

International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP)

Supported by the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) and International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS)

Second IPCP Progress Report, November 2014

At the 5th International Congress on Licensure, Certification and Credentialing of Psychologists it was decided to take the process onwards in a project that is supported by IAAP and IUPsyS, and which has the same goal; to promote the development of “A global agreement on identifying the benchmark competences that define professional psychology”. (See Report of the Congress Part 1, September 2014).

The project has been named “International Project on Competence in Psychology – IPCP”. A Work Group has been established which consists of:

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The Work Group published its first progress report in April 2014. It included a revision of the draft Summary Model of basic competences. The report was distributed to the “Reference Group”, a worldwide network of over 250 addresses. In addition the draft was discussed at a three hour open meeting at ICAP2014 in Paris (July) with almost 60 participants present. The project was also presented at two symposia at the same congress and discussed at an open meeting in Durban, South Africa, in September 2014.

The Work Group met for a one-day meeting in Paris, in conjunction with the ICAP2014, and for a two-day meeting in Oslo 22nd and 23rd September 2014. At these meetings, all comments received between April and September were considered and discussed, and changes were made to the draft.

The revision of the draft Summary Model, now renamed “The Competence Model” is presented in this document (see below).

It has been proposed that the whole document will be named “International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology”.

It will consist of:

- Preamble
- The Competence Model
- Glossary
- Notes (if needed).

Important future steps in the project have also been planned. On the basis of feedback from a new round of consultation with the Reference Group, a Work Group meeting on the 13th and 14th of February 2015 will produce a “Final Draft”. In producing this draft, due weight will be given to comments from organizations and individuals. This Final Draft will be presented to IUPsyS and IAAP at the European Congress of Psychology (ECP 2015) in Milan, in July 2015.

After an internal round of consultation with these two organizations, the Work Group will produce a final version of the proposed “International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology” to be considered for acceptance by IAAP and IUPsyS at the International Congress of Psychology (ICP) in Yokohama, in July 2016

We want the present round of consultation to take place as much as possible at an organizational level. Comments made on behalf of organizations will carry more weight than individual comments. We ask all the members of the Reference Group to bring this draft to their organizations and to collate feedback in the form of an organizational response. When several members of the Reference Group are from the same organization, we hope that these members will cooperate in bringing this draft to their respective organisation.

Comments on this draft can be sent to sverre@psykologforeningen.no. Please send your comments before the deadline below so they can be discussed at our next Work Group meeting.

Deadline for Comments: 1. February 2015.

Oslo IPCP Work Group meeting

The meeting was held on 22th and 23rd September 2014 at the office of the Norwegian Psychological Association, Oslo, Norway.

It was attended by: Sverre Nielsen (Chair), Steve DeMers (recorder of minutes), Dave Bartram, Steve Osborne, Tholene Sodi, Buxin Han, Janel Gauthier and Dragos Iliescu (recorder of the competence model).

Apologies were received from Waikaremoana Waitoki, German Gutierrez and Amy Hilson.

Procedure

We reviewed in detail the outcomes from the round of consultations and the open meetings.

As in the first round, there were three elements to consider:

1. The list of competences (i.e. the left hand side of the Competence Model)
2. The descriptions of those competences (i.e. the right hand side of the Competence Model)
3. The structure of the model (i.e. the four main section headings)

A high number of comments were received. These were sorted into:

1. Is this relevant for an *international* competence model? If relevant, is this already covered? If relevant and not already covered, is this a case for deletion of a competence?
2. If relevant and not already covered, is this a case for addition of a competence?
3. If relevant and not already covered, is this a case for re-wording of a competence?

We held on to the idea of including in the model only those competences that could had broad enough support to be considered “core” competences, that is, competences that one would expect a professional psychologist to possess in order to judge that person as being a competent practicing psychologist. These are competences that the profession and the public should reasonably expect of someone entering the profession and which professional psychologists should be expected to maintain during their career. Competences which aspirational or not commonly recognized throughout the world as “core competencies” for entry into the profession were left out.

Rewording was carried out where the meaning of the competence as initially defined was unclear. It was agreed that explanations in terms of detailed descriptions should remain in the right-hand column (see section on Competence Model in the Declaration).

In the process of doing this, we also commented on some issues arising from the descriptions (right-hand side of the table) but revisions of this were regarded as being secondary to refining the list of competences.

After reviewing all the comments and revising the list of competences and their descriptions, we agreed on the organisation of the document, with a need for a preamble, a glossary and the title of the document. We also agreed on the onward procedure and timeline. The revised structure is presented below for your review and comment.

Outcomes

Proposed revisions to the Competence Model are shown in the attached table.

The competences

We have received wide support for the changes that we made prior to the latest consultation.

These changes in the list of competences arose from the decision to focus on competences broadly recognized in the international community as “**core**” competences and to exclude those which were more aspirational, which could be redundant or which could be regarded as “optional” (i.e., possibly “core” from a local perspective, but definitely non-core from an international perspective). This resulted in removal of two of the original 14 competences:

- DP: Contributes to the continuing development of the profession.
- PS: Provides psychological services. (See the table below for these abbreviations.)

In addition it was noted that aspects of SP (specifically SP3) and of CO (specifically CO4) were also optional and could be removed.

Some changes in wording for the remaining 12 competences were agreed at the Oslo meeting:

- ER: Relates appropriately to others *becomes* ER: Relates appropriately to clients and others.
- WD: Works with diversity *becomes* WD: Works with individual and cultural diversity.
- SP: Operates as a scientist-practitioner *becomes* EP: Operates as an evidence-based practitioner.
- EV: Evaluates own work *becomes* SR: Reflects on own work.
- PA: Conducts psychological assessments *becomes* PA: Conducts psychological assessments and evaluations.
- CO: Communicates effectively and appropriately *becomes* CO: Communicates effectively and appropriately with clients and others.

The structure

We have kept the three categories:

- Knowledge and skills – the knowledge and skills a competent professional psychologist needs to underpin their competence.
- Professional Behaviour – how psychologists behave, or competences related to the way in which professional psychologists work.
- Professional Activities – what psychologists do, or the activities they undertake in their work.

The provisional descriptions

In the process of reviewing the competences and the structure the work group discussed suggestions relating to the descriptions. Some specific proposals have already been mentioned – i.e. the exclusion of SP3 and CO4. It was also noted that a revised version of CO3 should move to PI.

Following the Atlanta meeting, Dave Bartram, as one of the authors of the original Summary Model, produced a provisional re-working of the right-hand side of the Summary Model based on the discussions in the Work Group and the suggestions made by the Stockholm Congress Groups. The comments column in the table provides cross-references to the Groups' suggestions.

Issues arising

A number of issues that were present in the comments had been both thoroughly discussed in the original meeting in Stockholm and supported in the wide consultation. With this in mind, we did not make any changes to the document as a result of some suggestions. These issues are discussed below.

Core vs optional competences

Core competences are those we would expect all psychologists to possess, even if they do not practice them all regularly. We would also expect competence in these areas to have been assessed at entry to the profession and to be the basis for expectations of continuing maintenance of competence whenever one is practising. In defining a core competence we can say that all should possess it at least to the level expected upon entry to the profession and in the context of one's chosen field of practice.

Optional competences are those which some psychologists may possess on entry to the profession but which are more likely to be developed during one's career. They include things like contributing to research, mentoring or supervising others, contributing to the development of the profession, developing specific areas of specialist expertise. In short, such competences involve us in trying to define all those things psychologists might do rather than the core of what 'defines' them as professional psychologists.

Given the purpose of the IPCP project and the wide range of variation between countries and specialties, the attempt to identify the competences that are internationally recognized as “core”, is regarded as both more tractable and more useful than the attempt to identify core and optional competences.

Evidence-based practice

There was much discussion about the use of the term ‘science-based’. It was agreed that ‘evidence-based’ is a more inclusive term notwithstanding the view that much of the evidence-based on which psychological practice is built comes from scientific research. It was agreed that terms like this will need to be defined in a glossary attached to the model.

Best Practice

According to some of the feedback received from the Stockholm Conference, the term ‘best practice’ may not be widely understood.. For the present, this has not been amended in the model, though it was noted that a definition should be incorporated into the proposed glossary.

Cross-cultural issues

A number of issues were raised in relation to ‘WD: Works with diversity’, relating to the need for cross-cultural sensitivity. Revisions to WD have been proposed which it is hoped will address these issues as core competences, while recognising that some psychologists may need to further develop competences in this area where their practice specifically involves working with diverse cultural communities.

Supervision as a core competence

We have received strong arguments both for and against including supervision of other psychologists as a core competence. In parts of the world where supervision is given as part of the internship training and education, it may be desirable to include it. This may be the case in some countries in the U.S., Canada, Australia and in many European countries. Although the Work Group agrees that requiring supervision competence at entry level is aspirational, we hear from other parts of the world that it is out of the question to list supervision as a core competence. This is a question for which we would appreciate having further comments, especially from the members of the Reference Group the psychology organizations that have not yet expressed their view on this topic.

Preamble

To ensure that we have a common understanding of the scope of the project and what its aims and objectives are, we propose having a preamble.

Glossary

There are some concepts and words that need to be defined. All words that can raise a discussion on the meaning need to go into the glossary. If you see any words or concepts that you think need clarification, please point them out.

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You will find the Glossary under the Core Competence Model

Draft

International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology

Preamble

The globalization of psychology has resulted in many positive benefits. However, the unique historical, cultural and educational contexts in which psychologists practice around the world have also led to several critical problems and challenges. These challenges and problems include the lack of a coherent global professional identity, the lack of a recognized and broadly accepted set of knowledge, skills and abilities that defines appropriate professional practice, and the absence of any widely accepted mechanism of mutual recognition that can embrace the global diversity of psychology training and practice while still ensuring the competence of those providing psychological services wherever they practice.

This **International Declaration of Core Competences in Professional Psychology** is the result of an initiative that seeks to address the challenges described above. The International Project on Competences in Psychology (IPCP) is a product of the 5th International Congress on Licensure, Certification and Credentialing in Psychology, held in Stockholm, Sweden in July, 2013. The goal of this Stockholm conference was to explore whether a large group of invited psychologists from around the world believed it was both possible and worthwhile to identify a set of globally recognized competences that could serve as the basis for a coherent professional identity and a mutual recognition system for education, accreditation, practice, and so forth. Participants at the Stockholm conference debated the difficulties and the possible benefits of such an activity and then recommended that the effort be continued by a small working group. The International Association of Applied Psychologists (IAAP) and the International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS), the two largest international associations of professional psychologists and national psychology organizations, endorsed the creation of the International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP) and of the Work Group.

The goal of the IPCP is to develop a concise, yet substantive description of the core competences, that can be globally applied and accepted as defining the essential skills, abilities and knowledge of practicing psychologists. While psychology is recognized throughout the world as both a science and helping activity, the competences described in this International Declaration focus strictly on the application of psychological principles, theories and methods to resolving human difficulties and improving a person's quality of life and not on the many other competences that may comprise the scientific, academic or pedagogical activities of individuals trained as psychologists. This Declaration uses the terms "professional psychology" or "professional psychologist" to concisely indicate this focus on the practical application of psychology, and not to suggest that other activities engaged in by psychologists, like research or teaching, are somehow "unprofessional".

The goal of the IPCP to produce this set of globally recognized and endorsed competences also acknowledges that different nations, continents and regions, and even communities within these entities, may use and adapt these competences to better fit their local context. A competence in psychology may be widely, perhaps even universally, endorsed by all professional psychologists. Yet the expression or demonstration or application of this competence could be quite different in a specific national or cultural context. This variety of expression offers a richness and flexibility to the practice of psychology and should not be viewed as a departure from the stated competence or a weakness in its application.

Professional psychology must be viewed as an interpersonal activity in the full extent of the term "interpersonal". That is, the professional psychologist is a person with a specific world view and cultural perspective who then must offer professional services of a helping nature to another individual with a potentially very different world view and set of beliefs, attitudes and values. The competent psychologist must recognize her or his own historical and cultural perspective and possible biases resulting from these and provide useful and effective psychological services that understands and respects these same aspects of the clients one seeks to serve. Demonstrating cultural competence as a psychologist involves not only understanding implications of one's own background and perspective but also the cultural context and perspective underlying all psychological theories and methods plus a willingness to adapt professional approaches when appropriate.

This **International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology** also uses terms such as "appropriately" or "effectively" in several significant places. The use of these terms is not meant to suggest that all or most psychologists use uniformly agreed upon methods or approaches applied in some proscribed or formulaic manner. On the contrary, psychologists employ a variety of methods and approaches reflecting different theoretical and scientific understandings of human nature. Competent psychologists consider the appropriate scientific and clinical evidence supporting their approach and modify their professional services based on the specific clinical context and client situation in which they are working. The terms "appropriately" and "effectively" are used to indicate that such

modifications are expected as long as they are based on solid evidence combined with cultural sensitivity to the client’s needs and worldview.

This **International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology** presents the core professional competences that the IPCP has identified and that have been endorsed by a broad international reference group of professionals with an interest in advancing the practice of psychology. The goal now is to seek the endorsement of the major international, regional and national organizations representing professional psychology around the world. If this Declaration on Core Competences should achieve such wide endorsement, then it will be up to other groups or individuals to develop credible and widely applicable assessment methods that can be used to measure the competences of individual psychologists regardless of the educational preparation or cultural context.

Glossary under the Core Competence Model.

CORE COMPETENCE MODEL (draft)

	Competence		Descriptions
	KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS		
KN	Possesses the necessary knowledge	KN1	Has the necessary foundational knowledge of psychological concepts, constructs, methods, theory and practice to support competence
		KN2	Has the necessary specialised knowledge of psychological concepts, constructs, methods, theory and practice relating to own chosen area to support competence
SK	Possesses the necessary skills	SK1	Has the necessary basic skills to support competence in psychological practice
		SK2	Has the necessary specialised skills to operate in own chosen area of psychological practice to support competence

	PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR		
PE	Practices ethically	PE1	Applies relevant ethics codes in one's professional practice and conduct
		PE2	Adheres to relevant laws and rules in one's professional practice and conduct
		PE3	Resolves ethical dilemmas using an appropriate approach
AP	Acts professionally	AP1	Follows accepted best practice
		AP2	Undertakes continuing professional development
		AP3	Operates within the boundaries of one's own competence
		AP4	Consults peers or other relevant sources when appropriate
		AP5	Refers to relevant others when appropriate
		AP6	Chooses professionally appropriate courses of action in response to unpredictable and complex events
ER	Relates appropriately to clients and others	ER1	Establishes, maintains and develops appropriate working relationships with professional colleagues
		ER2	Establishes, maintains and develops appropriate working relationships with clients and others
WD	Works effectively with all forms of diversity	WD1	Identifies, acknowledges and respects diversity in others
		WD2	Recognizes the impact of one's own values and beliefs on one's professional behavior, clients, and relevant others
		WD3	Works and communicates effectively with diversity in teams, clients and others

EP	Operates as an evidence-based practitioner	EP1	Adopts an evidence-based orientation to the provision of assessments, interventions, service delivery and other psychological activities
		EP2	Consults psychological and other relevant research to inform practice
SR	Reflects on own work	SR1	Evaluates the efficacy of one's activities and service provision
		SR2	Reflects on and implements areas for improvement in one's practice
		SR3	Reflects on one's own values and beliefs and the impact they may have on one's practice
	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES		
SG	Sets relevant goals	SG1	Establishes goals based on needs analysis
PA	Conducts psychological assessments and evaluations	PA1	Assesses or evaluates individuals, groups, organizations or situations
		PA2	Identifies assessment or evaluation needs
		PA3	Selects, designs or develops assessments or evaluations, using methods appropriate for the goals and purposes of the activity
		PA4	Conducts assessments or evaluations, including administration, scoring, interpretation, feedback and application of results

PI	Conducts psychological interventions	PI1	Plans and carries out psychological interventions, with individuals, groups and organizations.
		PI2	Designs, develops and evaluates the usefulness and effectiveness of, psychological interventions, using methods appropriate for the goals and purposes of the intervention
		PI3	Integrates assessment and other information with psychological knowledge to guide and develop psychological interventions
		PI4	Evaluates the usefulness and effectiveness of one's own interventions
		PI5	Uses evaluation results to review and revise interventions as necessary
		PI6	Provides guidance and advice to other relevant parties involved in the psychological intervention
CO	Communicates effectively and appropriately	CO1	Communicates to diverse audiences as necessary for the effective conduct of one's professional activities
		CO2	Provides relevant and clear feedback, reporting and guidance to clients and relevant others
		CO3	Provide clear and unbiased information on psychological matters to relevant audiences

Glossary (draft)

In this Document the following definitions apply:

Assessment: see *Psychological Assessment*.

Best practice: a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is accepted as a quality benchmark for correct or accepted practice within a given socio-cultural setting.

Competence: a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behavior and values used to perform a specific behavior or set of behaviors to a standard, in professional practice settings associated with a professional role.

Competences: Clusters of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes that enable a person to act effectively and to a defined standard in a professional practice situation

Constructs: Explanatory variables which are not directly observable; they form the building blocks of scientific theories and models and lie at the heart of psychological explanations and interventions.

Continuing Education: Education provided for adults after they have left the formal education system and during their professional lives, usually non-formal and consisting typically of private study and reflection or short courses, which are sometimes credited by a professional association as proof for the fact that the person that took that course has acquired specific knowledge, skills or abilities, maintaining or expanding his or her professional competence.

Core (competence): A competence the possession of which is critical to the overall ability of a person to practice to an acceptable professional standard. Core competences are expected to be possessed by all those who claim competence in professional practice. However, other competences may also be required, depending upon areas of specialism and socio-cultural settings, to ensure overall competence as a practitioner.

Cultural competence: Competent professional behavior based on awareness for, respect for, knowledge about, and skill related to the cultural aspects of psychological work. These characteristics are necessary to perform professional psychological services which recognise the diverse worldviews and practices of both oneself and of clients from different cultural backgrounds.

Culture: A repertoire consisting of intangible and tangible elements, characteristic for a human society, community or group, which helps members of that society, community or group to interpret in a similar way the meaning of symbols and behaviors. Of these,

intangible elements such as symbols, ideas, values, interpretations are considered more important than tangible elements such as artifacts, tools, and other cultural elements.

Diversity: An attribute similar to heterogeneity, signifying the presence and inclusion of individuals, groups and cultures which are different from each other, but also including respect for and appreciation of those variables which define the differences.

Evaluation: A process describing in a structured manner some aspect of the quality of an entity or procedure. Depending on the approach, the process describes the presence or level of development of specific characteristics of the entity or procedures and compares these characteristics against a pre-specified standard.

Evidence-based practice: Attribute of an action or decision, meaning that it is based on inferences from information and data that are grounded in theory and support the quality and relevance of the outcome of the action or decision in a particular context for a particular use (from ISO10667).

Intervention: A deliberate and structured process usually based on a theoretical or practice-based model and having an expected outcome. The process is one in which some action is taken through which it is expected that the individual or group of individuals involved will be changed.

Mentoring: A professional dyadic relationship aimed at development, in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing professional competence in a specific area.

Practitioner: An individual who as a result of qualification (oftentimes there is a requirement also for registration) practices a profession. When used in the context of Psychology, a practitioner is a person who is not only qualified (and, if needed, registered), but also practices the profession in applied settings, as opposed to adopting only such roles as administration, teaching or research.

Professionalism: The level of excellence or competence, especially with respect to ethics and values, reflected in conduct, aims, and qualities, that is characteristic and expected from a practitioner.

Psychologist: A professional practitioner who is competent to carry out assessment and intervention related to psychological and behavioral variables, in order to improve the well-being of all individuals, groups, communities and society as a whole.

Psychological assessment: A systematic process that uses a combination of techniques and methods (such as tests, inventories, interview, observation), in order to evaluate various psychological and behavioral characteristics (e.g. traits, capabilities) of an individual or group of individuals.

Psychological evaluation: A systematic evaluation (see Evaluation) of constructs (see Constructs) which are psychological in nature.

Psychological interventions: An intervention (see Intervention) developed through psychological methods and based on psychological theories or models, in order to facilitate change in the behavior of an individual or a group of individuals.

Professional Psychology: An organized community of psychologists representing applied psychological best practice.

Research: The systematic investigation of reality with the aim of increasing the stock of knowledge or applying the current stock of knowledge in new ways.

Scientist Practitioner: A professional who exercises his or her professional role based on the principle that psychology is an applied science, honoring both the scientific and the applied part of his or her profession. Such a professional would work with clients in applied settings (and not be dedicated solely to research), but would place evidence based on scientific research at the heart of all his or her practice.

Stakeholder: An individual, group or organization that has an interest or a concern in a process or its outcome.

Supervision: A professional relationship between a senior and a junior member of the profession, aimed at building competence in the junior member. The relationship is usually extended over a period of time, is evaluative and monitors the quality of the professional services offered by the junior member, and sometimes is a form of gatekeeping to the profession.
