

Development of a new Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa New Zealand

Current Status and Next Steps

Why Update the Code of Ethics?

The current Code of Ethics for Psychologists in Aotearoa New Zealand / Te Tikanga Matatika, originally published in 2002, needs updating. It was recognised that some quite fundamental changes to the Code of Ethics were needed. The main goals of updating the Code of Ethics are to ensure it is relevant and fit for purpose for psychological practice now and into the future, and to ensure it more strongly reflects the profession of Psychology's commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Splitting the Code of Ethics into a Code of Conduct and a Code of Ethics

In November 2021 the New Zealand Psychologists Board signalled that it needed a Code of Conduct for regulatory reasons, and that this could be developed alongside a new Code of Ethics. These two documents (under a variety of names) are used jointly in many professions and organisations (for example, for psychologists in Australia and the United Kingdom) to mandate and guide practice by members. The two documents have different functions. In a psychological context:

- A **Code of Conduct** outlines the behaviours that are mandated as part of professional work and that form base-line expectations of behaviour and practice. It specifies those things that the psychologist must or must not do.
- A **Code of Ethics** outlines the core ethical values and principles that should guide a psychologist's practice and behaviour. Many decisions that psychologists need to make are not directly covered in the Code of Conduct, so psychologists use the principles in the Code of Ethics to help them to decide on the best (most ethical) of alternative courses of action.

The current Code of Ethics covers both of these functions. Ethical behaviour in the future will be guided and determined by both the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics.

Ethics and Partnership

To signify the partnership between Māori and Tauīwi (non-Māori, irrespective of their place of origin or their cultural background), the structure of the new draft Code of Ethics reflects both Te Tiriti o

Waitangi and the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists (2008: UDEPP) [1]. It draws on Māori tikanga (customs and practices) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), and on western traditions of professional ethics. Also reflecting the partnership between Māori and Taiwi, the requirements in the Code of Conduct are organised into ten Kawa (expectations of behaviour and approach).



The Mahi So Far

Original discussions about updating the Code of Ethics took place in 2018, but the revision process really started in July 2021 when a Code of Ethics Review Group (Review Group) with participants from He Paiaka Tōtara (a group for Māori psychologists), the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP), the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS), The New Zealand Psychologists Board (the Board), and Pasifikology (a group for Pasifika psychologists) was established. There are currently 13 members of the Review Group, of whom five identify as Māori and one identifies as Pasifika.

In May 2022 all psychologists were surveyed seeking their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the current Code of Ethics and changes they would like to see. Presentations were held at the NZPsS Conference in August 2022 and the NZCCP Conference in March 2023 outlining the broad directions being taken in revising the Codes and seeking feedback from the audiences. Review of literature about ethics and ethical decision making, and review of Codes of Conduct and Ethics from different professions and countries, was also undertaken to inform the development process. Information from all these sources, along with other feedback, has been used by the Review Group to develop subsequent drafts of the Code of Ethics.

In November 2023 feedback on a draft of the Code of Ethics was requested from representatives of several areas of psychology (including ABA, Clinical, Community, Corrections, Counselling, Educational, Family Court Writers, Forensics, Health, Military, Neuropsychology, and Organisational psychology), He Paiaka Tōtara, the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues, Pasifikology, and individuals and groups with specific interests in ethics in psychology. This feedback has been incorporated into further drafts of the Code of Ethics, and has informed the ongoing development of the Code of Conduct.

The Board initially developed the Code of Conduct. More recently, the Board and Review Group have collaborated in the joint development and integration of the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics. The Board has also sought legal review of the draft Code of Conduct.



Changes Incorporated into the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics

In addition to the structural changes described above, there have been many changes to the content of the Codes. Some of the major changes include:

- Re-orienting the code to reflect mātauranga Māori and Māori cultural values as core guiding principles of ethical practice
- Increasing the focus on inclusiveness, equity, and respect for the importance of cultural factors in psychological practice.
- Additional information regarding Māori concepts and tikanga to assist psychologists to practice ethically and effectively with Māori
- Inclusion in the Code of Ethics of discussion about Informed Choice as well as Informed Consent.
- Recognising that confidentiality and dual relationships may need to be managed differently in many Aotearoa New Zealand contexts (such as when a psychologist focuses on working with people from their own cultural group or if they live in a small town) and shifting the emphasis to managing such relationships well rather than avoiding them.
- A more whānau-centred approach, with an increased focus on collectives (groups, family/whānau, organisations, systems)
- Aiming for strength-based approaches, including a focus of empowering psychologists as well as clients.
- Articulating the ethics associated with the use of technologies that are new since the 2002 Code was developed, including increased use of telepsychology and Artificial Intelligence.
- Explicit recognition of the need for psychologists to be able to practice their own self-cares.
- More explicit recognition that psychologists have a right and responsibility to advocate for working arrangements that protect the dignity and wellbeing of their clients (for example, confidentiality, culturally safe services, access to effective services).
- More explicit expectations regarding honesty and fairness in business dealings as a psychologist.

The Journey Ahead

Draft versions of the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics will shortly be available to all psychologists and your feedback regarding the documents will be sought. These documents will be available online and an online feedback portal will be available for if you want to comment on these codes. Feedback which would be particularly helpful will include:

- Any areas that you think are not covered or that need to be covered in more depth, (remembering that these Codes are for the whole of the psychology profession and detailed guidelines separate to the

Codes may be needed for psychologists working in specific areas).

- Any content that you disagree with or think it should be presented differently.
- Any other changes you would like to see.

Your feedback on the Codes will be most welcome. Psychologists will be advised through the Board and the professional organisations when the Codes are available and the feedback portal is open.

[1] International Union of Psychological Sciences <https://www.iupsys.net/about/declarations/universal-declaration-of-ethical-principles-for-psychologists/>