



ORDEM
DOS
PSICÓLOGOS

Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses
Travessa da Trindade, nº 16, 5º A
1200-469 Lisboa

NIF: 508 968 291

T: 213 400 250/1 | F: 213 400 259
info@ordemdospsicologos.pt

www.ordemdospsicologos.pt

COMMUNIQUÉ

As several queries and inaccurate interpretations have arisen publicly concerning the professional internship regime for psychologists, further to the publication of the Internship Regulation for the Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses, by means of Ministerial Order nº 15866/2010, published in the Diário da República on the 20th October 2010, the Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses hereby clarifies the following:

1. Place of Internship and Internship Supervisors

Professional internships must be undertaken within entities and supervised by psychologists which/who fulfill the conditions regarding good standing set forth and are bound before the Order to comply with the duties – particularly collaboration and due diligence – laid down in the Statute of the Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses, approved by Law nº 57/2008, of the 4th September, hereafter referred to as the Statute, and the Internship Regulation, both established in the trainee psychologist's interest.

The requirements with regard to good standing, are closely related, in the case of internship hosts, to there being suitable conditions for professional internships to be undertaken and, in the case of supervisors, to having five years' professional experience, which are essential to ensure the training competencies necessary for the development of the trainee.

The compliance of the requirements mentioned and the commitment to fulfill the duties set forth are laid down in professional internship agreements and professional internship supervision contracts, between the Order and internship hosts for trainees and internship supervisors, respectively. This is the aim of these documents, the content of which is simply and briefly set out.

2. Registration with the Order and Internship Project

Registration refers to the application to register with the Order, whereby the applicant submits the necessary documentation as evidence that they fulfill the legal requirements set forth to be registered as a full member or trainee member. Due to the fact that registration is open to any person, between the submission of the application and the date of registration, an administrative process shall take place to assess if the applicant fulfills the aforementioned requirements.

In the case of trainee psychologists, registration with the Order further implies submitting a professional internship project proposal, which must indicate the basic details of the internship, its duration, place where it is to be undertaken and the internship supervisor proposed, as well as a declaration of principles whereby the trainee agrees to comply with their duties as a trainee, laid down in the form made available by the Order.

If a trainee has proposed to undertake an internship with an entity or supervisor which/who has not yet signed a protocol agreement or contract with the Order, the project must be accompanied by proposals with a view to signing such agreements or contracts, which must be signed by the proposed internship host and supervisor respectively, to officially ensure their good standing and commit them to comply with their duties before the trainee, as mentioned above.

3. Fees

Registration with the Order is subject to the payment of a fee for the amount of 180 Euros, by both psychologists and trainee psychologists. It is a registration fee which covers the costs of the registration administrative process and the issue of the professional certificate. Therefore, registration of a trainee as a full member at the end of their internship does not require a second payment of the registration fee.

Fees for the performance of professional internships, in turn, aim to provide the Order with the necessary funds to finance the logistics relating to the performance of professional internships, namely the acquisition of equipment and human and material resources necessary for organising internships, training courses and supervising and assessing trainees. These fees correspond, in a normal internship process, to 80 Euros for each six-month period of the internship undertaken and 80 Euros for submitting the internship report.

All fees payable within the framework of professional internships – as well as all others – are foreseen and listed in detail in the Regulation for Fees and Charges, approved by Ministerial Order nº 15865/2010, published in the Diário da República on the 20th October 2010. Any reference to the payment of fees in any other document, namely in the Internship Regulation,

must therefore be understood merely as a delegation to the provisions set forth in the Regulation for Fees and Charges.

4. Minimum number of hours

Pursuant to Article 52 of the Statute, professional internships have a duration of twelve months, except in the case of Psychology graduates who have undertaken a 4-year degree course, which does not include a curricular internship, and therefore the respective duration is eighteen months.

Pursuant to Article 13 (3), of the Internship Regulation, the trainee psychologist must, during the course of their internship, perform a minimum of 1600 hours or 2400 hours undertaking specific tasks in the field of psychology, which are broadly defined.

The minimum number of hours aims to fulfill the concept of the minimum duration of professional internships set forth in the Statute, with a view to avoiding it becoming an empty concept and to ensure that the principle of equality between trainees is complied with.

Hence, a professional internship which has a duration of twelve months with an average of seven hours a day, must be assessed differently from a professional internship, which although it was also undertaken over a period of twelve months, averaged three hours a day. The experience acquired and the level of achievement in terms of professional internship objectives, significantly differ in both cases. With the introduction of a minimum number of hours, the aim is to differentiate the value of the two situations in determining the internship period.

5. Remuneration of Trainees

Professional internships are undertaken within entities which are independent from the Order, which are entitled to organise and manage their activity freely (Article 61 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic). For this reason, the Order is not entitled to impose any form of payment for trainees by the entities whereupon they perform their activities.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the Order has deemed it important to lay down a principle regarding the payment of trainees for their activities undertaken within these entities. Therefore, in Article 17 (6) of the Internship Regulation, it states that as a general rule, internships must be remunerated.

It is the recognition that the activity of the trainee, despite being a means of acquiring essential skills to practice the profession, therefore being a gain, is objectively developed to the benefit of the internship host, and thus should be remunerated.

As an exception, it is foreseen that a trainee may accept a non-remunerated internship, namely when it is the only option available.

6. Professional Internship Training Courses

During the course of the internship, trainee psychologists must attend the professional internship training course and obtain a pass, pursuant to Article 21 of the Internship Regulation, which is made available by the Order and mainly geared towards the professional and ethical training of trainees.

These courses are a fundamental part of the full professional internship and provide the qualifications for the competent and responsible professional practice of psychology, particularly in regard to ethics, and aim to make trainee psychologists aware of their rights and duties as set forth in the Statute of the Order and the future Code of Ethics.

In this sense, the attendance of these courses is not only a duty but also a right psychologists are entitled to during their internship.

7. Conclusion of the professional internship

The trainee psychologist, after completing the minimum internship period set forth and obtaining a pass in the professional internship training course, must submit a final professional internship report, in which all the tasks undertaken during the internship must be described.

The report must be approved by the Board, under the recommendation of the Internship Committee, which, at the same time must give a final grade to the trainee psychologist for the activities developed during the course of the internship.

Due to the fact that the Order is a public association, decisions by the respective corporate bodies – in this case the decision by the Board to classify the trainee's performance – may be legally appealed before administrative tribunals, stipulating the grounds for their illegality (Article 268 (5) of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and Article 30 of the Regime for Professional Public Associations, approved by Law nº 6/2008, of the 13th February).

8. Approval of the Internship

The Statute of the Order sets forth that psychologists who provide evidence of the professional practice of psychology for a minimum period of eighteen months until the 16th April 2009 (the date on which the Foundation Committee was nominated), shall be exempt from performing the professional internship. All psychologists who do not fulfill this provision are obliged to undertake a professional internship, pursuant to the Statute (Articles 84 and 52 of the Statute).

However, considering that a great number of psychologists who despite not fulfilling the provisions in order to be exempt from performing the internship, have acquired professional experience within the framework of the internship undertaken prior to the Internship Regulation entering into force, the Order has decided that for psychologists in this situation, their professional experience may be approved by the Board, under recommendation by the Internship Committee (Article 25 of the Internship Regulation).

The internship that has been undertaken may be approved partially or in full, depending on whether the trainee has performed the internship for the whole period set forth in the Statute or not. In certain cases, if it is deemed that insufficient activities have been undertaken by the trainee, it may be requested that in compliance with the applicable principles and rules and in strict collaboration with the internship host and their supervisor, the trainee attends an internship course, extends the internship period or the develops additional activities in order for the objectives of the professional internship to be achieved.

9. Practice of the profession without being registered with the Order

In order to practice the profession of psychology, it is mandatory to be registered in advance with the Order, either as a full member or trainee member.

Therefore, all psychologists who are trainee members (they are deemed to be trainee members upon approval of their internship project at the start of their professional internship), may practice the profession of psychology, however, they are subject to supervision by the internship supervisor.

The practice of the activity under any of the above titles without prior registration with the Order, may be deemed a criminal offence of usurpation of official functions, pursuant to Article 358 of the Criminal Code, as has been publicly pointed out by the Order.

However, to date, the claims received have been regarding professionals who are not registered with the Order and who have not even submitted their application for registration. Therefore, as the Order is aware that there is period of time between submitting the application and registration, during which the documentation submitted is assessed, the Order has not taken any action and shall not take any action against persons who even though they are not yet registered, have formally expressed their wishes to register with the Order, and it also recognises that the reasons for not yet having registered properly may be due to reasons beyond their control.

Lisbon, 30th December 2010

On behalf of the Board,
The President