

**Submission by the Discipline of Psychology, Australian Catholic University,
on the Psychology Board of Australia Public Consultation
on the National psychology exam:
Guidelines and candidate manual, May 2019**

The Discipline of Psychology at Australian Catholic University welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Public Consultation on the National Psychology Exam (May 2019).

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) currently offers the Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) on the Brisbane, Melbourne and Strathfield campuses, the Master of Psychology (Educational and Developmental) on the Melbourne campus, as well as combined Master of Psychology/Doctor of Philosophy programs. ACU also offers the Master of Professional Psychology (5+1) program on the Melbourne campus. This submission focuses on questions related to making the higher degree exemption from sitting the exam permanent.

General questions for consideration:

Question 1. Which option do you prefer – the status quo or option 2 (proposed changes)?

ACU Psychology prefers **option 2**, the proposed changes.

Question 2. Are you in support of separating the guidelines into two documents: a guideline and a manual? Please provide a rationale for your view.

Yes, the proposed changes will make the documents more readable and user-friendly.

Question 3. Are you in support of making the higher degree exemption from sitting the exam permanent? Please provide a rationale for your view.

ACU Psychology agrees with the PsyBA's rationale to making the higher degree exemption permanent. We agree that

- the new APAC accreditation standards provide for adequate protection of the public by requiring higher education providers to ensure that graduates meet the competency standards for these programs and for entry into a registrar program
- Requiring the graduates of a 6-year or higher degree program to sit the exam would be redundant.
- Clarity about registration requirements, especially exemption from the exam, is a positive outcome, especially for students who consistently express concern about an additional final hurdle after extensive assessment of their competencies in the postgraduate programs.
- We agree with the submissions to consultation paper 25 (August 2015) by the Australian Psychological Society, the Heads of Departments of Schools of Psychology Association and the Psychology Foundation of Australia. These submissions all provided thoughtful analysis and arguments as to why the rigorous and diverse assessments required by

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higher education providers provide a superior picture of trainees' competence than a once-off written exam.

Question 8. Are there other specific impacts (positive or negative) arising from the proposal for practitioners, higher degree providers, employers, clients/consumers that need to be considered?

Consistent with APAC standards and good educational assessment practice, ACU Psychology uses a variety of assessment tasks including Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE), and close observation and assessment, over time, during practicum. Thus, by making the exemption permanent, positive impacts on students will be removal of a stressful, anxiety-producing exam hurdle. Assessment of trainee attainment of competencies by educators and supervisors, through rigorous, ongoing observation assessment processes, provides better protection of the public than a successful multiple-choice, written exam performance.

Question 10. Do you have any other comments on the proposal?

We are pleased that the PsyBA has proposed option 2 and support the proposed changes.

On behalf of the Discipline of Psychology at ACU

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