

Fact sheet:

Professional competencies for psychologists

Understanding digital competence

Background

Given the increasing use and reliance on digital technology to deliver services remotely, store and share information, conduct research, and communicate with clients, colleagues and others, the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) has updated the *Professional competencies for psychologists* to provide additional clarity and guidance about our requirements.

The *Professional competencies for psychologists* are in effect from 1 December 2025.

What are the key features of safe, effective and competent practice?

Competency 6.4

Effectively uses the most appropriate form/s of communication for the client and context; and is aware of the limitations of each mode of communication, including both face to face and digital health practice.

Other competencies that are relevant to understanding digital competence

Competency 2.1 – 2.10

Practises ethically and professionally. Competency 2 addresses the legal and ethical use of digital health to practice safely and within the boundaries of professional competence.

Competency 4.1

Has knowledge of the relative strengths and limitations of the different methods of assessment and modes of delivery relevant to practice across the lifespan and in different contexts, including cultural contexts.

Competency 5.1

Has knowledge of the efficacy and effectiveness of a range of interventions and modes of delivery relevant to practice across the lifespan and in different contexts, including cultural contexts.

What does this mean for practitioners?

Psychologists practising in Australia have always been required to use information, communication and digital technologies in a lawful, ethical and professional manner as appropriate to their scope of practice.

The *Professional competencies for psychologists* have been updated to emphasise the importance for all psychologists to demonstrate digital competence.

We expect that technology is to be used professionally, competently, safely and appropriately. We expect that all psychologists will have a foundational level of understanding so they can meet the minimum threshold professional competency.

The *Professional competencies for psychologists* do not require practitioners to be aware of, or use all digital skills and technologies currently available. Rather we expect practitioners to be proactive in keeping up to date with digital skills and new technologies as relevant to their scope of practice. This is because digital competence is vital in providing safe and effective care.

Practitioners should consider the impact of new technologies on privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, security of data storage and communication, as well as carefully considering the relative risks and benefits of using the technology.

There is no set way to meet this competency. Practitioners should use their professional judgement when applying the *Professional competencies for psychologists* to ensure they can sufficiently demonstrate them in their role and workplace as relevant to their scope of practice.

What does digital competence mean?

Digital competence is the confident and critical usage of a range of digital technologies for information, communication and basic problem-solving.

What does digital health mean?

Digital health is the use of digital, mobile and wireless technologies in health. It is the application of data and information technology to gather, store, retrieve and study to improve processes, service, delivery of client care and health outcomes.

It includes (but is not limited to) the use of digital tools for record keeping, research, collecting and storing data, and practice management systems. It also includes any use of artificial intelligence (AI) in psychology practice.

What does digital health practice mean?

Digital health practice is a term used to describe healthcare services, support and information provided remotely via digital communication and devices.

It includes (but is not limited to) telehealth, web-based interventions, use of apps and podcasts.

Case study

Melanie is the owner and senior psychologist of a group psychology practice. After reading the *Professional competencies for psychologists* she decides to become more aware of the digital skills and new technologies that are relevant to her role and the work of the team.

She begins by meeting with her staff to better understand the clinic's digital health needs, the team's digital health practice, and to ascertain their digital skill level. The focus is on developing an open understanding of both staff and service needs, and the risks inherent in using their current digital platforms and technologies.

Melanie asks the team to consider any gaps or issues in their service delivery where the use of technology could be improved. The staff identify some accessibility issues with the online intake form (clients report it is not user friendly) and some staff have questions about whether the software is sufficiently secure. The team raise some areas where their digital platform for telehealth could be improved to enhance the client experience and better integrate assessment questionnaires. They also note the underuse of web-based or app interventions for clients with low-intensity care needs, those on the waiting list, and for clients who would benefit from between session support.

Melanie then meets with the clinic's IT consultant, and a psychologist who has been recommended by her professional association who has expertise in digital innovation. This helps to benchmark her team's digital competence and explore other technologies that may be of assistance to her staff that would improve client access and experience of the clinic's services, while ensuring privacy and confidentiality of data.

As a team, they agree on a priority list of improvements, and decide to nominate and train up a digital champion. The digital champion's responsibility is to improve the online intake form, to work with the IT consultant to ensure all digital technologies have adequate security and encryption, to investigate the pros and cons of adopting a new telehealth and practice management system for the team's consideration, and to develop a list of evidenced-based web/app interventions appropriate to the clients seen by the clinic.

In addition, each member of the team identifies their own personal gaps or learning needs in their digital competence and commits to doing relevant training. Each month in their team meeting, one person is tasked with sharing what they have learned with the team, and how they have integrated this ethically and safely into their practice.

CPD guidance

Psychologists have an ongoing commitment to learning, education and training as outlined in the Board's [Continuing professional development \(CPD\) registration standard](#).

Practitioners who identify digital competency learning needs should consider the level or depth of professional development required based on their scope of practice and work context.

While some practitioners will require CPD opportunities to enable them to meet the minimum threshold professional competency in using technology (foundational level CPD), others will have a deep personal or professional interest in digital technologies and seek CPD that will help them become digital champions (advanced CPD).

Practitioners who identify learning needs in digital competence may wish to consider focusing learning activities in the following areas (as relevant to your scope of practice):

- reading Ahpra and the Boards [Information for practitioners who provide virtual care](#)
- understanding the latest developments in technologies used for health delivery and learning how to better integrate technology into your practice
- learning how to evaluate the efficacy and security of a digital health app
- investigating an evidence-based digital health practice and incorporate this into your scope of practice
- learning how to introduce and integrate digital health practice with your clients
- Carrying out a practice audit and determine if your current digital health practices are safe, effective and contemporary. Develop a plan for integrating improvements in digital health practice
- learning about the ethical challenges in digital healthcare
- learning about gamification and big data in digital health practice
- improving your understanding and use of the software, practice management system or other digital health systems you currently use
- investigating the opportunities and challenges for using artificial intelligence (AI) in psychology practice
- seeking advice from a digital health champion in identified areas of your practice, and
- undertaking a graduate certificate in digital health (for digital champions or those seeking advanced CPD)

CPD includes a variety of learning modes such as: reading, workshops, seminars, conferences, professional podcasts or DVDs, active CPD, master classes, supervision, and includes reflective and reflexive professional practice.

The *Professional competencies for psychologists* were made after wide-ranging public consultation, to ensure they are contemporary and relevant to safe and effective psychology practice.