

COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION

IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS

Section B: CoA Policy Statements: Philosophy, Values, and Responsibilities

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B-1. The Purpose and Practice of Accreditation

(Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology, Section II.A)

Accreditation is a voluntary, nongovernmental process of self-study and external review intended to evaluate, enhance, and publicly recognize quality in institutions and in programs of higher education. As such, it serves:

1. General, liberal education;
2. Technical, vocational education and training; and
3. Education and training for the professions.

Accreditation is intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and practice in health service psychology. Through its standards, the accrediting body is expected to encourage dual attainment of a common level of professional competency, and ongoing improvement of educational institutions and training programs, sound educational experimentation, and constructive innovation.

The accreditation process involves judging the degree to which a program has achieved its educational aims and the standards described in this document, and its students/trainees and graduates have demonstrated adequate mastery of the discipline-specific knowledge and profession-wide competencies. The accreditation body should not explicitly prescribe the processes by which competencies should be reached; rather, it should judge the degree to which a program achieves outcomes consistent with the standards in this document and its training aims.

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.”³

³ The APA Committee on Training in Clinical Psychology (1947). First report of the new accreditation process in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 2, 539-558.

B-2. Scope of Accreditation

(Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology, Section I)

The accreditation process is intended to promote consistent quality and excellence in education and training in health service psychology. Education and training provides tangible benefits for prospective students; the local, national, and international publics that are consumers of psychological services; and the discipline of psychology itself.

For the purposes of accreditation by the APA Commission on Accreditation (CoA) “health service psychology” is defined as the integration of psychological science and practice in order to facilitate human development and functioning. Health service psychology includes the generation and provision of knowledge and practices that encompass a wide range of professional activities relevant to health promotion, prevention, consultation, assessment, and treatment for psychological and other health-related disorders.

Programs that are accredited to provide training in health service psychology prepare individuals to work in diverse settings with diverse populations. Individuals who engage in health service psychology have been appropriately trained to be eligible for licensure as doctoral-level psychologists.

The Commission reviews programs for accreditation at doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral levels.

A. Scope of Accreditation for Doctoral Programs:

The CoA reviews doctoral programs in psychology that provide broad and general training in scientific psychology and in the foundations of practice in health service psychology. Practice areas include clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, and other developed practice areas. The CoA also reviews programs that combine two or three of the above-listed practice areas.

B. Scope of Accreditation for Internship Programs:

The CoA reviews internship training programs in practice areas in health service psychology, which may include clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, and other developed practice areas.

C. Scope of Accreditation for Postdoctoral Residency Programs:

The CoA reviews postdoctoral residency programs providing education and training in preparation for health service psychology practice at an advanced level of competency in: a) the developed practice areas that have been defined within the scope of accreditation at the doctoral level; b) a focus area that promotes attainment of advanced competencies in a content within one or more of the developed practice areas that have been defined within the scope of accreditation at the doctoral level; and/or c) in a recognized specialty practice area in health service psychology.

(See Implementing Regulations C-2 D and C-3 I for definition of “developed practice areas” for doctoral and internship programs respectively and the process by which areas may be identified as such)

B-3. Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission on Accreditation and Its Accredited Programs

As a self-regulatory process, accreditation includes certain rights and responsibilities for institutions, programs and accrediting bodies. The Commission on Accreditation (CoA) as well as the programs it accredits, in cooperation with each other, has the responsibility to:

1. Involve broad participation of affected constituencies in the development and acceptance of standards and policies.
2. Develop standards and policies which: (a) are consistent with the purposes of accreditation; (b) are sufficiently flexible to allow diversity and effective program development; c) allow and encourage institutional or programmatic freedom and autonomy; and, (d) allow the institution or program to exercise its rights within a reasonable set of parameters relevant to the quality of education and, in professional fields, to prepare individuals effectively for practice in the profession.
3. Conduct periodic review of the standards.

In all reviews, the Commission on Accreditation will be guided by the following general principles:

1. Should a member of the CoA be in actual or potential conflict of interest with respect to a program scheduled for review, that member will be recused during discussion and decision making on that program;
2. A high degree of professional judgment will be exercised by the CoA as to whether the program is fulfilling acceptable, publicly stated objectives, consistent with the *Standards of Accreditation for Programs in Health Service Psychology*.

Before making an accreditation decision, the CoA will review the program's most recent self-study report, the most recent site visit report, the program's response to that report, and any other records of relevance that the program has submitted. As required by the U.S. Department of Education, the CoA must provide opportunity for third-party comment concerning a program's qualifications for accreditation. The CoA will provide such public notice at least 6 months in advance of the review. The CoA will accept written comments on initial applicant or accredited programs from third parties and will forward the comments to the program for comment before proceeding with the review.

B-4. Accredited Program's Relationship with Accrediting Body

(Adapted from the *Standards of Accreditation for Programs in Health Service Psychology*, Standard V)

An accredited program demonstrates its commitment to the accreditation process by fulfilling the following responsibilities:

1. The program abides by the Commission on Accreditation's published policies and procedures, as they pertain to its recognition as an accredited program.
2. The program informs the Commission on Accreditation in a timely manner of changes in its environment, plans, resources, or operations that could alter the program's quality.
3. The program is in good standing with the Commission on Accreditation in terms of payment of fees associated with the maintenance of its accredited status.

**B-5. Recognition of the Commission on Accreditation's Policies and Practices
By External Groups**

(Commission on Accreditation, October 1998)

Through its guidelines and procedures, the Commission on Accreditation advocates continuous self-study by its accredited programs for the maintenance and enhancement of program quality. In similar fashion, the Commission acknowledges the need to conduct a program of self-study of its own accrediting practices as charged in the "Policies for Accreditation Governance," and to ensure that those practices are consistent with good practice within the accrediting community as well as within higher education. Therefore, the Commission will, as appropriate, seek recognition of its policies and practices by the governmental and nongovernmental groups established to review and recognize the activities of accrediting agencies. Such recognition is consistent with the Commission's belief in the value of self-evaluation and peer review and ultimately benefits the communities served by accreditation in psychology.