



EMPLOYERS' GUIDE TO RECRUITING CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN HONG KONG

Issued in association with

The Hong Kong Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology

Introduction

In Hong Kong, most clinical psychologists are members of either or both the Hong Kong Clinical Psychologists Association (“HKCPA”) and the Hong Kong Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology (“DCP”).

The HKCPA, established in 1980, is a registered trade union of qualified clinical psychologists working in the Government, the Hospital Authority, non-government organizations, and in private practice. The DCP, established in 1982, is an association of qualified clinical psychologists formed under the Hong Kong Psychological Society (HKPS) which is a professional and learned society.

Together, HKCPA and DCP have close to 400 full members constituting about 90 percent of all qualified clinical psychologists in Hong Kong. HKCPA and DCP share the same membership criteria.

As statutory registration of clinical psychologists is not in place, there is no law to define what a clinical psychologist is or to regulate the practice of clinical psychology. With professional goodwill, HKCPA and DCP have since 30 years ago taken up the responsibility to protect the public and the profession of clinical psychology. Admitting only those who have proper clinical psychology training to become members is one of the many ways through which HKCPA and DCP ensure good clinical psychology service in Hong Kong. DCP members must abide by the *Code of Professional Conduct* of the HKPS.

This *Guide* is compiled to assist employers in identifying and recruiting “qualified clinical psychologists”.

Why is it so important to recruit a qualified clinical psychologist to provide clinical psychology service?

An employer owes a duty of care to service recipients. Without statutory registration, the best guarantee of proper clinical psychology service is to employ clinical psychologists who meet the criteria in this *Guide*. Recruiting a qualified clinical psychologist also helps build up the reputation and demonstrate goodwill of the agency. Recruiting an under-qualified or unqualified clinical psychologist to deliver clinical psychology service poses higher risks of professional malpractice and reputation damage to the agency.

Identifying a Qualified Clinical Psychologist

A qualified clinical psychologist is anyone who is either:

A. Currently a Full Member of DCP (or HKCPA*)

- Members of DCP are listed here: <https://www.hkps-dcp.org.hk/en/home-en/member-directory-en>
- Full Membership criteria: <https://www.hkps-dcp.org.hk/en/join-dcp-en>

*As a convention, trade union (HKCPA) membership list is not open to public but can be verified with the member's consent.

B. Eligible to become Full Member of DCP, either

- Holding a Statement of Eligibility for Full Membership of DCP of HKPS:
https://www.hkps-dcp.org.hk/images/downloads/005_DCP_Form_Application%20for%20statement%20of%20eligibility_2016-05-16.pdf
- Final-year students of local clinical psychology programmes recognized by DCP:
These students are automatically eligible to become DCP Full Member upon successful completion of the training. As at today, only the clinical psychology programmes of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong are recognized:
https://www.hkps-dcp.org.hk/images/downloads/recognition/A%20list%20of%20Recognized%20Local%20Training_updated_11_2017.pdf

A clinical psychologist whose qualification is questionable is anyone who has not fulfilled the criteria stated above but who holds one of the following three statuses:

- Applying for DCP Full Membership, or
- Applying for *Statement of Eligibility for Full Membership of DCP*, or
- Was once Full Member of DCP but no longer is

Vetting for DCP Membership or Eligibility may take three months. If the membership status or membership application status of a candidate is unclear, the employer can write to DCP for general advice or for specific enquiry.

An under-qualified or unqualified clinical psychologist, according to this *Guide*, is anyone who does not hold any of the statuses listed above, or anyone who is:

- Not eligible for DCP Full Membership, or
- Expelled from HKPS / DCP by disciplinary action:
http://www.hkps.org.hk/en/disciplinary_action/

What about non-locally trained clinical psychologists?

A substantial proportion of DCP and HKCPA members are trained and graduated overseas.

Non-locally trained clinical psychologists are welcome to apply for DCP and HKCPA Full Membership. Full Membership status will be granted for individuals whose qualifications and training meet the membership criteria adopted by DCP or HKCPA.

Why are some clinical psychologists not DCP Full Member?

These extenuating situations may arise from any of the following reasons:

- Their Psychology foundation training (undergraduate) and / or advanced clinical training (postgraduate) does not meet the standards required by DCP; or
- The clinical psychologist has seriously violated the code of professional conduct in Hong Kong or elsewhere that DCP cannot admit him or her as member;
- The clinical psychologist has seriously violated the code of professional conduct in Hong Kong and has been expelled by HKPS / DCP; or
- The clinical psychologist is fully qualified but chooses not to join or remain in DCP because s/he no longer requires the membership for his/her job position

Is it not so that the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (“HKCAAVQ”) can accredit a non-local degree in clinical psychology?

No. The HKCAAVQ only vets the academic qualifications of an individual to confirm that the qualifications or the degree(s) held and the university / training institutions are recognized by the Hong Kong SAR Government. It does not and cannot vet the professional competencies needed by someone to practice as a clinical psychologist in Hong Kong. On the other hand, HKCPA and DCP will examine the components of the training programme leading to the academic degree in detail to ascertain that the coverage and quality of the training meet the standard for professional practice in Hong Kong.

Is it not so that the status of “Registered Clinical Psychologist” or “Registered Psychologist” means that the psychologist is competent to work as clinical psychologist?

Before statutory registration is enacted in Hong Kong as it is now, there is no official regulation on the use of such title. In other words, any person can use such title without breaking the law and unqualified psychologists can establish their own registration system. This situation is very unfavourable to the public as quality of training and practice cannot be assured or monitored by one professional body. Since 1993, the HKPS has registered over 400 psychologists with advanced psychology degree and having relevant post-qualification work experience. However, only those registered with the specialty of “clinical psychology” are DCP members and thus considered “qualified clinical psychologists” in this *Guide*.

How about those clinical psychologists who are not HKPS DCP Full Members but are members of other professional bodies?

There are numerous professional psychological societies all over the world. There is such a wide range of membership criteria for such societies that it is impossible to determine whether their members are qualified to practice as clinical psychologists in Hong Kong without a vigorous examination of the criteria for their membership, particularly in respect of the required professional and academic training. The HKCPA and DCP, representing about 90% of local clinical psychologists do have members who are also members of reputable professional societies abroad. As such, membership of HKCPA or DCP is still the best guarantee that the clinical psychologist is competent to practise in Hong Kong.

Further information

The HKCPA (www.hkcpa.org.hk) and DCP (www.hkps-dcp.org.hk) welcome any current or prospective employer of clinical psychologists to contact us regarding:

- Professional competencies and boundaries of clinical psychologists
- Employment terms and conditions
- Office accommodation & equipment
- Clinical / administrative supervision
- Continuing education
- Salary structure and promotion prospects
- Code of professional conduct & complaints against malpractice
- Professional indemnity insurance
- Occupational health issues