

April 2005

Newsletter

Background and Update on the Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP) of the Psychologists Registration Board of Queensland

The Board has asked me to report on the progress of the Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP) and to inform registrants of the history, aim, content, requirements, benefits and evaluation of the Program.

History and Rationale

Professional training of psychologists relies on apprentice and mentoring models. The quality of supervision is central to the ensuing standards of practice. The Board has a responsibility toward probationary registrants to ensure that the psychologists who are approved as supervisors are actually competent at supervising.

Many supervisors currently approved by the Board have considerable experience in supervision. However, years of experience in supervision cannot necessarily be equated with the quality of supervision being provided, particularly as the Supervised Practice Program (SPP) has recently undergone major refinement. The Board has both a duty and the statutory power to regulate and act on this issue¹. Assurance of supervisors' competency and effectiveness was therefore sought in a suitable training program for supervisors.

The invitation to develop and implement the STAP was publicly advertised in an Invitation to Offer on 6 February 2003 in the *Courier Mail* and on the Board's website. The Invitation specified the purpose and objectives of the training program. It also specified the proposed format of an initial two day training workshop followed by a one day refresher workshop every three years.

The STAP was on the agenda for meetings of the Board with Heads of Departments and Schools of Psychology at Queensland universities each year from 2000 to 2004. Updates on the proposed nature of the Program, the progress of its development and the budgetary implications for schools and departments were discussed at these meetings. The Board also held a meeting with the University Postgraduate Program Coordinators in 2003 where matters regarding supervisor training were discussed.

The recruitment, selection and appointment of a person or body to deliver the Program was in accordance with the Government's competitive tendering guidelines and included the ranking of applicants by the search committee and interviewing of the ranked applicants by the Board. We were fortunate with the quality of the tenders. A major strength of the selected Tender was that it included an individualized assessment component, to optimize the level of confidence in the accreditation process.

¹ Section 35 of the *Psychologists Registration Regulation 2002*

The successful Consortium includes four core team members from diverse professional backgrounds and associations with Queensland universities. They have extensive experience in practice of the profession; in the supervision of psychologists-in-training in academic settings and in the public and private sectors; in the training of psychologists as supervisors; and in supervision research itself.

A letter was sent to all approved supervisors in October 2003, providing an update on the STAP and its proposed format. The Board requested feedback on the requirements of the SPP and any other pertinent comments in a survey circulated with the letter to supervisors. This feedback was given to the Consortium and incorporated into the content of the STAP.

To assist with the design of the Program, members of the Consortium interviewed the Chairs of various APS Colleges (i.e., educational, organisational, clinical, health, neuropsychology, community, counselling, and forensic) to obtain their views on what is required in supervision for their specific speciality. The feedback from psychologists representing the full range of specialities was consistent with research findings and indicated that many factors in effective supervision are common to all psychology specialities.

STAP Content and Process

The Board's aim is to ensure that all supervisors on its approved list reach a minimum standard of competence in the process of supervision.

A key to this aim is that supervisors are conversant with the SPP required to be completed by probationary registrants. A SPP can be completed by probationary registrants following Pathway 1 (two years of practice approved by the Board) or Pathway 2 (postgraduate training in professional psychology). The structure and content of the SPP have been described in detail with defined core competencies in the *Guidelines for Probationary Registrants and Supervisors* which is available on the Board's website: www.psychologyboard.qld.gov.au

The STAP addresses the ethical, professional and legal responsibilities of supervisors and management of problems that may arise in supervision within the framework of the SPP and the relevant legislation for psychologists in Queensland. Different styles and models of supervision are considered using videos and a structured work book. Discussion takes place in small groups with role-play and feedback.

While the focus of the STAP is on generic supervisory processes and issues as these apply to psychologists in general, the Consortium made efforts to ensure that specialties in psychology are considered. Examples from various specialties are included in the workbook, videos and discussion sessions. Importantly, specialist input is provided to participants in the assessment and feedback stages of the STAP. The STAP endeavours to provide specialist assessors to match the area of practice of individual participants. These assessors have themselves completed the STAP and received additional training in evaluating participants. Assessors are available in the following areas: clinical, neuropsychology, educational, sport, community, organizational, health, counselling, and forensic. Further STAP will also endeavour to have the candidate's work marked by someone matched or higher in level of experience, and unlikely to have a conflict of interest because of work/collegial contact with the candidate.

Relationship of the STAP to SPP

The SPP is completed by all probationary registrants, either through Pathways 1 or 2. Registrants who wish to provide supervision for either Pathways 1 or 2 in internship or externship placements or under any other arrangement are required to complete the STAP.

There is no requirement to complete the STAP for registration purposes. Registrants undertake the STAP if they wish to be listed by the Board as an approved and accredited supervisor for the SPP.

Relationship of STAP to Continuing Professional Development

All psychologists have to undertake regular professional development which requires financial and time commitments. In accordance with the requirements of the Registration Acts for all Health Professionals in Queensland, the Board will be introducing recency of practice requirements linked to the annual renewal of registration. The Discussion Paper on Recency of Practice was released in February 2005 and is available on the Board's website. The requirement for recency of practice will include continuing professional development and the Board intends to recognize the completion of the STAP as contributing to continuing professional development.

The Consortium providing the STAP has also applied for the program to become an Australian Psychological Society endorsed professional development activity.

Evaluation

The Board will undertake an independent review of the STAP after three years. The terms of reference of the review and evaluation of the Program are currently being considered by the Board, but will include seeking feedback from stakeholders (educators, employers, professional societies, participants and supervisees) as well as consideration of potential impacts of the program. For example, any effect on the number and diversity of approved supervisors can be measured.

The Consortium is evaluating the STAP by -

- a. Measuring participants' satisfaction. Note: 71 individuals have completed the three workshops to date and provided an overall satisfaction rating of 4.4/ 5.0 (i.e. in the range of very good to excellent).
- b. Estimating the knowledge gained from the STAP based on data collected on each participant's knowledge of supervision before and after completing the program
- c. Assessing outcomes for supervisees based on data collected from supervisees to assess whether the training has made a practical difference to the effectiveness of the supervision they are receiving.

Under the terms of the Standard Consultancy Agreement the Consortium provides written reports to the Board on their progressive evaluation of the Program.

The Board considered the first report from the Consortium at its March 2005 meeting. The response to the first three Workshops held in November and December 2004 and March 2005 was overwhelmingly positive and feedback comments will be published in the next Board Newsletter and posted on the website.

Transition Arrangements

Whether currently approved or not, all supervisors have until **1 May 2007** to complete the STAP. From that date, all SPP supervisors will be required to have successfully completed the STAP.

Workshop dates and locations

The distribution of registrants in Queensland was considered when determining the locations for Workshops. The assessment and feedback stages of the Program are conducted by post / telephone / email etc and should not disadvantage participants living in remote areas.

Table: Dates and Locations of 2005 Workshops

Location	Dates of Workshops in 2005	Register by
Townsville	18 + 19 April 2005	28 February 2005
Rockhampton	20 + 21 May 2005	21 March 2005*
Toowoomba	17 + 18 June 2005	3 May 2005
Brisbane	22 + 23 July 2005	6 June 2005
Gold Coast	2 + 3 September 2005	18 July 2005
Brisbane	8 + 9 September 2005	25 July 2005

Contact details

Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program
Suite 82, Silverton Place
101 Wickham Terrace
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email Address: supervision-program@griffith.edu.au

Cost

Workshop	\$645
Evaluation for Accreditation	\$416
Total	\$1061

Note: A one-day refresher workshop 3 years after accreditation requires attendance for continued accreditation Cost per person is \$384.

Gina Geffen, Chairperson

