Supervision Training and Accreditation Program (STAP)

24 November 2009

Re: Psychology Board of Australia Consultation Paper

We thank the Board for a series of excellent proposals that will serve to ensure standards of psychological care to the public. Please accept this submission on the Psychology Board of Australia Consultation Paper. The focus of this submission is specific to the Endorsement of Psychology Supervisors.

Principal Comment

The Griffith University Consortium, which has provided the Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP) for the Psychologists Board of Queensland since 2004, supports the National Board's proposal that supervision be an endorsed area of practice. We would like to comment on the National Board's Consultation Paper on Registration Standards and Related Matters, particularly in relation to the issue of supervision. We hope that outlining some of the experience and findings of the STAP program in Queensland, may be of value to the National Board in its deliberations regarding supervision.

Advisings

The Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP) began in 2004 as an action of the Queensland Psychologists Board to meet the statutory obligation in the revised Psychologists Registration Act 2001 for supervisors operating under the Supervised Practice Program (SPP) to complete a standardized training program. To meet the Queensland Board's requirements, a supervisor under the SPP must:

- Undertake a 2 day training workshop on supervision and,

- Satisfactorily complete an evaluation of supervisory knowledge and skills. This evaluation comprises four components (i) a knowledge test (ii) a

video sample of a supervision session accompanied by self-evaluation (iii) a self-reflection essay (iv) structured supervisee feedback.

To maintain endorsement on the Queensland Psychologists Board's List of Accredited Supervisors, the practitioner must complete a Refresher Workshop (one day) every three years.

At the time of commencing the STAP, the Queensland Board had some 497 supervisors on its Board List of Approved Supervisors (i.e., approximately a ratio of 1.7 probationary registrants to each supervisor). The standard of training, quality of supervision provided, and level of activity of the supervisors was not well established.

Since November 2004 the Griffith University Consortium has conducted 46 two-day training workshops in supervision throughout Queensland. To date, 1017 supervisors have been trained. Of the total number of trained supervisors, 727 have completed the accreditation component and are now on the Board's List of Approved Supervisors (requirement since 30 April 2007). A further 128 accredited supervisors have already completed the Refresher program. There are extensive waiting lists for both the 2-day and Refresher program until STAP is finalized in June 2010 (with the advent of the National Registration Board).

As previously mentioned, when STAP training began in 2004, the ratio of supervisees to supervisors in Queensland was 1.7. Despite concerns that training would result in fewer accredited supervisors (including the concern raised by the current Clinical College submission), the reality is that the in 2009, 5 years after STAP training commenced, the ratio of supervisees per supervisor improved significantly to 1.3 (at November 2009: 952 probationary registrants to 727 fully accredited supervisors).

A number of supervisors from states other than Queensland have volunteered to do the STAP training, and some supervisors have done STAP since doing training as required in other states. Feedback has indicated that the STAP program is considered the most comprehensive and effective program currently provided in Australia. Comparisons mentioned by participants who have done other programs, indicate that in addition to the primary focus on administrative details related to specific Board supervision programs, the STAP program provides considerably more content and process on the theory and practice of supervision. The multifaceted

evaluation component is also seen as a comparative strength of the Qld STAP by these participants.

Appendix D of the National Board's draft does not appear to fully reflect the differences between the Queensland and NSW programs. We have therefore attached *Table 1* as an attempt to more comprehensively illustrate the points of similarity and difference between the two programs.

Evaluation and Outcome of the Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program

Initially there was a minority opposition in the profession to having to undertake mandatory training by psychologists who already had considerable experience in the field. There were also concerns that this requirement would push people out of the field of supervision and lead to an overall shortage of supervisors. The statistics above indicate that this fear was unrealized. In fact the reverse has occurred. There are now more supervisors in the field, the ratio of supervisors to supervisees has improved, and there is now a known standard of training of the supervisors in the SPP. There are a number of possible reasons for the increase. Many supervisors reported during the STAP training that without training they lacked confidence to start providing supervision. Others indicated that training and evaluation improved the reputation of supervision, and made them more interested in participating in providing it. There can be little doubt that training has enhanced the reputation and credibility of supervision and of Psychology more generally.

The other concern raised by many psychologists was the cost of the program. Some program development funds were provided by the Psychologists Board of Qld but thereafter the program had to be self-sustained by workshop enrolment revenue. The 2-day workshop costs $718. However, this cost compares reasonably with other 2-day professional development workshops. The evaluation for accreditation component costs $469 which provides the participant with access to detailed written and verbal feedback. In addition, the significant majority of participants had their fees paid by their employers, as employers recognised the value to their workforce of having trained and accredited supervisors in their organisations. Universities also funded supervision training and accreditation in whole or part. Further, the 2-day workshop attracted 28 PD points, and the refresher workshop 14 PD points.

The outcome data from the STAP program also indicate there has been an improvement in the standard of knowledge and skills in the cohort of Board List supervisors.

The outcome findings (O'Donovan, Dooley, Kavanagh, Melville, 2006; 2009) to date show:

1. A significant increase in knowledge about supervision and its delivery in the Queensland Board's Supervised Practice Program. *Increase in knowledge scores from pre-training (M=53.1, SD=13.0) to post-training [M=95.1, SD=3.8, t(143)=-38.5, p<.001]. Eta squared (0.9) indicated a large effect size.*

2. Increased utilization of a broader range of supervisory methods and skills based on supervisors' self-report. *There was a statistically significant increase in the percentage of tasks supervisors' rated themselves as performing 'sufficiently' from pre-training (M=60.1, SD=13.8) to post-training (M=94.1, SD=5.9, t[26]= -13.0, p<.001). Eta squared statistic (0.9) indicated a large effect size. Tasks which most changed as a result of training include: use of objective methods to evaluate professional competencies (e.g. video, skills demonstration) (improvement of 49%); use of role-play in supervision (improvement of 43%); monitoring and reviewing supervision contract (improvement of 41%); monitoring and discussing the state of the supervisory relationship (improvement of 39%); providing written feedback on supervisees' performance (improvement of 36%); and preparing for supervision sessions (improvement of 33%).*

3. Supervisors attribute improvement in their practice to undertaking the STAP workshop (39% of supervisors) and evaluation component (21% of supervisors), and 24% attributed their improvement to a combination of STAP training and evaluation.

4. The training workshop (two day) and refresher workshop (one day) have consistently achieved highly satisfactory ratings for content (86%); trainer (94%); 2-day workshop manual (90%); logistics (86%) and overall workshop quality (86%).

These findings add to the literature regarding the necessity for supervision training and evaluation of supervisors to ensure ethical practice for supervisees. We will not re-visit this literature as no doubt the Board is fully aware of the evidence in favour of supervision training.

Recommendations

- The Griffith University Consortium supports the National Board's proposal that there be a training and accreditation scheme set as a requirement for eligibility to supervise, and that there be a requirement for maintenance of standards through continuing professional development.

- The Consortium recommends that a nationally standardised training program be instigated. This program could be modelled on the Queensland approach since it is the only format with demonstrated effectiveness within the Australian context.

- The Consortium recommends that all supervisors in a National Training Program be required to undertake the designated Board training program, and that this program is the same across all states. We do not support that all currently accredited supervisors should be transitioned as accredited in the new system, as previous training across Australia has varied considerably in content and breadth. The extent to which prior learning will be recognized should be based on a) the format of the new course and b) how closely previous training has met the new requirements. A transitional (grandfather) clause could be provided for those applicants who could provide evidence that they have already completed training and evaluation in line with the new program. Alternatively, there could be no recognition for prior learning, but this would arguably disadvantage those supervisors who have already completed extensive training, in particular those trained in Queensland.

- The Consortium recommends that there be an evaluation component of the accreditation process. This should involve demonstration of the knowledge and skills of supervision practice. We strongly encourage the National Board to consider that a supervision program will be insufficient if it delivers training only, without evaluation of supervisors. There are two obvious reasons for this: a) that simply attending training does not provide evidence of effectiveness as a supervisor – this must be tested, and b) that the literature

on training clearly indicates that assessment shapes learning (e.g. Biggs, J.B. & Moore, P.J., 1993; Grafield, 1994; Jurges, Schneider, Senkbeil, & Carstensen, 2009). It is interesting to review the figures above from the STAP training where supervisors endorsed the importance of both training and evaluation as contributing to their improved supervisory practice. We thus recommend that any program be progressively evaluated for outcome and consumer acceptance, and that modifications be made based on these findings.

- We recommend that to be a supervisor a two (2) year minimum registration pre-requisite be adopted. This time provides sufficient degree of experience working in the field post-qualification as the Qld experience demonstrates. The failure rate in the STAP evaluation gives some indication. Longevity of holding unconditional registration gave no guarantee of passing the accreditation. The majority of participants who failed at least one element (approximately 6%) had held registration for more than three years. Given that nominating either two or three years appears to be an arbitrary allocation, rather than being embedded in any empirical evidence, then we would recommend that two years be a sufficient time frame as this will help to increase the overall pool of supervisors available.

- We endorse the National Board's indicated intention to prohibit the concurrent status of professional supervisor and line manager, unless special circumstances mean that the supervisee cannot arrange supervision and that special approval by the Board is required. The evidence from studies in organizational psychology indicate that there is considerable conflict in these roles and that they should be avoided.

- We would also recommend that the National Board considers providing training for Supervisees on what to expect from supervision. The Queensland Registration Board provided this type of training for the first time in 2009 based on the suggestion of supervisors doing the STAP training that their supervisees would greatly benefit from training on a) the basics of the SPP and b) what good supervision should include. Feedback from attending supervisees to the workshops provided in North Queensland and Brisbane indicated that this type of training is very important. Feedback included comments such as "Felt empowered and educated about my rights and responsibilities" and that "The workshop gave us an understanding of what's

involved with the STAP training, and thus what we can ask for during supervision sessions." The participants also indicated that it was very positive to have direct contact with the Board and to be able to ask a range of questions that allowed them to better understand the requirements of probationary registration. Ultimately, supervisees are the best source of feedback about supervisory effectiveness, and training will provide them with a better understanding of what is required and when they are not receiving good enough supervision. The literature is clear on how much harm poor supervision can do, and supervisees need knowledge to be able to discern effective from ineffective supervision. Such training also enhances the extent to which supervisees will take responsibility for their learning, and thus in turn, improve the effectiveness of supervision.

- We support the National Board's suggestion for professional development of individual supervision/peer consultation. The concerns raised by the Clinical College about the cost of such supervision may not be an impediment as supervisors should be able to organise voluntary peer supervision groups. We recommend that the Board alternatively stipulate the number of times such groups have to meet per year, rather than the number of hours. A group of no more than 5 supervisors (and no less than 2 of course) meeting 3 or more times a year may be a reasonable recommendation.

- Further to professional development, we suggest that it would be imperative to have regular updates of supervision training on a more formal basis as well. We would suggest that supervisors may be able to gain PD points from doing any APS approved supervision training, but in addition, that there are regular National Board endorsed updates. The current "Refresher workshops" required by the Queensland Registration Board are an example of this. Each 3 years, accredited supervisors need to do a 1-day workshop to update their skills. These workshops have been run to parallel a supervision-of-supervisor (supe-of-supe) format, and have received excellent feedback from the participants who have completed them.

- As registered psychologists under the new National Board legislation will have to participate in training to get required PD points, we suggest that supervision training with accompanying PD points will help to fulfil this obligation. We further recommend that, if there is an evaluative component to the training program, that this too attracts PD points.

- Finally, we recommend that the National Board publicly call for tenders for the provision of a national supervision training program.

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References

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Table 1: Comparison of NSW and Queensland Supervision Training Programs

	NSW workshop content	NSW evaluation component	Queensland Workshop content	Queensland evaluation components
2-day workshop	1. Preparation for the workshop: participants to pre-read the NSW Board's supervision Guidelines. 2. Content (based on NSW guidelines): • Best practice • Goals and Tasks of supervision • Social power • Boundaries • Models and structure of supervision • Needs assessment and contracting • Evaluative processes • Facilitative processes • Collaborate problem solving • Supervision triangle • Reflective practice group supervision • Observational methods • Managing problems • Self-monitoring and self-care	Knowledge test, comprising 3 examples of supervision methods done immediately following both days of the workshop. Participants expected to respond to the scenarios demonstrating knowledge of principles, not necessarily rules. Test is self-assessed, with minimum pass mark at 50%.	1. Preparation for workshop: participants receive a comprehensive workbook on the Qld supervision model + a review of all main issues related to effective supervision, based on the literature. Supervisees are requested to read the workbook before attending the workshop. 2. Content: • The SPP: content and rules. Also supervisor eligibility, assistant supervisors. • Format of supervision (e.g. group, individual) • Roles of supervisors. • Characteristics of effective and ineffective supervisors. • Supervisory styles. • Models of supervisor development. • Necessary skills of a supervisor. • Process issues in supervision. • The supervisory alliance. • Ethical, Legal and Responsibility issues. • Contracting • Administration issues in supervision. • The 6 core Competencies: what they are, how to train and evaluate. • Techniques in supervision for optimal learning. • Evaluation of supervisees and supervisors. • Completion of the supervision relationship. • Managing potential problems and pitfalls in supervision (with a number of specific issues demonstrated to be high risk areas in supervision). • Supervisor self-care and self-reflection. Workshop is a combination of didactic training, use of videos to demonstrate a range of issues, group discussion and experiential learning.	4 components – all of which have to be submitted within 3 months of completing training to allow participants to integrate and practise learning from the workshops. a) Knowledge test: 21 questions covering wide range of essential supervision knowledge. Minimum pass is 80%. b) Video of 1 hour genuine (not role-play) supervision session with a supervisee, which needs to demonstrate most of the essential skills and knowledge of an effective supervisor. Participants are provided with an extensive evaluation pro-forma that is used to evaluate their practice to indicate the areas that are important. Participants have to also self-evaluate their practice, and the accuracy of self-evaluation is also assessed. c) Self-reflection essay is a further means to assess participants ability to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their supervision practice, and to consider a plan for improvement. d) Supervisee evaluation: 2 forms completed by the supervisee to provide feedback on range of supervisors competencies. These components are all marked by a trained evaluator. Participants receive extensive written feedback initially, and after this, participants also have phone contact with the evaluator to discuss the feedback. The purpose of the feedback is to enhance effective supervision. 3. The program has also been externally evaluated, with very positive results. Further, data to assess training outcome has been collected and analysed.
Maintenance of supervision competence	N/A		Refresher workshop: once every 3 years after accreditation. Workshop designed to parallel supervision-of-supervision format. Participants prepare for workshop by doing number of readings on advanced supervision issues, as well as considering difficult supervision situations and bringing materials (e.g. supervision video) to receive supe-of-supe. Day is mostly experiential.	