



The Professional Board for Psychology

Minimum standards for the training of Counselling Psychology

February 2019

QUALIFICATION:	Board Approved Master's Qualification
FIELD:	Health or 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 Counselling Psychologists who can meet the psychological needs of the people living in South Africa.

The Professional Master's degree in Counselling Psychology is aligned with the National Framework for Human Resources for Health in South Africa and the National Qualification Framework for Education and is responsive to the psychological needs of the South African population.

In as much as there is common psychology practices that overlap, this competency document details the practitioner's education and training and confines the scope specific to the category of Counselling Psychology. These competencies, as specified by Rule 21 of the Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners Registered under the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974, confines the scope to areas of the profession to which counselling psychologists have knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, meeting specified standards. Each accredited programme in professional psychology is understood to be specific to the education and training of a set of competencies for a particular registration category. If joint teaching is offered between programmes, the training institution has to ensure that such joint teaching does not exceed 25% of the curriculum time and/or curriculum.

The qualifying practitioner will be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) as a Counselling Psychologist in Independent Practice.

Definition of Counselling Psychology

Counselling Psychology is a specialist category within professional psychology that promotes the personal, social, and educational functioning, career functioning and

well-being of individuals, couples, families, groups, organisations and communities. Counselling psychologists assist people with normal developmental issues, and also prevent and alleviate psychological and mental health disorders that range from mild to moderate severity. Psychological assessment, diagnosis, and formulation draw on a holistic appreciation of people's lived experiences and their sociocultural contexts. Counselling psychologists deliver a range of high-intensity psychological interventions that take into account the therapeutic potential of positive relationships, and people's strengths and resources.

LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE

Bachelor degree majoring in Psychology and an Honours degree in Psychology (Four years)

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 have to satisfy the minimum requirements and competencies stipulated by the Board.

ACCESS TO THE QUALIFICATION

Admission to an accredited programme in Counselling Psychology is open to applicants in possession of a recognised Bachelor degree with a major in Psychology and an Honours degree in Psychology, or an accredited Bachelor of Psychology degree; and who satisfy other requirements as stipulated by the training institutions.

MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

The following minimum competencies must be achieved by candidates in order to be registered in the category of counselling psychology¹:

1. Psychological Assessment

- a) Knowledge of psychological measurement and psychometric theory, including the ability to judge the reliability and validity of psychometric tests in different social contexts and for different social groups.

¹ These competencies apply to the M1/M2 years as well as the internship year of professional training.

- b) Knowledge of a range of psychological issues and problems, including life stressors and more severe issues with which people may struggle as individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations, including developmental and adjustment problems, psychological crises, and mental and behavioural disorders.
- c) Competence using ICD and DSM diagnostic systems to diagnose mental and behavioural disorders, as well as knowledge of informed critiques of such systems.
- d) Ability to conduct a comprehensive intake interview to obtain a detailed history and coherent description of the client's (individuals, couples, families, groups, communities or organisations) psychological functioning.
- e) Ability to appropriately select and accurately administer culturally sensitive instruments and norms to assess intellectual, behavioural, emotional, personality, neuropsychological and career functioning.
- f) Ability to accurately interpret and integrate data from intake interviews, records, psychometric assessments and other sources to generate coherent case conceptualisations (formulations) that describe and explain clients' (individuals, couples, families, groups, communities or organisations) psychological functioning, including their strengths and resources, and recognising the influence of sociocultural contexts.
- g) Ability to formulate useful recommendations, including, when appropriate, clear and specific recommendations for psychological interventions.
- h) Ability to communicate the results and recommendations of assessments in written and verbal form clearly, constructively and accurately.
- i) Ability to offer a well-supported medicolegal opinion and appropriate expert testimony when required.

2. Psychological Interventions

- a) Knowledge of the theory and practice of more than three evidence based models of psychological therapy (for example, cognitive therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy, narrative therapy, person-centred therapy etc.).
- b) Ability to formulate and conceptualise cases and plan interventions utilising at least one consistent theoretical orientation, drawing on the relevant empirical

research and appropriately matched to own clinical expertise and client preferences.

- c) Ability to implement counselling and psychotherapeutic interventions to enhance psychological functioning and well-being, and address psychological problems that fall within the scope of practice for Counselling Psychology, including typical life stresses and more severe issues, including developmental and adjustment problems, psychological crises and trauma, as well as mild-to-moderate mental and behavioural disorders.
- d) Ability to implement these interventions in different contexts, including educational, community, health, correctional and work/organisational settings.
- e) Demonstrates an appreciation of sociocultural contexts in which people are situated, including the ways in which socio-political and economic factors cause human distress.
- f) Ability to initiate and sustain mentoring relationships utilising sound interpersonal and communication and other counselling skills to assist people in their learning, personal and professional development.
- g) Ability to design and provide psychoeducation, as well as community and public health interventions to prevent or delay psychological problems that fall within the scope of practice of Counselling Psychology, reduce the negative impact of these problems, and/or promote psychological health, optimal functioning and well-being.
- h) Ability to facilitate group processes, including, mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative justice.
- i) Ability to support and enable vulnerable groups to express their views and concerns, and access information and services, and to defend and promote their rights.

3. Professional Practice

- a) Knowledge of the theories of mental health and well-being, life-span development, family systems, resilience and adjustment, career psychology, positive psychology and health psychology, and the application of these in assessment and intervention.
- b) Knowledge of the history and values of Counselling Psychology; demonstrates understanding of self as a Counselling Psychologist.

- c) Committed to holistic strength-based development, and, while able to diagnose symptoms effectively, avoids excessive focus on pathology in treatment planning and case conceptualisation.
- d) Demonstrates understanding that historical, social and contextual factors influence human development and functioning across multiple life domains.
- e) Knowledge of important features of the South African social contexts, including poverty, inequality, and unemployment, the high prevalence of HIV, and race and racism; demonstrates understanding of the principles of social justice.
- f) Ability to work sensitively with marginalised groups, and address psychological issues related to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and disablism.
- g) Demonstrates reflectivity both during and after professional activity, based on an understanding of own personal strengths and weaknesses, patterns of behaviour, emotional and cognitive biases, motivation, beliefs and values, and how these may impact on clients and professional functioning.
- h) Communicates clearly using verbal and written skills in a professional context; demonstrates clear understanding and use of professional language.
- i) Forms and maintains productive and respectful relationships with clients, peers/colleagues, supervisors and professionals from other disciplines.
- j) Ability to identify and network with local resources and facilities, and empower clients to access health, community, legal, labour and educational resources.
- k) Ability to refer clients to relevant professionals in a variety of systems, including health, education, legal and labour systems.
- l) Competence in information management, which includes the appropriate management of records and psychometric instruments.
- m) Ability to promote the profession of Counselling Psychology

4. Research

- a) Ability to design, manage and conduct ethical and responsible research, utilising quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods, which contributes to psychological knowledge, theory and practice, to report on such research, and implement the findings of such research in policy and practice

5. Policy Development and Programme Design

- a) Ability to provide advice on the development of policy applicable to a variety of sectors and issues, particularly those that impact on psychological functioning and wellbeing of people, based on psychological theory and research.
- b) Ability to design, manage and evaluate a range of psychologically-based programmes in diverse settings and organisations such as health, education and labour that promote strengths, wellbeing and optimal functioning.

6. Training and Supervision

- a) Ability to develop training programmes and to train other practitioners (including, for example, registered counsellors, psychometrists, nurses, teachers, lay counsellors and community workers) in basic psychological skills.
- b) Ability to make appropriate use of supervision and to be able to demonstrate this (so as to also be able to provide, after three years of appropriate post-qualifying experience, supervision of student psychologists, intern Counselling Psychologists, registered psychologists, and training and registered counsellors)

7. Ethics and Legislation

- a) Demonstrates advanced knowledge and application of the code of professional ethics of the HPCSA and the Professional Board for Psychology.
- b) Knowledge of relevant legislative frameworks which impact on psychological practice and research.
- c) Ability to act in accordance with these ethical and legal frameworks.
- d) Understanding of the limitations and boundaries of own professional competence.

CRITICAL CROSS-FIELD OUTCOMES**1. Assessment Criteria**

- a) Identifying and solving problems is demonstrated during the assessment and planning phases of client care as well as during the intervention phase of client care.
- b) Critical and creative thinking skills are used in developing therapeutic interventions.

- c) Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community is demonstrated in the interactions with other psychologists and health professionals.
- d) Cultural and aesthetic sensitivity is evidenced through providing acceptable and satisfying professional care across social contexts.
- e) Organising and managing the self is demonstrated in the successful management of clients.
- f) Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information is indicated in the successful generation and execution of research and appropriate psychological services.
- g) Effective communication, both verbally and in writing, is demonstrated through the successful engagement of clients, the psychological team, other health professionals and the broader public and other relevant stakeholders in all spheres of practice.
- h) Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems is indicated in the range of activities of the successful Counselling Psychologist and how this professional locates her/himself within the broader psychology system.
- i) 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.

Formative assessment may include:

- Tests
- Written and practical assignments
- Practical assessments, for example, client assessment
- Literature reviews
- Case studies
- Class presentations
- Role plays
- Seminars
- Peer evaluations
- Simulations in structured learning environments

- Learning portfolios.

Summative assessments include:

- Written examinations
- Oral examinations
- Practical examinations
- Supervisor reports
- Objective simulated evaluation scenarios
- Research dissertations.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARABILITY

Many of the competencies described in this document are adapted from the competencies of Counselling Psychology as described by the Society of Counselling Psychology (Division 17 of the American Psychological Association) and the American Board for Counselling Psychology, the New Zealand Psychologists Board, the Australian Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council (UK). This qualification, compared to similar qualifications internationally, produces a comprehensive and balanced practitioner, equipped to address issues of assessment and intervention within a wide range of psychological and life challenges. The practitioner functions within the internationally recognised domains of therapist, counsellor, health promoter, researcher, educator, change agent, expert witness and practice manager.

ARTICULATION POSSIBILITIES

Horizontal and vertical articulation with the following programmes is possible.

- Horizontally with Master's degrees in other areas of Psychology and the broader Social Sciences
- Vertically with Doctorate in Psychology