



***THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND***

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***STANDARDS FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF POSTGRADUATE  
ACADEMIC COURSES  
IN  
WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY***

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **PAGE NO**

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>GENERAL PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>COURSE CONTENT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE COURSE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>STAFFING RESOURCES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>COURSE RESOURCES</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>EVALUATION OF COURSE</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

What follows sets out the Society's standards for the accreditation of academic postgraduate courses in Work and Organisational Psychology. Its objectives are to specify minimum standards for good practice in this area.

Work and Organisational Psychology emerged as a discipline in the 1900s in the USA and Europe. Indeed, Division 14 The Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology is one of the longest standing divisions in the history of the American Psychological Association. Industrial and organisational psychology incorporated important elements of a variety of different fields in psychology, engineering, business and health. Work and organisational psychology grew rapidly and is firmly established throughout the world as is evidenced by the vast scientific and professional literature, and the numerous international and national conferences in the area. Consistent with professional societies of psychology across the world, the development of work and organisational psychology in Ireland was facilitated by the development of accreditation criteria for specialist training in work and organisational psychology.

In 2005 the Society, following wide consultation, established accreditation standards appropriate to professional training in work and organisational psychology. In a document entitled, *'Accreditation Standards for Postgraduate Professional Training in Work and Organisational Psychology'*, the Society essentially set out a framework for the development of postgraduate training in work and organisational psychology in Ireland. Consistent with its development in other countries, accreditation standards were designed under the general headings of conceptual knowledge, the development of general principles, content, skills development, personal development through supervised practice and work with clients, research and evaluation skills appropriate to work and organisational psychology, and the role of personal development.

The Society was mindful that accreditation standards should be sufficiently flexible to allow a new area of professional training to grow and find its own shape, while at the same time, the criteria should demand standards comparable to existing postgraduate provision in other areas of professional psychology. To this end, the Society set the standards that postgraduate education in work and organisational psychology should be pursued to Master's degree level (or equivalent) and that the time taken to complete this study should normally be one calendar year full time study (or equivalent part time). In making these standards the Society wished to ensure that the basic professional training for work and organisational psychology was to a level which enables students to be thoroughly grounded in and to merge the psychological knowledge and modes of inquiry of professional psychology with the work and organisational process.

In 2004 the Division of Work and Organisational Psychology (DWOP) was invited by the Professional Development Panel (PDP) to contribute to its development of accreditation standards for post-graduate courses in work and organisational psychology. In preparing its submission, the DWOP Committee consulted with the Membership, Qualifications and Registration Committee (MQRC), the directors and one external examiner of existing work and

organisational psychology training courses in Ireland, the existing British Psychological Society (BPS), Australian Psychology Society (APS), European Network of Organizational Psychology (ENOP) and American Psychological Association (APA) standards for postgraduate training in work and organisational psychology as well as the European Federation of Psychological Associations (EFPA) Task Force Report on work and organisational psychology. Keeping in mind the implications of the EU Directive on mutual recognition of training, the Division's attitude of inclusivity in areas pertaining to work and organisational psychology, the Society now sets out, below, the standards necessary for the accreditation of postgraduate professional training courses in work and organisational psychology.

## **1.1 DEFINITION OF WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Founded on organisational principles, work and organisational psychology is the application of theory, method and research to individuals, groups and organisations. Work and organisational psychologists occupy a special position in the delivery of professional psychological services with regard to the field of work and organisations. Although work and organisational psychologists share boundaries and similar competencies with other professional psychologists, specific to organisational psychologists is the capacity for integrated and multi-level (individual, group and organisation) analysis of human behaviour, and an understanding of the organisation's role as a dynamic and complex system interacting with other organisations, and the broader economic, social and political environment.

## **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 The following general principles should cover any course established in Ireland to provide postgraduate training in work and organisational psychology.
- 2.2 The primary aim of each course should be to provide postgraduate training that will enable the psychologist to become professionally qualified to work as a work and organisational psychologist. Furthermore, because of the dynamic nature of this field, ongoing continuous professional development will be necessary for work and organisational psychologists at all stages of their career.
- 2.3 Each course should provide basic theoretical and basic professional skills training in work and organisational psychology. In order to become a Registered Psychologist of PSI, however, graduates from such courses must fulfill the normal standards for registration.
- 2.4 Each course should be based on a model that includes theory, practical skills, research/evaluation skills, and has group and personal development as an integral part of training.
- 2.5 Proposers of courses should make detailed statements about the philosophy of the courses that they are offering. The statements should include references to the theoretical orientation(s) of the course, the range of skills the course wishes to develop,

the role of group and personal development, and the provision for research and evaluation skills.

- 2.6 Each course should enable students to become acquainted with different theoretical frameworks of work and organisational psychology and their applications.
- 2.7 Courses should foster in students a strong sense of professional and ethical responsibility, scientific integrity and personal awareness.
- 2.8 Courses should foster a deep understanding of the important links between theory and practice in the area of work and organisational psychology.
- 2.9 A high level of communication between staff, students and other stakeholders should prevail, so that students can freely discuss with staff different aspects of the course, while staff should keep students informed about their progress.
- 2.10 Courses should have an in-built review structure.
- 2.11 Courses should lead to the award of a postgraduate degree at Masters level or equivalent qualification.
- 2.12 Course should be of at least one full calendar year duration or part-time equivalent.

### **3. PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**

#### **3.1. STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

- 3.1.1 The PSI Code of Professional Ethics must be central to the ethos of the course.
- 3.1.2 The PSI's Code of Professional Ethics should be used as a reference in all cases where judgments regarding professional ethics are being made. Due regard should be given to parallel university procedures.
- 3.1.3 All stakeholders in the course should be made aware of psychologists' professional responsibilities under the Code.
- 3.1.4 The necessary formal procedures must be in place to ensure that individuals selected for the course that display unacceptable ethical standards in their course work are not allowed to continue on the course.
- 3.1.5 Formal appeals procedures within the university should be available to students who are judged unsuitable to continue on the course.

### 3.2 DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- 3.2.1 Courses should assist post-graduate students to value human diversity and understand the impact of social exclusion, discrimination and inequality on health and psychological wellbeing.

## 4. COURSE CONTENT

- 4.1 Courses should have a comprehensive academic syllabus covering both psychological theory and application.
- 4.2 The academic component should be designed specifically for postgraduate students and a range of educational methods should be employed in the teaching process.
- 4.3 A substantial part of the academic content should be taught by the work and organisational psychology staff on the course, though some teaching by other psychologists and professionals is desirable.
- 4.4 The course must provide substantial teaching in the following areas:
- In-depth academic knowledge base (psychology)
  - Academic knowledge base (other allied work and organisational and related disciplines)
  - Application of psychological skills to work and organisational issues (e.g., communication, consultancy, coaching, assessment/evaluation and psychological interventions aimed at change)
  - Methods and instruments used for assessment by work and organisational psychologists
  - Research skills
  - Teaching and training skills
  - Consultancy skills
  - Management skills
  - Professional and ethical issues

**Note: an expanded list of the academic knowledge base – drawn from the European Network of Organizational Psychology (ENOP) model (<http://www.ucm.es/info/Psyap/enop/rmodel.html>) – is included in Appendix A. This comprehensive list includes content that currently is designated as important in the area of work and organisational psychology. To provide course directors with the flexibility to design course content suitable to differing professional philosophies, directors are advised that while coverage across all the ENOP domains is required, coverage of all areas listed in Appendix A is not (see Appendix A for details).**

- 4.5 The academic input should account for approximately 60% of the total course and the remaining 40% divided between research and skills development.
- 4.6 Students must complete a comprehensive research project during the course of postgraduate learning.
- 4.7 The research can include a variety of approaches to work and organisational psychology, for example, quantitative or qualitative methodologies, single or multiple subject designs, process or outcome research, etc.
- 4.8 Research should be presented as a dissertation or thesis.

## **5. ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE COURSE**

- 5.1 The course should have a Board of Studies that reports to the institution that runs the course. It should normally include heads of the departments or schools concerned with the course in addition to, course director(s), course teaching staff, supervisors and student representation, and ensure that the interests of each group are fully represented.
- 5.2 The major function of the Board should be to facilitate communications among all those involved in the course. The Board should be involved in considering the long-term objectives of the course and reviewing its progress. Other functions could be specific to the individual course.
- 5.3 In all cases it is essential that the roles and functions of the Board should be clearly specified and that there are clear terms of reference. The roles, functions and terms of reference of the Board should be communicated to all the course stakeholders.

## **6 STAFFING RESOURCES**

### **COURSE DIRECTOR**

- 6.1 The Course Director(s) should be experienced and qualified Work and Organisational Psychologist(s) with at least five years' full time (or equivalent) experience in the post of lecturer (or equivalent) in Psychology, and be eligible for Registered Membership of the Psychological Society of Ireland and full membership of the Division of Work and Organisational Psychology.
- 6.2 The Course Director(s) must have the course as a major employment commitment and course organisation should be recognised as an important component of the post.
- 6.3 The Course Director(s) must engage in ongoing continuing professional development in the area of work and organisational psychology at both an academic and practical level.

- 6.4 There should be a clear channel of accountability for Course Directors clarifying their posts within the institutions in which the courses are run.

### **TEACHING STAFF**

- 6.5 A substantial part of the teaching should be done by a core group of Work and Organisational psychologists involved in the organisation of the course.
- 6.6 Other individuals with particular areas of expertise may more appropriately teach certain sections of the academic programme.
- 6.7 Courses should have adequate staffing to meet course design, development and delivery needs.
- 6.8 Courses should have adequate administrative and clerical support. Normally this should mean a minimum of a full-time secretary.

### **LIAISON BETWEEN CORE TEACHING STAFF AND OCCASIONAL LECTURERS**

- 6.8 It is imperative that close liaison is maintained between core teaching staff and occasional lecturers if an integrated comprehensive course is to be provided.
- 6.9 Regular meetings should be held between such staff.
- 6.10 All teaching/training staff should be in regular communication so as to facilitate feedback to students regarding their progress on the course and also to allow the staff to be responsive to feedback from students and graduates.

## **7. COURSE RESOURCES**

The course should have appropriate facilities and resources including:

- 7.1 Teaching space of adequate size and quality for each cohort of students;
- 7.2 Access to computer facilities;
- 7.3 Adequate space to enable the course to be administered effectively, including office space for administrative staff;
- 7.4 Individual office space for academic staff;
- 7.5 Access to library facilities;
- 7.6 Access to a range of psychometric tests;
- 7.7 Adequate storage for efficient operation of the course;
- 7.8 Access to common room or similar facility for students.

## **8. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES**

- 8.1 Only those graduates who hold academic qualifications that are recognised as satisfying at least the minimum qualifications of Graduate Membership of PSI are eligible for



inclusion on postgraduate professional training courses for work and organisational psychology. Institutions running the courses may set their own standards for entry to the courses over and above this.

- 8.2 Vacancies on courses should be nationally advertised and the selection of candidates should follow the principle of “open competition”.
- 8.3 Courses should provide to prospective applicants detailed descriptions about the philosophy of the course that should include theoretical orientation(s) of the course, the range of skills that the course wishes to develop and the role of personal development. It should also include some background statistics on the course, e.g., number of students normally accepted, and in the case of long-standing courses, some information on previous employment destinations of graduates from the course. The course should be an Equal Opportunities provider.
- 8.4 In addition to the academic standards for selection to the course, selectors should also pay attention to personal qualities required to meet the demands both of the personal/group development aspects of the course and the eventual role as a work and organisational psychologist. Such demands and the personal qualities required to meet those demands must be explicit and a mutually agreed method of evaluation must be applied.
- 8.5 A group composed of representatives of the core teaching staff should carry out the selection procedure.
- 8.6 The selection procedure should be evaluated periodically.

## **9. ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE**

- 9.1 The following principles should govern the procedures of candidate performance assessment.
- 9.2 The following areas should be assessed:
  - 9.2.1 conceptual knowledge
  - 9.2.2 methods of research, evaluation and intervention
  - 9.2.3 personal and group skills
- 9.3 The student should demonstrate competence in each of these three areas (9.2.1, 9.2.2, 9.2.3 above).
- 9.4 External examiners of high professional and academic standing in work and organisational psychology should be involved in all areas of assessment.
- 9.5 Knowledge and skills developed during the course should be assessed through appropriate methods. Although these methods of assessment may vary depending on

the philosophy of the course, each course should strive for a variety of methods, e.g., written examinations, research project, research essays, case reports, video and audiotapes, tutor/peer/self-assessment techniques.

- 9.6 Students should be continuously assessed and be given feedback about their progress. Student's continuous assessments should contribute to their final assessment.
- 9.7 The procedure and criteria for assessment should be explicit.
- 9.8 The assessment of research and evaluation skills should be based on a research project or dissertation.
- 9.9 There should be a formal appeals procedure, which should be made known to the students.

## **10. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES**

- 10.1 The course should engage in a quality assurance process, possibly as part of the host institutions existing structure, to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are sought and contribute to the development of the course.

## **11 EVALUATION OF COURSE**

- 11.1 The Psychological Society of Ireland as the body representing psychologists in Ireland reserves the right to approve or reject any professional training course in psychology. This document shall be used as a basis for the assessment of all courses in work and organisational psychology.

## Appendix A

The curricular content of Masters level programmes in Work & Organisational Psychology is a well debated feature of the development of education and training standards within the discipline in Europe. Since 1993, the European Network of Organizational Psychologists (ENOP), which included Irish membership, engaged in considerable research and discussion to identify, agree and harmonise educational standards and content for the field of W&O Psychology. The following section (fields of study) extracted from the ENOP document “European Curriculum for Work & Organizational Psychology: Reference Model and Minimum Standards” (2007). The section outlines the three constituent pillars of W&O Psychology and how it is expected that different countries, and indeed different programmes, may position themselves differentially in terms of exact content and coverage.

*These standards can be used for several purposes although their main functions are to serve as:*

1. *a curriculum design*
2. *a standard for evaluating curricula*
3. *a means for the accreditation of Work & Organisational Psychologists*

### **Fields of study**

“It is generally recognized that the discipline of W&O Psychology covers three fields of study, each of which focuses on different parts and aspects of human work activity. These fields are:

- **Work Psychology**
- **Personnel Psychology**
- **Organizational Psychology.**

Work psychology concerns people's work activity, i.e., the way in which people deal with their tasks. Persons are seen as workers who (individually and collectively) perform tasks that are derived from the work processes taking place in the organization. Important subjects are: tasks, work environment, time arrangements, performance, error, effort, load, fatigue, task design, tool design (cf. ergonomics), etc.

Personnel psychology concerns the relationship between persons and the organization, in particular the establishment of the relationship, its development, and termination. Persons are seen as individuals who at a certain stage of their career become 'employees' of an organization. Important subjects are: choice processes of individuals and organizations,

abilities and capabilities, needs and need fulfilment, commitment, methods of selection, career development, appraisal, pay, training, etc.

Organizational psychology concerns the (collective) behaviour of people in relation to the shaping and functioning of socio-technical arrangements designated as organizations. People are involved in this arrangement as 'members'. Important subjects are: communication, decision making, power, leadership, participation, cooperation, conflict, organizational culture, organizational structure, technology, organizational change, interorganizational relations etc.

It should be noted that in some countries different notions are being used, pertaining to combinations or cross-sections of the three fields mentioned here. Examples are: Industrial psychology and Occupational psychology. The three fields of study have been chosen because they can be differentiated from one another rather well, in scientific as well as professional respect. In spite of some overlap, there are differences in terms of object of study and research methods on the one hand, and diagnostic and intervention methods on the other hand.

The relative development of the fields and the importance assigned to them have shown differences in the various European countries. In some countries there has been a single dominant area (e.g., work psychology in France, or in some Eastern European countries), in other countries one could see two main fields emerge (e.g., work psychology and organizational psychology in Sweden, or personnel psychology and organizational psychology in Spain), and so on. In other cases there has been a more balanced situation with a more or less equal position of the three fields (e.g., in Germany and the Netherlands). Although differences in emphasis are still visible in both scientific research and teaching, and in professional activity, there is an apparent trend towards more balance between the three fields and a growing convergence between the European countries. “ (excerpt taken from ENOP website at <http://www.ucm.es/info/Psvap/enop/rmodel.html>)

The following are indicative (although not exhaustive) content domains that contribute to the three pillars of the ENOP model and thus are the suggested source for syllabus building in the field. Some contemporary content has been added to reflect the growth of positive psychology in recent years. **To provide course directors with the flexibility to design course content suitable to differing professional philosophies, directors are advised that while coverage across all three of the ENOP domains is required, coverage of all areas listed below is not.**

## **General Introduction to Work and Organisational Psychology**

1. What is Work and Organisational Psychology
2. History of Work and Organisational Psychology
3. Research in Work and Organisational Psychology: Principles, Methods and Techniques
4. The Role of the Work and Organisational Psychologist
5. Ethic and Professional Practice

## **I. Work Psychology**

1. The Analysis of Work in the 21st Century
2. Measurement in Work and Organisational Psychology
3. Work and Workplace Design
4. Ergonomics
5. Human-Machine Interaction
6. Health and Safety at Work
7. Prevention of Human Errors and Accidents
8. Work Time and Behaviour at Work
9. Attitudes at Work: Job Satisfaction, Job Involvement, Organisational Commitment and Engagement
10. Work Motivation
11. Employee Sickness, Absence, Attrition and Turnover
12. Psychological Aspects of Workload and Work Stress
13. Work-Life Balance
14. Diversity in the Labour Market and Workplace
15. Interface between Work and Organisational Psychology and Economic Psychology
16. Work Socialization of Young People

## **II. Personnel Psychology and Human Resources**

1. Job Analysis, Job Evaluation and Task Characteristics
2. Personnel Selection: Principles, Predictors, Models and Techniques
3. The Recruitment/Selection Process
4. The Structure, measurement, Validity and Use of Personality Constructs in Work and Organisational Psychology
5. Assessment Centre Methods
6. Assessment of Performance: Individual, Group and Organisational
7. Performance Development, Management and Feedback
8. Individual Development in the Workplace
9. Reward Systems
10. Design, Development, Delivery and Evaluation of Interventions in Organisation
11. Organisational Training and Development
12. Career Development and Management
13. Management Development
14. Participative Management
15. Psychological Contracts
16. Developing Policy and Procedures for Optimising Individual and Organisational Functioning
17. Counterproductive Behaviours at Work
18. Coaching and Mentoring Systems
19. Older Workers
20. Conflict, Negotiation and Conflict Management

## 21. Well-being, Burnout and Engagement

### **III. Organisational Psychology**

1. Theories of Organisation
2. Structure and Process in Organisations
3. Productivity and Effectiveness in Organisations
4. Effective Communication in Organisations
5. Complex and Effective Decision-making in Organisations
6. Judgement and Decision Making
7. Leadership: Theories and Models
8. Group Dynamics at Work
9. Teams, Team Development and Multiteam Systems
10. Organisational Culture
11. Planned Change in Organisations and Organisational Development
12. Assessment of Organisational Change
13. The Levers of Organisational Change: Facilitators and Inhibitors
14. Organizational Psychology in a Cross-cultural Perspective
15. Developments of Socio-technical Systems Design
16. Interorganisational Networks
17. Interaction of Person/Group-Organisational Environment
18. Positive Psychology and Organisational Development
19. Organisations in Context: Ecological Aspects of Work and Organisational Psychology
20. Organisational Diagnosis
21. Organisational Consulting
22. Strategic Management and Management Interventions
23. Industrial Democratisation and Industrial Relations
24. Automation: Socio-organisational Aspects
25. Transformations to a Market Economy

