



The Continuing Competence Programme for Psychologists Practising in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Guide for Participants

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Introduction To The Continuing Competence Programme

Te Poari Kaimātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa/the New Zealand Psychologists Board (the **Board**) comes under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the **HPCA Act**), the principal purpose of which is:

"to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing for mechanisms to ensure that health professionals are competent and fit to practise their profession"

To meets its obligations under the Act, the Board must be satisfied that a practitioner is competent to practise in New Zealand before that person is registered, and that the practitioner has maintained the required standard of competence before being issued a Practising Certificate (**PC**)¹.

The Continuing Competence Programme (**CCP**) is the Recertification programme set by the Board to ensure that psychologists are competent to practice.² The objectives of the CCP are to assist practitioners to address the ongoing challenge of monitoring and maintaining competence, while also giving the Board a mechanism to check that practitioners are meeting their professional obligation to actively maintain competence.

The Board...

- Upholds the importance of life-long learning to maintain competence and to maintain currency in our constantly evolving profession,
- Has confidence in the basic CCP model: that a self-reflective review of competence to set individually tailored learning objectives, followed by directed learning, is a practical and effective way of maintaining competence,
- Is committed to minimising the costs imposed on practitioners so that they can invest their time and resources into learning,
- Trusts that psychologists are committed to striving for excellence by routinely undertaking professional development, whether or not the Board mandates it, and
- Understands that supervisors are best placed to review competence and the impact of learning with the practitioner.

All actively practising psychologists are required to participate in the CCP and will be requested to declare they have done so when renewing their PC each year.

Practitioners should ensure that they refer to the current version of this guide, which is available on the Board's website: www.psychologistsboard.org.nz.

What Is Competence?

Epstein and Hundert (2002) defined professional competence as "the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served." In the context of a Continuing Competence Programme (CCP), competence involves the complex interaction of four major components: knowledge, skills, judgment, and diligence.

- **Knowledge:** absorbing and understanding a body of information well enough to then comprehend and conceptualise the range of professional issues that one can reasonably expect to encounter. Knowledge is a necessary, but not sufficient foundation for competence.
- **Skill:** the ability to effectively apply knowledge in actual practice.
- **Judgement:** knowing when to apply which skills, and under what circumstances. It includes self-reflection on and awareness of one's own values, experiences, attitudes, and social context, and how these may influence actions and perceived meaning. Good judgement increases the likelihood that choices made will be beneficial for the individuals, families, groups, communities, and organisations with which psychologists work.

¹ Sections 26 and 27 of the HPCA Act (2003)

² Section 41 HPCA Act (2003)

- **Diligence:** the consistent application of knowledge, skills, and judgement in one's professional activities and taking care to give priority to the clients' needs. Diligence also encompasses striving to give the best service possible to each client.

These components are all required to achieve the level of performance expected of a psychologist, and they will vary depending on the level of seniority and the context of practice.

Core Competencies

The Board has prescribed and published Core Competencies for the Psychologist Scope, including minimum standards of Cultural Competency. There are additional Core Competencies for four vocational scopes – Clinical Psychologist, Counselling Psychologist, Educational and Neuropsychologist. https://psychologistsboard.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Core_Competencies.pdf

Core competencies are the *minimum* competencies that each practitioner should possess at the time of registration. The initial acquisition of these competencies is the responsibility of the training programme and the practitioner seeking registration.

What Is Continuing Competence?

Competencies refers to the component skills and knowledge which contribute to the whole, whereas a competent psychologist is one who has attained a state of overall or integrated professional abilities. The Continuing Competence Programme (CCP) recognises that it is this state that each individual strives for and is continually refining.

A CCP involves engagement in self-reflection to identify areas in need of attention, the development of learning objectives to address identified needs, the drafting of a learning plan to achieve those objectives, implementing the learning plan, and completing a final review of progress against the original learning objectives. This is an active and dynamic process of continual learning and review which supports ongoing competence.

Underlying Principles Of The Continuing Competence Programme

While the HPCA Act places a statutory obligation on the Board to be satisfied that a practitioner is competent before issuing a PC, the Code of Ethics places responsibility for keeping abreast with current developments on the individual psychologist. Therefore, there is an alignment between the obligation on practitioners to maintain competence and the Board's statutory obligations.

The commitment to ongoing learning means that, at a minimum, each psychologist should do as much learning as needed to maintain their Core Competencies. The Board's CCP model requires psychologists to actively assure their continued competence. This process is designed to help maintain the vitality and safe practice of individuals and to promote psychology's high professional standing.

The CCP has been shaped by the following principles:

- **Accountability:** As a health professional, a practitioner bears the ultimate responsibility both for maintaining and for demonstrating professional competence to practise.
- **Lifelong continuous learning and improvement** is essential to the professional psychologist. Self-reflection, self-assessment, and evaluation are intrinsic to the psychologist's role, both for quality assurance and for professional self-care. There is also a need to keep abreast of evolving fields of knowledge as the psychology discipline moves forward. The performance of practitioners who do not engage in regular professional development is almost certain to deteriorate over time. It is incumbent on each psychologist to maintain the reputation of the profession by practising to the required standard of competence.
- **Psychologists at different stages of their career have quite different professional development needs.** Maintaining competence is a process which continues over the entire course of a career, adapting to changes in practice environments, professional activities, and client needs.
- **Flexibility in maintaining competence.** There is no one best way to maintain competence. The range of activities selected will vary according to individual learning style, identified needs, timing, availability, and context.

- **Easy to follow, understand, and sustainable.** The CCP's design is such that it should be readily integrated with other requirements and with the full range of professional tasks and roles. The Self-Reflective Review should be tailored to individual needs to make it a useful and personally meaningful exercise. Recording of learning activities should be clear and brief.

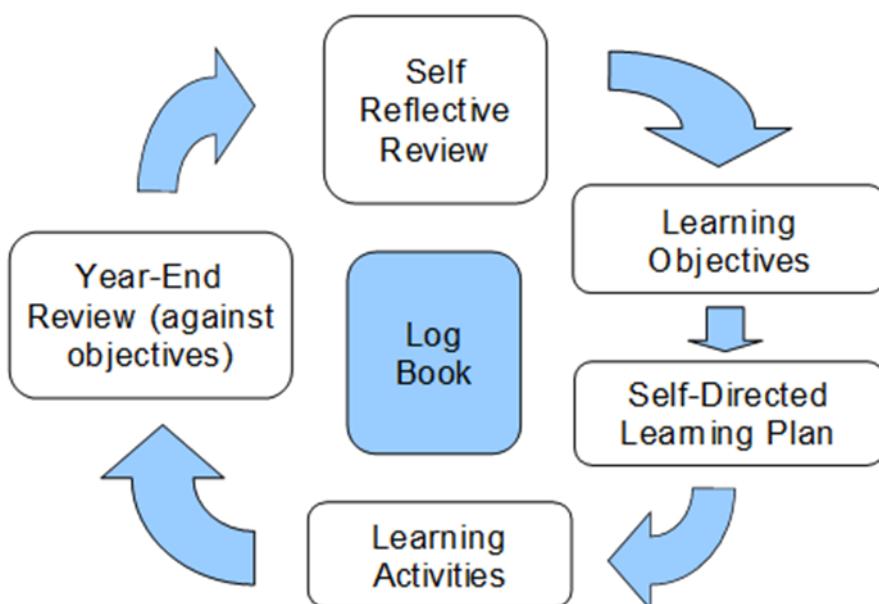
Overview Of The Continuing Competence Programme

The Continuing Competence Programme involves:

- *self-reflection* on Core Competencies to identify areas in need of attention,
- developing *learning objectives* to address identified needs,
- drafting a *learning plan* to achieve those objectives,
- *implementing* the learning plan, and
- completing a final *review of progress* against the original learning objectives.

This is an active and dynamic process of continual learning and review which supports ongoing competence (see Diagram 1, below).

Diagram 1: Process of Continuing Competence Programme



Each psychologist who applies for a Practising Certificate (PC) is required to declare that they are fit and competent to practise. On applying to renew a PC, each psychologist is also required to declare that they have met the requirements of the Board's prescribed CCP. **To meet this requirement, your participation in the CCP should start from no later than 1 April each year**, beginning with a Self Reflective Review and the setting of learning objectives for the following CCP year. (See section 7 regarding exemptions.)

Guidelines To Participating In The CCP

Please refer to the Quick Reference Guide to Your CCP, in Appendix 3.

The Board's CCP is a high-trust model that emphasizes personal responsibility, flexibility, and choice. However, with flexibility comes some ambiguity, so we offer advice to guide (but not overly restrict) your efforts.

Step 1: Your Self-Reflective Review

The CCP requires each practitioner to undertake an annual structured **Self-Reflective Review (SRR)** of their own knowledge and skills, compare these to the Core Competencies, discuss this with their supervisor, and record this in the CCP document (see Diagram 1, above). The purpose of the SRR is to develop an overview of your practice by identifying those competencies requiring attention. It can be seen as an annual stock-take of your overall competence and individual competencies, as well as an opportunity to identify and prepare for any areas of emerging practice.

Your SRR at the beginning of the year and your reflection on outcomes at the end of the year must be done with a supervisor. For your first three years of practice your supervisor must be a psychologist registered with NZPB who holds a current practising certificate, after that this is still recommended practice. If your supervisor is not a NZ registered psychologist holding a current PC you must ensure that they are sufficiently familiar with the core competences and the CCP so that their participation is meaningful, or you could find another psychologist to carry out this role. Your supervisor should actively participate in your review by assisting you to evaluate your competence against the Board's prescribed core competencies and by offering feedback on any perceived strengths and weaknesses in your practice. It may be helpful to supplement this with feedback from other sources (e.g., clients and/or colleagues with particular expertise). Record the date of the completion of the SRR process and the main points of your SRR in your logbook.

Your SRR is the foundation upon which your entire CCP is built, so it is worth investing the time and effort to make it meaningful, robust, and useful for yourself.

Step 2: Set your learning objectives for the year

Based on the insights gained from your SRR, identify, and record your learning objectives for the year. A learning objective is a clear, simple statement about what you intend to learn (e.g., how to use a certain psychometric tool, how to work with older clients). Optimally, your learning objectives should be specific, measurable, and attainable. You may, however, have some that are less specific and that are stated in higher level or abstract terms. It is essential that your learning objectives are meaningful to you. Record your learning objectives in your logbook.

You are not expected to generate learning objectives related to *all* the Core Competencies. Conversely, you may have more than one objective arising from a single competency.

If you generate more objectives than you can reasonably progress in a given year, you should prioritise them and defer some for later attention. You are expected to set at least a few learning objectives each year (ideally between 3-5).

It is recognised that some objectives may be overtaken by more urgent learning priorities that arise or, alternately, that some may be delayed by the lack of a suitable learning opportunity. It is also acknowledged that unforeseen learning opportunities may provide fresh stimulus and direction during the year, and that learning objectives and plans may be extended to also include aspirational and/or employment-related components. These can simply be noted in your logbook as late additions or changes.

However, if a psychologist's annual SRR were to identify significant competence deficits, then it is expected that the remediation of those deficits would be acted on as a priority.

The range of activities that may contribute to continuing competence is broad and is likely to be different depending on the stage of a practitioner's career. For example, this breadth may encompass (but is not limited to) continuing education to consolidate and deepen knowledge, keeping abreast of emerging research, upgrading practice to match new developments.

Step 3: Develop your learning plan

Once your learning objectives are formulated, you should develop a plan that briefly outlines how you intend to achieve each of them. A learning plan states simply and clearly how you intend to learn something. These plans may include (but are certainly not limited to) such activities as researching a topic, consulting a colleague, engaging in supervision, reading professional literature, enrolling in a continuing education course, and/or attending a workshop or conference. Your plans should be realistic and should account for the availability of opportunities and resources, along with the variety of ways that your objectives may be achieved.

Your learning plan is prospective. That is, it sets out your *intended* way forward as you begin a new CCP year. It is recognised that you may subsequently not be able to complete all your intended learning plans. It is also acknowledged that changes in your circumstances may result in ongoing alterations to your objectives and/or plans. Where this occurs, simply document it in your logbook.

Step 4: In a logbook, record activities undertaken towards your learning objectives

Continuing competence activities undertaken are to be recorded in a **logbook** which includes key CCP activities: Self-Reflective Review, identified learning objectives, the learning plan, activities undertaken to advance those objectives, and the end of year review.

Briefly record and date each of the activities you complete towards achieving your learning objectives and, where possible, retain documentary evidence of completion.

You may also wish to record other learning activities which are unrelated to your specified learning objectives/plan. This would include more general professional development activity, opportunistic training events, reading, a supervision log,⁹ and other professional events which have stimulated your interest. These more extensive records are optional extras, but they may usefully inform your future self-reflective reviews.

The logbook will be required for any audit of the CCP.

Step 5: Reflect on the outcomes of your learning

The CCP year concludes at the end of March with a review of the progress made towards achieving each of your learning objectives. Your review should be an active process of critically appraising the gains made and should be completed with the full participation and feedback of your supervisor. The involvement of your supervisor is intended to help overcome the natural tendency towards under- or over-estimation, blind spots, and “not knowing what you don’t know”. Research has shown that self-assessment can be quite inaccurate⁷, and so testing its accuracy by considering the feedback of appropriate others is an important component of the self-reflection process.

Relevant questions could include:

- Have you achieved the objectives you intended to?
- What gains in knowledge have you realised?
- Has your learning resulted in any changes in your professional practice?
- Has your supervisor noticed any changes in your competence, practice, or confidence?
- Have you encountered any barriers to enacting your gains in knowledge that need to be addressed?
- Have there been impacts for your clients, colleagues, or your organisation?

Your year-end review should include consideration of whether each of your learning objectives has been achieved, whether any residual objectives remain (that could be carried over to the next year), or if they have been overtaken by other objectives.

The year-end review and consideration of feedback naturally leads into a new SRR to start the next cycle, making your CCP a constantly self-regenerating process.

Record the date of your year-end review of progress and the main points of this review in your logbook.

Declaration of competence

You are required to participate in the CCP as part of your ongoing efforts to ensure that you maintain your competence to practise. As part of your annual application to renew your PC, you will be required to make a declaration that you have met the requirements of the CCP over the past year and that you are competent to practise.

Supervisor's Declaration

Your declaration must be counter-signed by your supervisor, confirming that they were actively involved in both your SRR and year-end review.

Logbook and retention of records

The CCP logbook will record the dates of key CCP activities, the SRR with your supervisor, learning objectives identified, the learning plan, the activities undertaken to advance the learning objectives, and the end of year review with your supervisor. A balance should be sought between avoiding burdensome detail versus sufficient information to evidence

your (timely) completion of CCP requirements for audit and for your own learning purposes. Your logbook can be kept in paper or electronic form, if it can readily be submitted for audit when requested. Please note that you must retain your CCP logbook for a minimum of three years.

Audit Of CCP Participation

If you are selected for audit, you will be required to make a more detailed declaration including statements that you:

- completed an annual self-assessment of your competence at the beginning of the PC year;
- discussed that assessment with your supervisor;
- developed learning objectives and a learning plan based on your self-assessment and your supervisor's input;
- engaged in activities to achieve your learning objectives during the year;
- evaluated (at year-end) the progress you made on achieving your objectives; and
- documented your CCP participation in your logbook.

General and targeted audits

Each year the Board audits a portion of PC applications for CCP participation. These will be either randomly selected (general audit) or from specifically targeted groups of practitioners (targeted audit).

The audit process and what it involves

1. If you are selected for audit, you will be required to submit your CCP logbook within 15 working days of receiving the request.
2. You will be notified (in writing via email) of the outcome of the audit.
3. If you have only partially met the CCP's requirements, the auditor will offer you feedback and guidance, and may arrange for you to be audited again the following year.
4. Where you have not met the CCP's requirements, individual assistance will be made available to you to make sure that you are on track with your CCP.
5. In the unlikely event that a psychologist is unable or unwilling to provide the required documentation or otherwise declines to cooperate with the CCP audit, this will be referred to the Conduct, Competence and Fitness Committee. Ultimately, this may result in disciplinary action including suspension of registration. [Refer s43 of the HPCA Act.]

Exemptions from participation

You may apply to the Board at any time to be exempted from CCP participation and/or an audit of participation for a specified period. Please use the prescribed Exemption Application form, which can be downloaded from the Board's website (<https://psychologistsboard.org.nz/forms-guidelines/>). Your reasons for requesting an exemption should be clearly stated. An exemption may be granted for various reasons, including (but not limited to) if you have practised for less than 4 months during the PC year¹⁰; on compassionate or pragmatic grounds; long-term incapacitating illness; serious illness of a close family member; study leave; parental leave; or extended overseas travel. Evidence to support your request may be requested. You will be notified of the outcome of your request within 10 working days of its receipt. If an exemption is not granted, you have the right to have the decision reviewed by the full Board.

What is expected in the audit?

The Board's aim is that all active psychologists engage in a meaningful process of self-reflective review and self-directed learning. The audit will check for evidence of engagement in this process. (See section 6 re declarations, logbooks, and other records.) The Board's preferred method for receiving this information is for practitioners to use the template logbook attached as Appendix 3.

What you can expect from the audit

Your audit submissions will be securely destroyed promptly after the audit. You will be provided with an audit feedback form¹¹ that specifies the criteria to fully meet requirements, whether your submissions were assessed to have met those criteria, and the overall outcome of the audit. You will also be invited to offer any feedback you may wish to give about your experience with CCP participation or as an audit participant.

Contacts

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or want some further guidance:

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Website: www.psychologistsboard.org.nz

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Acronyms:

PC - Practising Certificate
CCP - Continuing Competence Programme
HPCA Act - Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003
SRR - Self-Reflective Review

Terms:

PC Year - April 1 to March 31
Competence - see page 2
Continuing competence - see page 3
Core competencies - see page 3
Diligence - see page 3
Judgement - see page 2
Knowledge - see page 2
Learning activities - activities undertaken in order to meet a learning objective (e.g., supervision, workshops, reading, teaching).
Learning objective - a brief, clear statement of an intended outcome or goal in relation to identified needs. (e.g., "I will deepen my knowledge and understanding of the use of psychometrics with New Zealand subjects.")
Learning plan - a considered, flexible, self-directed plan for achieving identified learning objectives. (e.g., "I will attend a local workshop on the use of psychometrics.")
Scope of practice - means the range of services that a practitioner is permitted to perform. [Refer also section 5 of the HPCA Act 2003.]
Self-reflection - see page 4
Self-Reflective Review (SRR) - see page 4
Skill - see page 2
Vocational scope - the further-defined range of services that a qualified practitioner is permitted to perform, and also the title under which they can practise. Currently this includes the "Clinical Psychologist", "Counselling Psychologist", "Educational Psychologist" and "Neuropsychologist" scopes.

Appendix 2: Background to the introduction of the CCP

The development of the Board's CCP was initially informed by the College of Alberta Psychologists' emerging continuing competence programme, by broad and robust consultation with psychologists and other stakeholders³ (August 2007), and by a three-month trial of the planned CCP (completed December 2008). Significant revisions were made to the CCP in 2015 based on all the feedback the Board had received to date (including from the consultations carried out in 2014 and 2015), recent developments in the field of continuing competence, the original principles developed by the Board and endorsed by the profession in 2007, and the following statements of the Board's position:

The Board...

- Upholds the importance of life-long learning to maintain competence and to maintain currency in our constantly evolving profession.
- Has confidence in the basic CCP model: that a self-reflective review of competence to set individually-tailored learning objectives, followed by directed learning, is a practical and effective way of maintaining competence.
- Is committed to minimising the costs imposed on practitioners so that they can invest their time and resources into learning.
- Trusts that psychologists are committed to striving for excellence by routinely undertaking professional development, whether or not the Board mandates it.
- Understands that supervisors are best placed to review competence and the impact of learning with the practitioner.

Appendix 3: CCP Declaration of Participation (for audit only)

If selected for audit, you will be sent a copy of this form to complete.

CCP - Declaration of Participation

CCP requirements	Practitioner's signature confirming requirements completed	Date(s) requirement was completed	Supervisor's signature confirming involvement and completion of requirements
I, [REDACTED], declare that...		/ /	
...with the direct involvement of my supervisor, at the beginning of the 20XX/20XX PC year I completed a self-reflective review of my competence with reference to the Board's prescribed Core Competencies for Psychologists Working In Aotearoa New Zealand.		/ /	
...based on the results of my self-reflective review, I developed learning objectives and learning plans for the 20XX/20XX PC year.		/ /	
...during the 20XX/20XX PC year I engaged in activities to meet my learning objectives.			
...with the direct involvement of my supervisor, at the end of the 20XX/20XX PC year I conducted a review of my progress against the objectives I set at the beginning of the year and of the impact of my learning on my competence to practice.		/ /	
...I have kept records (including a logbook) of my CCP participation over the year that reflect my completion of the requirements noted above, and			
...I believe that I have met all requirements of the Board's prescribed Continuing Competence Programme during the 20XX/20XX PC year.		/ /	
...the evidence and information I have provided to the New Zealand Psychologists Board for the purpose of the Continuing Competence Programme (CCP) Audit are a true and accurate record of my participation in the CCP over the 20XX/20XX PC year.			

Appendix 4: CCP Logbook

Please refer to the Board's website for the recommended template

Appendix 5: Quick reference guide to your CCP

Quick reference guide to your CCP

1. At the beginning of each CCP year, **conduct a self-reflective review** of your current competence with reference to the Board's prescribed core competencies and with the assistance of your supervisor. Note the date of the review in your logbook and record this self-reflective review in your CCP logbook.
2. **Develop learning objectives** for those competencies requiring attention (as well as for any aspirational or employment-driven learning needs) and list them in your logbook. **Note:** A learning objective specifies "what" you intend to learn (e.g., "refresh my understanding of the Privacy Act").
3. **Devise a learning plan** to achieve each of your objectives and note completion of this step in your logbook. **Note:** A learning plan specifies "how" you intend to achieve the objective (e.g., by reading a book or attending a workshop.)
4. **Carry out your learning activities** through the year and make note of each of the activities you complete in your logbook and the date completed.
5. Toward the end of the CCP year, work with your supervisor to **critically review the impact of your learning activity on your original learning objectives**. This will contribute to your next self-reflective review and the setting of learning goals for the subsequent cycle. Note in your logbook that a review of progress on your selected objectives has been undertaken and record the main points of this in your logbook.

Having participated throughout the PC year, you should be able to declare on applying to renew your PC (normally in February or March) that you have met the CCP's requirements.

Retain your CCP logbook for a minimum of three years. Note that a portion of PC renewal applicants will be audited each year and that audit participants will be asked to submit their logbook (showing participation for the previous one to three years).

