



SPANISH EXAMINATION FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY (SEPPP):
DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
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Respectfully Submitted by

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As requested, we are outlining the process for creating the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) and the ensuing process for creating the Spanish version of the Exam (SEPPP). The process has been grounded in state-of-the-art procedures for exam construction, and has also been the process used for the existing French EPPP (FEPPP) used in Canada.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPPP

Each form of the EPPP is comprised of 225 questions, of which 175 are operational (scored) and 50 are pretest questions. No question becomes operational without having been pretested and determined to meet both classical and IRT statistics criteria for inclusion on the EPPP. The development of the EPPP is as follows:

1. Practice Analysis

The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) sponsored an update study of the practice of licensed psychologists in the United States and Canada in 2010 to review and refine the test specifications for the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP). This study utilized a content-based approach to refine the delineation of the content areas and knowledge required in practice and to identify the competencies performed by psychologists. Additionally, the study was designed to build on competency frameworks being explored by other key stakeholder groups in the profession.

The Practice Analysis included responses from 62 of the 64 ASPPB member jurisdictions. **Puerto Rico was well represented in the sample**, as its response rate (N=33; 3.3%) was tied with Georgia for the fourth largest of all US jurisdictions, behind only New York, Pennsylvania and Missouri. Puerto Rico's representation was greater than that of all the other US states and territories including that of California, Texas and Florida.

The Practice Analysis identified the following eight broad areas of knowledge deemed necessary to safely practice psychology and what percentage of the Exam should be taken up by each of those domains of knowledge. More information on the Practice Analysis can be found on the ASPPB website (www.asppb.net).

| Domain | % Of Exam |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Biological Bases of Behavior | 12% |
| 2. Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior | 13% |
| 3. Social and Cultural Bases of Behavior | 12% |
| 4. Growth and Lifespan Development | 12% |
| 5. Assessment and Diagnosis | 14% |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 6. Treatment, Intervention, Prevention and Supervision | 14% |
| 7. Research Methods and Statistics | 8% |
| 8. Ethical/Legal/Professional issues | 15% |

It is important to note that **these same eight content areas were recommended for future use by the most recent practice analysis conducted in Puerto Rico** for psychologists practicing in Puerto Rico (Maldonado Feliciano & Cirino-Gerena, 2010). The authors recommended reducing the ten content areas that had been used in the past to the eight identified above. This indicates that the content of the EPPP is generally consistent with content of practice in Puerto Rico.

The authors also use ASPPB positions to support other recommendations regarding their proposed Guidelines for Defining a Graduate program in Psychology (reference the National Register/ASPPB Joint Designation Program) and practicum experience (reference the ASPPB Guideline on Practicum Experience). Again, this indicates the congruence of direction and content between the practice of psychology in Puerto Rico and ASPPB's other member jurisdictions in the United States and Canada.

2. Pass Point study

ASPPB conducted a pass point study to determine the appropriate passing score for the Exam. Each form of the Exam is calibrated so that the pass point remains consistent from form to form. A pass point of 500 for independent practice was established and recommended to ASPPB jurisdictions.

3. Item Development

Questions are created for the EPPP according to the following process:

- a. An Item Development Committee (IDC) is composed of eight subject matter experts who are responsible for the questions in each of the domains.
- b. Members of the IDC recruit diverse item writers who themselves are subject matter experts in the domains of knowledge that comprise the EPPP.
- c. Item writers meet with members of the IDC at Item Writing Workshops held each year. During those workshops, new exam questions are created, edited and entered into the EPPP item bank for review by the Examination Committee (ExC) to be included in pretest blocks on future Exams.

4. Exam Form Creation

The Exam vendor (initially ProExam and currently Pearson) created forms of the Exam according to the test specifications identified by the Practice Analysis (see section 1 above and Appendix A for further details).

5. Examination Committee Review

The Examination Committee (ExC), is comprised of eight subject matter experts from the United States and Canada. One for each of the eight domains of knowledge represented in the EPPP meets to review each form of the Exam, question-by-question, in order to ensure that there is only one correct answer for each question, that the correct answer is indeed correct, that there are not multiple items testing for the same content items on any Exam, that the content covers the knowledge required at entry to practice, and that the questions for each domain reflect the range of knowledge in those domains. The ExC reviews both operational and pretest questions that will appear on each version of the EPPP.

6. Exam Form Upload

Finalized forms of the Exam are then uploaded at test centers throughout the jurisdictions where psychology licensing occurs, and candidates take the Exam at computer based testing centers.

TRANSLATION PROCESS

Fullerton, Parker and Gross (2000), who translated the nurse/midwife licensing examination for use in Puerto Rico, argue “certification exams that are based on competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) essential to professional practice remain valid in any language, since the intended use of the examination is consistent for all candidates who sit the examination for entry into practice. In fact, this is the basis for a single, common standard” (p331). The process for the nurse/midwife translation of their existing exam was similar to the SEPPP process.

Hambleton and Patsula (1999) argue for the translation of an existing test for the following reasons:

- If the knowledge skills and abilities to be assessed are the same for all the linguistic populations then existing exam maintains test content and structure
- Process of Item writing and review do not have to be entirely duplicated
- Original language exam and its psychometrics set the standard for subsequent versions.

Each version of the SEPPP underwent the following development process:

Initial Translation

Four active forms of the EPPP were translated into Spanish by an ISO 9001 certified translation company that specializes in creating translated exam forms for high stakes professional examinations. ASPPB’s exam vendor (ProExam, at the time) selected this translation company via an open, competitive proposal process that reviewed all

submissions for accuracy, clarity and relevance of translation of the representative sample content. The translation company employed the following process to develop the SEPPP:

- A. Translation team: A translation team of two translators and one editor was selected. All the translators have a doctoral degree in Psychology, university teaching experience and a lot of experience in translation.
- B. Non-Disclosure Agreement: All team members signed a NDA.
- C. Reference files: Reference files were collected including the ASPPB Style Guidelines, the DSM-IV (APA, 2000) and DSM-IV: Manual diagnóstico y estadístico de los trastornos mentales (Castellano, 1995) and sent them to the translators with all the other information provided by ASPPB.
- D. Translation Memory (TM): They created a TM for ASPPB in order to maintain consistency. All the translations are saved in a database where we can search terminology and previous translations.
- E. Glossary: They extracted terminology, created a glossary and translated it. This glossary is used as a reference for all future translations.
- F. Translation: Two translators translated two forms of the exam (200 questions each) each year.
- G. Editing: A single editor has edited all of the documents since 2013. This editor has never changed.
- H. Validation: After the editing was finished, the translators, editor and project manager held a conference call to discuss terminology in order to find the best term together.
- I. Board revision and client's comments: The translation was then forwarded to ASPPB for review. A committee jointly established by ASPPB and the Puerto Rico Board for Psychology then reviewed the translated forms. Their process is described below. The joint committee revised the documents and sent the translation company questions and suggested revisions.
- J. Editing/unification: The translation company's translation team held a conference call to review the joint committee's questions and revisions. Approved revisions were inserted in the document and the text was unified accordingly.

Spanish-speaking Subject Matter Expert Recruitment

In order to address any potential translation issues It was agreed that ASPPB and the Puerto Board for Psychology would establish a joint review committee of qualified Spanish-

speaking Subject Matter Experts (SSMEs) to review the translated forms of the EPPP. Each domain would have one SSME from Puerto Rico and one from the mainland. The Puerto Rico Board identified qualified psychologists who were working on the island for each domain and ASPPB identified qualified psychologists who were working on the mainland for each domain. Those identified were contacted to assess their interest and availability. Each participating SSME received an honorarium as well as reimbursement of travel expenses.

The coordinator of the process for ASPPB was Fred Millán, a bilingual psychologist of Puerto Rican descent, who is Past-President of ASPPB and Past-Chair of the New York State Board for Psychology. The following psychologists participated in the SEPPP translation process:

Puerto Rico SSMEs

| Name | Work Setting | Descent |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Guillermo Bernal | Universidad de Puerto Rico | Cuban |
| Elsa Cardalda | Private Practice | Puerto Rican |
| Edward Fankhanel | Universidad del Turabo | Puerto Rican |
| Cynthia Garcia Coll | Universidad Carlos Albizu | Puerto Rican |
| Maria Garrido | Ponce Medical School | Puerto Rican |
| Blanca Ortiz | Universidad de Puerto Rico | Puerto Rican |
| Jose Pons | Ponce Medical School | Puerto Rican |
| Noel Quintero | Universidad Carlos Albizu | Colombian |
| Kenira Thompson | Ponce School of Medicine | Puerto Rican |
| Jose Toro-Alfonso | Universidad de Puerto Rico | Puerto Rican |

US SSMEs

| Name | Work Setting | Descent |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Mari Carmen Bennasar | Mass. School of Prof. Psychology | Dominican |
| Melanie Domenech | Utah State University | Puerto Rican |
| Cesar Gonzalez | Mayo Clinic | Mexican |
| Tomas Granados | Health South Rehab Hospital | Mexican |
| Rafael Javier | St. John's University | Dominican |
| Nilda Laboy (nee Clark) | Mass. School of Prof. Psychology | Puerto Rican |
| Jorge Torres-Saenz | Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic | Mexican |

The importance of having ethnically and culturally representative translators who can account for any linguistic and cultural differences has been well documented (Fullerton, Parker & Gross, 2000; ITC, 2010; Muniz, Elosua & Hambleton, 2013). This distinguished group of bilingual psychologists diligently worked to accomplish this task in a responsible and ethical manner.

SSME Review Meetings

The SSMEs met four times over a two-year period to ensure that all four translated forms of the Exam were accurate and appropriate for use in Puerto Rico. The SSMEs engaged in extensive discussions around options for appropriate terminology until a consensus was reached. There was opportunity for feedback, discussion and revision throughout the process.

During the first meeting each year, two forms of the SEPPP (with both operational and pretest questions) were reviewed for the first time by the SSMEs. Each pair of domain subject matter experts, one from Puerto Rico and one from the U.S., reviewed all items in their specific domains to ensure accuracy of the translations in relation to the professional content addressed by the question. They corrected any mistakes noted in the translation and edited questions that might not be applicable in Puerto Rico. This step ensured that each domain area received the attention of Spanish speaking psychologists who are knowledgeable of the area content and its most appropriate terms for use in the translation. At this stage, the focus of the work was domain specific.

During the second meeting each year, the subject matter experts engaged in a “harmonization” process. They reviewed the two revised forms of the SEPPP, previously edited at the first meeting by the domain expert pair, to ensure that the Exam read accurately as translated and edited, and that there was gender balance demonstrated throughout both forms. This “harmonization” allowed all of the SSMEs to review and provide feedback and edits on the entire exam. It not only provided SSMEs exposure to the full range of content (not just their domain of expertise) and question type but also facilitated a review of term consistency throughout the exam.

Fullerton, Parker and Gross (2000) describe the responsibility of the panel of experts as guiding the translation effort toward a “translation consensus”, which leads to a “linguistically precise translation of examination content, and also incorporates and reflects the complexities of idiomatic and cultural values”. They also cite the need for “smoothing” and “decentering” which both relate to the idea that consistency of terminology and format are needed. This accurately captures how the SEPPP process was designed and implemented.

Score Transferability

ASPPB considers its translated forms of the EPPP (French and Spanish) to be equivalent to the English version and recommends that it be accepted as such by its member jurisdictions. When scores are reported for the EPPP, SEPPP and FEPPP, they are not differentiated in any way. However, each jurisdiction maintains the right to license individuals according to its rules and regulations.

Currently, the SEPPP is only offered to applicants for Puerto Rico licensure because Puerto Rico is the only jurisdiction whose law requires the Exam be offered in Spanish. Candidates in Puerto Rico have the option of taking either the SEPPP or the EPPP. However, applicants for licensure in other jurisdictions do not have the option of taking the SEPPP as no other jurisdiction currently has this language requirement. This holds true for the FEPPP in Canada as well.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to assess any test administration issues that might arise. Letters were sent to candidates who had recently passed the retired PR licensing exam inviting them to participate in the pilot program. The SEPPP was offered free of charge to any pilot participant and anyone with a passing score could use that for application for licensure in other jurisdictions. A total of 40 candidates took the SEPPP and 2 passed the exam.

Launch of Actual Administration of SEPPP

On April 1, 2014, two forms of the SEPPP became available to candidates for licensure in Puerto Rico through our past vendor ProExam and Prometric Centers. As of February 1, 2015, the SEPPP transitioned to being offered through our new vendor Pearson at their Pearson VUE testing center. This transition has impacted the information available for review and analysis as the migration of data from the old vendor's system to the new vendor's system has taken some time. We expect to have improved functionality and clean data soon as our new vendor integrates the existing data with newly gathered data from more recent exam administrations.

Two additional forms will be available as of August 15, 2015. All four Exam forms will be rotated so candidates will be presented with different versions at each sitting.

Also please note that as of February 1, 2015 (with the change of vendors to Pearson) the candidates will no longer be presented with every question in both Spanish and English in a side-by-side format. Each question will now be presented only in Spanish and the candidate will have the option of opening a pull-down translation if a review of the question in English is desired.

The following chart reflects the results of the SEPPP through April 6, 2015:

SEPPP Group Performance
Through April 6, 2015

| | Pilot | Live | Total |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Qualified / Tested | | | |
| Tested | 40 | 41 | 81 |
| Qualified to test | 58 | ? | ? |
| Overall Pass / Fail | | | |
| • Passed | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| • Failed | 38 | 41 | 79 |
| Total Tested | 40 | 41 | 81 |
| Accredited / Non-Accredited | | | |
| • Non-accredited programs PASS | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| • Non-accredited programs FAIL | 21 | 32 | 53 |
| • Accredited programs PASS | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| • Accredited programs FAIL | 17 | 9 | 26 |
| Total Tested | 40 | 41 | 81 |
| Master's / Doctoral | | | |
| • Master's passing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| • Master's failing | 14 | 26 | 40 |
| • Doctoral passing | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| • Doctoral failing | 24 | 15 | 39 |
| Total Tested | 40 | 41 | 81 |

Future Plans

Going forward, the plan is to translate, review and create one new form of the SEPPP each year and to retire one form, so that there will be updated Exams available and there will always be four forms available for testing. This also insures that Exam content is current and relevant to graduate training and practice.

Also, as more candidates take the exam we will have more data available to conduct differential item analyses on a regular basis. We need a large enough sample size to make any result statistically valid. This will provide invaluable information for all stakeholders.

References

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APPENDIX A

Executive Summary

Study of the Practice of Licensed Psychologists in the United States and Canada

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Professional Examination Service

Abstract

The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards sponsored a study of the practice of licensed psychologists in the United States and Canada. The underlying conceptual charge was:

- The identification and validation of underlying professional competencies (including but not limited to those related to professional knowledge)
- The identification of assessment methods to best measure underlying professional competencies (including but not limited to those related to professional knowledge)
- Revised test specifications for the EPPP updating the knowledge base and integrating additional relevant competencies

Professional Examination Service implemented the study under the direction of a Practice Analysis Advisory Committee and in conjunction with a Practice Analysis Task Force. The study consisted of two partially concurrent, partially sequential explorations. As in previous practice analyses, the first exploration examined the knowledge required for psychology practice with the goal of updating the EPPP test specifications, and retained a content-based organizational structure including eight content areas comprised of knowledge statements. The second exploration examined the competencies underlying the practice of psychology. Accordingly, a competency-based framework was developed and validated, including the delineation of six competency clusters, associated competencies, and behavioral exemplars typifying the development of competence.

A survey was developed and sent to approximately 5000 licensed psychologists in the United States and Canada in order to validate and update all elements in the comprehensive framework, including the content areas and knowledge statements, and the competency clusters, competencies, and exemplars. The return rate was 26%. Analysis of completed surveys produced information about (a) the demographic and professional background of licensed psychologists, (b) the critical knowledge licensed psychologists use, (c) comments about changes occurring in the profession, (d) the competencies required in professional practice, and (e) the validation of specific competencies and behavioral exemplars.. Results related to the first exploration were used to review and refine the test specifications to ensure that the knowledge assessed in the EPPP is required for the performance of critical behaviors and serves the public protection function of regulation. Results related to the second exploration were used to

develop and validate a conceptual framework for the assessment of competence at various stages in professional development. Various types of assessments were identified as useful for the assessment of competence. Preliminary discussions focused both on alternate question types that might be integrated into the EPPP, and the development of complementary assessment that might be integrated into the assessment of licensed/registered either before, during, or after initial licensure/registration.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- Regardless of country, respondents were more likely to have been trained in the major areas of clinical, counseling, and educational psychology than they were to be currently practicing in those major areas; and were more likely to be currently practicing in the major areas of clinical neuropsychology, forensic psychology, geropsychology, health psychology, and rehabilitation psychology than to have initially been trained in those major areas.
- In the U.S., more than one-half of the respondents indicated cognitive/behavioral psychology (58%), and 9% and 11% indicated interpersonal psychology and psychodynamic psychology as their primary orientation, respectively. No more than 6% of the U.S. respondents indicated any of the other four specifically-delineated theoretical orientations as primary. In Canada, about two thirds of the respondents indicated cognitive/behavioral psychology (66%), and 8% indicated interpersonal psychology as their primary orientation. No more than 4% of the Canadian respondents indicated any of the other specifically-delineated orientations as primary.
- Regardless of country, respondents were most likely to describe themselves as being experts in clinical psychology and in assessment/diagnosis/evaluation, and somewhat less likely to indicate clinical child psychology; counseling psychology; and treatment, intervention, and prevention. With very few exceptions, respondents indicated that they had expertise in one or more of each of 57 specifically-delineated areas of expertise.
- Nearly one third of the U.S. respondents have participated in formal post-doctoral specialization and/or respecialization and 17% of Canadian respondents have done so as well. Recently licensed respondents are more likely to have trained in clinical, clinical child, and school psychology, and less likely to have trained in community, counseling, developmental, educational, experimental, industrial/organizational, and social psychology than less recently licensed/registered respondents.
- Regardless of country, the majority of respondents are female (62% and 70%, respectively), and the recently licensed/registered respondents are more likely to be female than less-recently licensed/registered respondents (72% and 58%).
- The eight content areas and 77 associated knowledge statements were validated as an organizing vehicle for the development of the EPPP. Exhibit 1 documents the recommended test specifications for the EPPP.

Exhibit 1
Recommended Test Specifications for Content Areas

| | % of exam |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Biological Bases of Behavior — knowledge of (a) biological and neural bases of behavior, (b) psychopharmacology, and (c) methodologies supporting this body of knowledge | 12% |
| Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior — knowledge of (a) cognition, (b) theories and empirical bases of learning, memory, motivation, affect, emotion, and executive function, and (c) factors that influence cognitive performance and/or emotional experience and their interaction | 13% |
| Social and Cultural Bases of Behavior — knowledge of (a) interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, and intragroup processes and dynamics, (b) theories of personality, and (c) diversity issues | 12% |
| Growth and Lifespan Development — knowledge of (a) development across the full life span, (b) atypical patterns of development, and (c) the protective and risk factors that influence developmental trajectories of individuals | 12% |
| Assessment and Diagnosis — knowledge of (a) psychometrics, (b) assessment models and instruments, (c) assessment methods for initial status of and change by individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations/systems, and (d) diagnostic classification systems and their limitations | 14% |
| Treatment, Intervention, Prevention, and Supervision — knowledge of (a) individual, couple, family, group, organizational, or community interventions for specific problems/disorders in diverse populations, (b) intervention and prevention theories, (c) best practices and practice guidelines, (d) consultation and supervision models, and (e) evidence supporting efficacy and effectiveness of interventions | 14% |
| Research Methods and Statistics — knowledge of (a) research design, methodology, and program evaluation, (b) instrument selection and validation, (c) statistical models, assumptions, and procedures, and (d) dissemination methods | 8% |
| Ethical/Legal/Professional Issues — knowledge of (a) codes of ethics, (b) professional standards for practice, (c) legal mandates and restrictions, (d) guidelines for ethical decision-making, and (e) professional training and supervision | 15% |

- The competency-based model, including six competency clusters (Scientific Knowledge, Evidence-Based Decision Making/Critical Reasoning, Interpersonal and Multicultural Competence, Professionalism/Ethics, Assessment, and Intervention/Supervision/Consultation) was validated via the large-scale survey of practice.

- The competency clusters each represent competencies which are performed frequently-to-very frequently, are moderately-to-highly critical to optimizing outcomes for patient/client/public, and are moderately-to-very important to the practice of the respondents.
- The 37 competencies were generally validated and are performed frequently-to-very frequently, are moderately-to-highly critical to optimizing outcomes for patient/client/public, and are moderately-to-very important to the practice of the respondents.
- A detailed review of the results for the 277 behavioral exemplars associated with the competencies indicates a *general level of support* for the developmental unfolding of the competencies as operationalized by the exemplars.
- Methodologies for assessing competence were evaluated.
- The feasibility of enhancing the EPPP with alternate item types was explored as one way of augmenting the current licensure/registration process.
- The potential for developing new assessments to complement the EPPP was preliminarily discussed as was the use of such assessments at various points of time pre- and post-licensure/registration.
- Discussions amongst the members of the PATF and the PAAC confirmed the utility of the EPPP as an effective tool for the assessment of the Scientific Knowledge base underlying the practice of psychology. Recommendations for a revised set of test specifications for the EPPP were approved. Future directions in regard to alternate item types that might be built into this computer delivered examination were discussed.
- Discussions amongst the members of the PATF and the PAAC as well as key stakeholders involved in the assessment of competency in students, interns, and practica participants, and jurisdictional regulation confirmed interest in the assessment of competency via complementary assessments that might be integrated into pre- and post-licensure/registration activities and/or licensure/registration requirements.