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Short articles (around 600 words), news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions of particular relevance to students are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com

The land of opportunity?

WHILE an undergraduate, I was aware that competition for clinical psychology training was fierce. But I had no idea that I would be left in a desperate and helpless state trying to find the paid or even voluntary experience that many argue is a prerequisite for clinical training. After graduating in 2000, I applied for over 80 advertised positions and made 50 direct enquiries trying to find a position that would resemble 'relevant clinical experience'. But to no avail.

It became obvious that the problem was not an oversupply of psychologists, rather a lack of government funding to recruit and train enough psychologists to fill the increasing number of vacant positions in the NHS. So I looked elsewhere – to Australia, where things are very different.

To work within the public health service in Australia, the minimum requirements are relevant undergraduate training in psychology and registration with the Psychologists Registration Board in their state. Postgraduate training is not required.

Salaried employees are classified as 'intern psychologists' and undertake a planned supervision programme overseen by an 'unconditionally' registered psychologist for the two-year intern period. The supervision plan requires the intern to complete specific certificates on (a) intervention strategies, (b) ethical, legal and professional matters, (c) interviewing, counselling and consulting, (d) record keeping, (e) psychological testing, (f) development and maintenance of psychological skills, and (g) data collection and evaluation.

Psychologists in Australia are also employed in the workplace, in many different settings and roles. According to a report published by the New South Wales Department of Health, the NSW psychologist workforce numbered 4608 in 2001. Of these, approximately 1050 were registered as intern or conditionally registered psychologists and received 'in-house' planned supervision.

One stark consequence of the different system in Australia is that almost 85 per cent of Australian registered psychologists are prevented from practising in the UK,



BY VAUGHAN PARSONS

where psychologists must have doctoral-level qualifications in a specialist field.

Many claim that Australia is the land of opportunity, and from a career perspective they may be right. Australia's professional registration bodies allow psychology graduates to enter the profession provided they meet the necessary requirements. They also appear much more mindful of the skills that even intern psychologists are able to bring to the health service, whilst acknowledging that they do require

additional support and clinical guidance. The Australian system has proved that it is advantageous – not to mention productive – to get graduates into the health service and allow them to flourish and learn.

Short of changing the entire British registration system, perhaps the BPS could learn and adopt some of the practices and ideologies of its Australian cousin. Would I have stayed in the UK if employment opportunities were more abundant for graduates? Definitely!

■ *Vaughan Parsons works with the AIDS Dementia and HIV Psychiatry Team at Sydney Hospital.*

TRAVEL BURSARIES FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

DO you need help with the cost of attending a conference? The Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group (PsyPAG) might be able to assist.

There are two types of award, one for international conferences (maximum £250) and one for domestic conferences (maximum £50). In addition, award winners will automatically have their papers accepted for the next PsyPAG annual conference. They will also be asked to write a short report on the conference they attended for *PsyPAG Quarterly*.

There are two rounds of applications each year, with closing dates on 10 March and 10 October. In each round, there will be one international conference award and up to five domestic conference awards available. Money not awarded in one round may be carried forward to the next. The PsyPAG committee will judge all applications on their individual merits.

For details and an application form for the **10 March 2004** deadline, contact the PsyPAG Information Officer, Asiya Siddiquee. E-mail: a_siddiquee@hotmail.com.