College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario
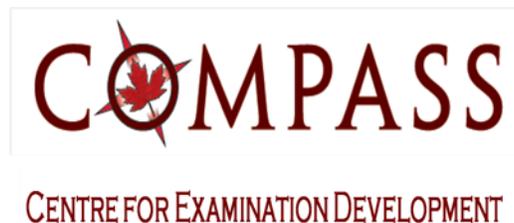
Entry-to-Practice Registration Examination Resource Manual

Canadian Professional Standard for Counselling and Psychotherapy (CPSCP):

Entry-to-Practice Competency Assessment

COMPASS

CENTRE FOR EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT

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About this Guide

This Guide provides an overview and sample of the structure and format of the Registration Examination; its calibration and scoring protocols; and other related information to candidates deemed eligible by the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO) to write the Canadian Professional Standard for Counselling and Psychotherapy (commonly known as the Registration Examination).

A companion document, *Information Guide for Candidates,* is electronically transmitted to registered candidates prior to the administration of the Examination. It includes additional information specific to rules, restrictions, and requirements associated with taking the Examination, as well as a review of its format and style and other details related to its administration.

Examination Purpose

The Registration Regulation of the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario reflects a competency-based registration model. This means that applicants must demonstrate in a variety of ways that they possess the required knowledge, skill and judgment to practice psychotherapy safely and competently, as opposed to simply possessing a specific academic credential.

Registration requirements are founded on the entry-to-practice *Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists* (http://www.crpo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RP-Competency-Profile.pdf)developed by the 2013 transitional Council. The competency profile also underpins the Registration Examination.

The Registration Examination is one part of a multi-pronged assessment process designed to assess the entry-to-practice competencies of Qualifying Members seeking full status as Registered Psychotherapists in Ontario. Regular route applicants must demonstrate competency by successfully completing:

- relevant education and training;
- clinical experience (completion of direct client contact hours and clinical supervision hours);
- the Professional Practice and Jurisprudence e-Learning Module; and
- the entry-to-practice (Registration) Examination.

To review a summary of the requirements for registration via the Regular route, click here.

The Registration Examination: What is the Canadian Professional Standard for Counselling and Psychotherapy (CPSCP) Entry to Practice Competency Assessment?

Commonly referred to as "The Standard", or the "Registration Examination", the tool is the entry-to-practice competency assessment for the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. To access the Registration Examination, candidates must have met specific College registration requirements related to education and training, direct client contact, and clinical supervision.

There are multiple parallel versions (forms) of the Examination, each of which is aligned to the *Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists* using a test blueprint. The blueprint provides the Examination specifications to which each form of the assessment must adhere.

Assessment Specifications: Each of the content domains in the Registered Psychotherapist competency profile will be represented in each form of the assessment within the following contexts:

I.   Make an initial assessment
        At least 10-15% of assessment

II.   Establish a working relationship
        At least 10-15% of assessment

III.   Therapeutic relationship
        At least 25-30% of assessment

IV.   Working towards change
        At least 5-10% of assessment

V.   Manage separation and ending
        At least 5-10% of assessment

VI.   Professional practice
        At least 10-15% of assessment

VII. Make use of supervision
        At least 3-5% of assessment

THE CONTENT ON ALL EXAM FORMS MUST TOTAL 70+% of competencies

The following diagrams provide visual representations of the test blueprint and the competency area alignments:

Diagram 1: Examination Content — Context

AREA 7
3-5%

AREA 1
10-15%

AREA 6
10-15%

AREA 2
10-15%

AREA 5
5-10%

AREA 4
5-10%

AREA 3
25-30%

- Area 1: Make an Initial Assessment
- Area 2: Establish a working relationship
- Area 3: Therapeutic relationship
- Area 4: Working towards change
- Area 5: Manage separation and ending
- Area 6: Professional practice
- Area 7: Make use of supervision
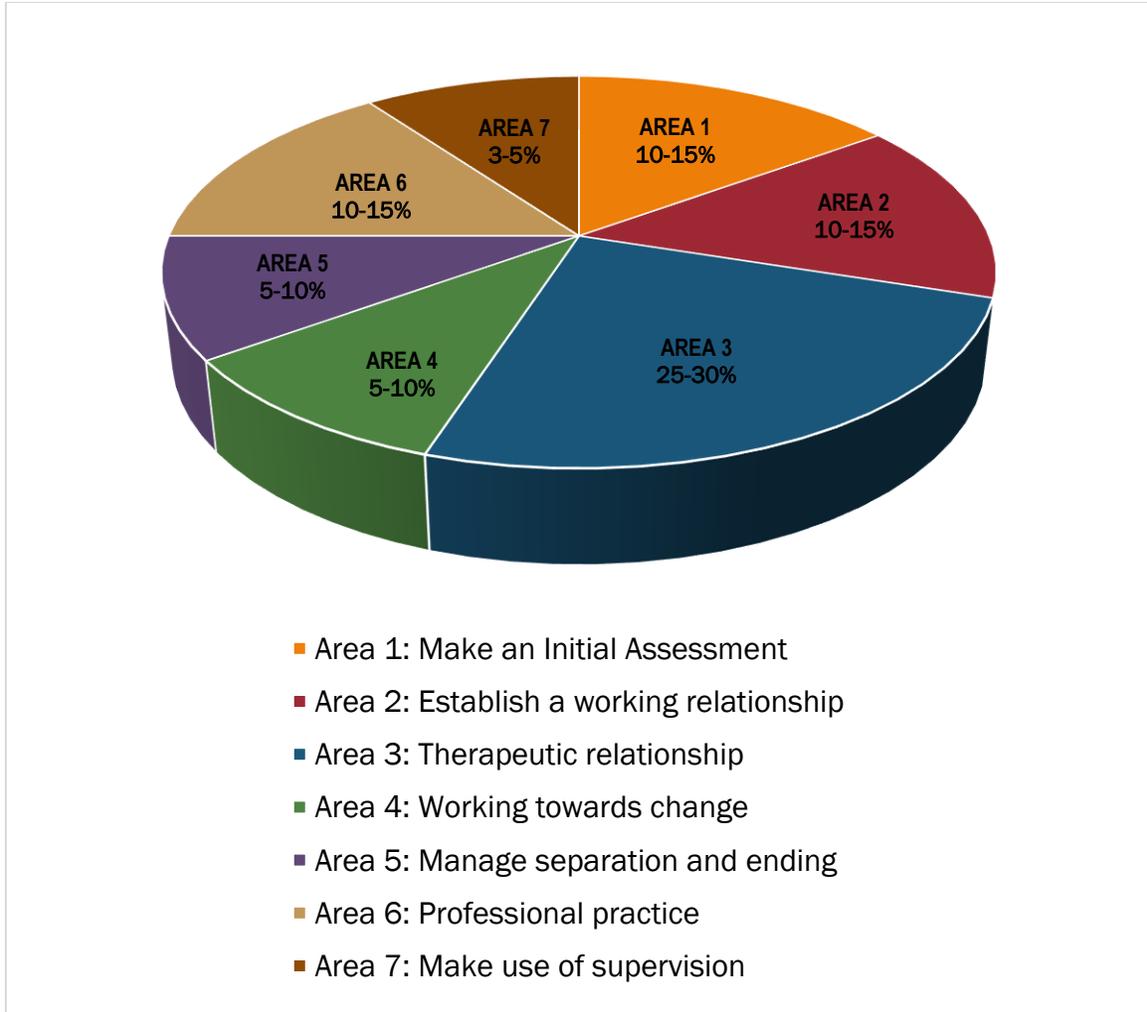
The percentages in Diagram 1 reflect minimum standards for the blueprint for each form of the Registration Examination.

Diagram 2: Examination Content — Registered Psychotherapist Competencies

- Area 1: Competencies 1.5, 3.5, 4.4

- Area 2: Competencies 4.1, 4.3

- Area 3: Competencies 1.2, 1.3, 4.2, 4.5

- Area 4: Competencies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 3.1

- Area 5: Competencies 4.6, 4.7

- Area 6: Competencies 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 5.1, 5.2

- Area 7: Competencies 3.5

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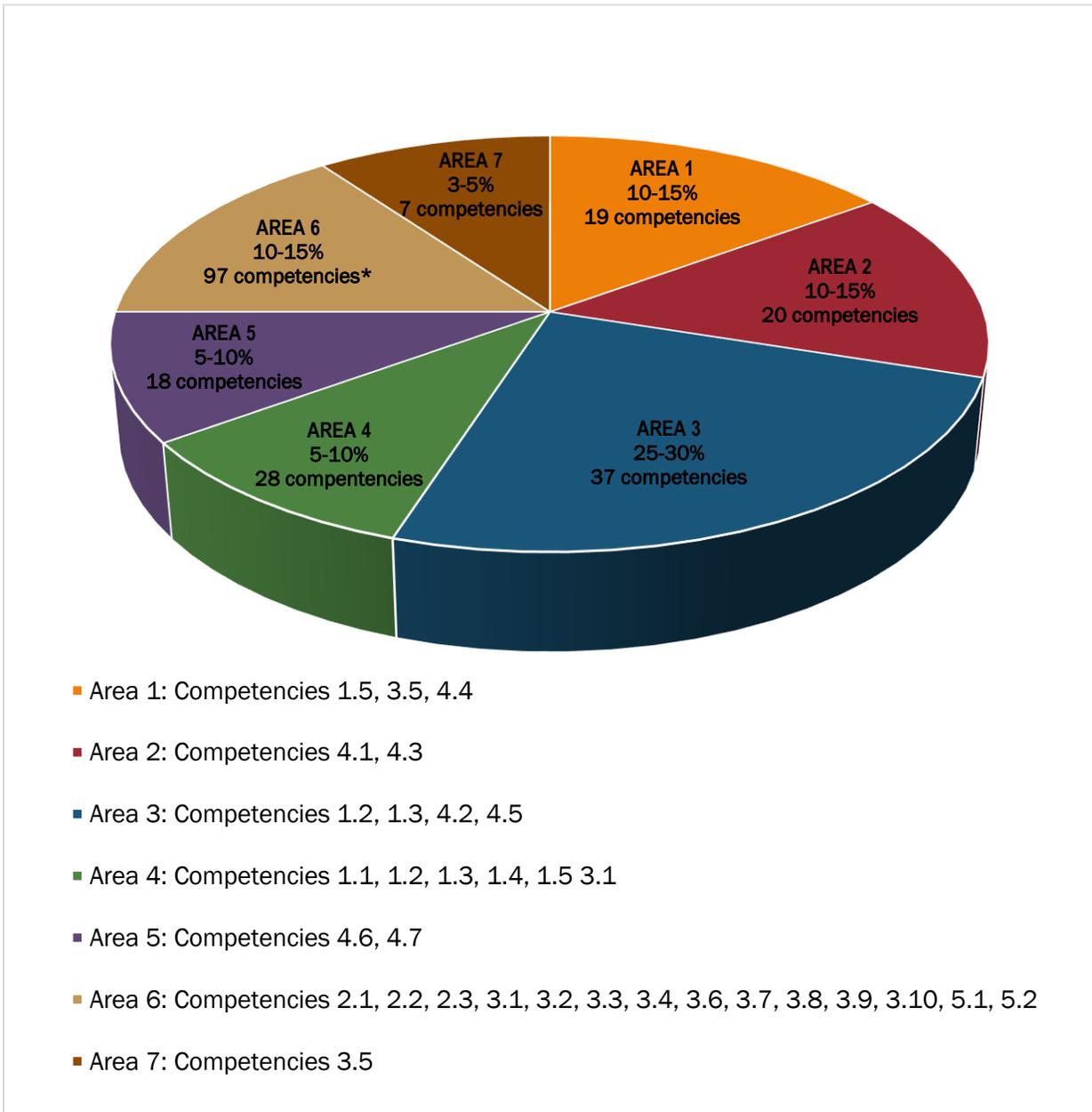
*Multiple competencies in this area are best assessed *in situ* through direct observation and clinical supervision, and are therefore not tested in-depth in the simulation process.

The percentages in Diagram 2 reflect minimum standards for the blueprint for each form of the Registration Examination.

Development Process for the Registration Examination

The CRPO uses the nationally validated CPSCP assessment as its Registration Examination. This national assessment, available in both official languages, is developed by the COMPASS Centre for Examination Development (COMPASS), an independent, third-party organization that specializes in large scale assessments for the counselling and psychotherapy profession in Canada. The work of the COMPASS is regularly monitored by the Registrar of CRPO and the Examination Committee of the CRPO.

The test development team used by COMPASS to create the Registration Examination consists of subject matter experts from across Canada with experience spanning the breadth and depth of the profession. Team members are practitioners, educators and/or supervisors of the profession who, together, have experience in all provinces and territories, including northern, remote, rural, urban, suburban, and reserve settings. Members represent a diversity of psychotherapy and counselling practice including clinical, academic, managerial, and supervisory experience with clients of all ages in a variety of practice settings. The test development team continuously generates new test items in both official languages that reflect current national practice in addressing the most frequently occurring mental health issues of people living in Canada. These test items, known as 'simulations', are subsequently pilot tested, reviewed, and refined by the team before they become part of the scored items on the large-scale assessment.

The Standard:
Simulation-Style Format and Content

The Registration Examination uses a competency-based, simulation-style, computer-based format. The simulations on the Examination are contextualized to the pan-Canadian experience at the entry-to-practice level. Simulations offer different clinical settings, roles, and clients. Regardless of setting, professional competency-based information-gathering, treatment planning, and decision-making processes based on the competency profile for Registered Psychotherapists are the focus of assessment. Each Examination presents ten simulations, each of which is designed to distinguish between abilities in information gathering and in professional decision-making in relation to the competency areas. Each Examination presents ten simulations, each of which is directly aligned to the competency profile for Registered Psychotherapists and is designed to distinguish between abilities in information gathering and in professional decision-making in relation to the competency areas.

There are five to eight sections per simulation; the sections combine to provide access to approximately seventy percent of competencies (omitting those best assessed through clinical supervision). Contextualized knowledge, skills and judgment are assessed; simulations require candidates to utilize competencies interdependently, not in isolation, and at the levels of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Structurally, each simulation has three components:

(1) A *brief scenario* of two or three sentences that provides a realistic setting and introductory client information (e.g., age, gender, presenting problem(s));

(2) An *information gathering* (IG) requirement in which the candidate must gather relevant information for working with the client (e.g., family background, status of physical health, previous counselling), and

(3) A *decision making* (DM) requirement in which the candidate must make therapeutic judgments or decisions, based on information gathered.

Each response option in each simulation is given a weight based on the level of appropriateness for good client care. The points range from +3 to -3. The point value is calibrated based on the degree to which the client may be affected, with +3 being of central importance for good client care and -3 being gravely damaging to client care. Cut scores are determined for each simulation through consensus processes by subject matter experts from multiple therapeutic modalities on the test development team.

SAMPLE of EXAMINATION CONTENT

Each simulation on the Registration Examination consists of three components:

Scenario,

Information Gathering (IG) sections, and

Decision Making (DM) sections.

A sample simulation (Lucia) has been subdivided below to show its component parts and competency alignments.

SCENARIO
Each problem begins with a *Scenario*. The scenario provides the setting and introductory client information (e.g., age, gender, presenting problem(s)).

Scenario Sample – LUCIA
You are a therapist in a group private practice. This is your first meeting with a new client. On her intake form, Lucia has indicated that she is 32 years old, is recently separated after 7 years of marriage, and has 2 school-aged children. Her family doctor has suggested she try psychotherapy to address what he described to her as early signs of depression.

INFORMATION GATHERING

In *Information Gathering* sections, test-takers gather all relevant information for answering the question. This might include family background, status of physical health, previous experience in therapy, etc. Directions in these sections will include the words, "SELECT AS MANY." Test-takers select their choices by clicking on the circle to the left of the options they think are best. When they do this, information appears directly below the selected choice. *On the actual Registration Examination, test-takers will not be able to see the response unless they select it by clicking.* Remember, that in an actual scenario there will be 5 – 8 sections and 4 – 14 selections per section (depending on the nature of the section).

Here is an example of an *Information Gathering* section.

Section A: Information Gathering Sample - LUCIA

In your first meeting with Lucia, what information would best assist you in determining potential directions for therapy at this time?

(SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section)

- o Client's self awareness

   Lucia is reflective and articulate

- o Current physical ailments

   Lucia has minor aches and pains

- o Presenting problem

   Lucia feels sad, no energy, has trouble sleeping

- o Prior mental health treatment

   Lucia has no history of mental health services

- o Children's educational problems

   The children are progressing well at school

5-7 more choices would appear here on a complete problem.

[Note: In this section, competencies 4.2e; 4.5b, g, i, k, l are being assessed]

DECISION MAKING

Decision Making (DM) sections provide opportunities for making judgments or decisions. These sections may be formatted in one of two ways:

1. <u>Multiple Options</u> - Several options are considered appropriate. These sections address decisions in which a combination of actions is required.

2. <u>Single Best Option</u> - There may be more than one acceptable option, but one option is generally regarded as most acceptable.

   <u>The "Multiple Options" type of Decision Making section (described in 1)</u> will have instructions to "SELECT AS MANY." After selecting all of the options that test takers think provide the best response, they click on the "next" icon at the end of that section and continue through the problem as directed.

Section B: Decision Making (Multiple Options) Sample – LUCIA

At the conclusion of your first meeting, what options would be indicated?

(SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section)

- o Refer to social services

  Lucia isn't interested

- o Refer to medical doctor

  Lucia doesn't respond

- o Offer individual therapy

  Lucia shows interest

- o Offer family therapy

  Lucia doesn't respond

- o Provide a brief description about experience and expertise with similar presenting problems

  Lucia feels reassured

5-7 more choices would appear here on a complete problem.

[Note: In this section, competencies 1.2d; 1.4d; 4.1a; 4.5i; 4.6b, are being assessed.]

Section C: Decision Making (Multiple Options) Sample – LUCIA

As you prepare for the next session, which of the following actions would be most helpful to initiate a collaborative plan with your client?

 (SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section)

- o   Have a telephone conversation with the husband

    Lucia doesn't respond

- o   Establish short-term objectives with the client

    Lucia gets involved in the process

- o   Plan for the children to attend therapy sessions

    Lucia isn't interested

- o   Establish treatment issues for therapy with the client

    Lucia gets involved in the process

- o   Obtain consent to consult with the client's doctor

    Lucia provides consent

- o   Obtain a psychosocial history

    Lucia verifies her intake information

[Note: In this section, competencies 1.2; 4.1h; 4.2g; 4.5h, l, r, are being assessed.]

<u>Single Best Option</u> – <u>In the Decision Making section described in 2 above,</u> the instructions will be to "CHOOSE ONLY ONE" option.

Section D: Decision Making (Single Option) Sample – LUCIA

At the beginning of the next session, Lucia is noticeably thinner. She looks tired and says she nearly didn't come to the session. She's been having more trouble caring for herself and for her children. What do you do?

(CHOOSE ONLY ONE in this Section)

- o Connect client with social services

  Lucia isn't interested

- o Explore issues and patterns of behaviour

  Lucia doesn't engage

- o Conduct a risk assessment

  Assessment completed

- o Refer client to a medical doctor

  Lucia doesn't respond

[Note: In this section, competencies 1.3c, d; 4.4c, 4.5m, 4.6b are being assessed.]

Section E: Decision Making (Multiple Options) Sample – LUCIA

It is the fifth session with Lucia. She states, "I really like our talks together. I feel safe and more optimistic…like I have a future. Can I contact you between sessions? I've seen you in my neighbourhood and know where you live." What do you do?

(SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section)

- o Suggest Lucia use the agency 24-hour phone number on the crisis hot line
  Lucia accepts the suggestion

- o Offer your off-hours phone number but have no direct contact
  Lucia receives the information

- o Explore the need for increasing the frequency of sessions
  Lucia engages in the activity

- o Explore other support strategies for between sessions
  Lucia engages in the activity

- o Provide a referral network
  Lucia receives the information

- o Normalize feelings of intense attachment
  Lucia engages in the process

- o Review progress to reassure client
  Lucia engages in the activity

- o Formulate a homework exercise that increases support network
  Lucia receives the information

- o Explain therapeutic boundaries
  Lucia understands

- o Clarify Lucia's comment and explore its dynamics
  Lucia engages in the activity

- o Refer Lucia to an additional therapist
  Lucia receives the information

[Note: In this section, competencies 3.2a; 3.8a; 4.5d, o, q, s, are being assessed.]

Section F: Decision Making (Single Option) Sample – LUCIA

Prior to the termination session, Lucia calls and cancels the appointment. Based on the information gathered to date and your therapeutic alliance, what would be the most appropriate course of action?

(CHOOSE ONLY ONE in this Section)

- o Contact the client

    Lucia thanks you for calling

- o Send a letter explaining the agency policy and provide a refund for the client's final session

    The letter is sent

- o Record in the client's file that she did not attend her termination session

    The file is updated

- o Contact the emergency person listed in the client's file

    The contact person says she had lunch with Lucia and will call her

[Note: In this section, competencies 3.1; 3.2a, b; 3.7, 3.10, 4.2e, j, l; 4.5l are being assessed.]

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN TAKING
THE REGISTRATION EXAMINATION

1. Read thoroughly and carefully. Follow all directions.

2. When a question asks you for information relevant to a specific time (for example, in this session or for next session), click with your mouse only those responses relevant to that time period.

3. There is no way for you to change your mind once you click on a response, even if you click by mistake. Consider your decisions and actions deliberately and carefully. If you do not follow the instructions provided by a clicked response, or if you click a response when not directed to do so, the rest of the simulation will not be scored. All responses are scored and will affect the overall assessment results.

   IMPORTANT NOTE: If you choose to skip a simulation by not selecting any responses to any sections, you will NOT be able to return to this simulation. If you choose to skip a section of a simulation, by not selecting any responses in the section window, you will NOT be able to return to that section to insert a response. Your score on that simulation will be based on selections you made up to the point at which you chose to skip.

COMPETENCY PROFILE ALIGNMENTS AND CALIBRATIONS

Each of the options within each section of each simulation is aligned with one or more competencies on the *Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists*. Additionally, each response option in each simulation is given a weight based on the level of appropriateness for good client care. The points may range from +3 to -3. The table below shows the range and rationale for the weighting of options.

Table 1: Calibration Range and Rationale

+3	Of central importance for good client care – omission would result in serious damage to the client in terms of cost, time, pain, risk of morbidity and/or mortality.
+2	Strongly facilitative of good client care.
+1	Mildly facilitative of good client care.
0	Does not contribute to client care, but does not cause the client any harm in terms of increased cost, time, pain, risk of morbidity and/or mortality.
-1	Mildly detrimental to client care in terms of cost, time, risk of morbidity and/or mortality.
-2	Seriously detrimental to client care in terms of cost, time, pain, risk of morbidity and/or mortality.
-3	Gravely damaging to client care and very costly to the client's welfare in terms of cost, time, pain, risk of morbidity and/or mortality.

COMPETENCY PROFILE ALIGNMENTS AND CALIBRATIONS IN ACTION

Let's look at the alignments to the competency profile and the calibration process together in action with one section of the sample simulation described earlier on page 14. Remember, this sample is designed to show how the process works; it is not an actual test item. Each of the options within the section is focused on one or more competencies on the *Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists*. Each response option has a weight based on the level of appropriateness for good client care. A rationale for the weight is shown on the far-right hand column.

Sample – LUCIA

It is the fifth session with Lucia. She states, "I really like our talks together. I feel safe and more optimistic…like I have a future. Can I contact you between sessions? I've seen you in my neighbourhood and know where you live." What do you do?

(SELECT AS MANY as you consider indicated in this Section)

Option	Competency Area(s)	Calibration	Rationale
Suggest Lucia use the agency 24-hour phone number on the crisis hot line	3.2b, 3.8a, 4.5o	+2	Aligns with ethical code; enhances client autonomy
Offer your off-hours phone number but have no direct contact	3.2a, 4.5d	-2	Boundary violation
Explore the need for increasing the frequency of sessions	4.5q	0	No indication that this is a current issue
Provide a referral network	3.8a, 4.5o	-1	Not pertinent to background information; client request was for personal between-session access to current therapist
Normalize feelings of intense attachment	4.2c, 4.5d, 4.5r	+2	Client has given indication of problem
Review progress to reassure client	4.5s	+1	Available information supports this option; mildly facilitative
Formulate a homework exercise that increases support network	4.5o	+2	Contributes to therapeutic direction; strongly facilitative
Explain therapeutic boundaries	3.2a, 4.5r	+2	Contributes to therapeutic alliance; relevant, timely information to explore
Clarify Lucia's comment and explore its dynamics	4.5d, 4.5m	+2	Relevant, timely information to explore; strongly facilitative
Refer Lucia to an additional therapist	3.8a, 4.6b	-2	Not pertinent to background information; client request was for personal between-session access to current therapist

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW OF SIMULATIONS AND SIMULATION COMPONENTS

The entry-to-practice competency Examination uses a 10-step process that includes modified-Angoff as a decision-making process. Checks and balances based on the test blueprint, commonly occurring mental health issues in Canada, and alignment to competency statements are the focus of the professional review of simulations and their component parts. The professional discussion on each component of each test item typically includes:

– Which competency statement does this item fit?
– What justifies it as being calibrated -3 to +3?
– Would practitioners trained in multiple ways see themselves in this scenario?
– Would practitioners at the entry-to-practice level be expected to do this? To see this client? To be in this situation?
– Do all of the possible selections fit with Canadian law? Provincial law? Territorial law?
– How would this play for persons who have been internationally-trained? For persons who have neither English nor French as their first language?
– Is the language appropriate to all modalities of treatment choices? Is there sufficient diversity?

Other considerations include ensuring that the combination of simulations on each form of the Registration Examination meets the requirements of the test blueprint in terms of percentage of competencies assessed, and provides test-takers with a variety of clients in a variety of settings.

SCORING FOR THE REGISTRATION EXAMINATION

The Registration Examination is criterion-referenced. Each simulation on the Examination has a benchmark (cut-score/pass-rate) for both *information-gathering* and *decision-making* within that section. Using the criterion-based (competency-based) benchmarks across all simulations, candidates must pass both the *information-gathering* components and the *decision-making* components of the Examination in order to successfully complete it. Unlike traditional multiple-choice tests, the pass/fail score in the competency-based Examination is not a specific percentage across all test items.

The passing point for each form of the Registration Examination was set by COMPASS' test development committee using a criterion-referenced method (Angoff method). The exact passing point varies from one form of the Examination to another, depending on the scored simulations included. The test development committee follows strict guidelines in selecting the simulations for each Examination form and uses linear equating to ensure the versions of the Examination are parallel in difficulty.

Each section, *Information Gathering* (*IG*) or *Decision Making* (*DM*), in a simulation was evaluated by content experts on the test development committee when the simulation was developed, and a minimum pass level (MPL) was established for the section using the scoring weights assigned to the options in that section. The MPL for an individual simulation on the Examination (*IG* or *DM*) is the sum of the MPL for all of the *IG* and *DM* sections contained in the problem; the MPL for the total Examination is determined by summing the MPLs for all *IG* and *DM* sections on the Examination form.

To assist candidates in evaluating their performance on the Examination, a report of scores is provided for both *IG* and *DM* sections. It is the total raw score for *IG* and *DM* on the entire Examination that determines whether a candidate passes or fails the Examination. Candidates must achieve total raw passing scores in both *IG* and *DM* to successfully complete the Registration Examination.

The total raw score is based on the nine scored simulations on the Examination. The Examination includes one unscored simulation that is being pretested for future Examinations.

Taking the Assessment: Security and Logistics

COMPASS maintains security on test development processes and test item storage, as well as ongoing checks on the reliability, validity and credibility of the assessment instrument. The experience of the test-taker has also been carefully checked.

Test centres located across Canada have been secured through the use of an experienced third-party test administrator. The administrator's function is to ensure the seamless process of taking the test in a secure setting with a well-trained proctor who is experienced in high-stakes testing protocols.

The following preparations undergo continuous quality assurance processes across the country:

- Secure online, bilingual application to write the assessment
- Optional self-assessment that replicates the Registration Examination style and format
- Test-taker guidebook to familiarize the candidate with the process and the testing platform
- Proctor guidebook and reporting system
- Test-centre availability across Canada, including settings outside of major centres
- Accommodations for persons requiring additional time to write due to disability or medical condition

Test security is essential to defensibility. Security features (among others) for the Registration Examination include:

- Computer lock-down to prevent theft of test information
- Secure test locations with experienced proctors of high-stakes assessments only
- Individual passcodes for use of testing platform

- Two pieces of photo-ID government-issued identification plus official letter of confirmation to write assessment to obtain access to the exam room

Every attempt has been made to secure sufficient test centre locations to ensure candidates do not have to travel longer than two hours to arrive at the test centre nearest to their home or place of work. Where this is not possible, a protocol has been put in place with the test administrator to find individualized solutions that maintain the same safety and security rigour.

The Registration Examination is designed to be available two times per year. This is consistent with most other high stakes assessments. By restricting the testing times to specific time slots, the opportunity for various forms of testing fraud, cheating or collusion are reduced and any unforeseen testing platform errors can be corrected without negatively affecting the scores of the test-takers.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The entry-to-practice Registration Examination is computer-based, simulation-style, and competency-based. It requires that test-takers apply their psychotherapy-based knowledge, skills, and attributes to therapeutic situations. The *Ontario Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists* to which the Examination is aligned, will be most helpful to the preparation process and is available at no cost on the CRPO website (http://www.crpo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RP-Competency-Profile.pdf), and the COMPASS website (http://www.compassexams.ca/en/self-assessment/). This profile provides the competency areas on which candidates will be tested. Any other materials that candidates may wish to use to prepare for the Examination are at their discretion; typically, candidates use textbooks and other materials that were assigned to them during their post-secondary education in the field of psychotherapy as reminders, since these products were initially used to teach the competency areas for the profession.

Also available is an online [self-assessment](), accessed on the COMPASS website. This tool is designed to give candidates a preview of the style and format of the actual Exam (a fee, plus applicable taxes, applies).

In a recent informal survey of most commonly used entry-to-practice textbooks for the psychotherapy and counselling profession (not an exhaustive list) included:

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Archer, J. & McCarthy, C. J. (2007). *Theories of counselling and psychotherapy; contemporary applications*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Arthur, N., & Collins, S. (2010). *Culture-infused counselling: Celebrating the Canadian mosaic*. Calgary, Alberta: Counselling Concepts

Corey, G. (2009). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy. (8th ed.).* Canada: Brooks/Cole

Corsini, R. & Wedding, D. (2009) *Current Psychotherapies, (9th ed.).* Canada: Brooks/Cole.

Martin, L., Shepard, B., & Lehr, R. (eds.), (2015). *Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Experience: Ethics-Based Issues and Cases*. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

Truscott, D., & Crook, K. (2004). Ethics for the practice of psychology in Canada. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press.

Wedding, D. (2009) *Case Studies in Psychotherapy, (9th ed.).* Canada: Brooks/Cole.

Yalom, I., & Molyn, L. (2005). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (5th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

COMPASS does not endorse specific authors or study materials in relation to the Registration Examination.