

PSYCHOLOGIST BOARD OF QUEENSLAND POLICY

File No: S37 / S120

Policy Topic: Policy on Descriptors in front of the word
“Psychologist” to denote areas of Expertise

Date of Approval: 12 December 2002

Dates of amendment: 20 July 2006
16 August 2007

Background

The profession of psychology has distinctive branches, reflected in textbooks, professional and scientific journals. Training for the practice of various branches of psychology is available at many of Australia’s universities, as well as elsewhere.

Employment agencies both in Queensland and other States advertise for psychologists qualified in particular areas of service, frequently by specifying the position in terms of a descriptor, eg clinical psychologist or sports psychologist.

The *Psychologists Registration Act 2001* describes categories of registration (section 140) dependent upon level but not type of training and does not differentiate between different specialities. However, section 144 (3) of the Act indicates that registrants must not advertise “skills, knowledge or training” which they do not have.

The present policy of the Board is to recommend that registrants list their areas of expertise rather than use a descriptor title. While descriptors indicating areas of expertise are not mentioned in the Act, their use is not prohibited by the legislation. Accordingly the Board sought legal advice on their use. The advice (26 June 2002) was that the Board should promulgate a policy that does not fetter the Board’s discretion in pursuing a prosecution in any particular case for a breach of section 144 (3) of the Act.

Policy

The Psychologists Board of Queensland recognises that there is a diverse range of services provided by registrants, dependent on the nature of the problem/issue, the characteristics of the client/patient and the referring person/agency. Similarly, the Board recognises that registrants have obtained qualifications and/or knowledge, expertise and skills in particular service areas and that this expertise is endorsed by various professional societies.

The Board believes it would be helpful to potential clients if particular psychological expertise was succinctly described. Accordingly, the Board will permit registered psychologists to designate their expertise in a particular area by a descriptor in front of the term “psychologist”. Examples are: Organisational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist, Sports Psychologist etc.

A list of permitted descriptors is appended. The Board recognises that the practice of evidence-based psychology is expanding and therefore other fields of practice are likely to develop. A registrant whose expertise is not listed may approach the Board to determine whether the list should be expanded.

Criteria for Usage of Descriptors

Registrants who wish to describe the area(s) of service they provide by one of the listed labels should note that section 144(3) of the Act forbids misleading advertisement.

Registrants intending to use one or more of the listed descriptor titles in advertising should be able to demonstrate that they have appropriate qualifications or experience and continuing training in the area(s) in which they intend to advertise their services. The Board considers that the following represents the minimum in qualifications or experience and continuing training that is required for registrants’ use of descriptor titles:

EITHER

- (1) A coursework higher degree, eg MPsych, DPsych, PsyD, or a professional PhD, eg PhD (Clinical Psychology), in the area(s) designated by the descriptor(s), and recognised by the Board

and

At least two years of supervised, full-time practice, or the equivalent supervised, part-time practice, in the area(s) designated by the descriptor(s). This supervised practice is to be undertaken with a supervisor qualified and experienced in the relevant specialty area who meets criteria (1) or (2) of this policy for use of a descriptor title in the relevant specialty area. The supervision processes are to be documented.

and

Demonstrated continuing participation in professional development activities that are commensurate with the descriptor title(s) used.

OR

- (2) Successful completion of formal coursework in the area(s) designated by the descriptor(s), and in a program of study recognised by the Board, eg a unit of study in Clinical Psychology in an APS accredited fourth year program.

and

At least five years supervised, full-time practice, or the equivalent supervised, part-time practice, in the area(s) designated by the descriptor(s). This supervised practice is to be undertaken with a supervisor qualified and experienced in the relevant specialty area who meets criteria (1) or (2) of this policy for use of a descriptor title in the relevant specialty area. The supervision processes are to be documented.

and

Demonstrated continuing participation in professional development activities that are commensurate with the descriptor title(s) used.

The Board does not formally give approval to individual registrants to use descriptor titles. In the event that a complaint is received about a registrant's use of a descriptor title for advertising purposes, the onus will be on the registrant to demonstrate that she/he has the relevant minimum qualifications or experience and continuing professional training required for use of the descriptor title.

LIST OF PERMITTED DESCRIPTORS

Clinical Health Psychologist
Clinical Psychologist
Clinical Neuropsychologist
Community Psychologist
Counselling Psychologist
Educational and Developmental Psychologist
Forensic Psychologist
Health Psychologist
Organisational Psychologist
Sport Psychologist