

## Public consultation report

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July 2025

### Updating the Guidelines for the national psychology examination

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Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency  
National Boards

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Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

## Background

1. The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) recently consulted on updating the [Guidelines for the National Psychology Exam](#) (the exam guidelines)
2. The purpose of the exam guidelines is to:
  - a. support the [General registration standard](#) by setting out the exam requirements
  - b. protect the public by ensuring that only those practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise psychology in a competent and ethical manner are registered
  - c. assist the Board in the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained psychologists
  - d. provide information and guidance to candidates preparing for the exam.
3. The exam guidelines were last reviewed five years ago (July 2019). Three changes to the exam guidelines were proposed as part of the Board's preferred option at public consultation, as follows:
  - a. To align the exam guidelines with the recently updated [general registration competencies](#).
  - b. To introduce an exemption from sitting the exam for internationally trained applicants for general registration, who hold qualifications that are substantially equivalent or based on similar competencies to a Board-approved fifth and sixth-year qualification.
  - c. To generally update, refresh and streamline the exam guidelines to improve readability (including clarifying the importance of consistency in decision making when a candidate fails the exam three times, in line with current operational practice).
4. We carried out a preliminary consultation with psychology-specific stakeholder organisations and government departments in late 2024. Public consultation was then open between 28 January and 24 March 2025. The proposed exam guidelines and consultation paper providing background to the proposal can be found at our [past consultations](#) page.
5. We have carefully considered all feedback. We would like to thank all individuals, organisations, professional associations and the community for their valuable feedback and engagement with this review.

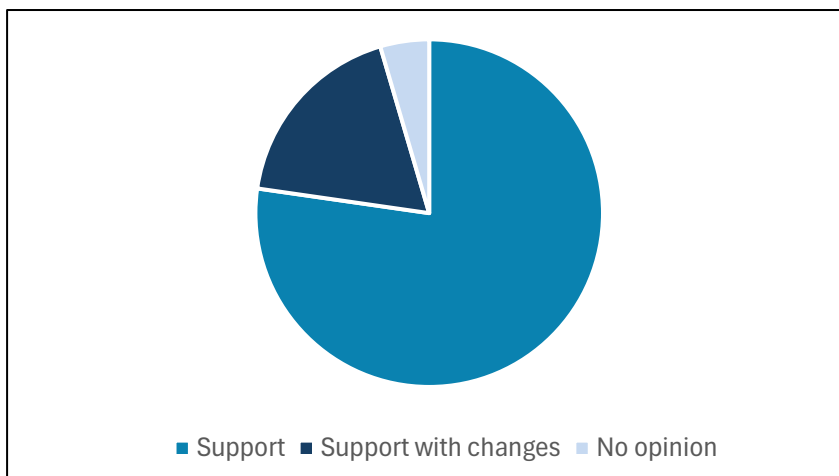
## Submissions

6. The Board sought feedback on ten specific questions ([Public consultation paper](#), page 8).
7. Forty-seven submissions were received during public consultation.
  - a. Twenty-one stakeholders submitted *detailed feedback* by completing the submission template (word document) provided by the Board, or through providing freeform feedback in an email.
  - b. Twenty-six submitted *brief feedback* via a shortened version of questions through an online survey (Qualtrics). All online survey submissions were from individuals.
8. Submissions that have been approved for publication can be reviewed [here](#). Submissions that were received at preliminary consultation or that were requested to be kept confidential are not published. Submissions or comments made that were out of scope for this review, are also not published.

## Feedback from public consultation

### Preferred option

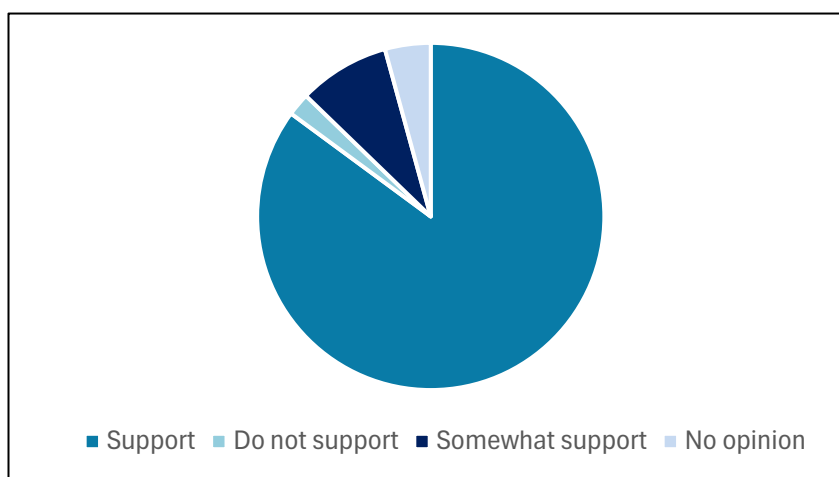
9. Stakeholders were asked if they support updating the exam guidelines, as per the Board's preferred option (Option 1).



10. A clear majority of stakeholders (34 of 44 responses) supported the Board's preferred option of updating the exam guidelines, with two stakeholders having no opinion.
11. Eight stakeholders supported updating the guidelines, while raising some concern about the exemption for some internationally trained psychologists. This concern is discussed below.

#### Incorporating the updated competencies into the exam

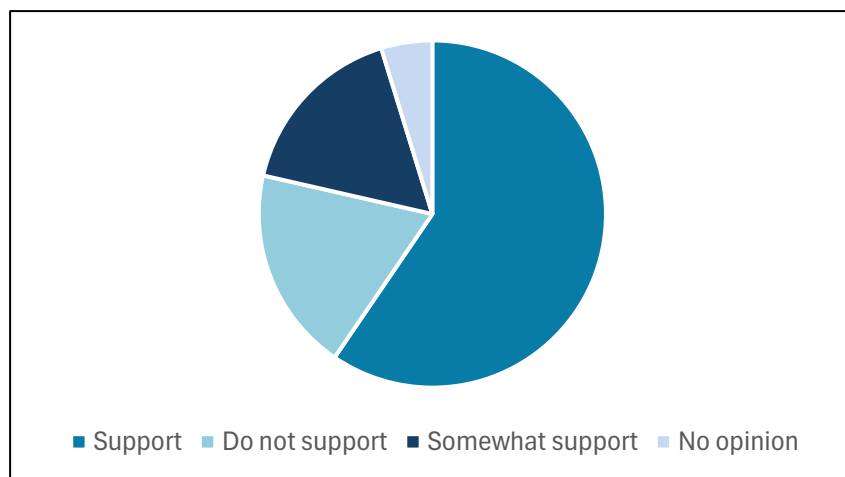
12. Stakeholders were asked whether they support including the updated general registration competencies as outlined in the [Professional competencies for psychologists](#) into the draft exam guidelines.



13. The twenty-one stakeholders who completed detailed feedback all supported this proposal.
14. Of those who completed brief feedback, nineteen were in support, one did not support, while the remainder either had partial support or no opinion with no reasons given.

#### Introducing an exemption from sitting the exam for some internationally qualified applicants for registration

15. Feedback was sought on whether stakeholders support an exemption from sitting the exam for international applicants for general registration who hold a qualification that is substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies, to a Board-approved fifth- and sixth-year qualification.



16. Of the 42 responses to this question, 25 supported introducing this exemption, two had no opinion, while seven stakeholders somewhat or partially supported the exemption.

17. Eight stakeholders did not support this exemption for various reasons. Feedback included that the national psychology exam is an important tool to ensure internationally trained psychologists develop knowledge in, and meet the threshold for, working in culturally safe ways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

18. It is important to note the following regarding cultural safety training:

- a. Internationally qualified psychologists who are exempt from the exam will need to undertake the [transitional program](#), including cultural safety learning. The transitional program includes working with people from diverse groups as relevant to the Australian context, and supervision on Australian ethical, legal, professional and cultural matters, as well as meeting competencies
  - i. A review of the transitional program is in the Board's ongoing work plan. Depending on the results of that review, the program may be updated in line with the new [competencies](#) and national law changes regarding [cultural safety](#).

19. Feedback was also provided around the need to meet a nationally consistent standard and have equity with Australian-trained psychologists.

20. After careful review, we have decided to keep this exemption in the updated guidelines for the following reasons:

- a. The [transitional program](#) will still need to be undertaken by this group.
- b. Applicants for general registration who are trained in Australia and complete the [higher degree pathway](#) (e.g. Board-approved Master of Clinical Psychology) are not required to complete the exam. The international equivalent qualifications would fall under this category. If the international applicant's training is equivalent to the [4+2 or 5+1 pathways](#), they will still be required to sit and pass the exam. Therefore, there is still equity with Australian-trained psychologists.
- c. Introducing this exemption is in line with broader National scheme improvements under the [Kruk review recommendations](#) to streamline processes for internationally trained applicants for registration in Australia.
- d. The exam is one assessment tool used to assess a practitioner's suitability for [general registration](#). The others include:
  - i. completion of a period of supervised practice
  - ii. direct observation of practice
  - iii. completion of professional placements/internship

- iv. assessment by a Board-approved supervisor while engaged in professional practice
- v. completion of a Board-approved qualification.

### Content of the draft exam guidelines

- 21. Those completing detailed feedback were asked if the language, structure and wording of the exam guidelines was clear, relevant, and workable.
- 22. Of the seventeen responses to this question, fifteen agreed that the guidelines are clear and user-friendly. One stakeholder felt the guidelines were 'too vague' but did not provide any detail on how to make changes to the guidelines. One stakeholder made comments that did not reference language included in the guidelines.

### Out of scope feedback

- 23. The majority of individual stakeholders took the opportunity to respond to the final question *Do you have any other feedback or comments about the draft exam guidelines.*
- 24. While the Board appreciates the time stakeholders took to provide us with this information, much of this feedback was out of scope for this specific consultation and the proposed changes to the exam guidelines.
- 25. This feedback was primarily about exam resources, exam questions, the exam failure report, and operational aspects of the exam.
- 26. This feedback has been recorded and will be considered in future work undertaken by the Board. Where appropriate, this feedback has also been provided to the relevant Ahpra departments.
- 27. One theme from this feedback (exam failure reports) has resulted in a recommendation for further work.

### How we used your feedback

- 28. Below is a summary of how we used the feedback received during the consultation process.

Themes	How we used your feedback
Internationally qualified assessment process	<p>We will respond to feedback raised regarding the lack of clarity around the assessment process of internationally trained psychologists.</p> <p>We will do this by improving the transparency of the assessment framework on our website in due course, in line with improvements across the National Scheme.</p> <p>We will also monitor the effects of the international exemption and adjust our processes as needed.</p>
Implementation	<p>The intended date of effect of 1 December 2025 was supported by the majority of stakeholders.</p> <p>We will use information provided on potential implementation issues raised by stakeholders to finetune the transition plans and minimise impacts on stakeholders where possible.</p> <p>An advance copy of the <a href="#">exam guidelines</a> will be published six months prior to the date of effect, and eight months prior to the first exam period of 2026.</p>

	We will also include evaluation processes as a post-implementation task, to ensure the updated guidelines are working as intended.
Exam documents	<p>Alongside the review of the exam guidelines, we have also reviewed the exam resources. To improve information for exam candidates, we have updated the <a href="#">National psychology exam candidate manual</a> and <a href="#">National psychology exam curriculum</a>. The exam manual is now an expanded document where all practical information on the exam can be found in one place. The Exam Curriculum has been updated in line with the new <a href="#">Professional competencies for psychologists</a> and the <a href="#">Code of conduct</a>.</p> <p>While out of scope of the current review, we received feedback regarding the report provided to candidates who fail the exam. In response to this, a review of the report will be conducted to identify if there are improvements that can be made on the information provided.</p>

### Next Steps

29. An advance copy of the Guidelines for the National Psychology Exam has been published to the Board's [website](#) ahead of the date of effect of 1 December 2025.
30. Advance copies of the National psychology exam manual and National psychology exam curriculum have also been [published](#).
31. The Board and Ahpra will regularly monitor and review the exam guidelines to ensure they remain relevant, contemporary and effective.