

# Quality control of psychological services

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## **Abstract**

The German Psychological Society (DGPs) has founded a Center for Scientific-Psychological Services. Its task is to further quality control of ethical standards in research applications, of psychological assessment tasks or of curricular standards in psychology education. At the time, the Center supports the Ethics Committee of the DGPs, the postgraduate training in forensic psychology, the quality seal of psychology majors, the EuroPsy certification, and the quality control of psychological testing for driving licences.

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Among its statutory objectives, the German Psychological Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie e.V., DGPs) aims to advance and disseminate scientific psychological knowledge in society. About ten years ago it became clear that to effectively pursue this aim the DGPs would require professionalization. Consequently, the DGPs has established a center for scientific-psychological services (Zentrum für wissenschaftlich-psychologische Dienstleistungen (DGPs), ZwPD) under the umbrella of a university-related company providing business and legal services. In following these goals the ZwPD is able to draw upon the excellent psychological expertise in universities and colleges.

As of the end of 2018, the ZwPD supports five projects. All projects deal with either quality control of ethical standards in research applications, of psychological assessment tasks or of curricular standards in psychology education.

### **Quality Control in Research Ethics: The Ethics Committee of the DGPs**

Upon request by the responsible researcher, the Ethics Committee judges the ethical tenability of a psychological research project's goals and procedures as described in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie (2018). The committee comprises nine full members and three coopted members who occasionally assist with their specialized expertise.

The ZwPD handles the requests for ethical consulting and decisions, see <https://zwpd.transmit.de/zwpd-dienstleistungen/zwpd-ethikkommission>. The Ethics Committee has processed about 480 requests in the past five years, a high number for work done on a voluntary and unpaid basis.

### **Quality of Forensic Assessments: Postgraduate Training in Forensic Psychology**

Conducting psychological forensic assessment, writing the report, and presenting it before court is a highly sophisticated task. Court cases, for example, about child custody interfere deeply with people's lives and deserve the highest competencies of specially trained, certified psychologists.

The postgraduate training imparts a fundamental scientific and vocational qualification for psychological tasks in the legal system. Of highest importance is the psychological assessment of family systems in cases before court, of defendants, convicts, or in imprisonment.

Regulations for postgraduate training have been issued by the Federation of German Psychology Associations, that is, the union of the Association of German Professional Psychologists (Berufsverband deutscher Psychologinnen und Psychologen e.V., BDP) and the DGPs. Postgraduate training in forensic psychology is organized by an expert

panel. The ZwpD is the business agency for the expert panel, see <http://www.rechtspsychologie-weiterbildung.de>.

In 2013, the year the ZwpD started with its postgraduate training in forensic psychology, there were 62 participants in the program, by 2017 there were 164 participants, and the number is still increasing. At the end of 2017 we registered 366 certified psychologists for forensic psychology. We have 86 supervisors who carry out the practical training.

## **Quality seal for psychology majors**

The DGPs issues a quality seal for psychology majors at universities and colleges in German-speaking countries if about 20 criteria for curriculum and publication standards are met by the study program and the staff. Currently we offer the quality seal for the study programs “Bachelor in Psychology” and “Master in Business Psychology”. The DGPs offers the quality seal in an effort to harmonize study programs and secure a high level of quality, and to uphold the unity of Psychology.

Of 32 requests for the quality seal 20 have been approved, three rejected and nine are in review.

The ZwpD oversees the complete procedure, see <https://zwpd.transmit.de/zwpd-dienstleistungen/qualitaetssiegel>.

## **Quality control of psychology education: EuroPsy-certification**

The European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA) has installed a procedure for the recognition of psychologists’ qualifications defined by standards of study programs and supervised practice in 28 countries in Europe. Each country establishes a Board that examines requests for the EuroPsy-certification. On behalf of the Federation of German Psychology Associations, the German Board (Nationale Anerkennungskommission) decides about applications from Germany. We have approved 289 EuroPsy-certifications since the service was created in 2009. The ZwpD administers the application process, see <http://www.europsy.de> and <https://zwpd.transmit.de/zwpd-dienstleistungen/europsy>.

## **Quality control of psychological testing for driving licenses**

Psychological testing in Germany is a standard procedure applicants must undergo to attain a driving license in passenger transportation (taxis or busses) or for regaining a driving license in all categories after revocation. The federal law requires five traits to be assessed: Resilience, orientation, concentration, attention, and responsiveness. Since 2017 the law has demanded that the tests used for measuring these traits undergo evalua-

tion for psychometric quality and, if not rated positively, can no longer be used for the stated purpose.

The ZwpD is a state-approved agency for carrying out these test evaluations. To this end we have contracted academic experts in psychological testing and have the tests evaluated by a modified test review scheme (TBS-DTK; Diagnostik- und Testkuratorium, 2018).

In conclusion, the ZwpD has established an effective infrastructure that is able to offer psychological services in many fields of quality control. In this way, the ZwpD supports the professionalization strategy of the DGPs.

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