



Malta Psychology Profession Board

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MPPB Supervision Guidelines

Why supervision?

Guidelines adopted by the Malta Psychology Profession Board (MPPB) support psychologists and psychology practitioners in providing competent and ethical practice to clients, such that the latter may benefit from quality service. "Clients" may include (but is not limited to) organisations, contractors, groups and individuals.

It is the responsibility of each psychologist and psychology practitioner to be familiar with any Board stipulated guidelines that are relevant to each area in which they practice.

The MPPB is obliged to assure the public that each psychologist is maintaining their competence. The MPPB considers supervision, together with other CPD requirements, as central to achieving this. In addition to ensuring the ongoing competence of psychologists, supervision is an intrinsic part of any Board recognized programme of studies, and is a necessary requirement for warranting.

Supervision as mandatory:

The Board expects all practicing psychologists to engage in supervision, regardless of the stage of their career and work settings/contexts. The Board is flexible in its belief that different styles of supervision will apply to different psychologists in different areas of practice and at different times in their career.

Supervisory agreement:

The supervisee and the supervisor should set up a supervisory agreement. Supervision takes place at a scheduled time for the purpose of conducting a self-reflective review of practice, to discuss professional issues and to receive feedback on all aspects of practice. The aim is to ensure high quality of service, improve practice and manage over-all well being of the supervisee.

A trusting and collaborative relationship between supervisor and supervisee is an essential component of effective supervision. The supervisor should be aware of the implicit power imbalance in the supervisor / supervisee relationship. Expectations of supervision, as well as transparency on any constraints to confidentiality need to be discussed. A respectful relationship needs to exist for the aims of supervision to be reached.

Both should retain notes arising from the supervision process. Such notes are to be kept for a duration of not longer than 5 years. In addition a record of the date and duration of each supervision session is also to be kept.

Although supervision may vary according to the supervisee's needs, the process involves reflection, conceptualization; plans for interventions; and evaluation.

Aim of supervision:

- To promote the ongoing professional development of psychologists;
- To aid psychology practitioners to fulfill their obligations towards warranting;
- To offer a form of accountability for psychologists / practitioners;
- To assist the psychologist / practitioner to examine the effectiveness of their work with clients; and
- To carry a supportive role in relation to the supervisee.

Supervision as core part of the psychologist's work:

The activity of supervision is regarded as a core part of a psychologist's work. Given its importance, psychologists should undertake training in supervision, and should also seek 'supervision of supervision'. The Board considers it is important that organisations, managers, or persons responsible for employing psychologists / practitioners recognise that receiving and providing supervision are essential core functions for the practice of psychology.

Successful supervisors demonstrate an interest in and commitment to the supervisee's professional development. They are to model ethical and professional conduct, including maintaining appropriate boundaries and practicing/ supervising within their competence.

During supervision there may be times when it is necessary for a supervisor to highlight and/or clarify some personal issue of the supervisee that impacts on their work. Should significant issues arise which may indicate that some form of assistance or psychological therapy is necessary, the supervisor should encourage the supervisee to arrange this with an independent therapist.

Cultural issue:

Given the increasing cultural diversity of our times, all psychologists / practitioners working with culturally diverse individuals or groups should seek a formal cultural supervision arrangement for any culturally related components of their professional practice.

Individual or group supervision:

Supervision will usually involve one-to-one meetings. At some times and in some situations (e.g. experienced or senior psychologists) group or peer supervision may be an appropriate addition. The supervisee needs to ensure that the format and frequency of supervision is meeting their needs.

Frequency of supervision:

It is recommended that the frequency of supervision will be a minimum of one hour per month for psychologists who work full-time and its equivalence in part-time practice. The frequency of supervision may need to be increased in some situations, where the supervisee is a practitioner, or when undertaking a new area of work or learning a new skill.

Each psychologist and their supervisor should review the effectiveness of their supervision regularly.

Finding a suitable supervisor:

It is the responsibility of each psychologist to find a suitable supervisor. If in doubt, the supervisee may refer to the MPPB website where a list of approved supervisors can be found. Given the need for trust and a good working match between the psychologist and their supervisor, the choice of supervisor should be the psychologist's and should not be imposed.

If it is not possible to have a suitable supervisor from within the same country, it is acceptable for the prospective supervisee to identify a supervisor from abroad. In this case supervision sessions can be conducted electronically (e.g., via telephone, email, Skype or teleconference). In this case, evidence of Board certified registration of the supervisor in that country, needs to be provided to the MPPB.

Dual relationships:

Wherever possible dual relationships should be avoided. In circumstances where dual relationships are unavoidable the supervisor and supervisee should discuss the implications of these relationships on the supervision process and note any agreed steps for managing the dual relationships in the contract.

Eligibility as supervisor:

Supervisors will be psychologists who have been warranted for at least 2 years and attended a supervision course recognized by the MPPB. Warranted Psychologists working for a period of at least six years or Psychologists who have been in senior positions (eg. Senior Psychologist, Principal Psychologist) at their work place, may also take on the role of supervisor. This does not exclude junior psychologists from also guiding their peers or other practitioners in their capacity as professionals. This role would however, be an informal one, and should not be a role that is imposed on the junior psychologist.

When the supervisor is not a psychologist:

In some situations it may be appropriate for psychologists to have supervision with a person who is not a psychologist. However this person should be registered with a recognised professional body. All psychology practitioners however, are expected to undertake their supervision with a psychologist working in their area, and who satisfies the Board as having the necessary requirements to act as supervisor.

Obligations of the supervisor:

Any expectations and obligations of the supervisor should be clarified and made explicit at the time of drawing up a supervision contract. The supervisor has parallel responsibilities to the supervisee, the clients, and to any organisation to which they are providing services.

The supervisor remains responsible in the general sense of providing appropriate and ethical guidance.

Under the requirements for warranting, supervisors are expected to provide a written report attesting to the supervisee's readiness for warranting, and are therefore required to provide the Board with a short report commenting on the candidates suitability for warranting.

Obligations of the supervisee:

The supervisee for their part has clear responsibilities towards the supervisor in terms of openly and honestly presenting material to the supervisor. The supervisee is responsible for keeping to agreed meeting times, and to other arrangement outlined in the supervisory agreement.

Confidentiality:

The contents of the supervisory relationship will normally be confidential. Any constraints on confidentiality should be explicitly stated. The supervisor has a primary professional duty to monitor and to manage risk of emotional/physical harm to the client, the supervisee, or to others that may arise within the sphere of supervisory responsibility. This duty may, in exceptional circumstances, override a duty to preserve the confidentiality of the supervisory relationship such as situations where there are perceived to be serious risks to the emotional or physical safety of the supervisee or client.

Concerns about supervisee's practice:

If a supervisor has any concerns about the supervisee's practice, these problems should be discussed with the supervisee. If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of the supervisor it should be discussed with a third party agreed upon by the two parties at the time of drawing up the supervisory agreement.

If the supervisor has concerns that the supervisee may pose a risk to the public by practicing below the required standard of competence, they are obliged to notify the Board.

Clients of the supervisee:

Clients of the supervisee have a right to be informed that supervision occurs, the purpose of this process, the identity of the supervisor, and the degree to which this may compromise confidentiality.

Formats of supervision:

One-to-one supervision involves one psychologist or psychology practitioner being supervised by one qualified and Board recognized supervisor coming from the same area of specialisation; Group supervision is carried out by an identified, appointed Board recognized supervisor for the purpose of supervising a group of psychologists;

Peer supervision / intervention is carried out by experienced psychologists who provide supervision to each other on a reciprocal basis.

For psychologists 50% of supervision can be carried out in group supervision or peer supervision / intervention. Persons working towards warranting can only be supervised on a one-to-one basis by a registered supervisor.

Personal professional indemnity insurance:

It is desirable that supervisors have personal professional indemnity insurance.

Acknowledgements

This document draws on material from The British Psychological Society, Division of Clinical Psychology, Policy Guidelines on Supervision in the practice of Clinical Psychology