



The Professional Board for Psychology

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR THE TRAINING OF RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGISTS

2023

NAME OF QUALIFICATION: Board Approved Master's Qualification

FIELD : Health and Social Sciences

SUB-FIELD : Health Sciences

NQF LEVEL : 9

CREDITS : Minimum of 180 credits

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE FOR THE QUALIFICATION

The qualification is aimed at producing competent, ethical, and professional practitioners who will contribute toward addressing the mental health needs of South Africa. This will be achieved through conducting a broad range of research on topics and issues of relevance to the country, as well as the impact of technological advances in the development and use of assessment measures in various contexts. The qualification in Research Psychology represents a generalist psychology professional in that the work that is typically done runs across the various domains of psychology. The qualification is simultaneously a specialist registration category in that it has specialist skills in research, test development, validation, translation, and adaptation that are not commonly found in other registration categories. Qualifying practitioners can conduct psychological research generally on psychological constructs, as well as specific research knowledge and skills linked to psychological test development. Qualifying practitioners can utilize psychological assessments (administration, scoring and interpretation) within various sectors and at various levels. The qualification is aligned to the National Framework for Human Resources for Health in South Africa and is also responsive to understanding the psychosocial needs of the South African population in diverse contexts. Specific projects may require more detailed in-depth knowledge of a particular domain-which can be

updated as and when required. Furthermore, the qualifying practitioner will be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) as a Research Psychologist in Independent Practice.

Definition of Research Psychology

Research Psychology is a category within professional psychology concerned with the use, development and application of research methodologies and the advancement of psychological knowledge in the understanding of human behaviour. Research psychologists have advanced assessment knowledge, including the use of psychological tools, administration, scoring and interpretation of psychological assessments and contribute to the development, validation, translation, and adaptation of psychological tests for the South African population.

LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE:

- Bachelor's degree majoring in Psychology and Honours degree in Psychology
- or
- an accredited Bachelor of Psychology (BPsych) degree

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is within the ambit of higher education institutions. However academic and training programmes must satisfy the minimum requirements and competencies stipulated by the Board.

ACCESS TO THE QUALIFICATION

Admission to accredited programmes is open to all learners in possession of an Honours degree in Psychology or an accredited BPsych degree and who satisfy other requirements as laid down by the providing institutions.

MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

The following exit level outcomes (ELO) must be achieved by the applicant to be awarded the qualification. These competencies apply to the M1/M2 years as well as the internship year of professional training.

Research

- Ability to design, manage and conduct research that is compliant with law and ethical standards that contributes to psychological theory and practice.
- Report on research, and implement the findings of such research in policy, practice, and publications.
- Ability to identify and design innovative research methods for psychosocial research in South Africa.
- Ability to use technology to enable advanced test designs and to develop research methodologies.
- Ability to apply conventional and innovative research methodologies and technologies, to advance current psychological theory and practice.

Policy development and programme design

- Research Psychologists will have the ability to advise on the development of policy applicable to a variety of sectors and issues, based on various aspects of psychological theory and research.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to design, manage and evaluate a range of psychologically based programmes in diverse settings and organizations such as health, education, and labour.
- Research Psychologists will be able to contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of a range of psychological programmes.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to conduct needs analyses regarding such programmes.

Training and supervision

- Research Psychologists will have the ability to develop research capacity for research into psychosocial issues for a range of other professionals and research assistants.
- Research psychologists should advance curriculum transformation which includes cross-cultural and indigenous psychology. By embracing this it will in turn influence training and relevant practice.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to provide ongoing supervision of student psychologists, psychometrists, registered counsellor, other psychologists and other professionals and research assistants in areas such as project management, research, and psychological assessments.

Development, validation, translation and adaption of psychological instruments

- Research Psychologists should have a thorough knowledge of psychometric theory.
- Research Psychologists should have the ability to develop, validate, translate, and adapt a wide range of psychological measures for use in research and psychological practice for a multi-cultural and diverse South African population.
- Diverse training in research methodology is central to test development, and this includes amongst others different means of data collection, the use of technology to enable advanced test designs, online platforms and both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Psychological Assessment

Research Psychologists will demonstrate an understanding of:

- The science of Psychometrics
- The purpose of psychological assessment
- The ethical and best practice standards related to the practice of psychological assessment.
- Factors that impact on test performance and how their impact can be minimised.
- Cultural sensitivity in the application of psychological assessment measures and psychometric principles.
- The administration of tests and perform screening of psychological functions, including but not limited to cognitive, neuro, forensic, interests, aptitudes and personality in a range of settings.
- The administration, scoring and interpretation of psychological tests in which they have been trained.

- The undertaking of these psychological assessment activities in a variety of settings (health, counselling, education, commerce, etc.).

Professional practice

- Research Psychologists will abide to professional practice and research in a manner which is cognisant of and sensitive to socio-economic status, culture, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other forms of diversity.
- Research Psychologists will understand relevant aspects of legislation; ability to perform research in contexts such as those related to criminal, civil and family matters.
- Research Psychologists will have competence in information and records management, financial and human resource management, and entrepreneurship.
- Research Psychologists will establish protocols and contracts with clients (individuals, groups, organizations, government departments).
- Use counselling skills to debrief and manage possible emotional reactions from participants during research studies.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to understand and adhere to their scope of practice.
- Research Psychologists will understand when and how to refer clients to other professionals.

Ethics and legislation

- Research Psychologists will have a thorough knowledge of the code of professional ethics of the HPCSA and the Professional Board for Psychology.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to conduct all aspects of psychological research and assessment in accordance with guidelines for professional practice of the HPCSA and the Professional Board for Psychology.
- Research Psychologists will have a thorough knowledge of ethics as expressed in national and international guidelines.
- Research Psychologists will have knowledge of relevant legislative frameworks which impact on psychological practice and research.
- Research Psychologists will have the ability to conduct research and practice in accordance with these legislative parameters and where possible, the research results should be published in peer-reviewed journals.

CRITICAL CROSS- FIELD OUTCOMES

Assessment Criteria

- a. Identifying and solving problems is demonstrated during the planning phases of psychological research, test development and assessment.
- b. Critical and creative thinking skills are used in developing psychological research and assessments.
- c. Working effectively with others as member of a team, group, organisation or community is demonstrated in the interactions with other psychologists and other professionals
- d. Cultural and aesthetic sensitivity is evidenced through acceptance and application of psychological research and practice across social contexts.
- e. Organising and managing self is demonstrated in the successful management of psychological research and practice.
- f. Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information is indicated in the successful generation and execution of appropriate psychological research.
- g. Effective communication, both verbally and in writing is demonstrated through the successful engagement of clients, the psychological team, other professionals, and the broader public and other relevant stakeholders in all spheres of psychological practice.
- h. Demonstrating an understanding that the world as a set of related systems is indicated in the range of activities of the successful research psychologist and how this professional located themselves within the broader psychological and social system.
- i. Development of entrepreneurial abilities, the use of personal and professional skills is indicated by the successful sourcing of new/alternate employment opportunities and the initiation of independent practices.
- j. Continuous self-assessment is performed as indicated in the life-long learning activities and accompanying professional growth.

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

Formative and summative assessment strategies should be used throughout the qualification programme to ensure that exit level and cross critical outcomes are met.

Some formative assessment techniques MAY include:

- Tests.

- Written and practical assignments.
- Practical exercises
- software application.
- Literature review.
- Case studies.
- Class presentations.
- Seminars.
- Peer evaluations.
- Simulations in structured learning environments.
- Learning portfolios

Some summative assessment techniques MAY include:

- Written examinations.
- Oral examinations.
- Practical examinations.
- Supervisor reports where applicable.
- Objective simulated evaluation scenarios
- Research based thesis

INTERNATIONAL COMPARABILITY

This qualification, compared to similar qualifications internationally, produces a comprehensive and balanced practitioner, equipped to address issues of psychological research, test development and assessment in a variety of contexts. The practitioner functions within the internationally recognised domains of researcher, developer of research capacity, educator, change agent and practice manager.

ARTICULATION POSSIBILITIES

Horizontal and vertical articulation with the following programmes is possible.

- Horizontally with master's degree in other areas of Psychology

- Vertically with a doctorate degree in Psychology.

September 2023