**THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY**

*Quebec, February 1ˢᵗ, 2015*

*Sverre L. Nielsen*
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*Chair of the International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP)*
*Supported by the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) and*
*International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS)*

Dear Sverre,

**RE: IPCP Progress Report and Draft International Declaration on Core
Competences in Psychology**

Thank you for inviting national, regional and international organisations of psychology
to review and comment the *Draft International Declaration on Core Competences in
Psychology.*

I have circulated the IPCP Progress Report and the Draft International Declaration
among the members of the IAAP Board of Directors immediately after I received
those documents from you last December. You will find attached a summary of the
comments and suggestions that I have received in response to my request for
feedback. I hope you will find them helpful.

Some IAAP Board Members have submitted the draft Declaration to their national
psychological associations for review. Four national organisations have responded to
their request for feedback. Those comments were sent to me so that I could forward
them to you on their behalf. As they represent the view of organisations other than
IAAP, I have not included them in the attached summary. Instead, you will find them
attached to the e-mail that will follow this one.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank you for your work on this important
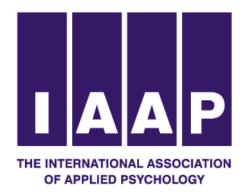international project.

Yours sincerely,

Prof./Dr. Janel Gauthier
President of the International Association of Applied Psychology

Encl.:  Summary of Comments and Suggestions from the IAAP Board of Directors
cc.:     IAAP Board of Directors

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED
ON THE DRAFT INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION
ON CORE COMPETENCES IN PSYCHOLOGY
DATED "DECEMBER 2014"

Submitted on behalf of IAAP to the IPCP Work Group
by
Janel Gauthier
President of IAAP
February 1$^{st}$, 2015


## GENERAL COMMENTS

General comments about the draft document have been positive and supportive.
Here are some examples:

"I´ve received the IPCP report and I´m happy to know that it is advancing as expected. I find it is a very important initiative, from IAAP and IUPsyS, looking at the globalization of Psychology."

"I think that the document is already well developed and structured."

"I have read the document several times, shared the information with some members of the Local Psychology Association Governing Committee in Uganda. It is my pleasure to inform you that I agree to the views expressed in this document."

"As a member of IAAP and present President of Asia Pacific Association of Psychology (APAP). I join you in this positive movement towards unity and uniformity in the Draft on International Declaration of Core Competences in Psychology. I endorse it fully and look forward to adopting it for APAP, once it is approved at Milan in 2015."

"Thank you for distributing the draft of the International Declaration on Core Competences in Psychology. I have carefully read the document and am very impressed by the outcome of this difficult task. I fully endorse the ideas presented in it."

"I have carefully read the documents and it seems that the declaration has already a clear structure with parts that are well specified. However, I do have a few comments and they are specifically related with the core competences that have been chosen."

"The idea of trying to establish core competencies all psychologists need to have is laudable and the document is a very good first step. I like how the core competencies are broad enough so that they are relatively open to interpretation to suit the needs of national associations. Sometimes, however, I wonder whether the competencies are perhaps too broad."

"I think this is an excellent initiative. I also thought that the document is solid and do not have suggestions for revision."
"Overall, we are supportive of the report and the draft International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology. We agree with the structure of the competence model, the focus on core competences, and the use of the term evidence-based practice. We consider cultural awareness and competence as a definite core competence, and are pleased with the changes made since the last draft."

# SPECIFIC COMMENTS

## A) REPORT

Page 3, Procedure: possible missing word 'are' in the following sentence: "Competences which ==are== aspirational or not commonly recognized throughout the world as "core competencies" for entry into the profession were left out."

STRUCTURE

Page 3: What is the structure of the IPCP model? On page 3, under "Procedure", it is written: « 3. The structure of the model (i.e. the four main section headings)", which refers to four main headings. I see only three: professional behavior, professional activities, knowledge and skills.

ON ISSUES

- **Core vs Optional Competences**

Page 5, bottom: The distinction between core and optional competences is problematic, due to mixing together entry level qualifications, frequency of practice, and development during one's career. There seems to be only minimal recognition of the context of one's chosen field of practice. I recognize and respect the need to focus on a core, but I am not sure that the diversity of applied practice can be well managed within this "core."

- **Evidence-Based Practice**

Agree with the use of the term « evidence-based practice ».

- **Best Practice**

Page 6, section on Best Practice: Perhaps that the definition of this term (best practice) appears 'not widely agreed upon'?

- **Supervision as a Core Competence**

Page 6, Supervision as a Core Competence: Based on the received feedback, perhaps Supervision could be listed as optional.

"As to supervision as a core competence, I think that it is aspirational at entry level."
"Regarding the debate on whether or not supervision of other psychologists is a core competence or not, I can say that to my knowledge in Germany and Switzerland it is necessary to complete an advanced training for supervising other psychotherapists for example. Thus, I would also not recommend including this as a core competence because it is not necessarily part of the basic education in psychology."

"Requiring supervision of other psychologists at the entry level is inappropriate for work and organizational (W-O) psychologists.  We who work in an academic setting do not do this.  The majority of us who work as a consultant do so as individuals.  Hence, we do not supervise others.  This requirement is arguably applicable only for those of us employed in consulting firms or in the private/public sector where there are two or more psychologists.  Note that the statement on page 9, "…to focus strictly on the application of psychological principles, theories and methods…" in no way encompasses or suggests competency in supervising other psychologists."

PREAMBLE

Page 5, Preamble: I am in support of this proposed approach.

GLOSSARY

Page 5: Glossary: This is very good and appropriate.

## B) DRAFT DECLARATION

**PREAMBLE**

Page 8, first paragraph of the Preamble: perhaps the absence of 'a' (as opposed to 'any') in the following sentence: "…that defines appropriate professional practice, and the absence of <mark>any</mark> widely accepted mechanism of mutual recognition…"

Page 8, Preamble, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph:  As the opening paragraph for an international declaration, this paragraph fails to persuade me that:
    § Globalization of psychology has resulted in positive benefits
    § The challenges are critical
    § Applied psychologists need a coherent global professional identity
    § A mechanism of mutual recognition can embrace both diversity and
       competence
One of the outcomes of this project may be some evidence that there is a set of knowledge, skills and abilities that defines appropriate professional practice, but that remains to be determined. The draft Core Competence Model in itself is not evidence but rather a rubric to guide the search for evidence.
Page 9, paragraph 1, line 4: recommendation to replace the word "helping" (activity) with "professional".

Page 9, paragraph 1, line 6: "resolving human difficulties and improving a person's quality of life" does not acknowledge groups, communities, organisations or systems and seems to prioritise problems over well-being. Recommend to make this statement less person and problem focussed.

Page 9, Paragraph 1, line 9: omit "concisely" (it is a split infinitive and the word is not needed). Same applies to paragraph 2, third line, omit "better".

Page 9, third paragraph: add 'safe' ? Perhaps the benefits in protection of clients via this effort should also be highlighted in the document. My comment pertains to the following sentence: "The competent psychologist must recognize her or his own historical and cultural perspective and possible biases resulting from these and provide useful and effective psychological services that understands and respects these same aspects of the clients one seeks to serve."

Page 9, last paragraph, clinical evidence: Strike the word clinical as not all professional psychologists are clinical psychologists (e.g., W-O psychologists, child psychologists, educational psychologists). For the same reasons, remove the word clinical in the next sentence (clinical context). If you wish to restrict one or more competencies to clinical/counseling psychology, make this explicit.

Page 9, last paragraph, line 8: recommend to replace "clinical" with "professional", as clinical suggests a very narrow focus of professional work: "competent psychologists consider the appropriate scientific and APPLIED evidence …..and modify their services based on the specific client and professional contexts in which they are working…"

Page 9, bottom paragraph: The spell checked allowed the work "proscribed" when I think that the intended meaning is "prescribed."

Page 9, bottom paragraph: There are many fields of applied psychology in which mention of "the specific clinical context" is not relevant. I think that mention of the "client situation" covers all fields well enough.

Page 10, second paragraph ("This **International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology** presents the core professional competences…"): This paragraph seems to be misplaced. Surely, it is not meant to be part of the final, endorsed statement. It seems to me to be better placed much earlier in the current draft, ahead of the preamble.

## CORE COMPETENCE MODEL

- **Knowledge and Skills**

  - **KN**

No comment.

  - **SK**

Page 10, SK2: Under SK2, I wonder whether "psychological practice" also includes teaching and research in psychology and whether these are aspects of psychological practices that need to be clearly stated.

- **Professional Behaviour**

"Activities are also behaviours. Therefore, this category has a name (Professional Behaviour) that does not only apply to it. It also applies to the next category

(Professional Activities). A solution, that many competence experts have found, is to name PE, AP, ER, WD, EP and SR as "attitudes".”

“My main question is about the distinction among “professional behavior” (PB) and “professional activities” (PA) in the table describing the core competence model. In fact, when reading it, sometimes I had the impression that the elements under the heading PB could also be framed as PA (for example, in the case of ER and WD in the table); or vice versa (for example, in the case of SG and CO in the table). I think it could be either useful to explicitly state in the document what is intended as PB and PA and/or to change some of the classification elements.”

“The model introduces Professional Behavior and Professional Activities. As not-English speaking country representative I think that we will translate “Professional” Behavior rather as something close to “Attitudes”.”

“In particular, I also question the need to differentiate between Professional Activities and Professional Behavior.”

“Distinguishing between Professional Behavior and Professional Activities is quite difficult – is the distinction needed?”

- **PE (Practices Ethically)**

Page 11, PE1: I understand that these codes are based on psychology. However, as they are stated here, they may wrongly suggest cultural, national or even religious codes.

Page 11, PE2: I understand that these laws and rules are based on psychology. However, as they are stated here, they may wrongly suggest cultural, national or even religious laws and rules.

Page 11, PE2: PE2 could be more specific by adding relevant tools, instrument and methods, apart from laws and rules.

Page 11, PE3: Some ethical dilemmas may be recognized, but their resolution may not be under the decision of the psychologist. This statement suggests that the psychologist must resolve them. If the psychologist has not the power to resolve them, how could he/she do it?

Page 11: PE1 and PE3 strike me as redundant.

- **AP (Acts Professionally)**

Page 11, AP5: “In particular, I also that AP5 "Refers to relevant others when appropriate" needs to be reworded. As currently worded, the meaning of the term 'refers' is ambiguous, especially for non-clinicians like myself. I would find it much clearer if it were reworded, as proposed by some other members of the Board Members, as follows: “Makes referrals to relevant others when appropriate”.
Page 11: AP5 might be more clearly stated as “Makes referrals to relevant others when appropriate”.

Page 11: AP6 might substitute “unpredicted” for “unpredictable”.

- **ER (Relates Appropriately to Clients and Others)**

The new trend for applied psychologists now is to work in multidisciplinary team. This might be added either in ER1 (working relationships with professional colleagues) or WD3 (diversity in teams).

Page 11 ER1: recommend to clarify if "professional colleagues" includes only psychologists or other professions as well, (e.g., "relationships with psychology and other professional colleagues" or "with other professions").

Page 11: ER2: recommend to clarify who the "and others" refers to (e.g., family, community, organisations); this probably can be clarified by modifying the paragraph on page 9 (perhaps including a reference to "others" there) because we agree that the competence statements should be short and focussed.

Page 11: ER2 might be better ordered for external audiences if it preceded ER1 and they were renumbered.

- **WD (Works Effectively with all Forms of Diversity)**

Page 11, WD: A third competency that I believe needs to be clearly defined is under WD. The definition of Diversity in the glossary does include the term "inclusion", but I believe the word "inclusion" does need to be in the description of the competency. The Academy of Management has been trying to be diverse for many years and now finds that the challenge is to make those who come from diverse backgrounds feel included. Many MNCs, particularly in the banking sector (e.g., Standard Charter Bank), lists "diversity and inclusion" as part of the information about the bank. To list only Diversity seems to me to be missing the more important part of valuing diversity - inclusion.

- **EP (Operates as an Evidence-Based Practitioner)**

Page 12, EP2: recommend to modify as follows: "consults AND USES psychological…."

- **SR (Reflects on Own Work)**

Page 12, SR1: This is aspirational. Many clients of W-O psychologists are content to subjectively evaluate the efficiency/effectiveness of the psychologist's activities.

• **Professional Activities**

Page 12, Professional Activities: "Professional" is also an appropriate word for naming the prior category. Therefore, it should not be used here. Maybe a better word could be "methodological". There is also "technical", but I would prefer the former.

NOTE: The attempt and the need to differentiate between "Professional Activities" and "Professional Behaviour" in the model were the focus of several comments. For further details, see comments about "Professional Behaviour" (PB).

- **SG (Sets Relevant Goals)**

Page 12, SG: I have the overall feeling that some of the competences are unfolded, considering all the aspects, while others are kept superficial. For instance, in Professional Activities, we have SG. I would have some specifications for SG: Establishes goals *for what?* (*Assessment, intervention...*) Based on *whose?* Need

analysis *(stakeholders)*. Here it is usually important also to adjust goals and expectations (related with AP3 - boundaries of competences).

Page12, SG1: recommend to replace "needs analysis" which in our view is a specific assessment tool with a more general word such as "a thorough assessment"

- **PA (Conducts Psychological Assessments and Evaluations)**

Page 12, PA vs PA1: PA and PA1 are quite similar and PA looks repetitive.

Page 12, PA1: I suggest adding: "..., in order to analyze needs or effects of interventions."

Page 12: recommend to clarify that PA1 is a somewhat higher order competence, and that PA 2, 3, 4 are the competences contained within PA1.

Page 12: PA1 seems fully redundant with its parts that are expressed in PA2, PA3 and PA4.

- **PI (Conducts Psychological Interventions)**

Page 13, PI1 and PI2: recommend to consider adding the words "evidence-based", e.g., PI1 "..evidence-based psychological interventions" and PI2 …. "using evidence-based methods"…

Page 13, PI2: "Designs, develops and evaluates the usefulness and effectiveness of …": This is already described in PAs above.

Page 13, PI2: PI2 might be confusing as in the PI4 the evaluation of usefulness and effectiveness of the intervention is repeated.

Page 13, PI2: I am not sure these commas are appropriate here: "…evaluates the usefulness and effectiveness of, psychological interventions, using methods…".

Page 13, PI4: This should be classified as PA above, while the former (PI3) and the next (PI5) should stay here.

Page 13: PI4 seems redundant with the other examples.

- **CO (Communicates Effectively and Appropriately)**

Page 13, CO1: recommend using instead of communicates "to" … communicates WITH; in our view, "to" denotes a hierarchical one-way communication, whereas "with" denotes a collaborative interaction.

Page 13, CO3: (a) typo: needs to say "provides"; (b) recommend reconsidering "unbiased" as the word is very value-laden and we wondered as to how easily it can be assessed. We agree with the intent of "unbiased" but also think that "evidence-based" is not the best substitute.

OTHER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- "In this fast changing environment, adaptability should be also considered as a core competence and not an optional one."

- "I like how the core competencies are broad enough so that they are relatively open to interpretation to suit the needs of national associations. Sometimes, however, I wonder whether the competencies are perhaps too broad. For example, the Knowledge and Skills competencies states having the necessary foundation knowledge. At its extreme, this could be achieved by taking 1 introductory psychology course. I wonder whether a minimum educational qualification needs to be included (e.g., certificate in psychology, at a minimum)."

## GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY: This is very good and appropriate here.

"Foundational knowledge", "specialized knowledge", "basic skills", and "specialized skills" warrant definition in the **Glossary**.

Page 15, definition of "evidence-based practice": Not everything we do is "grounded in theory". Inductive research with impressive empirically derived findings may accumulate for several years before a formal theory is developed. A theory requires the identification of mediators and moderators in addition to specifying cause-effect relationships. Rewrite: "Data that are grounded in theory and/or empirical research…"

Page 15, definition of "Practitioner": 'other roles, for example, but not limited to'. Change "as opposed to adopting only such roles as administration, teaching or research" for "as opposed to adopting other roles such as, for example, but not limited to, administration, teaching or research".

Page 16, definition of "Supervision": It is my assumption that sometimes supervision does not involve exclusively senior and junior; could involve two seniors.

Page 16, Supervision: An appropriate definition that is inappropriate for many professional psychologists who practice outside the domain of clinical/counseling psychology.

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