



Response to PSyBA recommendation to exempt higher degree students from sitting the National Psychology Board Exam

We are writing on behalf of the academic clinicians who teach in the University of Melbourne's professional psychology programmes, namely the Clinical, Educational and Developmental, and Clinical Neuropsychology Masters level programmes. We are pleased to receive the opportunity to comment on the recommendation by PsyBA to exempt higher degree students from sitting the National Psychology Board Exam. Our comments pertain to APAC Level 4 specialist training programs.

We strongly support this recommendation, made by the Board in recognition of the fact that graduates of these professional programmes have just completed a minimum of six years of study in APAC accredited courses at an Australian university. As noted in Consultation Paper 33, The new APAC accreditation standards for psychology programs (2019) now include a specific domain on public safety; a requirement for higher education providers to meet the Board's standards; and a focus on an outcomes-based approach that emphasises competencies for safe practice rather than an input-driven approach. The current APAC requirements rigorously ensure that Universities are training graduates from higher degree programs to an assessed standard of competency that is at least as high as that deemed appropriate by APAC and PsyBA.

As a result, a high standard of training is provided by Universities. This is based on rigorous academic training through coursework, research and clinical placements. Graduates of these programmes have therefore reached a consistent professional standard and do not need to prove this by sitting the exam. Requiring these graduates to repeat their process of assessment by sitting the National Psychology Exam would be an unnecessary impost on both the graduate and the PsyBA/APAC.

Consequently, we do not believe that exemption from the exam poses a risk to the standards of practice for registered psychologists. This is reinforced by the Board's comment in the Consultation paper that "no issues have been identified by the Board during the temporary exemption period" (page 8) from 2013-2019 .

A further consideration is that the cost of sitting the exam would have been a considerable impost on students who may have been studying continuously for many years and would need to fund the cost before being able to enter the workforce.

Furthermore, registered psychologists continue to be accountable to the PsyBA through the requirements of on-going professional development; this provides opportunities to develop and maintain competence in order to ensure safe practice once registered.

In summary, we fully support the recommendation to exempt higher degree students from sitting the National Psychology Board Exam, and do not believe this will pose any risks to the profession or the public.

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