

National Curriculum for Professional Education in Psychology

Prepared by the National Council for Professional Education in Psychology

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1. Introduction

The Norwegian educational programme in psychology is of 6 years' duration and qualifies for authorization as a psychologist.

The programme is offered at four universities. The purpose of the programme is to qualify the students for diagnosing and offering psychological treatment for mental dysfunctions. The educational provision shall meet the requirements of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) as well as requirements specified in relevant legislation related to professional practice, special EU-directives and international conventions.

This document gives an overview of the core competence each individual student shall have acquired on completion of the education programme irrespective of the university at which the programme is offered. It is important, however, to be aware of the fact that the individual educational institution has statutory academic freedom giving considerable room for choosing different academic profiles.

In addition to this, the document describes the purpose and goal of the education programme, learning outcomes, content and organization and examinations.

2. Purpose

The overall purpose of the professional programme in psychology is to educate candidates and provide them with a basic scientific attitude to and a broad competence in understanding, preventing and treating psychological problems, as well as provide a basis for performing all the most important forms of psychological work related to children, youth and adults. A central element in psychological work is knowledge of normal and deviating functionality, of human interaction and relations and of vulnerability and problems related to interaction and relations. The following constitute the main four elements of the education programme: 1. Imparting scientific knowledge, 2. Professional skills, 3. Attitudes related to professional practice and 4. Broad supervised professional training related to diagnosis and treatment.

The scientific knowledge includes theoretical understanding, insight into scientific method and knowledge of central results from research within all the parts of the discipline. The knowledge comprises both basic issues and applied problems within the different fields.

The candidates shall have knowledge and an understanding of both normal and deviant development and functioning. They must be familiar with basic theories and methods within the various fields of the discipline and with the most central research in the different areas, and be able to reproduce and evaluate theoretical and empirical scientific works. Prior to the completion of their education the candidates are to carry out a limited scientific project. This implies that they have to make a problem statement and carry out design, planning, data collection, analysis and scientific discussion at a level that satisfies scientific requirements for documentation and reporting. The project may include empirically as well as theoretically oriented studies of relevant problems, either in the form of an article or as a monograph. The programme is to provide the candidates with a knowledge base enabling them to keep scientifically updated within their field.

The professional skills provided include various methodological approaches to understanding, analysing and treating psychological problems that the psychologist will be faced with in his/her professional practice. The education will provide the candidates with skills in relational work, evaluation and diagnosis and different types of approaches to the treatment of psychological problems, both of an acute and a more chronic nature. The skills courses are related to the treatment of adults, children and families. The programme shall provide practical skills in interpersonal communication and skills related to cooperation with other professionals. On completion of the programme the candidates shall be able to hold all types of regular positions for psychologists and carry out their work in a way that is professionally sound.

Attitudes related to professional practice are based on professional knowledge as well as on general and discipline-specific values and ethical norms. They include the way psychologists appear and act, respect for the integrity and autonomy of other people, tolerance towards all types of human problems, and non-discriminative attitudes to clients' gender, disability and cultural, religious, racial and ethnic background. Also included among attitudes related to professional practice are the psychologist's insight into his/her own patterns of reaction and his/her professional strengths and limitations in performing his/her professional role, as well as a critical and professional attitude to practicing the profession. On completion of the programme the candidates shall have acquired an ability to reflect on value-related and ethical aspects of the professional practice.

Supervised professional training including diagnosing and treatment implies that each candidate will have a placement at a treatment clinic where he/she will participate in this type of duties, carry them out independently and cooperate with other professionals. The training is integrated in the 6-year programme in the way that candidates move from theory and skills courses to training and then back again to courses. This takes place several times during the course of study. The scope is about one year (60 credits). The candidates will have one long training period at a clinic in the National Health Service or similar, as well as some shorter training periods, either at external clinics or at clinics associated with the university. All the training is supervised by specialists in clinical psychology. The candidates shall have training experience with both children (or with families) and with adults.

The professional programme in psychology provides sufficient scientific knowledge, professional skills and attitudes to professional practice to give candidates who complete the programme authorization as psychologists in accordance with *The Health Personnel Act* and *Ethical Principles for Nordic Psychologists*.

3. Learning outcome¹

The professional education in psychology shall be in accordance with national and international political regulations related to health and education such as:

Norwegian laws, regulations and political decisions
international declarations, standards and political regulations on health policy,
human rights and higher education *The Health Personnel Act*
Ethical Principles for Nordic Psychologists.

¹ By learning outcome is meant "The knowledge and skills a candidate is expected to possess at the completion of a programme or course."

(Cf. FORSLAG TIL NASJONALT RAMMEVERK FOR KVALIFIKASJONER I HØYERE UTDANNING - PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION p. 15)

<http://www.regjeringen.no/Upload/KD/Hoeringsdok/2007/200703620/Rapport> Forslag til nasjonalt rammeverk for kvalifikasjoner i høyere utdanning.pdf.pdf

4. Content

The professional education programme consists of five elements:

- Basic courses (90 credits)
- Research method (60 credits)
- Clinical theory and skills training (90 credits)
 - Related to diagnosis, psychological treatment and attitudes/ethics in this work
- Supervised professional training – diagnosis and psychological treatment (60 credits)
- Complimentary disciplines, specialization courses in psychology, other subject areas than psychology (60 credits)

I: Basic courses (90 credits)

The scientific knowledge includes theoretical knowledge, insight into scientific method and knowledge of central results from research within the most important parts of the discipline. The candidates shall be familiar with the basic theories and methods within the different fields of the discipline and with the most central research in the different areas, and be able to reproduce and evaluate theoretical and empirical scientific works. The knowledge includes both fundamental issues and applied problems. This implies broad knowledge on psychological theory, empiricism and research methodology. The following topics must be covered with a minimum of 10 credits each:

- The history of psychology
- Biological psychology and neuropsychology
 - includes psychopathology and psychopharmacology
- Cognitive psychology
- Developmental psychology
- Social psychology
- Personality psychology

The last 30 credits must be allocated to the basic courses.

II: Research method (60 credits)

On the completion of the programme the candidates shall be able to carry out independent research projects. This implies that they have to make a problem statement and carry out design, planning, data collection, analysis and scientific discussion at a level that satisfies scientific requirements for documentation and reporting. The programme shall provide the candidates with the necessary basis for continuous professional updating in their field. The course comprises the following topics:

- Philosophy of science and the general framework for scientific studies of at least 5 credits
- Experimental, non-experimental quantitative method and qualitative method of at least 25 credits
 - This includes all elements of design, measurement and statistics and shall cover training in test methodology

- An independent scientific piece of work in psychology of a scope of at least 30 credits.

III: Clinical theory and skills training (90 credits)

The clinical skills include different methodological approaches to solving the professional problems the candidates will be faced with in their professional practice. They must be able to document skills of relational work, evaluation and diagnosis, definition of goals for treatment and other forms of measures and planning, implementation and evaluation of measures. The programme shall provide the students with practical skills in interpersonal communication and skills related to cooperation with other professionals. On completion of the programme the candidates shall be able to hold all types of regular positions for psychologists and carry out their work in a way that is professionally sound.

- Includes theory, knowledge and skills in examination and diagnosis and treatment of children, adults and families.
- Relevant legislation and ethical guidelines for psychologists
- Skills training related to
 - testing of children and adults
 - diagnosing children and adults
 - psychological treatment of children, adults and/or families.

IV: Supervised professional training (60 credits)

The supervised professional training is compulsory. The goal of the supervised professional training is to enable the student to acquire experience from direct client work in a way that will qualify for all types of regular positions as a psychologist in health-related activities. This includes the surveying, diagnosis and direct treatment of clients under the supervision of specialists in clinical psychology, as well as experience from cooperation with other professionals within the relevant treatment context. Training both with children and adults must be documented, as well as a minimum of 30 credits (5-6 months) of continuous training where all the steps in a course of treatment are carried out. The supervised professional training should not be scheduled too late in the course of study.

V: Complimentary disciplines, specialization courses in psychology, subject areas other than psychology (60 credits)

In addition to specialization courses in psychology this topic may also include for instance psychiatry, medical genetics, sociology, anthropology, education, etc.

5. Organization and professional training

a) Programme structure

The programme of professional study is of 6 years' duration and is standardized to 360 credits. One semester (5 months) of full-time study corresponds to 30 credits with a syllabus of about 2 500 pages. 60 credits may be related to subject areas other than psychology.

Through the programme the student participates in a number of different educational activities including lectures, workshops, study groups, preparation of reports, essays and other assignments. Moreover, the students participate in clinical instruction as well as supervised professional training (clinical studies).

b) Organization of the supervised professional training

The scope of the supervised professional training is 60 credits and the training is compulsory. The objective of the professional training is to enable the student to acquire experience from direct client work in a way that will prepare him/her for all regular positions as a psychologist. The training comprises one year of supervised training, usually at several places of training. Since most relevant placements are organized within the framework of the National Health Service, it is important to be aware of the provisions of the Health Personnel Act relating to students:

Section 3, subsection 1 no. 3 among other things defines health personnel as “...*Pupils and students who in training as health personnel perform acts as mentioned in the third paragraph.*”

The same Section, subsection 3 defines health care as follows: “*The term health care shall mean any act that has a preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, health-preserving or rehabilitative objective and that is performed by health personnel.*”

Section 5, subsection 2 of the Regulations defines the role students as follows: “*As a rule pupils and students shall only be given responsibilities for training purposes.*”

6. Examination/assessment

See comment in the letter “New template for National Curriculum Regulations”

In pursuance of Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, separate provisions apply to aptitude assessment for students in health-care profession programmes (cf. Act of 1 April 2005 no. 15 related to Universities and University Colleges, Section 4-10, sixth subsection).

The following areas shall be assessed:

- Consideration, understanding and respect for clients, patients or users
- Ability to cooperate, to establish relationships of trust and to communicate with clients and fellow employees
- Whether a threatening or offensive behaviour is shown in the situation of study
- Drug abuse/illegal acquisition of medicines
- Problems making him/her function poorly in relation to his/her surroundings
- Self-insight in connection with responsibilities related to the programme and the future professional role
- Negligence and irresponsibility that may cause risk to others
- Preparedness to change unacceptable behaviour in accordance with supervision received

In addition reference is made to “*Regulations related to aptitude assessment in higher education*”
<http://lovdata.no/for/sf/kd/td-20060630-0859-0.html#4>

The health Personnel Act contains provisions relating to aptitude for working as health personnel. These also apply to students under supervised professional training in the health service.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for the assessment of applications for authorization as a psychologist from persons with an education from abroad.

INTRODUCTION

When psychologists with an education from abroad apply for authorization in Norway, the Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel will ask advice from the higher education institutions that offer the programme of professional study. In the following the academic aspects associated with such counselling is accounted for.

AUTHORIZATION ASSESSMENTS OF APPLICANTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES

The question that must be answered is whether the education is “equivalent” to the Norwegian education for qualification as a clinical psychologist (the programme of professional study)

There are only two principal answers:

- Equivalent
- Not equivalent

In the following the academic evaluation will in many cases be “not equivalent” and here we shall point out what is lacking. What then, is to be described as deficiencies? Examples:

Re I Basic courses: Applicants should have courses in the basic subjects and the history of psychology. Shortages related to a basic course may be accepted.

Re II Theory of science and research method: Applicants should be able to provide documentation for participation in courses in statistics and research method, as well as documentation for having written one or more scientific pieces of work (equivalent to an independent piece of work).

Re III Diagnosis and psychological treatment: Applicants should be able to provide documentation for participation in theory and skills courses in diagnosis and treatment of adults and children, as well as courses related to ethical evaluation and Norwegian legislation. A lack of skills courses in diagnosis and treatment in excess of 30 credits cannot be compensated for by instructing the applicant to undergo supervised training.

Re IV Supervised professional training: One year of supervised training must be documented and a statement by the supervisor describing the training and certifying that the student has done satisfactory work must be provided. This is accepted as an aptitude assessment if the certification is issued by a supervisor abroad. Norwegian supervisors shall provide an explicit statement on aptitude as part of their certifications.

Re V Complimentary disciplines, specialization courses in psychology, subject areas other than psychology: As regards these credits a great deal of flexibility may be shown in connection with

the assessment and it should be possible to accept a lower number of credits as long as the applicant meets the other requirements.

Re VI Examination/assessment, aptitude assessment: It is a part of the academic assessment to point out whether the candidate has presented documents certifying his/her aptitude, in the same way as students on the programme of professional study are assessed (see 5b above).

AUTHORIZATION ASSESSMENTS OF APPLICANTS FROM EU-COUNTRIES

The expression here is whether “material deviations” from the Norwegian education exist. In order to answer yes to the question of whether the education is equivalent to the requirement of “an achieved diploma for practicing the profession of a psychologist”, it is assumed that the education in question is a clinical, patient-oriented education as a psychologist. This implies that the applicant must have taken the five basic courses in psychology, that he/she has been trained in statistics and method and has completed a major scientific work. In addition to this, the person in question must have undergone the full scope of the specified training in diagnosis and treatment of adults and children, courses relating to ethics and Norwegian legislation, as well as supervised training with clients. Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on documentation of aptitude. It is underlined that deficient skills training and knowledge cannot be compensated for by supervised professional training.

With respect to what is considered material deviations from the Norwegian education we adhere to the same guidelines as specified for applicants from third countries as described above. We point out what the deviations consist in and where we believe there are ways in which the applicant may reduce the deviations, we point these out.

Standard wordings

On this background the following deviations from the Norwegian education should be pointed out and form the basis for the assessment of applicants who are considered not have an “equivalent” education with the Norwegian one or that the education “deviates materially” from the Norwegian education. The following are some examples of assessment statements (specifications may be added to each statement):

- Material deficiencies related to the total length of study
- Material deficiencies related to the basic courses and knowledge of the history of psychology
- Material deficiencies related to education in statistics and method
- Material deficiencies related to theory and skills training in diagnosis and psychological treatment
- Material deficiencies related to scope and/or content in direct client work under supervision
- Material deficiencies related to the education in ethics and Norwegian legislation relevant to psychological practice in the National Health Service
- Deficient documentation of aptitude
- Deficient documentation of knowledge of Norwegian to communicate as a psychologist with clients within the National Health Service

General advice

Our general advice as a higher education institution to applicants is that material deficiencies related to points I to III can best be remedied by taking relevant education abroad since no such education is available in Norway.

When the requirements of point I – III have been met, a lack of supervised professional training (5b) can best be remedied by acquiring a license to practice as a psychologist under supervision for a more specifically defined period.

Deficient knowledge and skills related to ethical evaluations and relevant legislation (III) can best be remedied by a provision of courses in this field that applicants may attend, e.g. organized by NIF.

Deficiencies related to documentation of aptitude (6) can best be remedied by the applicant acquiring a license to work as a psychologist under supervision for a period of minimum 6 months and that on completion of the period the supervisor issues a statement that also includes an assessment of aptitude in keeping with the criteria specified in the regulations related to aptitude.