



## Supplementary guidance on the role of the external examiner

### What is the purpose of this guidance?

Training for Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWP) is focused upon enabling PWPs to develop the skills required to work effectively in a high volume, low intensity context with people with common mental health problems. Programmes need to ensure that their trainees understand the theory underpinning the PWP approach, and develop skills in the PWP clinical method, and need to assess their knowledge and skills in a way that is consistent with the national curriculum (2nd edition; updated and revised March 2011). The distinctive nature of this training, and the boundaries associated with the PWP role which are clearly defined in the national curriculum, necessitates the appointment of an external examiner who is familiar with the PWP clinical method. This will ensure that an impartial but well-informed view may be given as to the extent to which trainees on a programme are achieving national minimum standards of competence. The ability of programmes to support their graduates in achievement of those standards is a key measure that must be attained in order for PWP programmes to gain or maintain their accreditation with the British Psychological Society.

### Who is it for?

This guidance is aimed primarily at those involved in leading or delivering PWP training programmes, who are likely to be involved in recruiting new external examiners, or in overseeing existing appointments. The guidance may also be useful for university quality assurance or academic registry staff with responsibility for external examiner appointments, and for ensuring that such appointments meet relevant professional body and other quality codes. Universities are encouraged to share this guidance with the external examiners they have appointed to their PWP programme(s), for example as part of any other materials that may be provided to orientate an examiner to their role.

### What makes the role of external examiner different for PWP programmes?

In common with other external examiner appointments, the examiner of a PWP training programme is responsible for provision of advice and guidance on the extent to which the required academic standards are achieved. As outlined in the Quality Assurance Agency's *Quality Code for Higher Education*, this can include the provision of impartial and independent advice, as well as commentary on trainees' achievement of the standards set - whether those are the standards set by the university itself through its assessment strategy, or whether they are informed by external drivers such as professional body requirements.

PWP programmes need to reflect the national curriculum for the training of PWPs in low intensity psychological therapies, and need to follow a defined assessment strategy that focuses on the

completion of competency assessment role plays that are designed to enable trainees to demonstrate their skills in the PWP clinical method. Specifically, these assessments focus on (though are not limited to) the assessment and treatment of people with common mental health problems. The clinical skills assessments need to be evaluated in line with nationally agreed marksheets, which include the provision for automatically failing any trainee who fails to conduct a full and thorough assessment of risk.

In order to be able to fulfil their responsibilities, it is essential that external examiners for PWP programmes are able to assess PWP competency assessment scenarios in accordance with national requirements and using nationally agreed marksheets. This, necessarily, needs to reflect an ability to evaluate sound practice in the specific PWP clinical method - rather than, for example, more general approaches to assessment or treatment. Examiners also need to be able to identify where issues of risk have not been properly addressed.

Therefore, in addition to viewing trainees' written work, external examiners will need to routinely view samples of clinical skills assessment DVDs to ensure that appropriate standards are being achieved, and to ensure that marking of the clinical skills assessments reflects national standards.

### **Who can externally examine a PWP programme?**

Given the expectation that external examiners are able to evaluate competency assessments, it is the Society's view that people who are directly involved in delivery of PWP training, or who have other demonstrable expertise in delivering or developing low intensity interventions, are generally the most appropriate people to appoint to external examiner roles.

All external examiners should either be experienced PWP competency assessors, or have received appropriate training in PWP competency assessment to support them in their role. Experience of examining programmes for High Intensity or other CBT Therapists does not, in itself, offer sufficient qualification or experience to examine a PWP programme.

### **What role do external examiners play in relation to BPS accreditation of PWP training programmes?**

The external examiner has a unique opportunity to maintain an overview of standards, and to work with the programme should any issues arise. As part of their accreditation by the Society, programmes are required to complete an annual monitoring return, normally at the end of January each year (commencing January 2013). The annual monitoring return incorporates a requirement that programmes submit both a copy of their most recent external examiner's report, and details of any response they have provided to it. This enables the Society, via its Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner Accreditation Committee, to monitor any potential risk to standards, and to intervene and work with programmes where there is a need to do so. It also provides an opportunity to maintain an overview of positive practice during the period between accreditation visits.

On rare occasions, external examiners may raise matters of concern in relation to a programme, and may feel that those concerns present a risk to the programme's ongoing achievement of the standards for accreditation set out by the Society on behalf of the national Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. In such cases, examiners are asked to notify the Society of the details of their concerns, in order that these may be explored through the Society's standard procedure for dealing with complaints made about an accredited programme ([here](#)).

**Further information on the accreditation process for PWP programmes can be found in the Accreditation Handbook ([here](#))**

If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please contact [Lucy.Kerry@bps.org.uk](mailto:Lucy.Kerry@bps.org.uk)