



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

**COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION UPDATE
MAY 2011**

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CoA Spring Meeting Actions

The [Commission on Accreditation](#) (CoA) held its first program review meeting of the year on March 31-April 3, 2011 at the APA building in Washington, DC. CoA reviewed 76 doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral residency programs for initial and continued accreditation, as well as 12 requests for change in accredited status. The decisions made at this meeting are available on the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (OPCA) Web site ([HTML](#), [PDF](#)). The full listings of [accredited](#) and [applicant](#) programs have also been updated to reflect these actions.

New Implementing Regulation – C-11(d)

At its spring meeting, CoA adopted a new Implementing Regulation for postdoctoral residency programs, after reviewing the public comments received. [IR C-11\(d\)](#) provides clarification on differentiating a track, rotation, or area of emphasis from a separate specialty practice program. All CoA [policies and procedures](#) can be found on the OPCA Web site.

Annual Report Online Now Open!

Program directors were sent an e-mail the week of April 18th with information about the 2011 [Annual Report Online](#) (ARO), which must be completed by all accredited programs (*except for those that were granted initial accreditation during the 2010-2011 academic/training year*) by **September 15, 2011**. Please contact the OPCA Research staff at ARO@apa.org or (202) 336-6016 with any questions about the ARO or if you are a program director who did not receive this e-mail as the OPCA wants to ensure that it has correct contact information for all program directors.

Public Comment Items

The following three policies are currently out for [public comment](#). All comments will be reviewed at CoA's July 2011 meeting.

| Policy | Purpose | Comment End Date |
|--|--|------------------|
| Broad and General Preparation in Doctoral Programs | This second revision to the existing Implementing Regulation C-16 is meant to incorporate an understanding of programs' need for flexibility within the curriculum, without compromising the requirements and intent of the G&P and the need to protect the public. | June 1 |
| Annual Monitoring and Achievement Thresholds | The revisions to and reorganization of the existing Implementing Regulations D.4-7 and D.4-8 clarify CoA's annual monitoring process for all accredited programs through the ARO and narrative reports, as well as the identified achievement thresholds (for doctoral programs only). | July 1 |
| Outcome Data for Internships and Postdoctoral Programs | This draft Implementing Regulation clarifies CoA's expectations for the provision of outcome data (as required by Domain F) within internship and postdoctoral residency programs. | July 1 |

To download the proposed policies, view comments received, or register to post comments, visit the Accreditation Public Comment website at <http://apaoutside.apa.org/AccredSurvey/public/>. Comments may be submitted as an individual or as part of a group. Please contact the Office with any questions or issues regarding the public comment system.

Higher Education Session at APA Convention

In addition to the regular pre-Convention [site visitor and site visit team chair workshops](#), the OPCA will be sponsoring a special session at this year's APA Convention on current issues in higher education and accreditation. As programs and institutions are likely aware, a number of federal regulations in recent years have led to an increasing amount of documentation of educational activities. The purpose of this session is to help members of the psychology educational and training community understand the potential impact of changes in U.S. higher education in terms of the role of all accrediting agencies, whether they accredit at the institutional or programmatic level. Participants will have an opportunity to better understand the implications of the new regulations in higher education on the recognition of accrediting bodies, and the policies and procedures used in APA-CoA accreditation.

Scheduled presenters include:

- **Carol Griffiths** (U.S. Department of Education)
- **Leah Matthews** (Council on Higher Education Accreditation)
- **Susan Phillips, PhD** (current member of USDE's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity; Provost at SUNY Albany; former CoA Chair)
- **Belle Wheelan, PhD** (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools)

The session will be held from **2:00pm – 3:50pm** on **Friday, August 5, 2011** in Room 208 of the Washington Convention Center. No RSVP is needed; we hope to see you there!

Reminder: Notify CoA of Program Director Changes!

Per Implementing Regulation C-19, programs are required to notify CoA in advance of any substantive changes. CoA wants to reiterate the importance of [contacting the OPCA](#) when there is a change in program director and providing the contact information (including the e-mail address) for that person. Doing so will ensure that the correct individual(s) for your accredited program receives CoA's correspondence and periodic updates, including Annual Report Online login information and reminders.

Upcoming Important Dates

| | |
|------------|---|
| June 1 | Last day to provide comments on IR C-16 |
| July 1 | Last day to provide comments on Outcome Data IR; Revisions to IRs D.4-7/D.4-8 |
| July 14-17 | Summer CoA Program Review Meeting |
| August 3 | Site Visitor Workshops at APA Convention |
| August 5 | Higher Education Session at APA Convention |

PROGRAM COUNTS

As of May 3, 2011

| Program Type | | Accredited Programs | | Applicant Programs Under Review | |
|--|--|---------------------|------|---------------------------------|------|
| | | PhD | PsyD | PhD | PsyD |
| Doctoral Graduate Programs | Clinical | 173 | 62 | 3 | 3 |
| | Counseling | 67 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| | School | 55 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| | Combined | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Internship Programs | | 477 | | 16 | |
| Postdoctoral Residency Programs | Traditional – Clinical | 32 | | 12 | |
| | Specialty – Clinical Neuropsychology | 15 | | 4 | |
| | Specialty – Clinical Health Psychology | 8 | | 1 | |
| | Specialty – Clinical Child Psychology | 5 | | 4 | |
| | Specialty – Rehabilitation Psychology | 1 | | 2 | |
| | Specialty – Forensic Psychology | 0 | | 1 | |
| TOTAL | | 911 | | 48 | |

SPECIAL TOPICS SPOTLIGHT

This is the first of a planned series of educative topics that will be featured within the periodic CoA Updates. If you have suggestions for an area related to CoA's policies, procedures, or processes that you would like to see addressed in a future issue, please [let us know!](#)

Deferral for Information: What, How, Why?

When a program is reviewed for initial or continued accreditation, CoA might defer making a decision if there isn't enough information to determine whether the program is compliant with one or more accreditation standards (the [Guidelines and Principles](#), or G&P). When this happens, the program will receive a **deferral for information (DFI)** letter from CoA asking for additional clarification by a specific date. This is different from a **deferral for cause**, which is an action taken when CoA already has evidence that the program is out of compliance with the G&P, and the program is given an opportunity to show cause why an adverse decision (i.e., probation, revocation, denial of a site visit, or denial of accreditation) should not be reached. The full CoA decision process is outlined in Section 4.3 of the [Accreditation Operating Procedures](#). Although this article focuses on the DFI, there are certainly similarities and overlap between these two types of deferrals when it comes to the common areas of concern. At the same time, it is important to understand that a DFI is not a precursor to an adverse action. It simply means that an accreditation decision cannot be rendered with the information currently available. For example, it is possible that a program responding to a DFI will successfully resolve the review process with a decision of the maximum years of accreditation from CoA.

Still, a DFI means more work for everybody: the program director and staff must spend time preparing a detailed response and gathering the requested documentation, and CoA most completely re-review all of the program's materials at a future meeting. And of course, it means that current and prospective students must wait even longer to know the outcome of the program's accreditation status.

Programs can generally avoid receiving a DFI by ensuring that their self-study is complete, thorough, and addresses all aspects of the self-study instructions. Thoroughness is important for the other materials and responses submitted to CoA during the review process, too – such as responses to Preliminary Reviews or Site Visit Reports. For example, questions raised by the site visit team can often be resolved by the program providing a detailed response to that report.

Across the three program review meetings in 2010 and the first meeting of 2011, CoA deferred **23** programs for additional information. The **Top 5 Most Common Reasons for a DFI** cited across all types of programs -- doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral – are listed below. In preparing their self-studies and other responses, programs may want to pay extra attention to the following areas:

5) Public disclosure information (Domain G): When a program's public information (including C-20 data, for doctoral programs) appears to be missing important components, isn't easily accessible, or isn't consistent with how the program describes itself to CoA in its self-study, CoA may need additional information to determine if the program is in compliance with this aspect of Domain G.

4) Faculty/staff sufficiency (Domain C): When a program doesn't clearly document the roles of its faculty and staff – including the amount of time those individuals devote to only the program under review – or provide all required CVs, CoA may need additional information to determine if the program is in compliance with this aspect of Domain C.

3) Coverage of content areas (Domain B): When a program doesn't identify how specific content areas are covered within the program – for ALL of its students/interns/residents – or provide complete syllabi/information for any courses/didactics used to meet requirements, CoA may need additional information to determine if the program is in compliance with this aspect of Domain B.

2) Competencies and minimal levels of achievement (Domain B): In articulating its education and training goals, objectives, and competencies (GOCs), when a program's competencies are not defined in a way they can be measured (i.e., as knowledge/attitudes/skills), its evaluation mechanisms are not clearly linked to its GOCs, or there are no minimal levels of achievement identified, CoA may need additional information to determine if the program is in compliance with these aspects of Domain B.

1) Outcome data (Domain F): When a program has not presented aggregate data on both current and former students/interns/residents that demonstrate achievement of its GOCs, CoA may need additional information to determine if the program is in compliance with this aspect of Domain F. *[NOTE: CoA currently has an Implementing Regulation [out for public comment](#) that is aimed to help programs better understand the expectations for collecting and presenting outcome data].*

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