

## Psychology education pathways redesign project (Higher Degree Redesign Project)

### **Frequently Asked Questions – Discovery Phase webinars**

#### **Why is the Psychology Board of Australia undertaking the Higher Degree Redesign Project?**

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) have been asked by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department) to provide recommendations for a proposed redesign of the psychology higher education pathway and to work toward creating a single, shorter, more practical course of study.

Some of the problems the project is trying to address include workforce shortages and increasing community need for psychologists, access and equity and bottlenecks in the current training pathway.

For more information regarding the rationale behind the project, please visit the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

#### **What is the new course structure and when will it be implemented?**

A new psychology higher education pathway hasn't yet been determined, and at this stage of the project, no course structure for the new pathway has been proposed. We are in the process of listening to stakeholders to help inform suitable and grounded recommendations that meet the project's terms of reference and compiling information and insights to inform evidence-based recommendations.

While implementation is not within the scope of this project, rationale and impacts will be explored in public consultation and in final recommendations, due at the end of 2026.

It may take many years to realise any accepted recommendations made in the final report to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

For more information about how the Board has introduced, and retired, educational pathways to general registration in the past, please refer to further information regarding the 4+2 and 5+1 pathways, available on the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

#### **What will a shorter more streamlined pathway look like?**

At this stage, it is not yet known what a shorter, more streamlined pathway would look like.

What is known is the current standards of psychology education will be maintained, and psychologists and students will still be expected to adhere to, and meet, all relevant codes and competencies, including but not limited to the [Professional Competencies for Psychologists](#) and the [Code of Conduct for Psychologists](#).

A consultation paper outlining the proposed options will be available in early 2026.

#### **What is the timeframe for this project?**

The Board is working to deliver a final report to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing with recommendations by November 2026.

For a comprehensive timeline of activities to occur prior to submission of the recommendations, please visit the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

Implementation of the recommendations are outside the scope of the current work being undertaken.

## **I am considering starting/I am completing a course of study in psychology – should I wait for changes to come into effect?**

Implementation of the recommendations are outside the scope of the current work being undertaken. It may take many years to realise any accepted recommendations.

Noting this, students currently undertaking a course of study in psychology or looking to do so in the near future, are unlikely to be affected. For more information about how the Board has introduced, and retired, educational pathways to general registration in the past, please refer to further information regarding the 4+2 and 5+1 pathways, available on the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

## **How will the practitioner-scientist model be maintained in psychology training?**

The Board strongly supports maintaining the scientist practitioner model in psychology education.

Under any proposed changes, the scientist practitioner model would continue to be a key feature of a psychology training.

## **Why is the Higher Degree Redesign project considering other health professional courses to inform what a new pathway could look like?**

The Board are reviewing common course structures for other health professions including those regulated under the [National Scheme](#) to examine whether there are elements that could be applied to a redesigned psychology pathway.

Some health profession courses that lead to general registration include elements that align with the design principles of the psychology higher degree redesign project while still upholding the necessary competencies, thresholds and requirements for registration. Some elements include:

- A single pathway to general registration
- Removing units that are not accredited or required for registration in that profession
- Incorporating practical learning earlier in the course structure
- Less barriers to entry and/or admission requirements to progress in the pathway in comparison to current psychology training programs.

This information will be used to inform proposed options for redesign, along with other data and stakeholder feedback obtained during the Discovery phase.

## **How are equity and access for students who want to study psychology being considered as part of this project?**

Increasing equity and access in psychology training is a key priority for the Board.

As part of the HD Redesign project, we have sought feedback from a diverse range of voices including, but not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative groups and students
- People with perspective on LGBTQIA+ issues
- Neurodiverse people
- Mature age students
- People from rural and remote locations
- Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

There will be an opportunity to review possible redesign options in early 2026 as part of the public consultation process. We encourage those interested in equity issues or with lived experience to provide a submission as part of the public consultation process.

## **How will the project address the current bottlenecks in the training sequence?**

The current psychology education pathway includes separate entry points and admission requirements for honours and postgraduate training.

The Board are currently examining how a redesigned course of study can alleviate some of the blockers that are caused by multiple admission processes, without compromising the threshold of competency

required to practice as a psychologist. For example, a single degree would reduce the number of times a student needs to be assessed in order to progress through the sequence.

The project will also look at how we might create exit points to enable students to leave the course with another qualification (for example, a psychology assistant).

For more information about the issues we are trying to address, please visit the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

### **What will this mean for supervised placements?**

As part of the HD Redesign project, the Board has received positive feedback about incorporating practical training earlier in the degree.

Practical training could incorporate a range of methods (such as role play and simulated learning) that are designed to facilitate skill development earlier and complement supervised placements.

This would bring the degree into closer alignment with other health professions that already follow a pedagogical model and help students to become 'work ready' and better prepared for placements.

### **Will this affect Area of Practice Endorsement?**

One of the key objectives of the project is to increase the number of graduates who are eligible to obtain general registration as a psychologist.

While the redesign options will consider any effects that the recommendations may have on the training pathways for Area of Practice Endorsement (AoPE) any reform in this area will require a separate project.

Once the higher degree pathway reforms are underway, and psychology training pathways are aligned with general registration, review of AoPE can begin in earnest.

### **Is a shorter degree going to 'dumb down' the profession?**

The Board are not proposing to change the standards or competencies psychologists must meet, or the threshold that students must reach to be eligible for general registration.

Any proposed change to the psychology training pathway will be consistent with the Board's existing requirements for general registration.

### **Why is a psychology assistant workforce being considered and what options are being proposed by the Board?**

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has asked Ahpra and the Board to consider the level of competency attainment and workforce potential of psychology students who do not complete the full training pathway, such as a psychology assistant workforce. This is in response to known mental health workforce shortages. A psychology assistant workforce that is suitably trained to undertake defined, delegated tasks may present an opportunity to allow psychologists to work to their fullest scope, and in doing so support a sustainable mental health workforce.

The Board is still conducting work to determine the feasibility of a psychology assistant workforce in Australia, including whether there is a reasonable early exit point within the course structure to allow students who do not complete the full training pathway to qualify as a psychology assistant.

### **What would a psychology assistant workforce do?**

As part of this work, the Board is examining the way other comparable countries utilise their psychology workforce. This includes mapping competencies against educational attainment, determining scope of practice, supervision, registration requirements, and the risks and benefits to patient outcome and safety.

Psychology assistants (or equivalent roles) in other countries are not typically permitted to make independent diagnostic or treatment decisions or to undertake specialist assessments.

During the HD Redesign project, we have heard from a wide range of stakeholders with diverse views about this concept and whether it would be of value in Australia.

These views are being considered by the Board, and recommendations on the feasibility of a psychology assistant workforce in the Australian context will be included in the final report to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

**How would we compare internationally? Is this going to make an Australian psychology qualification less valuable overseas?**

Our current sequence of study is comparable with a number of other countries including New Zealand, the United Kingdom, South Africa and the USA.

This being said, Australia is out of step with international psychology programs that provide a clear, consistent, pathway to registration. All the above listed countries offer one pathway to become a psychologist that is fully accredited (with the exception of the US who regulate psychology at a state level).

Changes to the sequence of study would not reduce the amount of accredited psychology content required to complete the degree or change the standard of training of Australian psychologists but rather bring us closer in step internationally.

**I'm an overseas-trained psychologist, what would any proposed changes mean for me if I want to register to practice in Australia?**

Psychologists with international qualifications will still be required to have their qualifications assessed and recognised by Ahpra to be eligible for general registration as a psychologist in Australia.

For more information, please refer to information for [Overseas applicants](#).

**How will the Board work with Higher Education Providers, Public Health, Government, and other stakeholders to implement recommendations?**

It is crucial that project recommendations capture the viewpoints and expertise of diverse stakeholder groups, particularly given the significant implications of the project for psychology education, training and workforce. As part of the Discovery phase, the Board has met with jurisdictional leaders from all States and Territories and members of the higher education sector and other government departments continue to be actively involved in the HD Redesign Project Reference Groups.

The Board will continue to work closely with these groups throughout the life of the project.

**How have you consulted on the project so far?**

The Board has engaged with and will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders, including higher education providers, psychologists, academics, members of the community, professional associations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, students and many others to understand their thoughts and concerns. Key engagement activities undertaken during the Discovery phase include webinars, Project Reference Groups, jurisdictional meetings and bespoke engagements with key industry and stakeholder groups.

An opinion survey was launched in October 2025 and finalised in November 2025 to gather stakeholder sentiment about the project and terms of reference. This survey was a key component of preliminary engagement with stakeholders during the Discovery phase and questions were directly referable to the terms of reference for this project.

A formal public consultation process will occur in early 2026, where all interested parties will be invited to make a formal written submission regarding proposed options. There will also be opportunities for direct engagement with the Board via webinars, forums and focus groups.

For further information about the project timeline and how you can have your say throughout the project, please refer to the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).

### **How can I provide my thoughts about this project?**

The discovery phase of the Psychology Higher Degree Redesign Project is now in its final stages. This phase focused on gathering insights from stakeholders to inform the development of evidence-based recommendations for a proposed redesign of the psychology higher education pathway.

There will be opportunities for continued engagement throughout the life of the project, including in early 2026, when public consultation with redesign options is expected to occur.

For further information about the project timeline and how you can have your say throughout the project, please refer to the [Psychology Board of Australia's website](#).