



Updating the general registration competencies

Rachel Phillips, Chair Psychology Board of Australia

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Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of respect, the Psychology Board of Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and seas of Australia and their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Agenda

- The context of the review
- Why are competencies important in psychology regulation?
- About the Board's proposed updates
- Q&A
- How to give your feedback to the consultation
- What happens next?

Psychology regulation



- The Psychology Board of Australia and Ahpra regulate psychologists under the [National Law](#)
- Public safety is at the heart of the scheme
- The public can be confident that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered
- The Board must consult when reviewing standards and guidelines

A few notes

- Psychology has had competencies for general registration since 2010
- This proposal is about updating existing competencies not introducing them for the first time
- The *Guide to the Review* on our webpage may assist in understanding this consultation process
- Plenty of time for questions relevant to your personal circumstances

Understanding the registration categories



There are three registration categories for psychology:

Registration type	Description
Provisional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training and <u>working towards general registration</u>• Includes: 4+2, 5+1, higher degree, transitional program, overseas applicants, return-to-practice program
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can use the title 'psychologist'• <u>All psychologists have general registration</u>• Meet a minimum standard of education and training• Have been assessed as a suitable person to hold registration in the profession
Non-practicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain on the Register and use the title 'psychologist' while taking a break from practice

General registration



- General registration competencies establish the expected standard of practise for psychologists in Australia
- Under the National Law, all health practitioners are registered with general registration e.g., All medical doctors have general registration
- This review therefore applies to all psychologists in Australia, with and without Area of Practise Endorsement

What are competencies?

- A set of benchmarks that describe to the public **the minimum** knowledge, skills and attributes required to practice **safely and effectively**
- Competencies are used in:
 - **An educational context** when completing a qualification, and
 - **A regulatory context**
 - when setting the minimum threshold for registration at entry into the profession
 - When maintaining competence over the course of a Psychologist's career
- Help establish the **professional identity** of the psychology profession
- **Distinguish a psychologist** from other professions

Why do the competencies need updating?



- Competencies have not been updated since the beginning of the [National Scheme](#) in 2010
- To ensure that psychologists continue to meet the needs and expectations of the community
- To align with international psychology benchmarks and community expectations
- Make it easier for the public to understand what they can expect from a psychologist

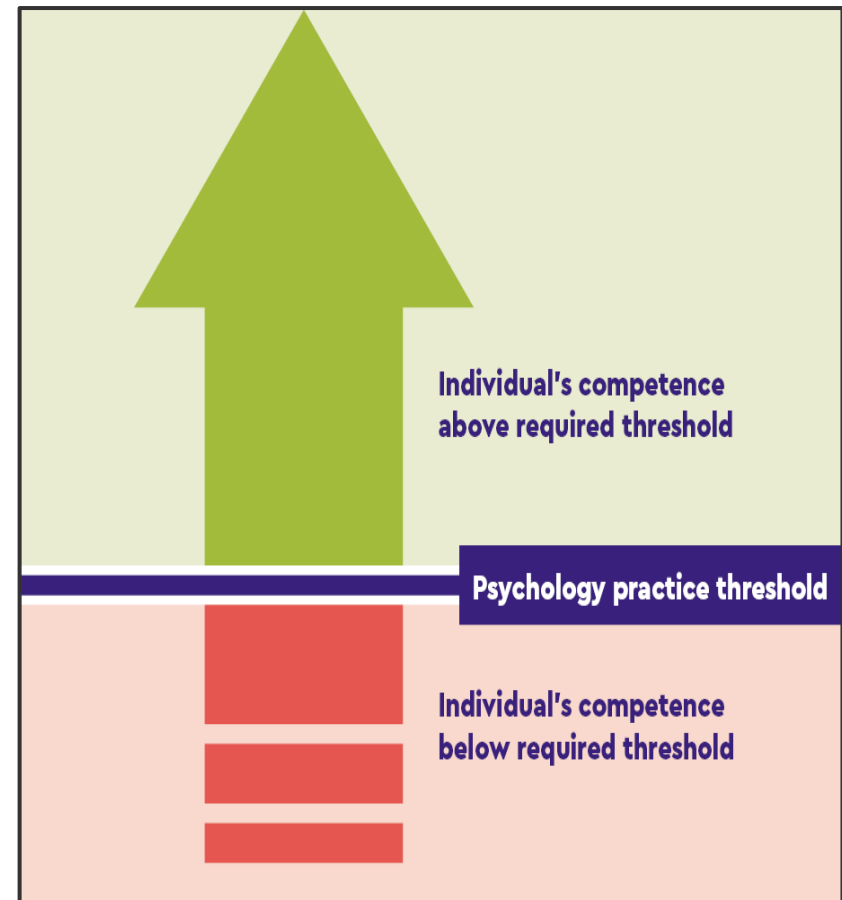
Our process of review



- Research and development based on evidence and expertise
- Preliminary consultation feedback
 - All stakeholders agreed the competencies need updating
 - Support for publishing the competencies 12 months before they come into effect (proposed date of 1 December 2024)
 - Assessment from the Office of Impact Analysis is for minor impact
- Advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychologists, groups and organisations
- Engagement with Professional Societies, Independent experts, HODSPA, and APAC regarding implementation
- Public consultation is the opportunity for feedback about the Board's proposal

What's not changing?

- Psychologists **will not** lose their registration when the updated *Professional competencies for psychologists* take effect
- There is **no additional regulation** required as a result of the updated competencies – We are not making it harder!
 - We are not proposing a higher/lower **threshold for entry into the profession**
 - There is no change in how psychologists **meet and maintain competency**
 - Criteria for a complaint or **notification** will remain the same as it is now



Updates to the core competencies



- Reorganising and updating the eight core competencies
- Listing all the competencies in one document
- Increased emphasis on:
 - culturally safe care with Indigenous peoples
 - working with the range of individual diversity
 - awareness of influence of psychologist's own cultural identity
 - professional reflexivity, deliberate practice and self-care

Reorganising the general registration competencies



Current

1. Knowledge of the discipline
2. Ethical, legal, and professional matters
3. Psychological assessment and measurement
4. Intervention strategies
5. Research and evaluation
6. Communication and interpersonal relationships
7. Working with people from diverse groups
8. Practice across the lifespan*

*Lifespan is moved to all competencies, specifically mentioned in C4, C5, and C8.

Proposed

1. Applies scientific knowledge of psychology to inform safe and effective practice
2. Practices ethically and professionally as a reflective practitioner
3. Exercises professional reflexivity, deliberate practice and self-care
4. Conducts psychological assessments
5. Conducts psychological interventions
6. Communicates and relates to others effectively and appropriately
7. Demonstrates a health equity and human rights approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, and communities
8. Demonstrates a health equity and human rights approach when working people from diverse groups

Improving how we explain the current competencies

- The current competencies are **high level and holistic** so all psychologists regardless of work context can meet and maintain threshold
- Clearer expectations are provided under each competency



C3: Professional reflexivity, deliberate practice and self-care



- Expands the current C2: Ethical, legal and professional matters.
- Outlines competencies already required elsewhere
- Outlines competencies already accepted in the profession
- International regulators are being more explicit about these competencies

C7: Demonstrates a health equity and human rights approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities

- The importance of embedding **culturally safe care** into the competencies
- **All psychologists** need to actively work towards providing positive health outcomes for Australia's First Nations Peoples
- Changes to the National Law
 - Our commitment to Health Strategy and Statement of Intent
 - Commitment to **close the gap** by 2031
- International regulators are more advanced and explicit

C8: Demonstrates a health equity and human rights approach when working people from diverse groups

- Embedding **cultural responsiveness** into the competencies
- Including an expanded list (not exhaustive) of individual/cultural diversity areas
- Emphasising the importance of **client-centred care** and actively working towards providing positive mental health outcomes for people with diverse individual and cultural backgrounds, and vulnerable members of the community
- Adding a **health equity** and **human rights** approach

Meeting and maintaining threshold

How do you meet threshold at entry into the profession?

- Same as you do now
- Complete a board-approved program of study including supervised practice and passing the exam (if required)

How do you maintain threshold as relevant to your scope of practice?

- Same as you do now
- Completing 30 hours of CPD annually

How do you change your scope of practice?

(e.g., when moving jobs, or working with a new client population)

- Same as you do now
- Importance of CPD and Code of ethics

Scope of practice



- **Scope of practice** refers to the professional role and services that an individual registered practitioner is educated, trained and competent to perform
- **Scope of practice for the psychology profession** is defined by the general registration competencies
- An *individual's scope of practice* evolves over time and can change depending on vocational choices and career path

Will I have to meet all the updated competencies?



- You will need to meet all eight general registration competencies when you **apply for registration** as a psychologist
- On **renewal of general registration**, you will need to meet all eight competencies *as relevant to your individual scope of practice and work role*
- Case Study #1 Not all competency *descriptors* will be relevant to every psychologist's work role
- Case Study #2 The same competency *descriptor* can be applied broadly to different work roles

Case study #1: Maintaining threshold in your individual scope of practice



When I started out as a psychologist I worked at a school and regularly used the WISC-V as part of my job. Now I work with adults and have not administered the WISC-V for many years.

Do I still meet *Competency 4: Conducts psychological assessments?*

Descriptor C4.4 – *Administers a range of culturally safe assessment methods*

- cognitive functioning capacity and vocational attainment
- diagnose psychological and psychosocial functioning
- risk to self and others
- parental and family functioning
- workplace assessments and performance

What learning do I need to undertake in order to maintain a safe level of practice in my current work role?

Case study #2: Moving work role

I currently provide direct client care in a group private practice providing individual therapy and have assessed myself (my supervisor agrees) as meeting Competency descriptor C5.4 “Outlines the risks and benefits of treatment”.

I am about to change job. How can I meet this competency if my new job is in:

- Administration/management in a hospital
- Policy writing in a professional association
- Research/teaching at a university?

What learning do I need to undertake to bridge the gap if I am moving into a new role?

How will I know if I meet the updated competencies?



- Same as you do now- when writing your CPD learning plan:
 - Read the CPD Standard and Guidelines
 - Read the competencies
 - Consider how each competency is relevant to your scope of practice
 - Do a **self-assessment** by evaluating your knowledge and skills against the competencies
 - Get feedback from your supervisor or manager about your knowledge, skills and learning edges
 - Create your outcome-focused learning plan that identifies your CPD needs for the year

The aim of self-assessment is to meet the competencies, and to refresh, extend or improve your knowledge and skills

What if I do a self-assessment and discover I don't meet threshold?

- You do the same as you do now:
 - Carefully review your practice to see if it is safe
 - Talk to your manager/supervisor/peers about the appropriate steps to take
 - Restrict your job duties until you have undertaken sufficient training and supervision to practice safely and effectively
 - Refer your client/s to a practitioner with the relevant training and competency
 - When moving to a new job or area of work, plan CPD and supervision to undertake before, during and after your transition
- If you self-assess as below threshold professional competency in an area outside of your scope of practice, you do not pose a risk to the public because you are not working in this area

Transition period



- The *Professional competencies for psychologists* will be published on our website at least 12 months before they come into effect
- The national psychology exam will be based on the updated competencies after the competencies come into effect
- We have proposed that the competencies take effect on 1 December 2024 to coincide with the annual renewal of registration
- The purpose of the transition period is for psychologists and other stakeholders to become familiar with the improvements

The importance of CPD for transition



- CPD is a regulatory tool to ensure practice is contemporary, safe and effective, and aligned with the general registration competencies
- This expectation has existed since 2010 in its current form.
 - The CPD model and expectations *are not* changing
- CPD is the key regulatory tool to assist each psychologist to safely transition to the updated competencies
- Annual learning plan provides the framework to assess individual learning needs
 - It emphasises individual responsibility for self-directed learning
 - Acknowledges that learning needs change over a course of a career
- CPD is not a ‘tick and flick’ exercise

Take-home messages

- While the Board is not proposing significant changes, there are some key areas where updates are being proposed
- Psychologists are not starting from a basis of "no competence"
- Psychologists **will not** lose their registration when the *Professional competencies for psychologists* take effect
- The APAC Standards already address many of the proposed competencies
- Criteria for a complaint or notification will remain the same as it is now
- There is no additional regulation required as a result of the updated competencies – the CPD standard will not change

Additional resource: Guide to the review



- Provides information about key aspects of the consultation
- Will help you understand **how** the changes will affect you
- Explains the foundational concepts and key terms
- Provides more information on why updating C3, C7 and C8 is so important

Public consultation

- Published 10 February 2023 on our [current consultations](#) page
- Submissions must be received by close of business (AEDT) on **Tuesday 11 April 2023**
- Giving feedback:
 - **Detailed feedback** – use submission template (Attachment I)
 - **Brief feedback** – online multiple-choice consultation survey

What happens when public consultation closes

The Board

- Review all feedback and consider changes
- Approve the final competencies and transition timeframes
- Develop resources to assist practitioners transition
- Publish an advanced copy of the competencies to take effect later

APAC and HEPs

- APAC to work with HEPs to ensure Board's competencies and graduate competencies align
- HEPs to incorporate updated competencies into courses via the annual quality assurance process

Psychologists

- Undertake any relevant CPD in anticipation of the date of effect of the updated competencies

Thank you