

Inherent Requirements Policy

Policy Code: C 1.2

1. Purpose

ISN Psychology supports diversity, inclusion and the rights of individuals who wish to further their education to achieve their career objectives in psychology. All educational institutions have a responsibility to ensure that students with a disability have access to and can participate in educational activities on the same basis as their peers. This requirement is enacted under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and mandated under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The Standards define “Reasonable Adjustments” or “Special Considerations” as a means by which an education provider can support students to meet inherent requirements for a course of study to fully participate in the course.

In some instances, individual students may not be able to successfully participate in a course of study or perform the duties associated with a career in psychology despite the application of “Reasonable Adjustments” or “Special Considerations”. This may occur due to a conflict between the requirements of the course of study and/or the psychology profession and the nature of the student’s disability or medical condition.

The intent of this policy is not to exclude students with a disability or chronic illness and/or mental health condition from pursuing a career in psychology or enrolling in an ISN course of study. The policy is a way to assist current and prospective students to make an informed decision at the application stage for each course of study offered at ISN Psychology. The policy provides a comprehensive overview of all inherent requirements associated with a degree and subsequent career in psychology. The aim is to provide students with an opportunity to consider any “Special Considerations” or “Reasonable Adjustments” required during their studies at ISN Psychology.

2. Scope

The Inherent Requirements policy applies to all staff, associates, and students and provides the framework of principles for inherent requirements as set out in this policy for study and work within the psychology profession. The Inherent Requirements policy does not replace legislation and if any part of it is in conflict, then legislation takes precedence.

3. Description

Inherent requirements are any non-academic abilities required to complete a course of study or work duties within a given profession. Inherent requirements may include the ability to perform the tasks or functions that are a necessary part of a job safely and meeting OH&S requirements.

The Australian Human Rights Commission decision in a case known as *Woodhouse v Wood Coffill Funerals* (www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/HREOCA/1998/12.html), states that Inherent Requirements should be determined by considering the following relevant factors:

- The essential tasks required by an employer (or by extension in a profession);
- Duties that are not ordinarily performed on a daily basis, but could be necessary in an emergency or during peak periods;
- The essential outcome of a duty, rather than the way a duty is performed;
- Particular circumstances of a job could determine that some tasks are essential, even though the same job in different circumstance may not be essential;
- Applicable awards or agreements could determine that a specific task is essential (but not in isolation);
- Written duty statements and terms may be considered an inherent requirement (it needs to be demonstrated that the task is essential); and
- Any mandatory requirements of employers by other laws (Australian Human Rights Commission website, www.hreoc.gov.au as cited on 4 June 2010).

At ISN Psychology inherent requirements are focused on courses and careers in psychology. All students must be able to meet their course of study's inherent requirements to enrol and complete the course. It is ISN Psychology's responsibility to ensure that due process is followed to objectively and reliably assess whether there are any reasonable adjustments possible to allow a student to participate in a course of study and subsequently work within the field of psychology. Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally change the nature of the inherent requirement.

Students who have a disability or chronic health conditions that may prevent them from meeting inherent requirements should contact the Disability Officer to discuss any reasonable adjustments to support them during their studies as early as possible.

Inherent requirements for psychology courses and subsequent employment in the field of psychology consider students ability to demonstrate ethical behaviour, legal compliance, communication skills (written, verbal and non-verbal), cognition, literacy, language, numeracy, sensory ability (vision and hearing), reflective skills, relational skills, and sustainable performance. A definition and explanation of each listed category is provided below. This document should be read in conjunction with the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) Standards and Guidelines and other relevant course information.

1. Ethical Behaviour

The Psychology Board of Australia governs the profession of psychology and psychologist are required to follow a code of ethics, guidelines and policies. Registered psychologists are accountable for professional behaviours, as set out in the code of ethics in all contexts. Students need to learn and demonstrate knowledge and awareness of ethical behaviours, including responsible and ethical research practices and behaving with academic integrity.

Students need to demonstrate ethical behaviours towards:

- Other students;
- College staff; and
- Members of the wider community

Justification of inherent requirement

Ethical behaviours and compliance with the APS Code of Ethics and associated guidelines and policies ensures safe and competent interactions for students and parties with whom they engage. Ethical behaviours ensure the psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of students and other parties.

Reasonable Adjustments

All reasonable adjustments offered to students must ensure that no policies, guidelines or codes are compromised, as set out by the Psychology Board of Australia or internal ISN Policies and Procedures, or result in unethical behaviours.

Examples of Ethical Behaviours

- Complying with professional conduct standards required to maintain provisional or full registration as a psychologist;
- Appropriately acknowledging sources in written assessments and presentations and not plagiarising content;
- Openness in discussion of course work;

- Displaying empathy towards others' experiences;
- Complying with the code of ethics and associated guidelines;
- Complying to the ISN Policies and Procedures;
- Complying with the Terms of Enrolment.

2. Behavioural Stability

Psychology courses can be cognitively and emotionally demanding. Behavioural stability is required to enable students to function and adapt effectively in a psychology course. Students need to demonstrate an ability to work constructively in both academic and clinical settings as part of a group or one-on-one scenarios with other parties. Students need to demonstrate an ability to handle sensitive information and materials in the course of psychological training and practice and demonstrate the ability to adapt to challenging and unpredictable situations.

Justification of inherent requirement

Behavioural stability allows students to manage unpredictable or challenging situations that may arise as part of psychological work. The inherent requirement requires students to apply psychological training and knowledge to personal self-reflection and development and includes clear articulation of ideas, emotional and behavioural regulation, and problem solving skills required within the psychology profession.

Reasonable Adjustments

Any adjustments should ensure students are able to function in a stable and safe manner within academic and professional settings.

Examples of Behavioural Stability

- Regulating emotions and behaviours related to course materials of a sensitive nature;
- Behaving appropriately and professionally towards other students, college staff and members of the community.

3. Communication

Psychology courses at ISN Psychology and careers in the field of psychology in Australia require students to demonstrate effective written and verbal English language skills. These communication skills are essential to complete a psychology course and provide safe psychological care to clients from the wider community.

Verbal Requirements

- An ability to understand and respond to verbal instruction and communication appropriately in a timely manner;
- Clearly articulate instructions;
- Provide clear and concrete feedback and reporting of situations.

Non-verbal Requirements

- Demonstrate non-verbal communication of a respectful, honest, empathic nature and non-judgmental nature;
- A capacity to respond appropriately to behavioural cues;
- Demonstrate awareness of own behaviours;
- Show sensitivity to all individuals and any cultural difference.

Written Requirements

- Demonstrate an ability to write succinct, coherent and clear documents as an essential part of the practice of psychology with in consideration of potential professional and legal ramifications;
- Written assessments are reflective of the necessary academic standards and conveys knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matters for professional practice;
- An ability to write information for a range of audiences.

Justification of inherent requirement

Written, verbal and non-verbal communication in various formats and contexts is an essential psychology graduate attribute. Accurate communication abilities may be critical for client safety and/or treatment i.e., the ability to accurately observe and interpret non-verbal and verbal cues assist with rapport building in both academic and professional settings. Communication skills are essential for case formulation and effective observation of clients' presenting issue, symptoms and reactions.

Reasonable Adjustments

Any adjustment offered must address the timely, effective, accurate and clear communication of ideas in verbal, non-verbal and written format. Adjustments should not compromise on the student's capacity to communicate ideas in clearly in the appropriate format.

Examples of Communication

- Oral presentations;
- Written reports, essays, case notes, online discussion forums and exams;
- Collecting information through client assessments and asking questions;
- Providing clients with information about their treatment and/or disorder;
- Appropriately discussing client progress with other professionals and within the appropriate forums and formats;
- Recognising non-verbal cues indicating a change in emotional state and appropriately reacting to this change;
- Recognising non-verbal cues of other students and college staff within the academic setting;
- Constructing written assessments at the academic standards or level set by APAC and the institute;
- Appropriately and accurately referencing sources;
- Preparing client and scientific reports appropriate for the purpose and audience within a timely manner.

4. Cognitive

Successful completion of a psychology course requires an understanding and knowledge of theory and practice. Students also need to demonstrate necessary skills in cognition, numeracy and literacy.

Theoretical Understanding, Knowledge and Cognitive Skills

- The capacity to process, synthesise and recall information;
- Locate appropriate and relevant information;
- Integrate and implement knowledge in practice; and
- Problem solve.

Literacy

- The ability to comprehend, acquire and convey information in English in various formats; and
- The capacity to understand and implement academic ideas in a scholarly manner.

Numeracy

- The ability to interpret and apply numerical data, measurements and criteria in academic settings, placements and professionally; and
- The ability to use statistical software.

Justification of inherent requirement

The ability to comprehend, interpret, apply and communicate accurate information is essential for safe and effective assessments, treatments and delivery of other care within psychology. The scientist-practitioner model requires all psychology professionals to demonstrate an ability to collect, analyse, accurately interpret and disseminate data.

Reasonable Adjustments

Adjustments should allow students to demonstrate the minimum acceptable level of knowledge and cognitive skills required to practice safely. No adjustment should impede the student's ability to demonstrate a minimum capacity for effectively acquiring, comprehending and applying accurate information. Adjustments should ensure that the student can demonstrate competent management of numerical data.

Examples of Cognition

- Accurate formulations and treatment plans;
- Testing hypotheses;
- Paraphrasing, summarising and referencing in accordance with appropriate academic conventions (i.e., the APA Style Guide);
- Reading and understanding written instructions;
- Producing documentation within clinical practice that meets legal and professional requirements;
- Producing accurate and concise research report, essays and other written assessment documents; and
- Accurately scoring and interpreting test data.

5. Relational Skills

The practice of psychology requires the ability to develop and maintain respectful relationships within an academic, personal, and professional setting with others.

Students on placement need to be able to build rapport with clients and engage in effective listening to deliver counselling interventions. Student should demonstrate an ability to maintain effective working relationships with college staff and other students and demonstrate personal integrity.

Justification of inherent requirement

Relational skills are essential for therapeutic work as a psychologist and in order psychology related work settings.

Reasonable Adjustments

Students must be able to demonstrate minimal effective relational skills required for a range of tasks associated with work in the psychology field.

Examples of Relational Skills

- Building strong rapport with colleagues, staff and clients;
- Effectively managing difficulties arising in therapeutic and academic relationships;
- Taking responsibility of one's own academic progress; and
- Demonstrating consideration and sensitivity to others' personal and cultural values in class, forums or work settings.

6. Reflective Skills

The practice of psychology requires an ability to learn from experiences, self-awareness and a capacity to reflect on one's own issues, behaviours, emotions, cognitions, actions, and values and how this may impact on practice.

Students needs to demonstrate:

- An ability to self-reflect and learn through experiential activities within the course;
- Show awareness of their own feelings, motivations and attitudes;
- Reflect on their professional performance;
- Accept constructive feedback on their professional practice and apply it; and
- Show a capacity for independent learning.

Justification of inherent requirement

The ability to reflect and show self-awareness is an important graduate attribute and is an essential skill in psychological practice, clinical and research supervision. To work with clients and responding to them appropriately requires an understanding of oneself and regulate emotional and behavioural responses.

Reasonable Adjustments

A student must be able to demonstrate acceptable minimum capacity to self-reflect and no adjustments should compromise this capacity.

Examples of Reflective Skills

- The ability to recognise one's own reactions within various situational context and how this may affect interactions and work with other students, college staff, and other professionals;
- The ability to identify when a professional issue is outside one's scope of knowledge or practice may be affected by an impairment; and
- The ability to accurately assess one's own academic and professional performance and integrate feedback effectively.

7. Sustainable Performance

Psychological practice requires sustainable physical and mental performance over time.

Students need to demonstrate an ability to:

- Sustain reasonable physical energy to complete course specific tasks in a timely manner;
- Meet minimum attendance requirements;
- Complete all required assessment tasks;
- Complete units of study in the course within the maximum allowed period of enrolment;
- Complete examinations within allocated times;
- Concentrate and complete repetitive tasks; and
- Maintain consistent and good performance for the duration of the course.

Justification of inherent requirement

Physical and mental endurance are essential for work in the psychology field. The courses at ISN Psychology requires students to attend 80% of classes and complete all assessments within a unit of study within a set timeframe.

Reasonable Adjustments

Adjustments must facilitate the completion of assessments and class attendance within a reasonable timeframe. Adjustments must ensure consistent performance can be achieved and sustained over a given period.

Examples of Sustainable Performance

- Attending and participating in tutorials, lectures, and workshops for each unit of study throughout the day;
- Maintaining an adequate completion rate of units of study within the maximum timeframe;
- An ability to complete examinations; and
- Maintaining focus and performance over a given period of time.

4. Breach of Policy

ISN expects all staff responsible for the admission, enrolment, and support of students to adhere to this policy and provide adequate supports and adjustments as required. All students are expected to demonstrate the abilities associated with listed inherent requirements throughout their enrolment at ISN Psychology

Any staff in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. Students in breach of this policy will be required to attend a meeting with the Disability Support Officer to determine if any reasonable adjustments can be made. If no reasonable adjustments are available and a student’s ability to successfully complete a course of study or work within the profession is compromised the student will be unenrolled from the course of study.

Should staff or students have doubts about any aspect of the Inherent Requirements Policy, they must seek clarification from the College Registrar.

5. Supporting Documentation

1. APS Code of Ethics;
2. Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992;
3. Disability Standards for Education 2005;
4. Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) Standards and Guidelines;
5. ISN psychology Policies and Procedures Handbook; and
6. The American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide.

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