American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation

2019 Annual Report

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Staff Liaison: Jacqueline Remondet Wall, Ph.D.

TOPIC: Program Review

Periodic and Annual Review of Programs

During 2019, the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) conducted the following reviews: 1) annual reports submitted by programs which includes analysis of threshold data and reported fiscal change; 2) program submissions of substantive change notifications; 3) required responses to reporting requirements submitted by programs; 4) reviews of programs that applied for accreditation (full or contingent); and 5) periodic reviews of accredited programs (programs seeking to renew full accreditation or programs with contingent accreditation seeking full accreditation from contingent status).

Consequent to the applicant and periodic review processes for programs seeking to attain or renew accredited status, the CoA made decisions on 314 programs. Table 1 provides a listing of the different accreditation status decisions and actions, including adverse actions (i.e., deferral, probation, denial and revocation) made by the CoA in 2019. In addition to conducting periodic and applicant program reviews, two (2) programs were reviewed and granted the non-accredited, "intent to apply" status in 2019 (previously termed "eligible" status). Plus, the CoA granted new or continuation requests for "accredited, inactive" status that were received from 11 programs, and accepted the voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from 24 accredited programs. The Commission also evaluated numerous reports submitted by accredited programs in response to the Commission during the year (N=229); these reports are referenced above as reporting requirements.

As previously mentioned, the CoA conducted a review of data submitted by accredited doctoral programs in the Annual Report Online (ARO). The review of ARO data examines specific information against threshold values, as is specified in Implementing Regulations D. 4-7 b and c. Twenty-five (25) programs were noted to have submitted data that was incongruent with the threshold value and therefore subject to additional reporting to demonstrate consistency with the SoA. As part of the ARO, the Commission also examined program's reporting change in fiscal status, as prescribed by accreditation standards and regulations. A review of program submitted notices of change in fiscal status resulted in additional review for three programs; further review did not result in a change of accreditation status for any of these three programs.

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1   A roster containing the Commission seats held by each Commissioner is available on the APA Accreditation webpage.

TABLE 1.

COA PROGRAM REVIEW DECISIONS, 2019[2]

Decision	Number of programs
Granted initial or continued full accreditation	194
Granted full accreditation from contingent accreditation	16
Granted accreditation on contingency	38
Extend contingency	4
Deferred for information	43
Deferred for cause	17
Accredited on probation	2
Denial	0
Revocation of Accreditation	0[3]
Total	314

In addition to the reviews noted above, reviews of proposals from four (4) unaccredited applicant programs to teach students who were enrolled in the APA-accredited Clinical Psy.D. programs at Argosy University (AU) occurred[4]. These reviews were conducted at the CoA meeting held on April 4-7, 2019. Plus, in the fall of 2019, the Commission reviewed a proposal from another program for this purpose. All five (5) of these programs were granted "accredited, inactive" status to "teach-out" students who were enrolled in APA accredited programs at AU. Also, during 2019, twenty-five (25) accredited programs expressed willingness to accept transfer students from the closed accredited psychology programs at AU. These 25 programs submitted substantive change notices addressing how transfer students would be integrated into the accredited program. All of these programs were reviewed by CoA and the changes were accepted. It should also be noted that substantive communications occurred to facilitate these accreditation decisions; parties included APA OPCA, the US Department of Education, institutional accreditors, state authorizing agencies, program personnel, and academic administrators.

At the conclusion of 2019, there were a total of 1,201 accredited programs. A detailed breakdown of the numbers and types of accredited programs is provided in Table 2. The Appendix presents a table illustrating the growth in the number of accredited programs by decade between 1948 and 2018, as well as the number of accredited programs in the most recent year (2019).

Throughout the year, the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (OPCA) staff provided logistic, clerical, financial, and administrative support to the Commission. For example, OPCA staff completed preliminary or administrative reviews of self-studies submitted by 44 applicant programs, and 167 accredited programs seeking continued accreditation. OPCA staff also coordinated the 220 site visits made to programs during 2019. Plus, members of the OPCA staff provided consultative guidance to programs and constituent groups on accreditation matters.

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2   All reviews occurred under the *Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology* (SoA).
3   The accreditation status of one program, reviewed on December 31, 2019, was revoked. Given that the final date of the decision is February 28, 2020, the decision is not reported in this table.
4   Argosy University ceased operating in March 2019.

TABLE 2.

NUMBER AND TYPE OF APA ACCREDITED PROGRAMS, 2019

Programs (Level and Area)		Number of Accredited Programs*			
	Area	PhD		PsyD	
		Full	Cont.	Full	Cont.
Doctoral Programs	Clinical	172	3	59	6
	Counseling	64	0	9	0
	School	57	1	8	2
	Combined	6	1	4	3
	Total Doctoral Programs	**395**			
		Full		Contingent	
Internship Programs	*One (1) program currently, "Accredited, on probation"*	602		39	
	Total Internship Programs	**642**			
	Area	Full		Contingent	
Postdoctoral Residency Programs	*Traditional – Clinical*	90		3	
	Specialty - Clinical Child Psychology	7		0	
	Specialty - Clinical Health Psychology	12		1	
	Specialty - Clinical Neuropsychology	30		8	
	Specialty - Forensic Psychology	1		0	
	Specialty – Geropsychology	3		0	
	Specialty - Rehabilitation Psychology	8		1	
	Total Postdoctoral Residency Programs	**164**			
Total		**1,201**			

*As of November 20, 2019

Addressing Complaints made against Accredited Programs

The Complaints work group received, reviewed and made decisions on 11 complaints that were filed against accredited programs.

Modifications of Procedures

The CoA dedicated time at each of their four meetings in 2019 to review policy and procedures. A total of 12 Implementing Regulations (IR) were reviewed and modified for public notice or comment and/or adoption. Of these, 6 IRs underwent comment and were subsequently revised in 2019; the topics of which were: 1-3) doctoral, internship and postdoctoral interim reporting; 4-5) consortium programs for internships and postdoctoral residencies; and 6) confidentiality and disclosure of information used in the accreditation process.

Modifications to the Decision Disclosure Policies and Practices

Modifications were made to be in accord with regulatory requirements; these changes consisted of adding information to the accredited program directory that includes the specific standards on which a program is required to provide ongoing reporting. In addition, all CoA decisions, including accreditation decisions, deferrals, and adverse actions are disclosed in the CoA program directory. These changes required public comment and when adopted also resulted in modifications to Section 5 of the *Accreditation Operating Procedures* (AOP).

The CoA continues to examine policies and procedures and in doing so, receives comments from the publics served by accreditation.

Formation of a Work Group to Explore Accreditation of MA Programs in Health Service Psychology (HSP)

The CoA established a work group to examine policies and procedures for the accreditation of programs in HSP offered at the Master's degree level of education. The group conducted reviews of available literature, including accreditation standards and educational requirements, and began preparation of standards for this accreditation. When these standards have been drafted they will be put forward for public comment, reviewed and revised as needed, and ultimately be adopted for use.

Training of Site Visitors and Chairs of Site Visit Teams

The Commission conducted workshops at multiple training council meetings and at the APA Convention. These workshops were focused on the training of site visitors and providing information on how to complete a self-study. The number of attendees at the site visitor trainings was 182, while there were 181 attendees at the self-study workshops.

It is important to note that continuing education credit was approved for CoA site visitors for participating in a site visit once a year, starting on September 1, 2019. The total number of CE credits awarded per year for a site visit is 25. The CoA will also start awarding journal credit to the site visitors who would prefer this professional recognition; while still being arranged, this should begin soon.

Informing the Public About CoA Decisions and Actions

Among a number of activities, the CoA Communications work group prepared content for four issues of the *CoA Update*, which is published on the APA accreditation webpage.

Research and Accreditation Decisions

With support from OPCA staff, the CoA conducted research activities in 2019. These activities included an analysis of program outcomes in accord with the data thresholds established to monitor student achievement and compliance with accreditation standards, as noted in the program review summary.

TOPIC: **Recognition of the APA as an Accrediting Agency**

The CoA is recognized by the US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

USDE Recognition

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has recognized the APA as a programmatic accrediting agency since 1970, with accreditation actions completed by the CoA. As part of the recognition process, preparation of a petition for renewal of recognition by the USDE was initiated in 2019. The petition was submitted on February 3, 2020 and will be reviewed in 2020-2021.

CHEA Recognition

The CoA is recognized as an accrediting body by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The CoA prepared two transition reports to CHEA in 2019, one was submitted on April 30, 2019, and the other on January 3, 2020. These reports presented information on CoA compliance with selected CHEA standards, revisions of which were published in 2019. The CoA is subject to a renewal of recognition by the CHEA in 2023.

APPENDIX

GROWTH OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS BY DECADE

Year	Doctoral	Internship	Postdoctoral	Total
1948	36	—	—	36
1958	78	62	—	140
1968	97	102	—	199
1978	140	138	—	278
1988	246	347	—	593
1998	312	450	2	764
2008	374	469	48	891
2018	406	630	144	1180
2019	395	642	164	1201