

26/05/2018

Dear members of the Psychology Board of Australia,

As a final year student enrolled in the Masters of Teaching (School Counselling/Psychology) program, I am saddened to hear that the board aims to retire the 4+2 pathway for general registration. Removing the 4+2 pathway would be detrimental as it relinquishes the only option available for us to attain registration as psychologists.

Currently in the Department of Education, registration is available to school counsellors and school psychologists. Most school counsellors are teachers who have returned to university to complete undergraduate psychology units and the postgraduate diploma in school psychology to become eligible for registration via the 4+2 pathway. Other school counsellors, with explicit reference to my cohort, have completed honours in psychology and additional postgraduate training in teaching to understand how teachers and schools operate. Most school psychologists have attained postgraduate qualifications in Professional Psychology, which makes them eligible for general registration via the 5+1 pathway. All students in my cohort are keen to start the 4+2 process when we begin work. We strongly believe that registration will equip us with a strong knowledge of the discipline, essential assessment and intervention skills as well as a robust understanding of ethics which will ensure that the welfare needs of students are adequately met.

However, several challenges currently exist with this arrangement. School counsellors accrue their registration hours only when schools are operational i.e 4 school terms per year, each 10 weeks long totalling 40 weeks. We do not practice during the 12 weeks of school holidays. This means that we require at least 2 years and 10 weeks to complete provisional registration. Furthermore, school counsellors operate in teams responsible for specific school across NSW. Each team consists of a Senior Psychologist (Education) who acts as the principal supervisor and another highly experienced school counsellor who acts as the secondary supervisor. Given that the Department of Education currently attempting to transition all school counsellors towards general registration, there is an immense strain on our Senior Psychologists to provide supervision for their team of school counsellors before the transition period expires. This has resulted in a "queue" or "waiting list" for provisional registration where some school counsellors have practiced for years before starting the registration process. In addition, there is also a preference to assist School Psychologists achieve general registration status as their internship can be completed within 1 year due to the 5+1 pathway. As a result, there may be a longer waiting period before School Counsellors can commence with registration.

Given the lack of general registration options available for school counsellors, I request that the transition period be extended for at least 3 years. This will provide my cohort and the current school counsellors adequate time to start and complete registration before the board transitions to other means to registration unavailable to us. We, as school counsellors, can have a major impact in negating the risk factors that are present in the lives of children during their primary and secondary schooling years. I believe that allowing additional time for us to complete our registration will strengthen our knowledge and skills to better serve the students who need the most support.

Regards,

Geoff