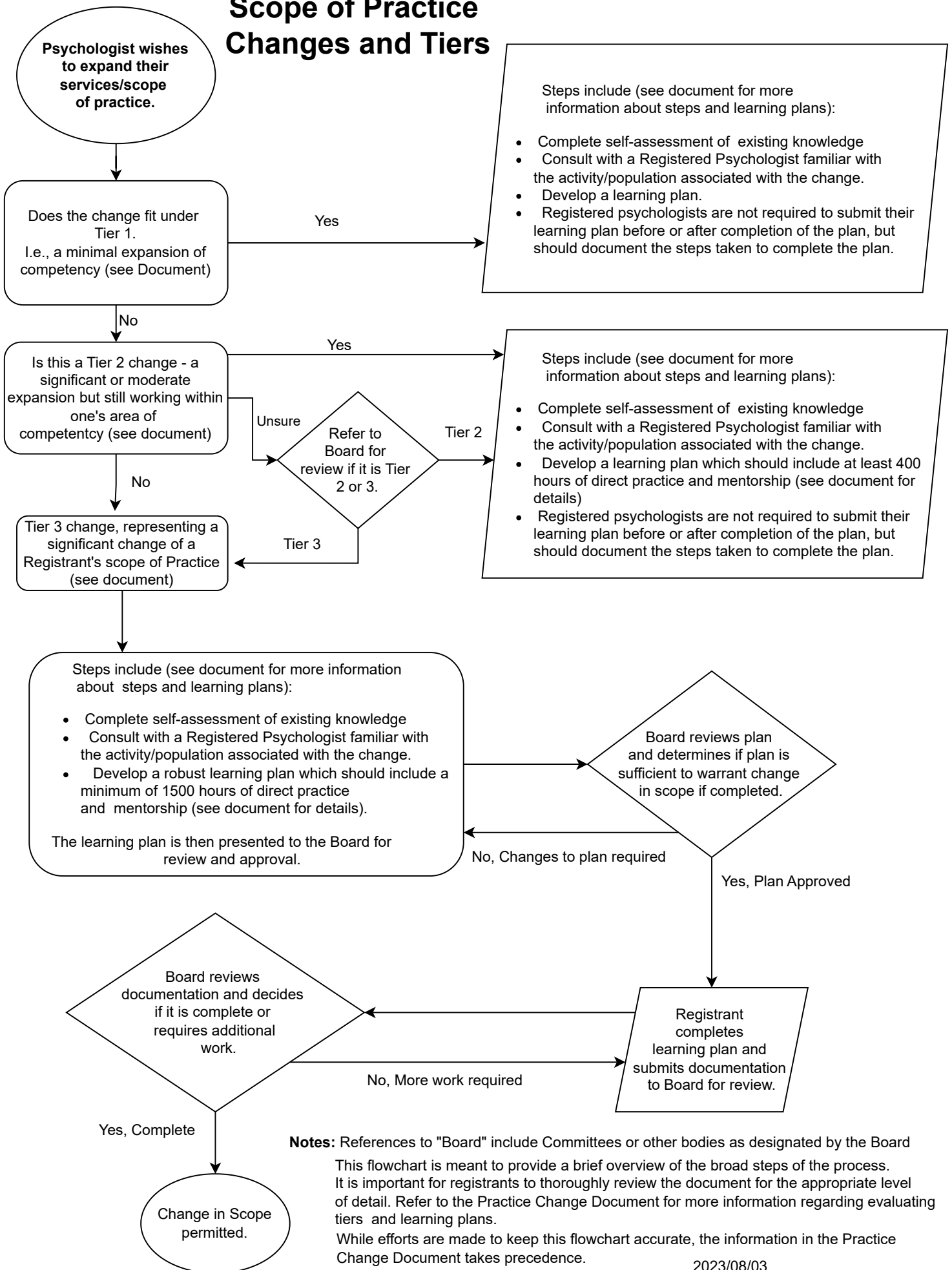


Scope of Practice Changes and Tiers



Notes: References to "Board" include Committees or other bodies as designated by the Board. This flowchart is meant to provide a brief overview of the broad steps of the process. It is important for registrants to thoroughly review the document for the appropriate level of detail. Refer to the Practice Change Document for more information regarding evaluating tiers and learning plans. While efforts are made to keep this flowchart accurate, the information in the Practice Change Document takes precedence.

Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology
Policy: Learning Plans and Scope of Practice for Registered Psychologists

Practice Area / Areas of Practice (Scope of Practice)

Defined as the area in which a psychologist is actively engaged with respect to populations served and issues and/or types of work completed.

Competency Areas / Areas of Competency (Scope of Competency)

Defined as the area in which a psychologist has competency to practice based on academic learning and supervised practice.

Expansion within Existing Area of Competency

Having achieved an integrated and organized sequence of study within their areas of competency, psychologists may seek to expand the population they are working with or learn other new skills related to their areas of competency.

Doing this would be governed by Standard IV.1 (NSBEP Standards for Providers) as outlined below.

Psychologists shall limit their delivery of services to those areas of competence as defined by verifiable training and experience.

Interpretation: In the event that a psychologist chooses to expand services beyond the range of those usually delivered, the psychologist shall obtain pertinent training and/or appropriate professional supervision.

Tier 1 (Minimal Expanding of Competency Area):

A Tier 1 change would represent the lowest Tier of expansion. Put simply, a psychologist who wishes to simply further their knowledge in an area that is well within their areas of competency, but which is not currently or recently in their area of practice. In general, requests in this area would be to work with populations within the same age range and within the same types of disorders or severity of disorders as originally trained in (e.g., severe psychopathology for clinical psychologists, working with children and adolescents for school psychologists, etc.).

Please note that the examples are intended to be illustrative in nature and not definitive, as individual differences in prior training and experience could influence the Tier and amount of study required.

Examples could include:

- An adult clinical psychologist who would like to start treating adults with borderline personality disorder
- A school psychologist who would like to treat individuals with anxiety disorder within schools
- A counselling psychologist wishing to start treating adults using ACT

When considering such a change, initial steps should include completing an assessment of one's existing knowledge related to the desired expansion and consulting with a Registered Psychologist who has expertise with the activity and/population. Registered Psychologists are welcome to review more detailed information on Learning Plans that is provided later in this document; however, they do not need to complete or submit a formal Learning Plan for a Tier 1 change. Registrants should document their approach of ensuring they have the knowledge and skills required for the expansion and utilize the NSBEP Continuing Competence process to augment their approach with the new activity/population.

Candidates should consult the [Supervision Handbook](#) for the approval process required during the period of candidacy.

Tier 2 (Significant Expanding of Competency Area or Areas)

This would represent a significant or moderate level of expansion but still working within an individual's areas of competence. In other words, a psychologist who is looking to significantly change the focus of their work but still within the realm of their training and educational background. In these cases, a psychologist may be requesting to work with slightly different populations than originally trained in but only by a small degree (e.g., a group of disorders that requires specialized training like Eating Disorders for a clinical psychologist, a school psychologist who did not complete significant intervention coursework but is looking to run group anxiety treatment within a school setting, etc.).

Examples could include:

- A child clinical psychologist who would like to start working with infant mental health (0-2), potentially assessing for Autism Spectrum Disorder or other developmental disabilities
- A school psychologist looking to counsel young adults (e.g., undergraduates) on anxiety and adjustment issues within the university setting
- A forensic psychologist looking to conduct private practice work in anxiety and depression management with a defined range of adults (e.g., 18-65).
- A counselling psychologist looking to begin working with couples conducting marital therapy

In this case, initial steps should include completing an assessment of one's existing knowledge related to the desired expansion and consulting with a Registered Psychologist who has expertise with the activity and/population.

Registrants should develop a Learning Plan to address the knowledge and skills that will be required to work with the new activity/population. Registrants should also utilize the NSBEP Continuing Competence process to augment the activities of their Learning Plan. The plan should also involve engaging in at least 400 hours of direct practice related to the population, while they are receiving mentorship.

Registered Psychologists do not need to submit their Learning Plan to the Board for a Tier 2 change. However, if a registrant has consulted a psychologist with expertise relating to the desired activity and/population and is still uncertain whether their Learning Plan constitutes a Tier 2 or 3 change, they may submit a letter of intent to the Board. This letter should clearly outline what expansion the registrant would like to make to their area of competence along with sufficiently outlining their existing training and experience. This information will be reviewed by the Registration Subcommittee at its next available meeting. For more information about meeting dates and submission deadlines please see the Board's [website](#). More guidance on developing a Learning Plan is provided later in this document.

Candidates should consult the [Supervision Handbook](#) for the approval process required during the period of candidacy.

Tier 3 Addition of an Area of Competency

This Tier represents the highest level of change to a Registrant's scope of practice and identifies a psychologist who is looking to work with new populations or develop competency in areas they were not initially trained to work with. This Tier identifies those who are essentially looking to change their roles and practice in a clear and significant manner, conducting work typically done by a psychologist trained in another area of competency. In general, these individuals are seeking to work with a new age group, a new group of disorders or issues, or working within an environment/setting that is different than their training prepared them for (e.g., a counselling psychologist looking to work within the prison system). In all areas/examples the psychologist would not have completed a cohesive series of graduate studies or internship in these areas.

Examples could include:

- A clinical psychologist seeking work in the field of forensic assessment or conducting neuropsychological assessment or rehabilitation work {e.g., traumatic brain injuries)
- A school psychologist treating individuals of any age for severe mental health concerns, including risk of suicide or self-harm, major depressive episodes, or other significant psychopathology (e.g., OCD, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, PTSD, etc.)
- A counselling psychologist looking to work within the school system performing psychoeducational assessments or conducting classroom-based interventions for children

A Tier 3 change would be governed by Standard IV.3 (NSBEP Standards for Providers) as outlined below.

Psychologists who wish to change their service specialty or to add an additional area of specialization must meet the same requirements with respect to subject matter and professional skills that apply to a post-graduate training in the new specialty.

Training psychologists to qualify them for change in specialty will be under the auspices of appropriate institutions that offer post-graduate training in that specialty. Such training should be individualized, due credit being given for relevant course work or requirements that have previously been satisfied. For example, merely taking an internship or acquiring experience in a practicum setting is not considered adequate preparation for becoming a clinical, counselling, industrial-organizational or school psychologist when prior training has not been in the relevant area. Fulfillment of such an individualized training program may be attested by the award of a certificate by the supervising department or professional school indicating the successful completion of preparation in the specialty.

Note: The Board recognizes that Standard IV.3 reflects a gold standard approach, but given the lack of opportunities to reasonably allow for completing a re-specialization graduate program, the approach outlined below for Tier 3 will be considered by the Board.

A Tier 3 change by a Registered Psychologist would involve the completion of a significant amount of coursework, mentorship and other didactic activities that are integrated and vetted by a Registered Psychologist with expertise in the desired area of competence. Registrants should assess their existing knowledge and skills that are related to the desired expansion and thoroughly consult with a Registered Psychologist who has expertise with the area of competence, who can inform the development of their Plan. The Plan will also require a Mentor who will provide mentorship while the registrant completes a minimum of 1500 hours of practice related to the new area of competence. However, additional time may be required depending on prior knowledge and experience of the registrant and/or as required by the Board. Transcripts or records of formal coursework and didactic activities should be retained by the Registered Psychologist and submitted to the Board when the Learning Plan is completed. More guidance on developing a Learning Plan is provided in the following section of this document.

A Tier 3 change is generally unavailable during the period of candidate registration.

Guiding Principles for a Learning Plan

Training consists of two elements: acquisition of knowledge and acquisition of skills. The amount of training required will vary, depending on the degree of overlap between the expanded scope and that for which the Registrant already possesses, as well as with their prior academic preparation. For example, Registrants wishing to extend their practice to include clinical psychology or clinical neuropsychology will need to undertake considerable training.

Acquisition of knowledge

The types of activities suitable for fulfilling this criterion include successful completion of graduate level courses if available, attendance at workshops/conferences and individual reading. Content should include not only the necessary clinical material but should also cover ethical and jurisprudence issues relevant to the new activity/population/area of practice. The training curriculum should ensure coverage of all facets of knowledge for the new activity/population/area of practice and which the Registrant had not previously acquired.

Acquisition of skills

Skills are acquired through practice under the mentorship of a Registrant competent in the new activity/population/area of practice. As well as client contact, this will include discussion of relevant clinical and especially diagnostic issues with the Mentor and discussion of the practical application of ethics and jurisprudence knowledge.

Requirements of a Learning Plan

A Learning Plan should specifically include the following items:

- a) The psychologist should complete and assessment of their existing knowledge and skills that are related to the desired expansion. Specific relevant coursework and supervised practice should be listed in the Plan.
- b) A statement clearly articulating the activity/population/area of competency which the Registrant wishes to add.
- c) A detailed description of the knowledge that will be acquired by the registrant, including descriptions of courses or continuing competence activities, as well as a list of readings that will be completed. This description should be structured in such a way as to demonstrate that the combination of the registrant's prior training and the new training yields the requisite knowledge and skills for the expansion. And, when desiring to add a new area of competence, the registrant ensures the prior and new training yields the requisite knowledge and skills for the corresponding area of practice as described in the NSBEP's definitions of [Areas of Practice](#).
- d) A description of the skills that will be acquired including the number and type of clients planned to be seen during mentorship, the nature of the services that will be provided to them, as well as the number of hours of mentorship.
- e) Registered Psychologists do not submit learning plans for Tier 1 & 2 level changes. (Candidates must follow the process outlined in the Supervision Handbook). However, Registered Psychologists should retain a copy of their documentation and Learning Plan should there be a question about competence at a later date. Individuals who are planning a Tier 3 change should submit their Learning Plan to NSBEP for review before undertaking the additional training, education, and mentorship.

Learning Plans for Tier 3 expansions should be submitted to the Board and will be reviewed by the Registration Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will review the Learning Plan in relation to the minimum level of knowledge base and skills required for the practice area, as outlined in the NSBEP's definitions of [Areas of Practice](#), along with considering the registrant's existing, relevant coursework and supervised practice that the registrant has listed in their Plan. The Registrant will be notified of the decision (provided with feedback on their Learning Plan).

Checklist for Learning Plans

- Have you completed an assessment of your existing knowledge and skills that may relate to the desired expansion? Specific coursework should be considered along with the number of hours of relevant supervised practice, if applicable. May also include consideration of workshops, professional reading, and other didactic experiences.
- Have you consulted with a Registered Psychologist with relevant expertise about your Learning Plan?
- Do you have a Registered Psychologist(s) whom you can consult, and in cases involving a tier 2 or 3 expansion, a Registered Psychologist to provide mentorship?
- Have you considered setting relevant Continuing Competence Learning Objectives with respect to this expansion?
- Have you considered whether there is legislation or guidance documentation applicable to the population/activity/area of competence that you will be working with that may be different or apply differently than it would to your current area of practice? For a listing of legislation and guidance documentation provided by NSBEP, please visit the following URL: http://www.nsbep.org/downloads/Binder_Standards_Legislation_Guidelines.pdf

Completion and Conclusion of Learning Plan Process for Tier 3 Expansions

Once the Board has approved the Learning Plan, the registrant can begin to carry out the activities of their Plan.

Once the registrant has completed all of the activities contained in their Plan, the Board will require independent verification in the form of a letter from the Mentor confirming that the training described in points b) and c) (from earlier section on Requirements of a Learning Plan) have taken place, describing the knowledge and skills attained by the registrant and attesting to the registrant's readiness for autonomous practice in regard to the area of competence, activity or with the new client group. Transcripts and/or records of formal coursework and didactic activities should have been retained by the Registered Psychologist and they should be submitted at the time when the Mentor's letter is provided to the Board.

The final recommendation of the Mentor will be reviewed by the Registration Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will review the final documentation in relation to the minimum level of knowledge base and skills as outlined in the NSBEP's definitions of [Areas of Practice](#).

Upon reviewing the letter from the Mentor and any other documentation, the Board may do any of the following:

- Require additional information from the Registrant or the Mentor
- Refuse the request for expansion and outline what additional activities are required
- Approve the expansion.

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