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International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology (*ICUP*): Highlighting the Value of Undergraduate Psychology Education in Personal, Work, and Community Domains

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The value of undergraduate psychology education has been questioned, especially in countries where most graduates do not pursue further training to become licensed psychologists. Partly to address this concern, the International Collaboration on Undergraduate Psychology Outcomes, involving 120 members from 47 nations, developed the *International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology* (*ICUP*) model. This model comprises 24 foundational competences across seven categories: psychological knowledge, psychological research methodologies and methods, psychology-relevant: values and ethics, cultural responsiveness and diversity, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and interpersonal skills, and personal and professional development. Designed to complement national models, *ICUP* highlights how psychology graduates can meaningfully contribute in personal, work, and community domains. In this article, we briefly describe the value of *ICUP* in each domain and answer commonly asked questions from stakeholders. We provide examples of educational approaches to demonstrate value for students (applying the competences in life and work), educators (using the competences to prepare students for life beyond graduation), employers (making explicit what competences psychology graduates offer), and communities (demonstrating how competences might foster psychologically literate citizenship). We assert that the *ICUP* model enhances the perceived and actual value of an undergraduate psychology degree by articulating its broad, foundational impact.

Keywords: International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology, psychological literacy, foundational psychology competences, educational outcomes

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continued

The value of undergraduate psychology education has been questioned, especially in countries where most graduates do not pursue further training to become registered/licensed psychologists or research psychologists. We developed the *International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology* (*ICUP*) model for several reasons, including to address this concern (see Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025). One focus of the *ICUP* model is on how graduates can contribute meaningfully in personal, work, and community domains. We will consider the value of undergraduate psychology education in each of these domains, encompassing questions regarding the *ICUP* model from stakeholders, including students, educators, employers, and the general public. We provide examples demonstrating how implementation of the model could facilitate educators supporting students to (a) be aware of the competences that they have acquired; (b) apply such competences to their personal, work, and community lives; and (c) communicate such competences to others, including potential employers. In essence, we assert that the implementation of the *ICUP* model should increase the perceived and actual value of undergraduate psychology.

The *ICUP* Model

The *ICUP* model was developed by the International Collaboration on Undergraduate Psychology Outcomes (ICUPO) Committee alongside the advisory International Reference Group on Undergraduate Psychology Outcomes, totaling 120 psychology educators from 47 countries across six continents, providing geographically and culturally diverse representation (including Indigenous psychology educators from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Cameroon, and India). The committee aimed to develop international consensus on key undergraduate foundational competences and create a model that might guide curricular development in diverse cultural contexts.

Readers may find some key definitions used in the ICUPO project useful; definitions for "foundational

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The *International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology* model has been described at conferences and in publications, which are listed on the project website at https://icupo.org. A preprint describing the *International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology* model is at https://osf.io/6vz8s. The authors have no known conflicts of interest to disclose.

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psychology competence," "professional psychology competence," "intervention," and "psychology-relevant" are provided in Supplemental Material 1. The term "competence" was chosen following a review of international and national terminology for psychology learning outcomes (e.g., International Project on Competence in Psychology, 2016) and we adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (2019) conceptualization: "more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it involves the mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in a range of specific contexts to meet complex demands" (p. 4).

Between 2022 and 2025, the committee identified a process for model development, reviewed educational frameworks, mapped national and regional psychology curricula, clarified terminology, and integrated the data into a unified model. The model was further driven by stakeholder needs and responsivity to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs; United Nations, 2015) and was informed by the concept of psychological literacy: the ability to intentionally apply psychology to meet personal, work, and community goals (Cranney et al., 2022). The model was revised iteratively in response to extensive feedback and consultation to ensure that it appropriately encapsulated cultural responsiveness and diversity (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025).

The model includes two core categories (psychological knowledge and psychological research methodologies and methods) as well as five psychology-relevant competence categories (communication and interpersonal skills; values and ethics; cultural responsiveness and diversity; critical thinking and problem-solving; personal and professional development; see Figure 1), each associated with a set of competence statements (24 in total). Note that psychology-relevant category competences are generic competences that are both psychology-informed and psychology-applied; see the definition in Supplemental Material 1. All categories are interconnected, with *personal and professional development* centrally located in Figure 1 to underpin and highlight the importance of integrating and applying psychological knowledge to achieve personal, work, and community goals. The model is framed within an ecological system, reflecting the broader context that situates the competences and the range of possible stakeholders. For further detail on the *ICUP* model, see Cranney, Nolan, Job, et al. (2025) and Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al. (2025).

Stakeholders

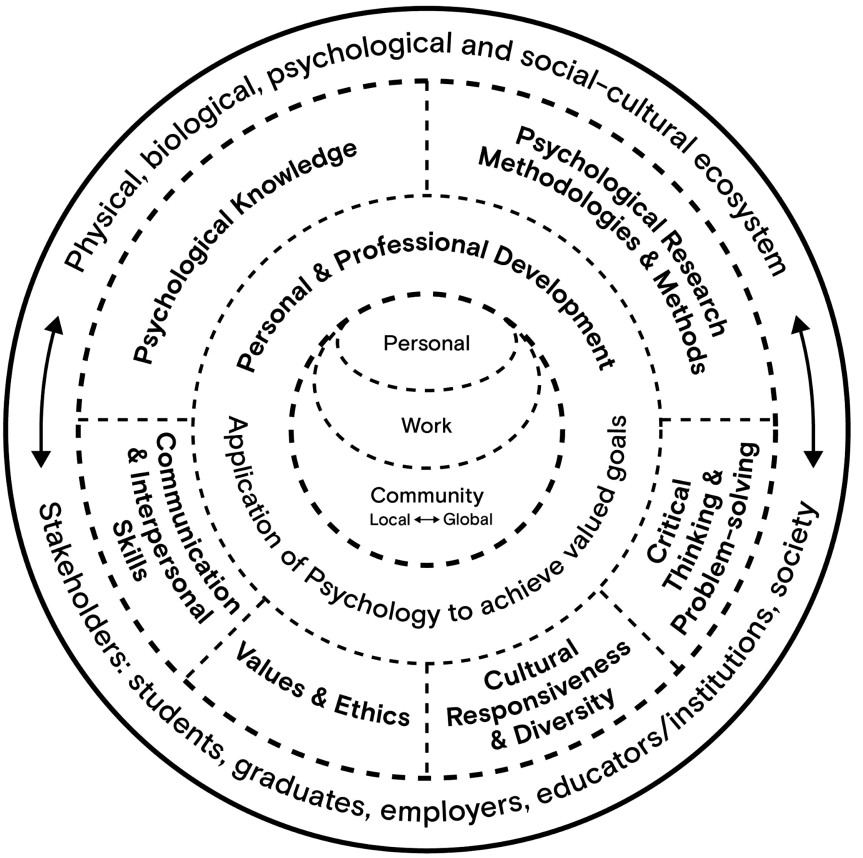
Stakeholders in undergraduate psychology education are shown in Figure 1. Students and graduates require a future-proof, fit-for-purpose curriculum and learning experience to prepare them to function effectively in their personal, work, and community lives. Educators and educational leaders in universities may seek guidance on developing student skills, often to improve employability, but may face tension with relevant regulatory frameworks. Employers seek work-ready graduates, and community members will benefit from psychology graduates who are concerned about sustainability, equity, and social cohesion. Recent research in Europe suggests that students and graduates are less confident about specific aspects of their own competence development than educators and educational leaders think they should be (Papageorgi et al., 2024), demonstrating the importance of considering multiple stakeholder perspectives.

In each of the domains (personal, work, community), we discuss the potential value of foundational psychology in a way that addresses stakeholder questions, and we give some examples of strategies to deliver relevant competences. Unless otherwise indicated, the stakeholder questions were raised through the consultation processes during development of the model, including (a) targeted engagement with the International Reference Group on Undergraduate Psychology Outcomes and with psychology organizations and leaders; (b) engagement with audiences at conferences, workshops, and colloquia; (c) publication and other forms of dissemination and feedback; and (d) discussions with our students. These questions are reflected in the frequently asked questions in Appendix 7 of the *ICUP* model preprint (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025). Other questions were proposed by us (which we make clear in the text). With reference to the *ICUP* competences, we provide possible answers. Some answers are supported by research, although not yet specific to the *ICUP* model; further *ICUP*-specific research is planned. Supplemental Material 2 provides a list of studies relevant to each of the three domains.

Competences in the Personal Domain

The application of psychological competences in the personal domain refers to the ability of psychology undergraduate students and graduates to

Figure 1
International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology Model



Note. This socioecologically framed figure emphasizes (a) the broad ecosystem in which the *International Competences for Undergraduate Psychology* competences are situated and (b) the wide range of stakeholders, given that graduates of undergraduate programs in many countries go on to a wide range of careers. There are two core competence categories: (1) *psychological knowledge* and (2) *psychological research methodologies and methods*. There are also five psychology-relevant competence categories: (3) *values and ethics*, (4) *cultural responsiveness and diversity*, (5) *critical thinking and problem-solving*, (6) *communication and interpersonal skills*, and (7) *personal and professional development*. All seven competence categories interact with each other. Numbering is primarily for convenience in referring to competence statements. Psychology-relevant personal and professional development is at the center of the figure, reflecting (a) a student-centered approach; (b) a socio/bio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2005); and (c) the critical importance of integration and application of psychological knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes in personal, professional, and community contexts (i.e., psychological literacy). From *International Collaboration on Undergraduate Psychology Outcomes (ICUPO): Figures, Tables, ICUP Model*, by S. A. Nolan, J. Cranney, S. Narciss, M. A. Machin, J. Gullifer, S. Goedeke, L. K. de Souza, R. Job, F. Jia, L. Foster, J. A. Hulme, D. Iliescu, X. Ju, H. Kojima, A. Kumar, T. Tchombe, W. Waitoki, V. Boeta Madera, and M. E. S. Reyes, n.d., Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/6y38x/files/gvp3y).

draw on what they have learned to address their own individual goals. Within the context of introductory, health, motivation, lifespan development, or social units, specific *ICUP* competences can be leveraged to support student achievement of personal goals, such as improved relationships, physical and psychological health, or ethical decision making (Morris & Cranney, 2022). For example, students could be introduced to effective communication techniques such as active constructive responding (Gable et al., 2004) and then practice this technique (with feedback), followed by assessment. This activity aligns with several *ICUP* competence statements, particularly "Demonstrate collaboration skills that promote understanding, inclusivity, and cooperation among team members" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 8).

Many of the *ICUP* competences are relevant to the personal domain. The psychological knowledge competence category includes the ability to "Identify the distinctive contribution of the discipline of psychology in relation to other disciplines to understanding the self, others, and contemporary contexts" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 5). This competence is further enhanced by the psychology-relevant values and ethics competence category, which includes competences around reflexivity regarding personal values and biases, and psychology-informed ethical decision making. Cultural responsiveness and diversity competences encourage reflexivity, humility, and respect in interactions with diverse others, while critical thinking and problem-solving encourage students to evaluate information to "form and justify judgements and decisions based on psychological knowledge, skills and values" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 8). Of course, communication and interpersonal skills are relevant in all aspects of one's personal life (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025). Finally, personal and professional development competences include the ability to "Demonstrate ongoing reflexivity regarding one's competences, values, and interactions with others to enhance self-care and the self-regulation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 9). We *propose* that, collectively, these competences can equip psychology students with skills, knowledge, and values that increase self-awareness, enable them to seek and evaluate information that can facilitate personal development, and position them to make evidence-led decisions (e.g., Morris & Cranney, 2022; Morris et al., 2018; Wilson, 2009). We acknowledge that more research is required to demonstrate strong links between *ICUP*-driven educational strategies and personal satisfaction and quality of life (see Supplemental Material 2 for relevant literature).

Students and graduates who asked how the *ICUP* can help in the personal domain largely focused on "how" they might do so. Although typical curricula include content on learning theories, health, well-being, and mental health, many feel unclear on how to use this knowledge to pursue their own goals. This disconnection may reflect a tradition in psychology undergraduate education (especially in the Global North) of teaching content (theory and research methods), with "application" being reserved for professional training. As Cranney et al. (2011) stated, the latter constitutes a very narrow interpretation of "application" which focuses on professional psychology contexts and denies the value of application of foundational competences in personal, (general) work, and community domains. We argue that all graduates (regardless of career destination) would benefit by developing psychology competences relevant to the personal domain. Emphasizing such competences would ensure that students are given opportunities to develop—and document—skills in application and to reflect on their own personal and professional development needs. For example, early in their studies, students can be introduced to metacognitive strategies that contribute to academic success (e.g., study strategies, anxiety management) and taught to reflect on and improve their own approaches (Dunlosky et al., 2013; Morris et al., 2023), supporting lifelong learning. When embraced by educators, the *ICUP* model provides a framework to help students to apply psychology more effectively in their personal lives.

The literature tells us, as did our stakeholders, that some educators and educational leaders have understandable concerns about teaching students in a way that develops their competences in the personal domain. First, psychology educators are not usually trained clinicians and they do not feel competent to address issues relating to student mental health concerns (Hulme & Kitching, 2017; Murdoch, 2016). We offer reassurance that this is not what the *ICUP* is asking. Two competences within the *ICUP* help: knowing one's limitations in terms of judgment or competence,

and seeking advice when these limitations are encountered (personal and professional development). We believe that it is possible to teach students how to manage their own psychological well-being and to know when appropriate professional support is needed. For example, Pearson et al. (2024) described an innovative unit where first-year psychology students learned about nature-connectedness and well-being. These students learned to improve their mood through spending time in nature (personal domain), recognized the benefits of such activities for reducing workplace stress (work domain), and developed a greater appreciation for environmental conservation (community domain). This outcome was achieved without crossing professional or ethical boundaries.

Relatedly, not all applications in the personal realm are related to mental health. Across the discipline, there are numerous lessons for our personal lives (Hulme & Cranney, 2021). For example, we speculate that students may acquire knowledge and skills that let them apply principles of operant conditioning to training their new pet; prioritize an early night before a job interview because they know the cognitive impacts of sleep deprivation; harness visual cues to remember their grocery list; ask their physician informed questions about research findings related to their care; or wear their bicycle helmet because they know the impact of head injuries (see Supplemental Material 2). That is, foundational psychology is pertinent to many aspects of personal life.

Second, specific to mental health applications, educators express concern that the application of psychology, especially in the personal domain, should be taught after foundational theoretical and research training. However, there is a plethora of literature describing the practical delivery of competences in the personal domain in foundational psychology education (e.g., Chew et al., 2022; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2024; Pownall et al., 2023). Many students are drawn to psychology in part to better understand themselves (Wilson, 2009) and in a safe learning environment students value insights that they can relate to their own lives (Craig & Zinkiewicz, 2010; Hulme & Kitching, 2017; Morris & Cranney, 2022).

Third, some educators expressed apprehensions regarding the teaching of values and ethics in foundational undergraduate psychology programs. These concerns focused on the importance of *not* imposing our own values and ethics on our students, with which we agree. The *ICUP* model does not prescribe specific personal values, ethics, or morals, but rather encourages students to reflect on their own and others' stances, considering how values may be influenced by social-cultural factors and can be informed by psychological research. It offers a perspective to support students' understanding of the values and ethical frameworks underlying psychology as a discipline, including its potential to exacerbate or address social issues (e.g., Wright et al., 2024). Such reflection is essential for ethical, professional, and culturally responsive behavior. It is sometimes argued that psychological science should be "value-free," but even striving for objectivity is value laden (Howard, 1985). The *ICUP* offers a framework in which students are enabled to reflect on their values in order to make informed decisions within their own context.

We did not hear questions from employers or community stakeholders regarding applying *ICUP* competences in the personal domain. However, we imagine that psychology students and graduates taught according to *ICUP* principles learn to self-regulate emotions, develop self-awareness, and bring insights about their own positionality and well-being into work and community environments. Foundational psychology graduates will not be experts in mental health, but they will have sufficient knowledge to signpost professional support. They will have a broad range of competences that inform their own self-care strategies, social interaction skills, and personal development needs that will benefit themselves and those interacting with them, including in workplace or community contexts (e.g., CBI Economics, 2024; Naufel et al., 2019).

Competences in the Work Domain

The work domain is familiar to many of us, as universities increasingly focus on preparing "work-ready," employable graduates. One of the most frequently adopted definitions of employability comes from Yorke (2006, p. 8): "a set of achievements—skills, understandings, and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy." Yorke's definition ties in neatly with our understanding of psychological literacy, and we recognize his "skills, understandings, and personal attributes" within the

ICUP competences. We also appreciate the concept of "chosen" occupations, whether professional psychology careers or other types of work.

There are multiple ways in which the application of psychology can assist students and graduates to achieve success in meaningful work (e.g., Naufel et al., 2019). As discussed above, students can be supported in documenting and communicating the acquisition of competences, which they can also use to plan their own personal and professional development needs. These abilities should facilitate students' capacity to make strong applications, perform well at interviews, and create positive first impressions on potential employers or (post)graduate trainers in professional programs. Undergraduate psychology education can also prepare students to pursue work-related goals. For example, employers will value psychology graduates who can draw on Psychological Knowledge and Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving competences to produce effective, evidence-informed solutions to work challenges. By way of example, in Rosenkranz et al.'s (2024) enterprise challenge strategy, students were challenged by a potential employer to apply their psychological knowledge and skills (including critical and creative thinking) to specific problems (e.g., developing an idea for a strategy to support the needs of veterans or to support a charity organization in delivering services to vulnerable people). The project led to increased student ratings of their own capacities for critical thinking and the application of psychological knowledge.

In addition to the abovementioned salient competences, the *ICUP* model encapsulates other competences involved in demonstrating the value of psychology in the workplace. For example, Psychological Knowledge gained from study of foundational occupational or social psychology can be applied to improve leadership or team productivity. Research Methodologies & Methods are useful to determine whether one approach is more effective than another (e.g., in marketing a product, or reducing absenteeism). Within the Values & Ethics competence category, graduates can "Evaluate moral and ethical dilemmas and apply psychology-informed ethical decision-making in diverse cultural, personal, and professional contexts" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 6). Decisions made at work often have to balance organizational needs against employee and client expectations and this requires an ethical approach to decision making that is informed by diversity awareness (e.g., de Souza, 2025). Similarly, it is rare in the workplace (or in higher education) for graduates not to encounter people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and the psychology-relevant competences around Cultural Responsiveness & Diversity, and Communication & Interpersonal Skills will help ensure that they are able to interact sensitively and appropriately in person and when using technology with both their teams and clients. Finally, the competence "Demonstrate collaboration skills that promote understanding, inclusivity, and cooperation among team members" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 8) may promote collaboration, teamwork, and inclusive leadership skills. These proposals regarding the utility of having acquired *ICUP* competences are yet to be tested, although there are supportive findings from research on comparable foundational psychology education (see Supplemental Material 2 for relevant scholarship).

Overall, then, we propose that teaching the *ICUP* competences can prepare graduates of foundational psychology programs to make informed choices about their future employment, be successful in applications and interviews, and, once employed, make psychologically informed decisions, solve problems, and interact effectively with diverse others. In other words, we expect that competent graduates will become successful and valued employees. Indeed, achieving such outcomes is in the interests of all stakeholders. Specifically, we propose that (a) students and graduates will be meaningfully employed in work where they are valued; (b) employers will gain work-ready employees who function effectively and confidently in different situations; (c) educators will see improved graduate outcomes that contribute to university performance metrics; and (d) as Yorke (2006) noted, communities and society more generally will benefit from the likely economic prosperity of appropriately employed graduates.

Through our consultations, a frequent question from students and graduates was about "how" they could apply psychology to meet work goals. This is interesting, given that psychology educators are motivated to find value in undergraduate programs, most often articulated as a need to improve graduate outcomes (variously defined as progression to postgraduate training or graduate employment). It seems likely that, as with applying the competences in the personal domain, undergraduate psychology programs may be teaching

content at the expense of practical applications despite the recent focus on employability.

This tension between knowledge and competence can be traced back to Newman (1852), who argued that the purpose of university education is to develop students' critical thinking skills, giving them the ability to evaluate evidence; these are skills that are required in both the academy and the workplace (Reddy et al., 2013). We suggest that the *ICUP* model encourages the development of competences relevant to both students' academic learning and potential employability. One approach might be to introduce career development learning exercises in the first year (e.g., applying evidence-based techniques from organizational psychology to career-planning, resume/CV writing, and interviewing) and then in the third year progress to more advanced exercises, such as informational interviewing (e.g., Cranney case study in Nolan et al., in press). Similarly, units that emphasize the application of psychology to work contexts and embed in-class authentic work-based problem-solving will provide students with an opportunity to practice (and be assessed on) work-relevant skills (see Supplemental Material 2 for reference listing).

Educators and educational leaders raised relatively few questions with relation to these competences. They were concerned to ensure that foundational undergraduate psychology graduates were (a) aware of the limitations of their expertise and (b) were *not* presenting themselves as professional psychologists in the workplace. This latter concern may be tied to the "gate-keeping" culture that occurs with entry to professional psychology training (e.g., Reddy et al., 2014). In addition, in some regions, the term competence is reserved for the professional skill levels needed by licensed/registered psychologists in practice. However, by drawing upon the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019, p. 4) definition of competence ("involves the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in a range of specific contexts to meet complex demands"), we recognize that competences can be described on various levels.

In the literature, there are numerous examples of teaching undergraduate psychology students to apply psychological competences at work (e.g., Cary et al., 2024; Spencer, 2021). The majority of this literature signposts authentic learning, teaching, and assessment experiences and the mobilization of knowledge from career development and occupational psychology. While students may initially find authentic learning challenging, they also report high levels of reward when they master required competences and say that they feel more confident about taking psychology into the workplace and utilizing the competences throughout their working lives (Hulme & Cranney, 2021).

Employers (from this project and as reported in the literature, e.g., Hugh-Jones & Sutherland, 2007) were curious about what made psychology graduates distinctive relative to other graduates. This will be answered in part by teaching students to recognize their own competences, as discussed above. Educating employers regarding psychology graduate competences could be facilitated by strategies such as (a) involving employers in developing curricula including authentic learning and assessment exercises (Brayley & O'Connor, 2021; Hulme & Cranney, 2021); (b) creating cocurricular programs such as (online) career fairs; and (c) distribution to employers of lists of competences and case studies regarding successful graduates; this could be achieved via media commonly read by employers of psychology graduates.

Community stakeholders did not raise questions about the *ICUP* model with regard to psychology competences at work. We imagine that there may be concerns in common with educators about the risks implicit within the potential for misapplication of psychology. However, we also foresee potential benefits because psychology graduates contribute work-relevant competences that inform recruitment practices and enhance effectiveness to improve products and services consumed by community members. In summary, we propose that embedding *ICUP* into psychology undergraduate programs can leverage the value of psychology within the workplace.

Competences in the Community Domain

In writing about the relevance of the *ICUP* model to the community domain, we adopt a broad understanding of community that embraces local (e.g., where one lives, works, or studies) to global (e.g., relating to the UN SDGs) issues. In the 2019 U.K.-government-commissioned review of tertiary education, Augar (2019) argued that successful outcomes of higher education for students and society are not only about employability and pay rates but also about graduates being physically and psychologically healthier, and importantly, making political and civic contributions. In our experience, despite most universities claiming to

produce graduates (e.g., "global citizens") capable of contributing to society/community beyond their economic contributions through paid work, this is not emphasized within most psychology programs (Pownall et al., 2024). Students may enter psychology programs with diverse aspirations, including personal, such as seeking to understand themselves better (Wilson, 2009), and work, such as seeking to gain employment (often as a licensed/registered psychologist; Reddy et al., 2014). There are scant data on students' aspirations regarding community contribution beyond their work. Nevertheless, students and graduates may be interested in helping others (Roberts et al., 2015) and may seek to know more about how psychology can help them do so in their communities. Educators and educational leaders are often keen to demonstrate community contribution within their programs, given a growing "civic university" agenda (Brink, 2018) but can lack knowledge of how to develop this. Community organizations are generally not aware of how psychology graduates may be able to make distinctive contributions to their work. In this section, we discuss: the case for making "community" relevant in psychology education; the *ICUP* community-relevant competences; and practical examples of educational strategies to support student development of those competences.

Boyer (1990, pp. 77–78) eloquently argued for community/societal concerns being relevant to higher education outcomes:

> The aim of education is not only to prepare students for productive careers, but also to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends; not merely to study government, but to help shape a citizenry that can promote the public good. Thus, higher education's vision must be widened if the nation is to be rescued from problems that threaten to diminish permanently the quality of life.

Within psychology, these sentiments are reflected by Miller's (1969) call to psychological scientists to "give psychology away" (p. 1071) through both formal and informal education and Halpern et al.'s (2010) assertion that "psychologists should develop the concept of psychologically literate citizens and convey this message so that policymakers and the general public will understand that the need to be psychologically literate is similar to being able to read or use numbers in thinking" (p. 172). Similarly, Bizarro and Pieta (2023) argued that "Psychology needs to respond to social needs, psychological suffering, interpersonal conflicts, risks to human development, and the promotion of quality of life and well-being" (p. 111).

McGovern et al.'s (2010) definition of psychological literacy has been revised by Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al. (2025) as the capacity to intentionally apply "psychology knowledge, skills and values to achieve personal, work and community (local to global) goals; the integration and application of foundational psychology competences within an undergraduate program should lead to psychologically literate graduates" (pp. 12–13). Prior to that, Cranney et al. (2022) distinguished between the concepts of psychological literacy, psychologically literate citizens, and global citizenship, essentially with each step involving greater development of cultural responsiveness and interdisciplinary knowledge (see also Tick et al., 2024). The *ICUP* model is theoretically framed by psychological literacy and global citizenship. In parallel with this development, the International Union of Psychological Science (Gutiérrez, 2024) and the International Association for Applied Psychology (2025) embraced the UN SDGs as relevant to global psychology.

The most explicit *ICUP* competence relevant to the community context is within the personal and professional development category: "Propose, implement, and/or evaluate interventions to meet the psychological needs of communities (local to global), with reference to the [UN SDGs], such as eliminating racism and human habitat destruction" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 9). As indicated in Supplemental Material 1, the term intervention does not just refer to "treatment," and in an undergraduate context, is much more likely to focus on harm prevention or on increasing well-being (e.g., contributing to community-led projects, such as described by Akhurst et al., 2016). Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Goedeke, et al. (2025) outlined the relevance of psychology to the UN SDGs and have provided six case studies (one outlined below) from across the world which implicitly or explicitly address the UN SDGs and thus this competence (along with many other *ICUP* competences). Another highly relevant competence is within the "Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity" category: "Propose, implement and/or evaluate interventions based on psychological science to meet the needs of diverse cultural groups including marginalized groups" (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, p. 7). These two key

competences are clearly dependent on most of the competences across most of the categories, as will become clear in the examples below.

Educators have asked how to practically integrate community domain competences in the curriculum, and so we provide examples (see also Supplemental Material 2). In a final year undergraduate capstone unit, Brayley and O'Connor (2021) invited an external not-for-profit community-based organization in Australia to be an active partner in providing students with an opportunity to integrate and apply their competences in helping the organization to achieve one of their aims—gaining funding for their programs to support women experiencing homelessness. The task was to create a prospectus document to be used as a resource to write grant applications that often had short lead times. In groups, with structured guidance from the organization and educators, students undertook research on the nature and needs of, and evidence-based strategies for supporting, the target population and then wrote their prospectus. These tasks would have required *ICUP* foundational competences in knowledge, research, cultural responsiveness, and communication, and importantly, are directly relevant to the two key "community" *ICUP* competences. It should be noted that all communication was online and students did not go to the workplace as this educational strategy was designed to cope with COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This strategy is scaleable.

Other community-based strategies are less scaleable because they involve placement in the community and thus often need to be offered as an elective unit. Dudgeon et al. (2011) described a final-year unit in which students spend 4 weeks in a remote Indigenous community in Australia, with the unit designed in partnership with that community. Prior to this unit, the program had prepared students in developing relevant foundational competences, particularly those equivalent to the *ICUP* Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity competences. Thus, students were open to different cultural ways of knowing, being, and doing (Indigenous Allied Health Australia, 2019) and knew to avoid the common mistakes of imposing Euro-American perspectives during their collaboration with Indigenous community members, who determined how these students could contribute to the community (e.g., delivery of out-of-school programs, developing grant applications). The students were supported by educators before, during, and after this experience to facilitate and make explicit the development of their competences in this learning-rich community context.

The previous two examples have both similar and dissimilar characteristics, but Bringle et al. (2016, 2022; Ruiz et al., 2024) would likely argue that they are both demonstrating service-learning, defined as:

> Both a pedagogy and change strategy that engages students, community members, and instructors/staff in co-creating relationships that integrate academic material, community-engaged activities, and critical reflection to advance public purposes and to achieve clearly articulated academic learning, civic learning, and personal growth goals. (Ruiz et al., 2024, p. 153)

Bringle et al. (2016) provided examples for service learning across the curriculum, from introductory psychology to capstone units. Ruiz et al. (2024) provided a detailed table of how students can be supported across the curriculum to develop competences to respond to the climate change crisis—that is, to address at least one of the key *ICUP* community competences.

The service-learning approach for the community domain is strongly advocated by community-minded educators in the Global North (where often the majority of graduates do not become licensed/registered psychologists), but the approach can be, and often is, ignored by the majority of psychology educators (often for structural reasons). The story can be different in the Global South—where the community cannot be ignored (and where the majority of graduates may work as professional psychologists). Tchombe and Takang (UN SDG case study, cited in Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Goedeke, et al., 2025) describe how their Cameroonian students, in their first developmental psychology unit, are introduced to the following:

> Practical applications of developmental theories in understanding human development, knowledge of science, and aspects of lifespan development with explicit reference to the SDGs. … Students are then provided an opportunity to analyze the consequences of harmful cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation on child development paying attention to the physical, cognitive, and socioemotional dimensions of the period of development (p. 6).

The teaching strategies utilized, including undertaking a developmental case study within the community, provide students with *ICUP* foundational competences across Knowledge, Research, Cultural Responsiveness, and Communication

categories, thus providing them with the essential competences to support further development of the two key community domain competences mentioned above. Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Goedeke, et al. (2025) and Cranney, Nolan, Hulme, Jia, et al. (2025) provided additional examples relevant to the UN SDGs and thus to the community domain.

Although we did not hear this question from employers, they may ask how competences relevant to the community domain are relevant to them. First, we propose that competences relevant to the community domain are likely to be transferable to the work domain, such as the capacity to design, implement, and/or evaluate interventions. Second, we propose that such graduates may have become more "community-minded" and thus are more likely to (a) respond constructively as a team member and (b) contribute to the organization's "social enterprise" endeavors.

Finally, as noted by Bringle et al. (2022), integrating community engagement within the foundational undergraduate curriculum (through service learning) draws on non-EuroAmerican approaches to learning and community, reflecting nontraditional orientations such as feminism and humanism, and also drawing on Global South core concepts such as *ubuntu*—essentially, a reinstatement of the importance of community relatedness and the appreciation of diversity (Majoko & Dudu, 2023). Thus, explicitly integrating *ICUP* community-relevant competences facilitates a more inclusive and sustainable foundational psychology education, empowering graduates to contribute constructively to community.

Additional Considerations

Some stakeholders question the extent to which the *ICUP* model is international. We took great efforts to ensure as wide a representation and input as was practically feasible (see Cranney, Nolan, Hulme, de Souza, et al., 2025; Cranney, Nolan, Job, et al., 2025). Educators also asked why we do not specify knowledge subject matter topics and our reply is that (a) there is too much variability within and between countries, and ownership in this realm needs to be taken by nations and institutions (see Dunn et al., 2010, for a well-argued position) and (b) Global Majority educators, including Indigenous psychology educators, need to assert local and Indigenous knowledge (Sanches de Oliveira & Baggs, 2023; for textbook considerations, see Supplemental Material 3).

A number of United States educators conveyed that they perceive the *ICUP* to be focused primarily on adding content related to culture and international perspectives. Relatedly, they view the *ICUP*, as opposed to other competence models such as their own national model, as a means to "internationalize" their units/courses. The *ICUP*, however, is a full competence model that encapsulates the wide range of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that a student could acquire at the foundational level (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025). We are certainly not advocating that the *ICUP* replace a given national model, but it could. Indeed, there is much overlap between the *ICUP* and a number of national models, unsurprising given that about 30 national models were used as input in the development process.

Building on the misperception that the *ICUP* is mainly about adding cultural and international content, some educators told us that they perceive that the *ICUP* is not relevant to certain units/courses, such as statistics or cognitive psychology. Again, the *ICUP* is a full competence model; numerous competences relate to both of those units/courses, even as they are traditionally taught. We argue, though, that the *ICUP* could lead to important shifts in how such units/courses are taught, aside from any content changes, that could enhance students' experiences. These units/courses could include teamwork that bolsters communication skills and cultural responsiveness in working with diverse others, or they could challenge students to acknowledge coloniality in knowledge production and to consider other ways of knowing (i.e., decolonize the curriculum, e.g., Ghazali-Mohammed et al., 2025). Importantly, the *ICUP* signals a shift toward a greater emphasis on developing reflexivity at the foundational undergraduate level, with three competence statements (in the values and ethics, cultural responsiveness and diversity, and personal and professional development categories) emphasizing this capacity (Cranney, Nolan, Hulme, de Souza, et al., 2025).

Educators also asked what the advantages would be to considering *ICUP*. We suggest facilitating mobility of local students and graduates; potentially attracting more international students; and improving curricula based on the quality of the *ICUP* competences, as elaborated above in the three domains. The effort involved in changing the curriculum may be challenging, although most programs already engage in

regular curriculum renewal. We note that (a) many educators are already, in their current curriculum, incorporating the development of at least some of the *ICUP* competences, and this needs explicit identification; (b) the ICUPO project is identifying and sharing existing and potential teaching and assessment strategies for the development of *ICUP* competences (see Cranney, Nolan, Hulme, Jia, et al., 2025); and (c) although each institution or nation will need to undertake curriculum renewal to suit its own contextual needs, a concise series of general steps has been identified (see Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al., 2025, pp. 64–65).

Importantly, the *ICUP* model provides guidance rather than prescription, and educators and educational leaders are free to use it adaptively alongside their own regulatory frameworks and traditional practices. The extent to which the *ICUP* model and its competences are adopted, and the ways in which the competences are taught and assessed, will "vary across cultures, and must occur locally or regionally in order to ensure their relevance to local or regional cultures, customs, beliefs, and laws" (Gauthier et al., 2010, p. 193). Like the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists, the *ICUP* competences are "general and aspirational rather than specific and prescriptive" (p. 237), designed to encourage global thinking while being "sensitive and responsive to local needs" and "intended to influence the local and global … discourse" (Gauthier, 2020, p. 239).

Conclusion

In most parts of the world, there is significant support from psychology and higher education organizations for ensuring the quality of undergraduate psychology education. But the aims of foundational undergraduate psychology vary from one nation to the next—from professional competence training, to preprofessional training, to liberal arts and sciences education; thus, the competences that have been emphasized vary (Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin et al., 2025). The ICUPO project aimed to demonstrate that there were commonalities across foundational psychology globally. For graduates who do not undertake professional psychology competence training, many stakeholders wonder what *value* graduates bring to the personal, work, and community domains. The *ICUP* model was created partly to address this question, and we assert that all students, regardless of career destination, can benefit from the acquisition of these competences. This assertion requires evaluation after sufficient educators and programs have adopted aspects of the *ICUP* model.

The responsibility for the valuing of undergraduate psychology—currently and into the future—lies with psychology education leaders. *ICUP* is framed by psychological literacy and Nolan, Cranney, Narciss, Machin, et al.'s (2025) definition of psychological literacy encompasses both general and undergraduate-specific "integration and application of competences" conceptualizations. Psychological literacy has also been viewed as a pedagogical philosophy, with three characteristics (Hulme & Winstone, 2017; Morris et al., 2021). First, educators believe that the primary outcome of foundational undergraduate psychology is psychological literacy and thus such educators would seek to design and deliver curricular strategies that support students in the integration and application of competences. Second, educators use evidence-based educational strategies, such as scaffolding, feedback, retrieval-based testing, and authentic assessments (e.g., Hulme & Cranney, 2021). Third, educators model psychological literacy in their teaching including, for example, (a) demonstrating their own cultural responsiveness in interactions with students and (b) being aware not only of their own strengths and limitations but also those of the discipline and profession of psychology. Their values may align with that of the *ICUP* model, in being student-centered (see Figure 1) and thus concerned with ensuring that students have the opportunity to develop competences that are sustainably relevant to students' future personal, work, and community domains, regardless of career destination. In doing so, these psychologically literate educators will promote the value of undergraduate psychology education as well as the relevance and thus sustainability of the discipline and profession of psychology.

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