

From EuroPsy regulations (EFPA, 2021-2025)

Functional competences to be acquired during professional training

The functional competences provide a description of the actions psychologists perform based on a problem solving cycle starting from:

- Need identification, contract/task clarification goal setting;
- Planning/designing assessment, intervention, service or product;
- Implementing assessment, intervention, service or product; and
- Evaluation of outcomes.

These competences are performed in various fields of practice, occupational contexts and types of clients. Competences are based on knowledge, skills and attitudes applied and practised ethically. The competent practitioner is not only able to demonstrate the necessary knowledge and skills but also attitudes appropriate to the proper practice of their profession. Attitudes are of special importance, since they define the unique nature of the psychological profession.

Functional competences describe the main types of scientifically based activities of psychologists (what psychologists do, including e.g., assessing, consulting, and coordinating, researching, teaching, treating, training). Each functional competence describes psychological knowledge, skills and attitudes related to individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and society within different contexts/situations. For each competence learning outcomes are defined in terms of what psychologists are expected to be able to do after the completion of the three phases of academic education and supervised practice.

The following general attitudes are needed in all functional competences:

- Caring – displays kindness and concern for others.
- Collaborative – willingness to work with other people in a respectful manner.
- Conscientious – accurate with attention to detail.
- Reflective - willingness to think critically and hypothesis-oriented—to reflect critically on own actions.
- Curious – be interested in the causes of behaviour and events.
- Empathic – willingness to understand and share the feelings of others.
- Flexible – willingness to adapt a flexible approach and mindset.
- High quality mindset – willingness to strive for continuous improvement.
- Honest – willingness to accept information and results that are not expected and act with integrity.
- Open – be open to new experience, knowledge, research and practice.
- Patient – be tolerant towards obstacles without becoming annoyed or anxious.
- Responsible – being aware of one's own responsibility.

The following description of functional and foundational competences is intended to apply for all areas of psychology and to encompass important learning outcomes and competences of psychology.

Need identification, contract/task clarification and goal setting

Learning outcome: The psychologist can:

- i Identify, assess, and analyse clients' needs and risks.
- ii Gather information about the clients' context to inform action.
- iii Clarify expectations and contract with clients
- iv Set appropriate goals for action. (assessment/intervention/service/product) specifying criteria for evaluation.

Competences needed are in particular: Knowledge

- i Basic principles, problems and methods underlying the science of psychology.
- ii Mental health and wellbeing, normotypical and atypical functioning and development, and their preconditions.
- iii Psychopathology and/or dysfunctional/maladaptive behaviour (incl. clinical, occupational, educational and other settings, e.g. bullying/mobbing).

Skills

- i Establishing contact with clients in different emotional states
- ii Interviewing, listening, and observing skills.
- iii Gathering and understanding additional information (from scientific literature, medical/educational/organisational records, stakeholder analysis and other available documents /sources).
- iv Arranging, structuring and critically evaluating information, drawing conclusions, formulating the problem until it informs next actions (assessment or intervention).
- v Negotiating tasks/goals and required resources with clients and important others.

Attitudes

- i Curious – interest leading to inquiry to understand the causes of client's behaviour and interpretation of events
- ii Open – be open to client's needs and goals.
- iii Empathic – willingness to understand the client's situation and share client's feelings.
- iv Collaborative – display a willingness to work with clients and others in a respectful manner.

Planning/designing relevant assessment and intervention or product/service

Learning outcome: The psychologist can plan/design or consider and choose among relevant assessments and interventions or services/products according to the clients' needs and context/situations and the goals agreed upon.

(Intervention is defined here in general terms: it may include psychological therapy/coaching, consultation/consulting, teaching/training, psychoeducation, advocacy, empowerment or changing context/system conditions.)

Competences needed are in particular: Knowledge

- i Psychometrics.
- ii Theories of individual/team/organisational behaviour and change/modification/development.
- iii Constructs that are measured (by quantitative and qualitative methods) or intervened (e.g., personality, emotions, cognitive functions, actions, team/organizational processes etc).
- iv Specific assessment/intervention methods, their procedures and their attributes/qualities.

Skills

- i Choosing methods and their implementation strategies, taking into consideration the goals of assessment/intervention, clients' (mental) status, their context and individual/group/organisational differences.
- ii Analysing the options available and formulating hypotheses about the possible outcomes of the choices and the evaluation criteria for testing these hypotheses.

Implementing psychological assessments or interventions or services/products

Attitudes

i Caring – displays kindness and concern for others, considering a client’s emotional state.

ii Responsible – being aware of one’s own responsibility.

iii Flexible – displays a flexible approach and mindset.

Critical and hypothesis-oriented thinking – display willingness to reflect critically on own actions

Learning outcome: The psychologist can appropriately carry out psychological assessments and implement interventions or services/products with/for clients in different contexts/situations. This can include pilot studies to test psychological assessments and interventions or services/products. (*Interventions can include psychological therapy/coaching, consultation/consulting, teaching/training, psychoeducation, advocacy, empowerment or changing context/system conditions.*)

Competences needed are in particular: Knowledge

i. Procedures of specific assessment/intervention methods or services.

ii. Possible difficulties and problems that may come from method/service itself, clients’ specificity etc., and the ways of overcoming these difficulties.

Skills

i. Can implement specific assessment/intervention methods under different conditions and with different clients.

ii. Can recognise, articulate and manage/accommodate unexpected/possible (side)effects (consequences, impact) during the assessment/intervention without losing sight of the agreed goal.

iii. Can test the a priori formulated hypotheses for evidenced based decisions.

Attitudes

i. Conscientious – accurate with attention to details of situations, interpretations, and feelings of clients.

ii. Empathic – willingness to understand and share the feelings of clients and others and one’s own reactions, and reflect their consequences with respect to the applied assessment and intervention.

iii. Flexible – willingness to adapt one’s assessment and intervention approach.

iv. Open – be open to new experience, assessment and intervention knowledge, research, and practice.

v. Patient – demonstrates tolerance of delay, problems or suffering caused by assessments and interventions without becoming annoyed or anxious.

Learning outcome: The psychologist can evaluate process characteristics, and outcomes, outputs, and impact of psychological **assessments** and/or **interventions** or **services products** and to revise the procedures if necessary during the implementation process (formative evaluation) and at the end (summative evaluation). If needed, it may mean going back to section 1 (need analysis and goal setting) and start the process again. (*Outcome measures may include reliability, validity, usefulness, impact, gain, effectiveness etc. depending on the context and goals of the evaluation*)

Competences needed are in particular: Knowledge

i Psychometrics.

ii Quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather, analyse and interpret data.

Skills

i Develop and apply appropriate evaluation designs.

ii Gathering, analysing, and interpreting evaluation data with respect to quality and ethical criteria and evaluation goals, considering cultural competences.

iii Detecting/scrutinising noteworthy details, critically reflecting and adapting assessment/evaluation accordingly to ensure quality.

Evaluation

Attitudes

- i Honest – willingness to accept evaluation results that are not expected and act with integrity.
- ii Flexible – willingness to probe different interpretations of evaluation outcomes and own biases.
- iii High quality mindset – strives for continuous improvement of one’s problem-solving approach.

Foundational competences

The foundational competences describe main aspects of psychological knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to implement the four functional competences and focus on how psychologists work. Psychologists are required to provide evidence of the following foundational competences for independent practice:

- 1 Competences related to ethics, professional standards and law.
- 2 Communication and relational competences.
- 3 Continuing Professional Development – CPD competences.
- 4 Science and research competences.
- 5 Collaboration competences.
- 6 Individual and cultural differences competences.
- 7 Digital/Information and communication technology competences.
- 8 Self-reflection, and self-care competences.

1. Competences related to ethics, professional standards and law-

Learning outcome: The psychologist can

- i Apply relevant ethical principles and adheres to relevant laws, codes and rules in one’s practice and conduct.
- ii Recognise, record and solve ethical dilemmas and deviation of professional standards in one’s professional practice and research using an appropriate decision making and quality management approach.
- iii Recognise the relevance and importance of ethical codes and professional standards as a basis of professional conduct, research and practice.
- iv Give support/advice/consultation for colleagues on matters of ethics.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i EFPA ethical meta-code, relevant international conventions, international and national laws and professional standards pertaining to one’s professional practice and research.
- ii Relevant laws and regulations in one’s professional practice and research.

Skills

- i Applies relevant ethical codes and professional standards into one’s professional practice, research and conduct
- ii Recognises, record and solve ethical dilemmas and deviation of professional standards in one’s professional practice and research using an appropriate decision making and quality management approach.
- iii Consults with colleagues/supervisors and seeks for additional viewpoints from relevant literature.

Attitudes

- i Responsible – acts in a responsible manner and in line with relevant ethical, conduct and legal frameworks.

- ii Respectful – demonstrates respect when engaging with clients and others.
- iii Honest – acts with integrity and honesty.
- iv Conscientious – demonstrates attention to detail and a thorough approach.
- v Reflective – willingness to think and reflect critically and hypothesis-oriented, and apply reasoning in decision making processes.

2. Communication and relational competences

Learning outcome: The psychologist can:

- i Establish a working alliance.
- ii Take others' perspective and acknowledge others experience, etc.
- iii Express their thoughts, professional contributions and share information with clients, other professionals and public.
- iv Manage professional and personal boundaries appropriately

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- v Communication theory/models.
- vi Theories on social relations/interactions.

Skills

- i Interpersonal skills (e.g. verbal fluency, emotional and affective expression, persuasiveness, warmth/positive regard, hopefulness, empathy, alliance bond capacity, and alliance-rupture-repair responsiveness; perspective taking; consistency).
- ii Obtain informed consent, sharing information, professional contributions with clients and important others taking into account the status/condition of the client and important others (e.g. parents).
- iii iii. Negotiate the needs, goals, process, and results of assessment/intervention and resolving conflicts with clients and important others.
- iv iv. Give and receive constructive feedback, writing structured reports and presenting oral reports adequate for different audiences.
- v v. Share information and check understanding using clear language and appropriate, written materials, making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to optimise people's understanding.
- vi vi. Present and clarify the relevance of the psychologist's professional contributions.

Attitudes

- i i. Open – applies an open minded and enquiring client specific approach to communication and relationship building.
- ii ii. Honest - when obtaining informed consent, developing contract, reporting the findings.
- iii iii. Positive – supportive and positive in approach in communication and feedback.
- iv iv. Respectful – accepts others as equal in professional interactions

3. Continuing Professional Development – CPD competences

Learning outcome: Psychologists have the responsibility of developing their professional qualities and maintaining, improving, and broadening their knowledge, expertise and multi-faceted competences. This requires that they are able to use the functional competences to develop their own professional competences in a career long process: analysis of training needs, goal setting, planning the training, implementing the training, evaluating the training.

The psychologist can:

- i i. Maintain professional competences.
- ii ii. Overcome gaps in knowledge and skills.
- iii iii. Respond to the challenges of the rapidly growing knowledge base and technological developments by upskilling.
- iv iv. Change practice requirements when needed.
- v v. Commit to continuous lifelong learning.
- vi vi. Engage in supervision.
- vii vii. Share and learn from collaboration with other psychologists and professionals.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i i. Recent/novel evidence-based research, methodological and theoretical psychological perspectives in specific fields of practice.
- ii ii. Multicultural perspectives of psychology and diversity.
- iii iii. Interprofessional collaborative practices.
- iv iv. Professionalism/Ethics.

Skills

- i i. Updating knowledge in line with current evidence bases.
- ii ii. Identifying needs and areas for development.
- iii iii. Exploring knowledge.
- iv iv. Examining and analysing information from a range of sources and different mediums.
- v v. Questioning and using critical thinking.
- vi vi. Self-actualising, self-reflecting and learning.

Attitudes

- i i. Open – be open to challenge, change and development.
- ii ii. Curious – interest leading to inquiry, be interested in the causes of behaviour and events.
- iii iii. Collaborative – display a willingness to work with others in a respectful manner, to share knowledge and experiences.
- iv iv. Goal oriented – set goals and evaluate progress on a regular basis.
- v v. Innovative – explore new ways of working.
- vi vi. Proactive – identify professional development activities.

Learning outcome: Psychological practice requires a constant critical reflection that is informed by knowledge, practice and research and the ability to use and do research to inform practice and understand of the process of research.

The psychologist can:

- i i. Engage in evidence-based decision making, critical reasoning, and integrating best available scientific and contextual expertise into practice.
- ii ii. Use informed and scientifically established assessment, intervention, supervision and consultation tools and strategies.
- iii iii. Informs oneself critically and reflectively about advances in psychological science, other sciences in general and own subject area.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i i. Scientific decision-making processes.
- ii ii. Hypothesis testing and research problem solving approaches.
- iii iii. Qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Skills

- i i. Search for, critically read, understand and evaluate scientific psychological literature.
- ii ii. Be able to formulate hypotheses and research questions in everyday psychological practice.
- iii iii. Collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data to test hypotheses or explore research questions.
- iv iv. Use qualitative and quantitative research data to theorise from and improve practice.

Attitudes

- i i. Critical and hypothesis-oriented thinking – display willingness to reflect critically and formulate hypothesis for further actions.
- ii ii. Curious – interest leading to inquiry, be interested in scientific knowledge.
- iii iii. Open – willingness to consider different perspectives.

4. Science and research competences

- iv iv. Conscientious – willingness to respect scientific findings, make thorough data analysis and pursue the integrity of research.

5. Collaboration and leadership competences

Learning outcome: The psychologist can work effectively with and consult colleagues/other professionals in the same and other disciplines to provide safe, high-quality client-centred services. They are able to perceive in which task and context they have expertise and are expected to assume leadership functions.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i i. Roles and methods of related professions.
- ii ii. Models and formats of supervision/intervention.
- iii iii. Theories on (inter-, multi-, trans-) disciplinary teamwork/cooperation/collaboration/group dynamics and leadership.
- iv iv. Systemic theories.

Skills

- i i. Shared decision-making and leadership.
- ii ii. Perspective taking.
- iii iii. Resolving conflict.
- iv iv. Managing and leading change.

Attitudes

- i i. Trustful – willingness to create an environment of confidence.
- ii ii. Open – be open to new experience, knowledge, research, and practice.
- iii iii. Collaborative - display a willingness to work with other people in a respectful manner.
- iv iv. Responsible – willingness to take on responsibility.

Learning outcome: The psychologist can:

- i i. Identify, acknowledge, and respect diversity and minority issues.
- ii ii. Recognise one's own values, beliefs, and experiences on one's professional behaviour with clients and others and the impact on others.
- iii iii. Work and communicate effectively with all forms of diversity in clients, colleagues, and others.
- iv iv. Be inclusive in all forms of diversity in working with clients, colleagues, and others.

6. Individual and cultural differences competences

Awareness of own biases helps to avoid stereotyping individuals belonging to different groups. The psychologist can consider that sociocultural factors such as gender, gender identity, culture, ethnicity, age, family context, religion, sexual orientation, majority/minority affiliation etc. are included in the assessment of factors which affect personality, values, worldview, relationships, psychopathology, and attitudes to treatment, and can make individual adjustments to the client's needs based on this.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i i. Diversity theories.
- ii ii. Intercultural theories.
- iii iii. Personality theories.
- iv iv. Adaptation and inclusion theories.

Skills

- i i. Perspective taking.
- ii ii. Self-reflection.
- iii iii. Identify differences.
- iv iv. Manage diversity.
- v v. Advocate for others.

Attitudes

- i i. Open – be open to new experience, values, knowledge.

- ii Empathic – willingness to understand and share the feelings of others.
- iii Curious – interest leading to inquiry of others.
- iv Respectful to other experiences, values, knowledge.
- v Proactive toward improving the situation for others and self.

7. Digital/information and communication technology competences

Learning outcome: The psychologist can use digital technologies, in particular information /communication technologies in an effective and safe way considering clients' needs, data protection, online privacy and cybersecurity for need analysis and goal setting, assessment, intervention, and evaluation.

Knowledge about the possibilities and limitation of digital technologies, in particular information/communication technologies and the skills to apply the technology in an effective and safe way.

Competences needed are in particular:

Knowledge

- i Ethical practice, legal and security requirements (e.g. GDPR), specific to electronic/remote practice.
- ii Professional boundary issues.
- iii Range of digital technologies (e.g. Self Help or Online Blended Learning/Therapy).
- iv The role of apps in psychological assessments and interventions and other platforms available to support the delivery of psychological interventions.
- v Communication processes which may affect digital practice across individual, system and group work (e.g. turn taking and use of non-verbal information).

Skills

- i Adequately apply data protection principles (including risk and safety) to all aspects of remote/online or in person work.
- ii Recognise one's own competences, training and supervision needs in relation to the context of digital practice.
- iii Recognise needs and culture-specific requirements of clients and provide suitable digital modalities.
- iv Manage boundaries if working remotely (e.g. conducting a consultation session via video chat from home).
- i Critically appraise digital tools and interventions and use the evidence base to inform selection of these for practical and research purposes.

Attitudes

- i Responsible -works in an ethical, safe, and effective way attending to professional and clinical boundary issues specific to online/remote practice.
- ii Flexible – displays a flexible approach and mindset

Learning outcome: To promote their own wellbeing and ensure the ability to perform their professional role, psychologists have the responsibility of self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-care. This includes psychologists balancing their professional and personal lives.

Psychological practice entails exposure to potentially distressing situations that may create a risk for the psychologist's and may affect the client's wellbeing.

The psychologist can:

- i Acknowledge that the well-being of clients depends on their own self-awareness and self-regulation.
- ii Acknowledge own thoughts, behaviours, attitudes and prejudices.
- iii Identify and analyse own needs and risks through an unbiased and unattached perspective.
- iv Recognise and correct errors, such as losing professional distance or impartiality.
- v Engage in physical, psychological, spiritual or support activities described as the components of self-care.

Competences needed are in particular:

8. Self-reflection, and self-care competences

Knowledge

- i i. Awareness of occupational risks and how to mitigate and manage them.
- ii ii. Mental health and career satisfaction indicators.
- iii iii. Deontology and professional values.

Skills

- i i. Self-observe, -analyse, -reflect and -evaluate (attending to signs of distress).
- ii ii. Seek interpersonal support, or professional, if needed.
- iii iii. Balance personal and professional requirements.
- iv iv. Resilience and coping strategies.

Attitudes

- i i. Attentive – attuned to own emotional state and willingness to recognise one's own thoughts and feelings.
- ii ii. Open - Willingness to change.

Tutor-supervisor

The Supervisor will be responsible for supporting the learning and assessing the competence of the Practitioner-in-Training on a day-to-day basis and encouraging her/him to act as independently as possible, given the situation and her/his competences.

Supervisors will need to develop skills which include the following:

- positive and active listening,
- openness and positive regard
- reflective practice,
- giving feedback,
- dealing with difficult issues and feelings,
- boundary issues and issues of power relations,
- sharing ethical dilemmas,
- mentoring,
- evaluation of competence,
- assessment of performance.

Supervision may be used to socialise the new psychologist into the profession, to replicate institutional canons and to propagate the norms of the profession.

The supervisor supports the development of reflective practice, professional awareness and sensitivity, and understanding of ethical issues and dilemmas in practice.

The supervisor will provide a central contribution to the learning process thorough modelling, feedback, observation and discussion.

The supervisor also performs a kind of gate-keeping function, which means that he/she approves competent practice and contributes to the exclusion of those who are considered not being competent to practice as a psychologist.

Outcomes of supervision

The psychologist practitioner-in-training will be required to provide evidence of the acquisition of the functions and competences.

He/she should complete a systematic self-evaluation of level of skill in relation to the range of competences.