



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION (CoA) POLICY AND PROCEDURE UPDATE APRIL 2010

Richard Seime, Ph.D.
Chair

Joyce Illfelder-Kaye, Ph.D.
Associate Chair, Program Review

Elizabeth Klonoff, Ph.D.
Associate Chair, Quality Assurance

Annual Report Online Now Open!

All program directors were sent an e-mail on April 15 with information about the 2010 Annual Report Online (ARO). All accredited programs must complete this report by September 15, 2010. Please contact the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation (OPCA) with any questions regarding completion.

Upcoming Changes to Appeal Procedures

At its April 8-11, 2010 meeting, the CoA voted to adopt proposed changes to its appeal process as mandated by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. These changes affect Sections 5.5 and 5.6 of the *Accreditation Operating Procedures* and will be effective July 1, 2010. These changes were sent to the APA Board of Directors for final approval. View the changes [here](#).

Site Visit Report Templates

As of May 1, 2010, site visitors are required to utilize specific templates to complete their reports of programs. Templates for each type of program (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral) are available as Word documents on the OPCA website's [site visitor resources page](#).

2010 Fees

In 2010, site visit fees increased from \$1500 to \$1700 per site visitor due to inflation and increases in travel and hotel costs. Prior to this increase, site visitor fees had remained constant since 1998. Appeal hearing fees for doctoral programs increased to \$2500 to be consistent with other doctoral program fees. All fees are listed on the OPCA website [here](#).

Current Implementing Regulations (IRs)

All programs should periodically consult the OPCA website's [policy documents page](#) for the latest version of the IRs and other news items. Section "C" of the IRs contains those policies that clarify portions of the *Guidelines and Principles (G&P)*, and is the section most relevant to accredited and applicant programs.

Achievement Thresholds for Doctoral Programs

Clarification:

The CoA has noticed that there are some common misconceptions related to Implementing Regulation D.4-7, which addresses program achievement thresholds. Attached to this update, we have provided a document that we hope will clarify the intent and meaning of IRs D.4-7 and D.4-8. We encourage all accredited doctoral programs to review this information, and contact OPCA if you have any further questions.

Recent Actions:

At its November 2009 meeting, the CoA identified 78 of the 372 accredited doctoral programs that were not meeting the current identified thresholds. In December, letters requesting additional information were mailed to these 78 programs, with a March 1, 2010 date for response. Sixty-eight programs responded to this request by that due date, 59 of which provided adequate explanations and/or plans. The remaining 9 programs were judged not to be adequately addressing the threshold concerns; of these, 3 were already scheduled to be reviewed in the near future and were informed that these letters will be part of the record at their upcoming reviews. The remaining 6 programs were sent letters asking them to provide additional information to the CoA by September 1, 2010.

Ten (10) programs did not respond at all to the December letter from CoA. At its April meeting the CoA voted to inform each of these programs that if a response is not received within 30 days, they will be considered to have withdrawn from accreditation per Section 2.3 of the *Accreditation Operating Procedures*.

At its April meeting, the CoA also voted to revise these two IRs to better clarify their intent and the process by which thresholds are identified and revised. The CoA hopes to finalize the revisions at its July meeting.

Postdoctoral Residency Issues

The accreditation website currently [lists the postdoctoral specialty areas](#) in which programs are eligible to seek accreditation. In addition, IR C-11(b) will be updated soon to include those same areas.

The CoA recognizes that postdoctoral residencies are the fastest-growing type of program applying for accreditation, with 13 [initial applications](#) received in the last year alone. This marks the first year that there is a dedicated CoA policy group working on issues related to postdoctoral program accreditation. Current areas of discussion and possible IR development include: transitions between traditional practice programs and specialty practice programs, defining what constitutes a program when multiple emphasis areas are present, and distinguishing the difference between traditional practice programs with areas of emphasis and specialty practice programs.

Public Information for Doctoral Programs

As all doctoral programs are aware, IR C-20 requires accredited doctoral programs to make specific information about its education and training outcomes available to the public. In reviewing this information over the last several years, the CoA has often found that it was difficult to locate, inaccurately presented, or hard to understand if one were a prospective student.

In an effort to ensure that this required information is available to the public in a more consistent and understandable fashion, the CoA in February announced two new requirements that will be effective for all accredited doctoral programs as of [September 15, 2010](#):

- 1) The required information must *all* be located in one place and titled "*Student Admissions, Outcomes, and Other Data*"; and
- 2) If the program has a website, the information must be located no more than "one click" away from the main/home doctoral program web page.

After September 15, the CoA and OPCA staff will be reviewing programs' compliance with the above requirements, including that the data provided are consistent with the program's ARO data from academic year 2009-2010. CoA will continue to review the information it requires in C-20, as well as the format of that information, and will likely post some changes in the required elements with specified dates for compliance in the near future.

Current Public Comment Items

The two proposed IRs on *Distance and Electronically Mediated Education in Doctoral Programs* and *Telesupervision* are still available for public review and comment. Comments will be accepted through [June 15, 2010](#) and will be reviewed by the CoA at its July meeting.

To read the proposed IRs, view comments, or post comments, please visit the Accreditation Public Comment website at <http://apaoutside.apa.org/AccredSurvey/public/>. Questions preparatory to providing comment may be directed to the OPCA.

IR C-16: Upcoming Public Comment

At its April meeting the CoA voted to request public comment on proposed changes to IR C-16 regarding broad and general education in doctoral programs. Additions to the IR include definitions of several core content areas, a definition of graduate level, and expectations for review of syllabi. The proposed IR will be placed on the public comment webpage above by mid-May, and notice will be provided at that time that it is available for comment.

QUESTIONS?

Contact:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
American Psychological Association
750 1st Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Phone: (202) 336-5979

Fax: (202) 336-5978

E-mail: apaaccred@apa.org

Web: <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation>

Accredited Doctoral Programs: Understanding IRs D.4-7, D.4-8, and Achievement Thresholds

What is IR D4-7?

Implementing Regulation (IR) D.4-7 outlines thresholds for acceptable performance for accredited doctoral programs.

Why must such thresholds be identified?

As an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) is required to have standards in place addressing “success with respect to student achievement in relation to mission, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, State licensing examination, and job placement rates.” (*Section 602.16 (a)(1)(i) of the Criteria for Recognition by the U.S. Secretary of Education*)

What are the thresholds that CoA looks at?

For accredited doctoral programs, the CoA has chosen 4 such “success indicators” to evaluate on a yearly basis. These are:

- 1) number of years to complete program;
- 2) attrition;
- 3) proportion of students accepted into an internship; and
- 4) changes in student-faculty ratios.

Does my program have to meet these thresholds?

It is important to recognize that these thresholds are not absolute indicators that programs are required to meet. The thresholds for each of these indicators were determined using a data-driven method that allowed CoA to identify only those programs that were significantly different from all other accredited doctoral programs for each indicator. In other words, the thresholds represent the achievement standards that the overwhelming majority of accredited programs are already meeting. With that said, programs that do not meet these thresholds may be subject to further review; that process is outlined in IR D.4-8.

What is IR D4-8? (What happens if my program doesn't meet the thresholds?)

Implementing Regulation (IR) D.4-8 outlines how the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) will review programs' data against these thresholds. Programs that fail to meet the specific thresholds for any of the 4 indicators are identified as “outliers,” which triggers a CoA request for additional information. The program will receive a letter asking the program to explain why it is so discrepant from other accredited programs and to develop a plan to deal with this discrepancy in the future. As would be true any time a program is asked to explain or remediate an issue, the CoA may request additional information at any point if the program's explanation is deemed inadequate.

Will the thresholds ever change?

Although IR D.4-7 currently states that the thresholds will be “reviewed periodically and revised as appropriate,” the CoA is currently looking at making changes to the IR to clarify the exact timing of this review and revision. The intention is that these empirically determined thresholds will be revised every 3 years, with the revised thresholds to be effective in the year following the one in which they are determined.