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## GUIDANCE

# Guidance for BPS accredited neuropsychology training programmes in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak

In the wake of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, many aspects of our personal and professional lives have been interrupted in the last two months or so. Terms such as ‘the new normal’ and the word ‘unprecedented’ cover all aspects of life and media reporting. Accordingly, in an attempt to respond to the obvious challenges facing those who are pursuing training leading to entry onto the BPS Specialist Register of Clinical Neuropsychology (SRCN), a small working group of those involved in organising, delivering and accrediting practice based training in clinical neuropsychology met in late April 2020. The group which involved representatives from University of Glasgow, University of Bristol, BPS QICN qualification as well as the Committee for Training in Clinical Neuropsychology (CTCN) recognises that there are a number of challenges facing all those working to complete the practice component of clinical neuropsychology training. This document provides guidance for those in training, and those providing training, in relation to managing issues with regard to clinical neuropsychology practice training the current situation. Suffice to state, this brief guidance should be read in conjunction with the recent DClinPsych Training and Covid-19 guidance<sup>1</sup> as well as recent DON guidance on Teleneuropsychology<sup>2</sup>.

There was consensus that despite changes in service delivery and how patient-facing work can be undertaken at present that the established and agreed standards of competency [DON Competency Framework]<sup>3</sup> should not be amended. In terms of common and current practice, professionals working towards entry onto the specialist register, are required to obtain two years (WTE) supervised practice with an approved supervision plan/supervisor in place.

Given the extent of the disruption arising from Covid-19, we accept the need for a concession to accommodate up to three months of disruption to activity. Although disruption may extend beyond this, we have agreed a temporary concession to allow 21 months WTE activity to be regarded as sufficient to demonstrate development of requisite competencies. The competency threshold standard will however, remain the same as that historically applied.

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## CANDIDATES DUE TO SUBMIT PORTFOLIOS IN 2020

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For those candidates who just prior to Covid-19 restrictions were considering submitting later this year, then this option may still be viable, even if clinical neuropsychology practice has been substantially reduced or modified during the period of disruption. Typically, those individuals will have gained sufficient supervised practice and enough material to complete their case portfolio and case studies in advance of the lockdown.

Alternatively, there may be a number of candidates who were on the cusp of completing their agreed period of supervised practice but still had not covered the range of case presentations required for their clinical portfolio. In such circumstances, it may be possible to demonstrate via alternative ways of working/service delivery that they meet or indeed exceed the competency level. Despite Covid-19 restrictions it is considered feasible to demonstrate the same competency in underpinning knowledge, clinical work, personal and professional practice and communication via technological solutions such as assessment and intervention work via Attend Anywhere, MS Teams etc.

If individuals' personal, family or altered working circumstances mean that neither of these options is feasible, then opening up a dialogue with the training programme staff/administration with regard to possibly delaying submission to allow all required experience to be acquired and competencies to be developed is indicated.

## ALL OTHER CANDIDATES

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For those candidates who were not due to submit portfolios this year who have experienced a disruption to training as a result of changes in work undertaken during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, again a period of three months of substantial reduction in clinical neuropsychology practice can be accommodated within the overall period of training without impacting on planned submission date. However, those who experience substantially reduced clinical neuropsychology practice for longer than three months should discuss with their supervisor and the training programme team options for extending the period of training.

Again it is recognised that for many people, although there will be changes in the nature of clinical practice as a result of requirements for social distancing, it will nevertheless be the case that many people are continuing with clinical neuropsychology practice in adapted forms. In many ways this period presents an important opportunity to reflect on neuropsychology practice and procedures in the process of making adaptations and will be valuable experience.

As noted, there is no change to the competencies that need to be acquired for entry to the Specialist Register, which will be examined via the written portfolio and in the viva voce examination. What is important therefore is that candidates discuss their training with their Coordinating Supervisor and their training programme directors to identify whether extending the period of training and delaying submission of their portfolio would enable sufficient experience to be acquired to demonstrate the competencies required. All training providers are committed to offering tailored advice and support in these unprecedented times.

This interim guidance will be reviewed and updated in light to ongoing developments in the Covid-19 pandemic in three months.

**WORKING GROUP:**

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**REFERENCES**

- <sup>1</sup> The British Psychological Society. DCLinPsych Training and Covid-19 (BRE26r). British Psychological Society. 22 April 2020.
- <sup>2</sup> Division of Neuropsychology Professional Standards Unit Guidelines to Colleagues on the use of Tele-neuropsychology. BPS, April 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> [https://www1.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/required\\_competences\\_for\\_clinical\\_neuropsychology.pdf](https://www1.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/required_competences_for_clinical_neuropsychology.pdf)



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