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accreditation
American Psychological Association

Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology

Quick Reference Guide to DOCTORAL Programs

The accreditation standards summarized below are to be applied within the context of the "Guiding Principles of Accreditation" summarized on pp. 2-5 of the Guidelines and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology. The principles emphasize:

- *Broad and general preparation for practice at the entry level*
- *Focused and in-depth postdoctoral preparation for specialty practice*
- *Integration of science and practice*
- *The degree to which a program achieves outcomes and goals consistent with its stated training model and with the Accreditation Guidelines and Principles.*

Thus, accreditation in psychology is intended to "achieve general agreement on the goals of training… encourage experimentation on methods of achieving those goals and… suggest ways of establishing high standards in a setting of flexibility and reasonable freedom." [1]

DOMAIN A: ELIGIBILITY

A1. Program offers doctoral education and training in professional psychology including preparation for practice.

A2. Program sponsored by an institution of higher education that is accredited by a nationally recognized regional accrediting body in the U.S. or is a member in good standing of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

A3. The program:
- Is an integral part of the mission of the academic unit in which it resides
- Is represented in the institution's budget
- Has sufficient students and necessary facilities to ensure meaningful interaction, support, and socialization

A4. The program:
- Requires 3 full-time academic years of graduate study (or the equivalent) and completion of an internship prior to awarding the doctoral degree:
- At least 2 of the 3 years must be at the institution (or the equivalent)
- At least 1 year must be in full-time residence (or the equivalent)

A5. Program engages in actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural and individual diversity as reflected in its recruitment and retention policies for faculty and students, curriculum and field placements, nondiscriminatory policies and operating conditions, and avoidance of actions that restrict program access on grounds irrelevant to success. The definition of diversity includes but is not limited to:
- Age
- Disabilities
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Gender Identity
- Language
- National origin
- Race
- Religion
- Culture
- Sexual orientation
- Social economic status

A6. Formal written policies are available concerning:
- Admissions and degree requirements
- Financial and administrative assistance
- Student performance evaluation, feedback, advisement, retention & termination decisions
- Due process and grievance procedures for students and faculty

DOMAIN B: PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY, OBJECTIVES, AND CURRICULUM PLAN

B1. Program publicly states a philosophy and model of training consistent with the sponsoring institution's mission that emphasizes:
- Integration of science and practice

- Education that is sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity

B2. Program specifies objectives in terms of competencies expected of graduates consistent with:
- Program's philosophy and training model
- Substantive area of professional psychology that is represented
- An understanding of legal, ethical, and quality assurance principles

B3. Program implements a coherent curriculum that enables students to demonstrate substantial understanding of and competence in the following areas (see Implementing Regulation C-16, Broad & General Preparation for Doctoral Programs):
   a. The breadth of scientific psychology including:
      o Biological aspects
      o Cognitive and affective aspects
      o Social aspects
      o History and systems
      o Psychological measurement
      o Research methodology
      o Techniques of data analysis
   b. Foundations of practice in the program's substantive area including:
      o Individual differences
      o Human development
      o Dysfunctional behavior/psychopathology
      o Professional standards and ethics
   c. Diagnosing or defining problems through assessment and implementing intervention strategies (including empirically supported procedures) including exposure to the current body of knowledge in at least the following areas:
      o Theories and methods of assessment and diagnosis
      o Effective intervention
      o Consultation and supervision
      o Evaluating the efficacy of interventions
   d. Issues of cultural and individual diversity relevant to all of the above.
   e. Attitudes essential for life-long learning, scholarly inquiry, and professional problem-solving in the context of an evolving body of scientific and professional knowledge.

B4. Program requires adequate and appropriate practicum experiences that include:
   a. Placement of students in settings committed to training with appropriate and adequate supervision that provide a wide range of training experiences including empirically supported procedures
   b. Integration of the practicum component with other program elements including provision of adequate forums for the discussion of the practicum experience
   c. Appropriate sequencing, duration, nature, and content of the practicum experiences consistent with the program's goals and objectives
   d. Justification of the sufficiency of the practicum experiences for internship preparation

Note: Program is responsible for documenting how students achieve knowledge and competence and for setting minimal levels of acceptable achievement in the above areas (B1-4).

DOMAIN C: PROGRAM RESOURCES

C1. Program has an identifiable core faculty (see Implementing Regulation C-18, Core Faculty):
   a. Includes a designated psychologist leader(s) with appropriate credentials and experience
   b. Who function as an integral part of the academic unit
   c. Sufficient in number for the necessary academic responsibilities
   d. Have theoretical perspectives and academic/applied experiences appropriate to the program's goals and objectives
   e. Demonstrate competence and credentials congruent with the program's goals and objectives
   f. Are available and function as role models for students

Note: In addition to core faculty, other individuals with faculty appointments may augment and expand the students' educational experiences.

C2. Program has an identifiable body of students at different levels of matriculation who:
   a. Are sufficient in number for meaningful peer interaction and socialization
   b. By interest, aptitude, and prior achievement are qualified for the program
   c. Reflect through their intended careers and professional development the program's philosophy, goals, and objectives

C3. Program has additional resources needed to accomplish its goals and objectives including:
   a. Financial support for educational and training activities
   b. Clerical and technical support
   c. Training materials and equipment
   d. Physical facilities

    e.   Student support services
    f.   Access to or control over practicum training sites appropriate to the program's training model, goals, and objectives

C4. If the program is a consortium of multiple independent entities then there is a formal written consortium agreement that articulates:
   a. Nature and characteristics of the participating entities
   b. Rationale for the consortial partnership
   c. Each partner's commitment to the program and its philosophy, model, and goals
   d. Each partner's obligations regarding contributions and access to resources
   e. Each partner's adherence to central control and coordination of the training program
   f. Each partner's commitment to uniform administration and implementation of the program including student admission, financial support, training resource access, performance expectations, and student evaluations

Note: An individual consortium partner may not publicize itself as independently accredited unless is also has independently applied for and received accreditation.

DOMAIN D: CULTURAL AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY

D1. The program:
- Has made systematic and long-term efforts to attract and retain students and faculty from differing ethnic, racial, and personal backgrounds (see A.5 for definition of diversity)
- Ensures a supportive learning environment for training diverse individuals who represent a broad cultural and individual spectrum
- Avoids actions that restrict program access on grounds irrelevant to success in graduate training (see Footnote 4 for exceptions)

D2. Program has a thoughtful and coherent plan to provide students with relevant knowledge and experiences about the role of individual and cultural diversity in psychological science and practice.

DOMAIN E: STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONS

E1. The program:
- Recognizes the rights of students and faculty to be treated with courtesy, respect, collegiality, and ethical sensitivity
- Informs students of these principles and of their avenues of recourse should issues arise

E2. Faculty members are accessible to students, provide guidance and supervision that encourages timely completion, and serve as role models who promote students' acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies.

E3. Respect for cultural and individual diversity is demonstrated in accordance with Domain A5.

E4. Upon admission students' are given written policies and procedures regarding requirements, expected performance, program continuance, and termination procedures.   Students receive, at least annually, written feedback on the extent to which they are meeting the program's requirements and expectations including:
   a. Timely, written notification of all problems and opportunity to discuss them
   b. Guidance regarding steps to remediate all problems (if remediable)
   c. Written feedback on the extent to which corrective actions have or have not been successful in addressing the issues of concern

E5. Programs keep records of all formal complaints and grievances filed since the last accreditation site visit and make these available as part of the CoA's periodic reviews.

Note: Programs must adhere to institutional regulations and applicable local, state, and federal statutes concerning due process and fair treatment.

DOMAIN F: PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

F1. With appropriate involvement of students, the program engages in regular, ongoing self-studies that address:
   a. Its effectiveness in achieving goals and objectives in terms of outcome data while students are in the program and after completion
   b. How its goals and objectives are met through the program's educational and training processes
   c. Its procedures to maintain current achievements or to make program changes as necessary

F2. Program periodically and systematically reviews its goals and objectives, training model, and curriculum, and related outcome data relative to:
   a. Sponsoring institution's mission and goals
   b. Local, state, regional, and national needs for psychological services
   c. National standards of professional practice
   d. Evolving body of scientific and professional knowledge

     e.   Graduates' job placements and career paths

DOMAIN G: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

G1. Program describes itself accurately and completely in documents available to current and prospective students and other "publics":

    a.   Descriptions of the program should include:
- Goals, objectives, and training model
- Requirements for admission and graduation
- Curriculum
- Faculty, students, facilities, and other resources
- Administrative policies and procedures
- The kinds of research and practicum experiences it provides
- Its education and training outcomes

    b.   Accreditation status including name, address, and telephone number of the CoA is included

G2. Information is presented in a manner that allows applicants to make informed decisions about entering the program.

DOMAIN H: RELATIONSHIP WITH ACCREDITING BODY

H1. Program abides by the CoA's published policies and procedures.

H2. Program informs the CoA in a timely manner of changes in its environment, plans, resources, and operations that could affect program quality *(see Implementing Regulation C-19, Notification of Changes to Accredited Programs)*.

H3. Program pays necessary fees to maintain accredited status.

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[1] The APA Committee on Training in Clinical Psychology (1947). First report of the new accreditation process in psychology. American Psychologist, 2, 539-558.