



Guidelines for the vetting of warrant applications (core competencies)

The Malta Psychology Professions Board (MPPB) is bound by law to observe the criteria set forth in the Malta Psychology Act (2004) when determining whether a prospective candidate is eligible for a warrant to practice psychology and obtain the title of registered psychologist.

According to the **Malta Psychology Act 2004**, s3(3) (a) (b) (c) (d) the law requires applicants to be:

- a) **Maltese citizens or else otherwise permitted to work in Malta**
- b) **Of good conduct**
- c) **In possession of a Masters Degree in Psychology conferred from the University of Malta or of another professional qualification as the Board may deem equivalent**
- d) **Able to prove that the applicant has undertaken adequate experience in the practice of the profession for an aggregate period of at least 2 years full time or its equivalent in part time¹. This period of experience in the profession has to be undertaken upon completion of the professional training or degree and it has to be undertaken under the supervision of a registered psychologist.**

If the applicant has completed his/her professional training abroad than the applicant needs to prove that the professional training is equivalent to the professional qualification conferred from the University of Malta. Obtaining this equivalency in qualifications is the responsibility of the applicant and can be obtained from the Malta Qualifications Council. However, the candidate needs to know that identifying the MQRIC level rating by itself is not sufficient to establish equivalence to the Masters course in Psychology by the University of Malta and subsequent eligibility for warranting. The MPPB also needs to be satisfied that the professional training undertaken by the applicant is equivalent to the training offered by the University of Malta. In addition, if a course is accredited by an overseas accrediting body, this does not automatically mean that it will be recognised by the MPPB which is the local accrediting Board.

The warrant applicant needs to provide attestation at the end of the 2 year practice period post training that he/she has met the core competencies and skills of the specialisation. The competencies listed below are adapted from the **UK Health Professions Council's Standards** of proficiency for practitioner psychologists², and the list will guide the MPPB when

¹ Equivalent in part time means 3770 hours, half of which (except in the case of Academic, Social or Research psychologists) are required to be direct client contact (assessments or psychological interventions).

² The MPPB would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to Mr D Knight on behalf of the Health Professions Council for granting permission to use the document entitled Standards of Proficiency-Practitioner Psychologists. For further information regarding this document kindly follow the subsequent link:- http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10002963SOP_Practitioner_psychologists.pdf

processing applications. If an applicant can show that during the period post recognisable training he/she has developed these competencies and other requirements by law, then they are eligible for a warrant. These are the standards produced for the safe and effective practice of the profession of psychology.

If the applicant should have minor shortfalls in the criteria to be met, the MPPB guided by the **Malta Psychology Act 2004**, s3(5) may require that the applicant undertakes an adaptation period or else submit the applicant to a proficiency test.

The MPPB, through the authority given to it by the Malta Psychology Act 2004 (refer to s18 of the Act) is expecting that applicants for a warrant meet the standards highlighted below. If the MPPB is satisfied that the applicant has met these standards of practice and a warrant is issued, a declaration that the standards of proficiency are being met must be provided to the Board through the mandatory audit that the Board is responsible for carrying out, in order for a psychologist to be able to maintain his or her warrant.

1. General competencies of practitioner psychologists

The general competences that psychology assistants should aim for, and that practitioner psychologists should have are:

- Be able to understand the power imbalance between practitioners psychologists and clients and how this can be managed appropriately,
- Be able to gather the information required through the careful administration of the appropriate assessment techniques.
- Be able to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate the information collected.
- Be able to formulate and deliver care plans or interventions to meet the needs of the service users.
- Be in touch with the latest developments in the particular field of psychology specialised in, critically evaluate the research and thus use it as a basis to inform their own practice. Thus the practitioner psychologist is expected to keep abreast with the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge relevant to their professional practice.
- Be able to adapt practice in order to be able to meet the diverse needs of service users.
- Be able to conduct audits, reviews of practice and/or effectiveness of planned activity. Related to this competence one must keep adequate records (handled and kept in line with appropriate legislation).
- Be able to conduct adequate and appropriate diagnostic procedures, treatment and therapy or other interventions keeping in the mind the safety of the service users.
- Be able to practice in a non-discriminatory manner, understand the importance and be able to maintain confidentiality (as well as understand where confidentiality cannot be maintained), and understand the need and importance of informed consent and exercise a professional duty of care.

- Be able to reflect critically on their practice and consider alternative ways of working.
- Be able to understand and maintain a fitness to practice. Psychologists are thus expected to practice within their area of competence and specialisation, maintain high standards of personal conduct and manage the physical, psychological and emotional impact of their practice. Psychologists are also expected by the MPPB to fulfil the requirements set forth in the CPD document.
- Be able to plan, design and deliver training which would take into account the needs of participants.

These competencies will be maintained through mandatory regular supervision and CPD (see CPD document for further details).

2. Core Competences in the different areas of specialisation

Working towards warranting:

The greater part of the psychology assistant's activities must be in the area of specialisation in which professional training has been received and for which a warrant is being sought. Such activity needs to be demonstrated through relevant attestation by employer and/or supervisor, as a requirement for warranting. Person's working towards warranting must be aware that unsupervised practice in a competence which has not been gained constitutes a breach of ethics (see also the CPD document).

Maintaining one's warrant:

For the purpose of maintaining a warrant, each candidate should keep a logbook of CPD activities, as well as a record of supervision that should be signed off by their supervisor in order to demonstrate active competence in an area. The holder of the warrant must be aware that unsupervised practice in a competence which has not been gained through additional training and supervision also constitutes a breach of ethics (see also the CPD document).

Psychologists who have reduced their hours of practice need to also keep a log of CPD and supervised activities. Although in this case the amount of hours of supervision can be directly proportionate to the amount of practice carried out, it remains mandatory that the number of hours of CPD continue to be maintained in full so as to reflect the need to remain updated with the ongoing development in the profession (see also the CPD document).

Practitioner Psychologists

2.1 Clinical Psychologist core competencies: -

- Be able to use formal assessment procedures (standardised psychometric instruments), systematic interviewing procedures and other structured methods of assessment.
- Be able to identify, review and critically appraise a substantial body of research evidence relevant to clinical psychology practice.
- Be able to draw on knowledge of development and/or social and/or neuropsychological processes across the lifespan to facilitate adaptability and change in individuals, groups, families, organisations and communities.
- Understand and use therapeutic techniques and processes as applied when working with a range of individuals in distress and implement psychological therapy or other interventions appropriate to the presenting problem and to the psychological and social circumstances of the client and based on a range of evidence-based models of formal psychological therapy.
- Understand the impact of psychopharmacological and other clinical interventions on psychological work with clients.
- Understand and implement psychological models related to working:
 - i. with individual clients, couples, families, carers, groups and at the organisational and community level; and
 - ii. in a variety of settings including in-patient or other residential facilities with high-dependency needs, secondary health care, and community or primary care.

2.2 Counselling Psychologist core competencies: - Understand explicit and implicit communications in a therapeutic relationship.

- Be able to conduct psychological assessments and make formulations of a range of presentations.
- Understand the use and interpretation of tests and other assessment procedures.
- Be able to critically evaluate risks and their implications.
- Be able to contrast, compare and critically evaluate a range of models of therapy.
- Be able to critically evaluate psychopharmacology and its effects from research and practice.
- Be able, on the basis of psychological formulation, to implement psychological therapy or other interventions appropriate to the presenting problem and to the psychological and social circumstances of a range of clients.

2.3 Educational Psychologist core competencies: -

- Be able to support the learning of others through the use of psychological skills and knowledge.
- Be competent in the relevant psychological assessments that would be of value to their practice in the area of educational psychology.
- Be able to use the outcome of assessments, and draw on theories and research to develop psychological formulations and interventions aimed at helping their clients within educational settings.
- Be able to provide evidence-based practice and research by being able to design and implement research activities in the area of educational psychology.
- Be able to work in a multidisciplinary environment, which would also include the contribution of parents/guardians/carers.
- Be able, through the promotion of psychological wellbeing of their clients, to adopt a proactive and preventative role within educational settings.
- Be able to understand psychological models and factors that might possibly lead to underachievement and social exclusion amongst vulnerable groups.
- Be able to completion culturally safe assessments and interventions within educational settings.

2.4 Forensic Psychologist core competences: - Use formal assessment procedures, standardised psychometric tools, systemic interviewing procedures and other structured methods of assessments when assessing clients in a forensic setting.

- Be able to evaluate the risks that clients might pose to self and others and be aware of possible implications this evaluation might have.
- Be able to conduct service evaluations, conduct research and be able to develop psychological methods, theories and instruments in forensic psychology.
- Be able to use psychological formulations in order to plan adequate interventions with clients in a forensic setting. These interventions or psychological therapy are derived from empirically sound psychological formulations aimed at reducing maladaptive and/or socially damaging and offending behaviour displayed by the client. These interventions can be either at an individual or group level.
- Understand the theory and its application to the provision of psychological treatment that focuses on offenders, the victims of offences litigants, appellants and individuals seeking arbitration and mediation. Be able to understand the application of psychological theories to the criminal justice and legal system.
- Be able to understand the development of criminal and antisocial behaviour.

2.5 Health Psychologist core competences:-

- Be able to support the learning of others in the application of psychological skills, knowledge, practices and procedures in the area of specialisation related to health outcomes.
- Be able to design and implement health psychology baseline assessments of behaviour related to health outcomes that are based on appraisal of the influence of the social and/or environmental context.
- Be able to develop psychological formulations using the outcomes of assessment drawing on theory, research and explanatory models.
- Be able to design, plan and implement health psychology interventions based on the assessment and formulation.
- Be able to evaluate and communicate the outcomes of health psychology interventions.
- Be able to critically evaluate risks and their implications.
- Be able to draw on knowledge of developmental, social and biological processes across the lifespan to facilitate adaptability and change in individuals, groups, families, organisations and communities.
- Be able to evaluate and respond to change in health psychology and in consultancy and service-delivery contexts.
- Understand the need to implement interventions and action plans in partnership with service users, groups and other professionals and carers.
- Understand context and perspectives in health psychology.

2.6 Neuropsychologist Core Competencies: -

- Demonstrate a holistic understanding of the social, psychological, cognitive and vocational impact of acquired brain injury and neurological conditions both for individuals and systems.
- Identify cognitive impairment, behavioural changes and emotional difficulties and provide integrated psychological/neuropsychological approaches to manage these.
- Understand structural organisation of neurorehabilitation services and the role of clinical neuropsychology within such a service.
- Use behavioural observations and to map them to possible neurological, cognitive or emotional underpinnings.
- Perform clinical assessment including history taking, bedside cognitive assessment and mental status examinations and carrying this through to management.
- Tailor neuropsychological assessment to clients and to address appropriate questions.

- Demonstrate familiarity with and select, administer and interpret a wide range of assessment instruments.
- Understand psychometric principles underpinning cognitive testing.
- Describe the range of factors that could affect performance on neuropsychological tests.
- Construct formulations about the client's neuropsychological status by the deductive application of appropriate test instruments in the course of a broader investigation.
- Demonstrate knowledge regarding the neuropsychological profiles associated with a range of common neuropsychological disorders.
- Use neuropsychological formulations dynamically to facilitate a clients understanding and adjustment, and to plan interventions if required, coupled with the ability to revise formulations.
- Use formulation, and devise and deliver evidence-based and tailored neuropsychological interventions.
- Adapt models of therapeutic intervention for psychological difficulty in the context of impaired cognitive functioning.
- Implement psychological interventions appropriate to the presenting 'neuropsychological' difficulty and to the psychological and social circumstances of the client(s).
- Apply principles of management and rehabilitation of neuropsychological/neurological disorders.
- Use up-to-date knowledge and understand the treatment approaches and management of a range of common of neuropsychological, neurological and neuropsychiatric conditions.
- Understand the role of clinical neuropsychology in mental health services.

2.7 Organisational/Occupational Psychologist core competencies:-

- Be able to act ethically in order to balance the interests of the organisation with individual rights.
- Be able to effectively use formal assessment for personnel selection.
- Be able to use the consultancy cycle and conduct systematic review.
- Be able to research and develop psychological methods, concepts, models, theories and instruments in occupational psychology and use psychological theory for the benefit of organisations and individuals.
- Understand and be able to act and provide advice on policy development concerning employees' and job seekers' legal rights and monitor agreements and practices.

- Be able to understand and effectively manage human-machine interaction and maximise the design of environments and work.
- Be able to effectively conduct performance appraisal and career development.
- Be able to effectively engage in counselling, personal development and training.
- Be able to effectively negotiate employee relations and motivation.
- Be able to effectively manage organisational development and change.

2.8 Sport and exercise Psychologist core competencies: -

- Be able to use formal assessment procedures and standardised psychometric testing and interviewing procedures in assessing their clients within a sport psychology context.
- Be able to construct psychological interventions based on the outcomes of assessment, theories and research relevant to the specialisation of sport psychology.
- Demonstrate an understanding of specific psychological skills such as arousal and anxiety, confidence, coping skills, techniques of relaxation, goal setting, biofeedback, imagery and stress management.
- Demonstrate an understanding of personality and motivational differences. They must also show a grasp of how physical exercise is associated with outcomes such as mood, cognitions and self-esteem.
- Demonstrate an expertise in aspects of sporting activities that have a strong social component like team building, interpersonal communication and leadership skills.

Non Practitioner Psychologists

2.9 Academic Psychologist core competencies:-

- Be able to keep abreast of the developments in their area of specialisation.
- Have the necessary skills to conduct both small and group teaching as well lecturing large groups.
- Be able to support students in their thesis at various levels, that is BA, MA and PHD.
- Prepare and develop academic programs.
- Be able to construct valid assessments to consult course content.
- Regularly publish in peer reviewed journals.
- Act as reviewers for journals in their area of expertise.
- Contribute to the development of the academic field of expertise and social concerns.
- Be able to conduct and disseminate research.

2.10 Research Psychologist core competencies:-

- Be able to conduct and disseminate research in the area of expertise.
- Be able to conduct research that informs public policy.
- Be able to keep abreast in most recent developments of research methods.
- Be able to keep abreast of the developments in their area of specialization.
- Regularly publish in peer reviewed journals.
- Be able to act as reviewers for journals in their area of expertise.

2.11 Social Psychologist core competencies:-

- Be able to carry out social psychological research which can contribute to the understanding of societal phenomena.
- Carry out assessments indicated in the learning outcomes of the BPS training in Psychometric Testing - Level A and Level B.
- Contribute to policy making.
- Apply social psychological theories to the understanding of societal issues.

- Carry out research based on sound research techniques.
- Be able to sit on selection board related to the recruitment of personnel.
- Carry out training related to group work and group dynamics.
- Engage in non therapeutic work with groups.

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