

# **Recommendations for Australian Postgraduate Psychology Practicum Logbooks**

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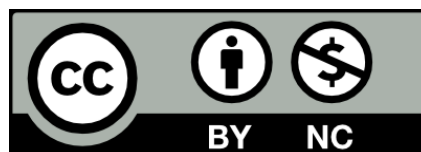
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## **Background**

In postgraduate psychology training, placements represent a formative period where trainees commence applying their skills in practice. The nature of psychology training relies heavily on experiential learning, and thus placements represent the application of knowledge to practice (Callahan & Watkins, 2018). Due to the crucial role of placement experiences in the training of future psychologists, postgraduate psychology programs need to adhere to strict standards set by the accrediting body. In Australia, postgraduate psychology programs are accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC), an independent quality and standards organisation. APAC develops accreditation standards and monitors higher education providers to ensure they meet these standards, with the aim of ensuring public safety through high quality training of psychologists.

Accreditation standards related to placements specify that trainee psychologists must complete a minimum number of hours working directly with clients, receiving supervision, and completing client related activities. Furthermore, trainees must have exposure to a variety of placement settings and client presentations. To ensure that these standards are met, higher education providers must maintain formal records of trainees' placement experiences in the form of placement logbooks. Specifically, this record must include "the range of professional placement experiences, types of clients, required direct client activities hours and supervision requirements (hours and type of supervision) for students in each program of study" (Australian Psychology Accreditation Council, 2019, p.12). Logbooks are typically completed by trainees using the template provided by their higher education provider and must be signed off by the relevant supervisor in a manner that demonstrates ongoing monitoring.

Keeping accurate logbooks of trainees' placement experiences is complicated by several factors. First, not all placements are created equally, with placement organisations providing different clinical experiences (Eisenhard & Muse-Burke, 2015; Hatcher et al., 2012; Helmes & Pachana, 2011). For example, a trainee completing placement in a rural indigenous community would have a different experience than a trainee completing placement in a metropolitan hospital. This is consistent with United States studies that have shown that placements in community clinics involve more advocacy than other placement sites (Hatcher et al., 2012). These differences may pose challenges when trainees are trying to record or document their learning and experiences using the same logbook.

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Second, not all educational programs count placement experiences in the same way. For example, 40% of training programs in the United States do not consider consultation with a client's parent as a log-able client contact activity. Such discrepancies are also present in Australia, with higher education providers defining 'direct' client hours in different ways (Quinlan et al., 2021).

Third, 'logbooks' have different purposes depending on the program in which they are used. Whilst all educational programs use logbooks to keep track of placement hours, activities and experiences, logbooks can also serve other functions. For example, some higher education providers incorporate reflective prompts into their logbooks to encourage trainees to engage in reflective practice on their placement experiences (Gooi et al., 2021).

APAC permits training institutions flexibility in the implementation of training standards. That is, the design and functions of logbooks can differ between programs, provided the minimum standards are met. This flexibility, in turn, creates uncertainty regarding the specific information that needs to be collected via logbooks and the ideal format for doing so. To understand how the implementation of logbooks potentially differs across training institutions, a recent benchmarking study compared the logbooks of 40 Australian postgraduate psychology programs (Gooi et al., 2021). Programs displayed consistency in some areas, for example, most programs recorded the date of placement activities, duration of direct client contact and provided a tally of total placement hours. However, there was substantial variability across multiple domains. For example, whilst all programs recorded information on direct client activities undertaken, the inclusion of sub-categories to provide further context to these experiences ranged from 8% to 85.7%. Such discrepancy highlights the need for greater standardisation of logbook practices, especially when considering agency supervisors receive placement trainees across multiple institutions. The authors also called for inter-institutional collaboration and development of standardisation guidelines for logbooks.

### **Formation of the Working Group**

In response to the call for greater standardisation around postgraduate psychology placement logbooks, the idea for a working group was proposed at the national forum of Australian postgraduate psychology educators consisting of program directors, clinic directors, placement coordinators and academics from different postgraduate psychology programs. Consequently, the Australian Postgraduate Psychology Logbook Working Group (APPLWG) was formed to review and develop guidelines for logbook processes. The APPLWG included five educators from the national forum which represented postgraduate psychology training programs in Master of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology and Organisational Psychology.

### **Formulation of Recommendations**

The process of formulating the recommendations of the AAPLWG began by outlining a list of placement logbook functions. This included functions such as record keeping, monitoring of trainee placement hours and the development of trainee reflective practice.

Based on the logbook functions, the information needed to satisfy each logbook function was also collated (e.g., to track trainee experience with clients, information such as client demographics, presenting issues and interventions used were included). The working group also referred to the preliminary data collated by Gooi et al. (2021) on the existing logbook practices in Australian postgraduate programs.

The group explored ways to prioritise and categorise the logbook functions into separate sets. The outcome involved two categories. The first was the “Essential” category which included the minimum amount of information on logbooks to meet accreditation requirements. The second was the “Optional” category which included logbook functions and information that was useful to have given their potential value add from pedagogical and record keeping perspectives. In addition to the list of functions, other aspects of the logbook keeping process (e.g., signature and verification processes) were also discussed by the APPLWG.

In developing the recommendations, the APPLWG aimed to determine a balance between functionality and practicality. A decision was made against proposing one

standardised logbook template for all training programs, instead opting for recommendations on the information that should (essential) and could (optional) be included in all logbooks, regardless of the logbook format. This would make it more practical for training programs to adopt these recommendations without having to completely revise their existing logbook designs and templates.

### **Elicitation of Feedback**

Following the development of the draft logbook recommendations by the APPLWG, feedback of these recommendations was sought from relevant stakeholders through presentations made to the national forum of Australian postgraduate psychology educators and the annual meeting of the Australasian Association of Psychology Training Clinics. In general, the feedback provided by educators was encouraging and suggested that the proposed recommendations captured all essential inclusions in Australian postgraduate psychology logbooks.

Written feedback from stakeholders was also sought through an online survey which was distributed to postgraduate psychology educators across Australia, including program directors, placements coordinators and clinic directors. The survey was promoted through various platforms, including relevant email groups and at the presentations made to the national forum of Australian postgraduate psychology educators and the annual meeting of the Australasian Association of Psychology Training Clinics.

A total of 30 respondents completed the survey. Most participants were from educational institutions within New South Wales (37%), followed by Queensland (20%), Western Australia (17%), South Australia (13%), Victoria (10%) and the Australian Capital Territory (3%). Most participants (93%) declared that they were Board Approved Supervisors with the Psychology Board of Australia, where most supervisors were providing supervision to students within a postgraduate clinical psychology program (64%). The remaining supervisors reported providing supervision to students enrolled in other postgraduate psychology programs such as health psychology, neuropsychology, education and development psychology, professional psychology, organisational psychology, and counselling psychology.

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The survey comprised two sections: the first section provided respondents with the list of information that could be recorded in practicum logbooks (such as trainee name, date of activities, mode of delivery for client work, reflections of placement experience). The items in the list were presented in a random order such that respondents were blinded as to whether each piece had been categorised a priori by the APPLWG as either essential or optional. Respondents were asked to consider each piece of information in the list and indicate whether they believed each piece represented an essential, optional or an unnecessary inclusion in postgraduate psychology logbooks.

The findings from the first section of the survey suggested that the 15 items categorised as ‘essential’ inclusions in practicum logbooks by the APPLWG, were also categorised as ‘essential’ inclusions by majority of participants. For 11 of the 15 items, 90% or more of participants categorised these items as essential inclusions in logbooks. For the remaining four items, at least 63% of participants categorised these items as essential inclusions in logbooks. There were no items in this category that were categorised as ‘unnecessary’ by participants. As such, there was broad agreement (at least 63%) that each item should be included as an ‘essential’ item in postgraduate logbooks.

For the seven items categorised as ‘optional’ inclusions in postgraduate logbooks by the APPLWG, five of the items were similarly categorised as ‘optional’ by majority of respondents (at least 43%). The remaining two items were categorised as ‘essential’ inclusions by majority of respondents (50% and 56%), and thus were not considered appropriately categorised by the majority.

In the second section of the survey, respondents were presented with the proposed recommendations for postgraduate psychology logbooks developed by the APPLWG. The recommendations were presented in a table, with each piece of information categorised under the heading ‘Essential’ or ‘Optional’. Participants were asked to review these recommendations and comment as to whether the essential information list included all necessary information and whether they would adopt these recommendations into their psychology program’s logbook requirements.

To assess whether the ‘Essential’ list of inclusions was complete, participants were asked to respond to the question, “*I think the Essential information list includes all necessary information that should be captured in psychology practicum logbooks*” on a 7-point Likert

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Scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Most participants (83%) indicated some level of agreement with this statement. When asked whether there were any other items that should be included in the Essential or Optional list of inclusions, all respondents answered 'No', suggesting that there were no further inclusions needed for either list. To assess how likely participants were to adopt this list of recommendations into their postgraduate program, participants were asked, "*I would adopt these guidelines into my psychology program's logbook requirements*" on a 7-point Likert Scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Most participants (93%) indicated some level of agreement with this statement.

Overall, the stakeholder review of the proposed logbook recommendations was very successful. The verbal feedback indicated broad agreement with the inclusiveness of the recommendations. This was supported by the written feedback collected using the online survey, where most respondents independently agreed that the items categorised as 'essential' by the APPLWG, should be categorised as such. For the list of 'optional' inclusions, the majority of participants agreed that most of these items should also be categorised as 'optional'. The overwhelming majority of respondents thought the recommendations were inclusive and complete, and agreed that they would adopt these guidelines into their psychology programs logbook requirements.

### **Recommendations of Working Group**

Following the stakeholder feedback process, the draft recommendations were reviewed by the APPLWG. Minor adjustments were made, and the final recommendations can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 presents recommendations for Essential information to be recorded in practicum logbooks. As can be seen from the table, logbooks are required to obtain basic information including trainee's name, placement location and date of placement activities. When recording Direct Client Hours, it is recommended that basic details regarding the client and the type of work conducted is recorded. This information allows oversight that students have sufficient exposure to a range of client presentations, enabling early identification of gaps in training or placement experience. Supervision entries need to specify the name, duration of supervision and the format (group versus individual supervision) through which supervision occurred. Logbooks are recommended to provide an overall summary of hours achieved to date



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by the relevant trainee. Lastly, logbooks also require formal verification in the form of supervisors and trainee's signature.

**Table 1**

*Essential Information to be Recorded in Practicum Logbooks*

| Domain   | Description of Domain  | Example of Logbook Entry  |
|--|--|---|
| Trainee name                                   | Trainee name to be clearly listed on the logbook. For online systems, this may take the form of a user profile.  |   |
| Name of Placement Organisation and/or location | Specify the name of the placement organisation or location that placement activity has taken place.  |   |
| Date of activities                             | Specify the date on which the relevant placement activity occurred.  |   |
| Direct client hours                            | <p>Include brief information regarding the relevant client/s (age, gender and presenting issue) and/or organisation.</p> <p>Specify type of work conducted (e.g., psychometric assessment – WISC &amp; WIAT; therapy – CBT; delivery of mindfulness workshop)</p> <p>Specify if the direct client work took the form of simulated practice.</p> <p>Specify the duration of client contact.</p> | <p><i>Client A, 60-year-old male presenting with depressive symptoms. Therapy- individual basis- CBT [Simulated contact]. 60 minutes duration.</i></p> <p><i>Client B, 14-year-old female presenting with learning difficulties. Psychometric assessment- WISC-V. 120 minutes duration.</i></p> <p><i>Delivery of Transformational Leadership workshop for 25 senior managers of XYZ Corporation. 120 minutes duration.</i></p> |
| Client related hours                           | Include brief information regarding type of client related work conducted (e.g., client preparation, writing case notes, scoring of psychometric tests).   | <p><i>Preparation for therapeutic session; researched use of CBT for depression. 30 minutes duration.</i></p> <p><i>Scoring of WISC-V. 60 minutes duration.</i></p> <p><i>Preparing and reviewing workshop material. 180 minutes duration.</i></p>  |

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| Domain   | Description of Domain  | Example of Logbook Entry                                  |
|--|--|---|
| Supervision attended                               | Include name of supervisor, duration and format (specifically differentiating between individual versus group supervision)   | <i>Dr Supervisor, individual supervision, 60 minutes.</i> |
| Signature of Board-Approved Supervisor             | Logbook to be signed by the primary supervisor or delegated supervisors(s).<br><br>Frequency of signature to be a minimum of once per fortnight for a standard 2 days per week placement.  |   |
| Summary or tally of hours within placement/program | Logbook needs to provide a mechanism for generating a tally of hours completed within the particular placement and program overall   |   |
| Trainee declaration and signature                  | Trainee signature and verification that the recorded placement hours are true and correct. Trainee signature does not necessarily need to be included in all log entries and can be included in an overall placement/training summary sheet. |   |

Table 2 presents recommendations for Optional information that can be recorded in practicum logbooks. Such information has potential value add from pedagogical and record keeping perspectives, however, it is noted that such inclusions may be more than APAC minimum requirements. As can be seen from the table, with the increase in blended delivery programs and greater reliance on technology for client work and supervision sessions, it is recommended to include information regarding the mode of delivery of client work and supervision. Supervision is an area where it is recommended to provide additional information, such as a summary of the content of supervision sessions and specifying whether supervision involved direct observation of client activities. It is recommended that logbooks provide opportunities for trainee reflections, however, it is noted that programs may capture this information elsewhere in their programs. In addition, education providers could consider designing logbooks in a way that provides the opportunity for practicum activities undertaken to be linked to competency domains. Lastly, it is recommended that logbooks enable the provision of summary data, such as hours achieved with particular client groups (e.g.,

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experience working with children) and hours completed on particular activities (e.g. experience conducting assessments).

**Table 2**

*Optional Information to be Recorded in Practicum Logbooks*

| Domain                                  | Description of Domain   | Example (underlined)  |
|---|---|---|
| Mode of delivery for direct client work | Specify if the format of direct client contact occurred in-person, phone, online using video conferencing software.                                 | <i>Client A, 60-year-old male presenting with depressive symptoms. Therapy-individual basis- CBT. <u>Format: in-person.</u></i><br><br><i>Delivery of Change Management Workshop to 15 executives of ABC Corporation. <u>Format: presentation using Zoom.</u></i> |
| Mode of delivery for supervision        | Specify if the format of supervision occurred in-person, phone, online using video conferencing software, or asynchronous (i.e., written feedback). | <i>Dr Supervisor, 60 minutes, individual supervision. <u>Format: in-person.</u></i>   |
| Supervision discussion summary          | Provide a brief summary of matters discussed and outcomes/plans for follow up activities.   | <i>Dr Supervisor, 60 minutes, individual supervision. <u>Format: in-person.</u></i><br><i><u>Summary: discussed progress with psychometric assessment for client B with goal set to finalise draft within fortnight.</u></i>                                      |
| Observation by supervisor               | If an episode of client contact was observed by a supervisor, specify this in the relevant entry.   | <i>Client A, 60-year-old male presenting with depressive symptoms. Therapy-individual basis- CBT. <u>Session observed by supervisor.</u></i>  |

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| Domain   | Description of Domain   | Example (underlined)  |
|--|---|---|
| Trainee reflections  | Provide a section for trainees to write reflections on learning and placement experience.   | <p><i>Client A, 60-year-old male presenting with depressive symptoms. Therapy-individual basis- CBT.</i></p> <p><u><i>Reflection: I found it difficult to build rapport with this client and realised that this was partly due to my own anxiety regarding the age difference. In future I will be more aware of my own transference.</i></u></p> |
| Links between logged activity and specific professional competencies | Specify the core competencies that the logged activities relate to.   | <p><i>Client A, 60-year-old male presenting with depressive symptoms. Therapy-individual basis- CBT.</i></p> <p><u><i>Competencies: Intervention Strategies; Communication and Interpersonal Relationships; Practice Across the Lifespan.</i></u></p>   |
| Provision of summary data  | Provide a function through which the logbook system can generate summary data (e.g., total number of clients seen in particular age groups) for trainee's own record. For example, this summary could be included in a trainee's CV indicating types and amount of client experience. |   |

### **Discussion & Future Directions**

The aim of this document is to present the recommendations for logbook processes and inclusions for Australian postgraduate psychology training programs developed by the APPLWG. It describes the context which has led to the formation of the APPLWG and the processes which the working group has gone through to arrive at the final set of recommendations.

In developing these recommendations, the APPLWG has aimed to strike a good balance between functionality and practicality. As such it has taken the approach of identifying the fundamental aspects of practicum logbooks to meet accreditation requirements (Essential items) and also providing further recommendations on how logbooks can be better utilised in postgraduate psychology training (Optional items).

Through its stakeholder consultation process, the APPLWG has sought to consider the needs of postgraduate training programs in varying levels of training (APAC Level 3 and Level 4 programs) and areas of practice endorsement. Feedback received from the consultation process indicated that the recommendations, which provide clarity and guidance in terms of what constitutes appropriate logbook inclusions and processes, have been well received by colleagues.

Given the ever-changing landscape of psychology service delivery and training, the APPLWG recommendations would require ongoing revisions into the future. With the increased use of video conferencing technology in service delivery and psychology training, it is likely that modes of delivery for client work and supervision, which have been listed as optional items in the current recommendations, would in the future become essential information in practicum logbooks. Also, specialised logbook software (e.g., Time2Track, SONIA) which have become increasingly common, have the capacity to record and analyse large amounts of detailed information. This could potentially give rise to new and creative ways of using logbooks in the future.

The work of the APPLWG has been a first attempt by education providers in developing a set of common guidelines for practicum logbooks processes in Australian postgraduate psychology training programs. It is the hope of the working group that these recommendations

would lead to greater consistency in logbook practices across different training programs, which would further support cross-institutional benchmarking and research collaboration.

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