![American Psychological Association logo] **AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**

American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation

2020 Annual Report

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TOPIC: Program Review

Periodic and Annual Review of Programs

During 2020, the Commission on Accreditation (CoA or the Commission) conducted the following program reviews: 1) programs that applied for accreditation (full or contingent); 2) periodic reviews of accredited programs (programs seeking to renew full accreditation or programs with contingent accreditation seeking full accreditation from contingent status); 3) programs submitting for the intent to apply designation, which is not an accredited status; 4) programs requesting accredited, inactive status; 5) program submitted responses to required reporting requirements; 6) annual reports submitted by programs which include analyses of threshold data and program reported fiscal change; and, 7) program submissions of substantive change notifications.

Consequent to the applicant and periodic review processes for programs seeking to attain or renew accredited status, the CoA made decisions on 185 programs during 2020. Table 1 provides a listing of the different accreditation status decisions and actions, including decisions made for applicant programs, those seeking continued accreditation and programs moving from contingent to full accreditation. This table also denotes CoA decisions and actions in 2020 that led to or completed an adverse action (i.e., deferral for cause, probation, denial, and revocation). Approximately five percent (5%) of the programs reviewed by the CoA moved towards or completed a review process where adverse actions were ultimately made. Specifically, three percent (3%) of the decisions made were a deferral for cause, while another one percent (1%) were for placement on accredited, on probation status, and one-half of a percent (0.5%) for revocation of accreditation (Note: all of these decisions were made on different programs). All accreditation decisions are posted on the APA accreditation website in the directory of programs, titled, "program search tool" and in the Notice of Actions posted in the program accreditation decisions section of the site.

In addition to conducting periodic and applicant program reviews in 2020, 6 programs were reviewed and granted the non-accredited, "intent to apply" status. Plus, the CoA granted new or approved continuation requests for "accredited, inactive" status that were received from 22 programs and accepted the voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from 15 accredited programs. The Commission also evaluated numerous reports submitted by accredited programs in response to the Commission during the year (N=257); these reports are referenced above as reporting requirements.

As previously mentioned in the listing of review processes, the CoA conducted a review of information 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 D.4-7(c). In 2020, 23 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. These program responses were integrated into the review process as described above.

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

TABLE 1.

COA PROGRAM REVIEW DECISIONS, 2020[2]

Decision	Number of programs
Granted initial or continued full accreditation	98
Granted full accreditation from contingent accreditation	24
Granted accreditation on contingency	22
Extend contingency	3
Deferred for information	29
Deferred for cause	6
Accredited on probation	2
Denial	0
Revocation of accreditation	1
Total	185

As part of the ARO, the Commission also examined program's reporting of 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 two programs. Further review did not result in a change of accreditation status for either of these programs.

At the conclusion of 2020, there were a total of 1,215 accredited programs. A detailed breakdown of the numbers and types of accredited programs is provided in Table 2. In addition, Table 3, located in the Appendix of this report, illustrates the growth in the number of accredited programs by decade between 1948 and 2018, and also includes the number of accredited programs in the two most recent years (2019-2020). Using this information, a 3% increase in the number of accredited programs across all levels of education and training is noted since 2018.

Throughout the year, OPCA staff provided logistic, clerical, financial, and administrative support to the Commission in the program review process. For example, OPCA staff completed preliminary or administrative reviews of self-studies submitted by 34 applicant programs and 112 accredited programs seeking continued accreditation. Members of the OPCA staff provided consultative guidance to programs and constituent groups on accreditation matters. OPCA staff also coordinate site visits; in 2020, all in-person visits were delayed in March 2020, secondary to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and site visits were transitioned to a virtual process. The OPCA coordinated 37 in-person site visits and 14 virtual site visits made to programs during 2020.

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2   All reviews occurred under the *Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology* (SoA).

TABLE 2.

NUMBER AND TYPE OF APA ACCREDITED PROGRAMS, 2020

Programs (Level and Area)		Number of Accredited Programs*			
		PhD		PsyD	
	Area	Full	Cont.	Full	Cont.
Doctoral Programs	Clinical	173	3	60	6
	Counseling	62	0	9	1
	School	57[3]	1	7	3
	Combined	6	1	4	3
	Total Doctoral Programs	**396**			
Internship Programs		**Full**		**Contingent**	
		609		35	
	Total Internship Programs	**645[4]**			
Postdoctoral Residency Programs	Area	**Full**		**Contingent**	
	Traditional – Clinical	94		3	
	Specialty - Clinical Child Psychology	8		1	
	Specialty - Clinical Health Psychology	11		1	
	Specialty - Clinical Neuropsychology	32		9	
	Specialty - Forensic Psychology	1		0	
	Specialty - Geropsychology	3		0	
	Specialty - Rehabilitation Psychology	10		1	
	Total Postdoctoral Residency Programs	**174**			
Total		**1,215**			

*As of October 25, 2020

Addressing Complaints made against Accredited Programs

The Complaints work group received, reviewed, and made decisions on seven complaints that were filed against accredited programs. All complaints were processed in accord with accreditation policies and procedures.

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3   One School PhD program is currently "Accredited, on probation"
4   This count include one program currently "Accredited, on probation"

TOPIC: Policy Changes

Modifications of Procedures

The CoA dedicated time at each of their four meetings in 2020 to review policy and procedures. A total of nine (9) Implementing Regulations (IR) were either reviewed and modified for public notice or comment and/or were reviewed following public comment for further revision or adoption. All IRs put forward for public comment in 2020 were revised and adopted. These IRs' topics were: internship placements for students in accredited doctoral programs (IR C-17 D); aspects of a program's curriculum or training relevant to acquisition and demonstration of profession-wide competencies (IR C-8 D, C-8 I, and C-9 P); the thresholds for student achievement outcomes in doctoral programs (IR D.4-7(b)); the CoA's policy on the conduct of its research studies related to its accreditation program (IR E.1-3); the disclosure of program information (IR C-26 D, C-27 I, and C-23 P). Also, the Standards of Accreditation in health service psychology for Master's degree programs were reviewed for public comment.

Modifications to the Decision Disclosure Policies and Practices

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

Accreditation of Master's Programs in Health Service Psychology (HSP)

The CoA established a work group comprised of CoA commissioners that examined policies and procedures for the accreditation of programs in HSP offered at the master's degree level of education. In 2020, the MA accreditation work group drafted a set of accreditation standards and put them forward on two occasions to the psychology public for comment. After the first presentation of materials for public comment, information received was reviewed and standards edited, yielding a second round of comment to be requested from the field. Following this second round of comment, the CoA reviewed and finalized the accreditation standards.

Per APA policy, these standards were submitted to APA governance for vetting and approval. Specifically, the APA Board of Educational Affairs received the Standards of Accreditation for master's degree programs in HSP (SoA-M) and following their vetting, the SoA-M were submitted to the APA Board of Directors (BoD). The APA BoD has in turn, approved the submission of the SoA-M to the APA Council of Representatives (CoR) for consideration. The APA CoR may approve the SoA-M or return them as written to the CoA for further consideration. While the SoA-M are in the process of review by the APA, the CoA will initiate an examination of procedures and processes to implement accreditation at this level of education.

Training of Site Visitors and Chairs of Site Visit Teams

The Commission conducted workshops at training council meetings that focused on the training of site visitors and provided information on how to complete a self-study. The number of attendees at the site visitor trainings was 62, and there were 123 attendees at the self-study workshops. During 2020, three workshops were cancelled consequent to the COVID-19 pandemic impact.

It is important to note that continuing education (CE) credit was approved for CoA site visitors in 2019, with 25 CE credits available for persons serving as a site visitor for a program on a once per year basis. In 2020, this was reviewed, and a new method of site visitor recognition was implemented, that of receipt of subscription credit for an APA journal. This addition was initiated to recognize site visitors who may prefer this professional recognition. Journal credit is provided for a one-year subscription to an APA published journal during the calendar following a site visit.

Informing the Public About CoA Decisions and Actions

Among a number of activities, the CoA's Communications work group prepared content for four issues of the *CoA Update*, which is published on the APA accreditation website. In the CoA Update, a summary of CoA decisions are shared. Plus, OPCA staff prepare and post a Notice of Actions (NoA), which provides details on CoA decisions after each program review meeting. The NoA is posted on the website and sent electronically to the bodies that recognize the APA as an accrediting agency (i.e., US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation), as well as to other accrediting, authorizing and regulatory agencies (e.g., licensure boards, state boards of higher education, institutional accrediting agencies). In addition, OPCA staff update the APA accreditation website which has both a searchable database of accredited programs and an annual list of accredited programs.

The CoA granted programs flexibility in the use of methods and practices such as telesupervision, telepractice, and distance education to minimize COVID-19 exposure. These flexibilities follow guidance provided by the Office of Postsecondary Education at the US Department of Education. This guidance and support for programs was made available on the OPCA website and updated as needed during the year. In addition, this information was sent by electronic mail to program's training directors, active site visitors, and CoA constituents *as soon as possible in order to keep all affected parties informed*.

Research and Accreditation Decisions

With support from OPCA staff, the CoA conducted research activities in 2020. These activities included an analysis of program outcomes from the ARO 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.

US Department of Education Recognition

The US Department of Education initially recognized the APA as a programmatic accrediting agency in 1970. The Association has been recognized since this time and is recognized with accreditation actions being completed by the CoA. As part of the recognition process, preparation of a petition for renewal of recognition by the Department of Education (ED) was initiated in 2019. The petition was submitted in late January of 2020. The ED office completed their initial review with a virtual visit to a CoA meeting; conducted in late October of 2020. A report containing the initial analyses completed by ED staff, termed a draft staff analysis, was also received in October 2020. The APA will have the opportunity to respond to this analysis in spring 2021 as part of the review process. Given such, OPCA staff are drafting a response to the items noted in the review. The APA response to the staff draft analysis, along with all relevant materials presented in the 2020 submission will be reviewed in accord with ED processes during 2021.

CHEA Recognition

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has recognized the APA-CoA as an accrediting body since 2002. As part of the process to maintain CHEA recognition, the APA submitted the second of two transition reports on January 3, 2020. These reports presented information on CoA compliance with CHEA's revised Recognition Policy. The revisions to CHEA's recognition policies were initiated with new guidance adopted in 2018 and implemented in January of 2019. The revised standards will be used during the APA-CoA's submission for consideration of continued recognition; the renewal process will be initiated in May, 2021.

APPENDIX

TABLE 3.

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
2020	396	645	174	1215