

Te Poari o ngā Kaihaumanu
Hinengaro o Aotearoa

The Psychotherapists Board
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Comparable Qualifications Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to practitioners applying for registration with a qualification gained in a country other than New Zealand.

Practitioners applying for registration via this policy must provide clear evidence that they meet the criteria listed below **and** the Board's Psychotherapist Core Clinical Competencies.

The comparable qualifications assessment process is designed to assess equivalence with Aotearoa New Zealand registered psychotherapists. The central features include:

1. Psychotherapy training in Aotearoa is post graduate training undertaken over a minimum of three years full time. The training process includes a personal psychotherapy experience, supervised clinical practice and education in a coherent approach to psychotherapy theory and practice.
2. Psychotherapists are trained to work in depth with personality change or development over time. This includes assessment, diagnosis, formulation and treatment planning.
3. Psychotherapists who have qualified outside of Aotearoa must prepare themselves to work in the unique sociocultural context present in Aotearoa, including an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a founding document. Often this is undertaken once registered in the first year of practising in Aotearoa.

Assessment Panel

An Assessment Panel (AP) will assess each application. An AP is made up of two experienced independent psychotherapists appointed by the Board.

What is assessed

An applicant is expected to clearly identify any courses taken as part of their formal qualification or professional development courses post qualification that provide evidence of the Board's Psychotherapist Core Clinical Competencies.

The AP will determine if applicants are at a level of competence equivalent to a newly registered psychotherapist trained in a New Zealand-accredited training programme. What this means is that the AP will assess whether the applicant is at a minimum standard of: 'newly qualified'.

Ideally, the applicant will display the integration of their knowledge of psychotherapeutic theory into their practice including a display of their orientation and working in-depth with personality change over time in a casework description(s) or case study.

The assessment is focused on ascertaining whether the applicant practises as a psychotherapist through a display of their work, their experience *and* their training.

Applicants who are applying to be registered in a specific scope of practice must be able to demonstrate that they are competent in that scope¹.

If no case study or casework description is provided in an application, then the AP will place greater weight on an applicant's qualification. A qualification will be assessed against the Board's clinical competencies to determine if an applicant has met minimum standards.

The Board provides a detailed comparable qualification assessment guide on its website for applicants to help them through this process.

Criteria for acceptance

The following is a list of criteria any applicant applying under this policy must meet to be considered for registration in New Zealand:

1. Advanced training: Core training in psychotherapy qualification at postgraduate level or equivalent and 3 to 5 years full-time or equivalent.
2. Literature review and research: For the purposes of 'Advanced training at postgraduate level or equivalent', an applicant must provide evidence that their standard of writing must be at postgraduate level.
3. Personal psychotherapy: Personal psychotherapy experience at least fortnightly for the duration of the programme the applicant undertook.
4. Supervised Practice: 250 hours of supervised clinical psychotherapy practice completed over a minimum of two years with a minimum of 75 hours of clinical supervision.

Please note: supervised practice and personal psychotherapy should not be considered things that can be added later. Personal psychotherapy during training and 250 hours of supervised practice during training are core requirements.

5. Clinical, ethical and cultural competencies: Content must cover the Board's clinical, ethical and cultural competencies. In summary a psychotherapy graduate will:
 - Have learned and integrated at least one approach to or model of psychotherapy in-depth.
 - Have learned and integrated at least one theory of human development in depth.
 - Have learned and integrated understanding of mental disorders and diagnosis as used in psychotherapy.
 - Show the ability to work in depth with personality development over time using case work description.
 - Demonstrate an understanding of ethical professional practice as a psychotherapist.
 - Demonstrate cultural competence (see below 'Meeting the cultural competence requirements').
6. Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Demonstrate an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, this includes the articles, goals and principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the implications for practicing psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹ Please refer to 'Scopes of Practice' on the Board's website to determine if you fit the criteria for being registered in any scope of practice.

7. Post-qualification experience: Consideration will be given to post-qualification experience. The length and nature of post-qualification experience can be considered, as can post-qualifying relevant professional body membership, and ongoing professional development courses.
8. Police check: An applicant must provide a police check/report from their country of origin/residence.

Assessment panel – the process

The two assessors on the AP make independent assessments arriving at a conclusion to accept or reject the applicant for registration without discussion between them.

If the assessments differ then a discussion can be undertaken to see if the difference can be settled, and alignment reached.

If alignment is not reached a third assessor (or the Board, or a subset of Board members delegated by the whole Board) makes an additional assessment and the outcome will be a two-thirds majority.

One assessor will act as the liaison or “lead”, communicating with the Registrar and letter writer but this person does not have greater authority or weighting in the assessment process.

Requests for further information from the applicant can be passed to the lead assessor without a rationale for the request so that independence is maintained.

As a fundamental part of natural justice, if an applicant is unsuccessful, assessors are required to provide reasons for their decisions.

Meeting the cultural competence requirement

There are areas of practice that are specific to working in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Cultural competence at the required minimum level cannot be met by doing online computer-based training.

Psychotherapists practising in Aotearoa New Zealand will have undertaken a process of reflection on their own cultural identity, will recognise the diversity of worldviews (both within and between cultural groups) and will understand the theories of power relations and the impact of colonisation processes. They will also recognise the impact that their personal culture has on their professional practice.

Where the applicant meets the Board’s criteria and their training is a psychotherapy training, but they are not yet culturally competent for the purposes of full registration, the Board may decide to grant registration but place conditions on that person’s scope of practice.

Any condition will require the applicant, within 12 months of being issued an annual practising certificate (APC), to provide evidence of competence in the following areas:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi and relevance to psychotherapy practice in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Cultural and social dynamics and safety specifically relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Understanding of the Aotearoa New Zealand health sector and Aotearoa New Zealand legal system including working with the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) (including the HDC Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights) and the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act).

Conditions may also include weekly supervision with an experienced New Zealand Registered psychotherapist and will be tailored towards individual need.

<i>Approved by: The Board,</i>	<i>Policy in effect from: November 2008</i>
<i>Previous review dates: March 2009, September 2014, November 2020, August 2024</i>	<i>Date to be reviewed: August 2027</i>