

## Self-Study Pitfalls



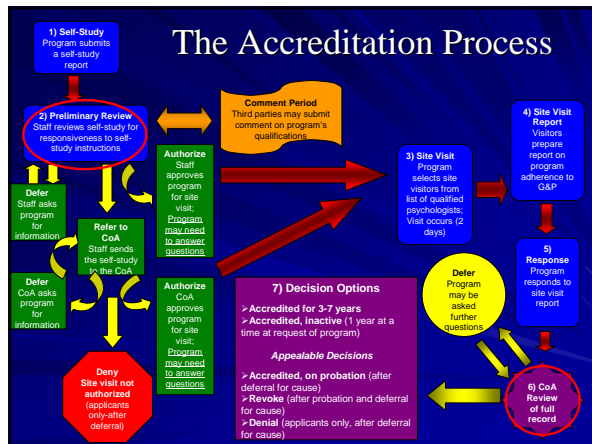
Commission on Accreditation



(c) 1/2009

## The Basics

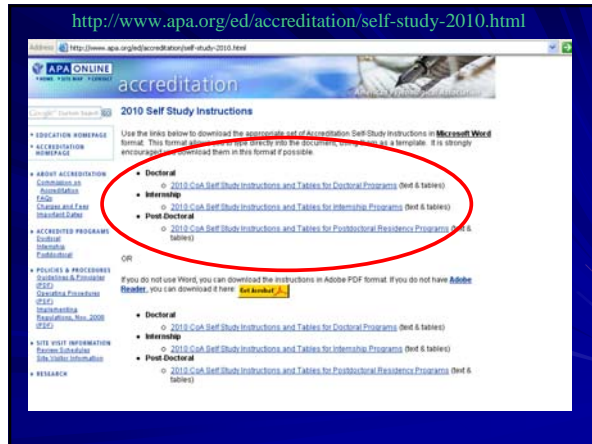
- Introductions
- Role of the Self-Study in the APA accreditation process (*see next slide*):
  - **Preliminary Review:**
    - Degree to which the information is responsive to the self-study instructions
    - Ensuring that all information is present for the CoA to make a decision during its final review
    - Authorize/Not authorize a site visit
  - **CoA Final Review:**
    - Professional judgment as to how well the information in the self-study and responses meet criteria of G&P
    - Final accreditation decision



## The Self-Study Instructions

- Slightly altered each year – use the ones for the year of your scheduled (re-accred) or anticipated (applicant) site visit;
- Use them as a *template* (download in Word format);
- \*Read the 3-5 pages of additional instructions and information preceding the transmittal page\*
- Use the **bold prompts** to focus your responses;
- Read the instructions and footnotes for each Table;
- Read the relevant Implementing Regulations (IR's) when they are referenced throughout the instructions.

\*\* **NOTE:** Programs who do not use the correct outline will be required to **revise and resubmit** the entire self-study (IR D.2-3).



## Organization

- Number pages whenever possible.
  - Read instructions for specific requirements.
  - Handwritten numbers are better than no numbers!
- Label all documents and Appendices clearly.
  - How will someone unfamiliar with your program and self-study find the relevant material?
- Be SPECIFIC when referencing policies, evaluation forms, etc.
  - Don't just cite the general Appendix or document (e.g., Handbook) – how will the reviewers find what you are referring to?
- Physical submission:
  - All self-studies will be put in identical accordion folders upon submission, so no need to submit them in binders.
  - Forms of binding permitted but should be easily removed.
  - Tabs, dividers, colored pages, folders, clips, rubber bands – OK
  - Remember the idea is to make things simple and easy to find.

## Responsiveness – Areas of Common Confusion

### Domains A-H

### Domain A

- Submit the “[Summary Check Sheet for Documents and Appendices](#)”
- Fill out the [A.6](#) table. Clearly identify the page number and appendix for each required policy.
- Answer all of the prompts in the self-study instructions.

## DOMAIN B

### Goals, Objectives, Competencies:

- *Minimal levels of achievement* not identified in relation to the program's goals and objectives and/or curricular/content area requirements ;
- *Goals/objectives/competencies* are too general and not specific enough in order to later review outcome data in Domain F for students/interns/residents in the program and after program completion;
- Relying solely on "course grades" or "exam passes" as indices of competence in program areas (*doctoral programs*);
- (If using an evaluation form to assess competence) – does not specify where in the evaluation form the specific areas are reviewed.

### Curriculum/Content Areas:

- B.3 (*doctoral programs*) – most problems surface when the program does not clearly address how each aspect of B.3 is covered in the curriculum:
  - Programs are strongly encouraged to use the embedded tables to present this information.
  - G&P does not specify that curriculum areas must be addressed through coursework, but if they are, the program must be VERY clear which courses may be used to satisfy those requirements.
    - Required vs. elective courses
  - If multiple courses may be used to meet areas – each potential course must be equivalent to another in terms of offering *broad and general* training in that area ([IR C-16](#)) – if syllabi do not indicate that, the program should explain further.
- B.4/B.3 (*internships/postdocs*) – describe *in detail* the training activities used to gain knowledge in each competency.

- Programs do not address how students/interns are exposed to the current body of knowledge of theories and methods of consultation and supervision as described by [IR C-1](#) (note that *providing* consultation or supervision is NOT required at doc/intern level)
- *Internship* programs misinterpret the definition of "evaluation" required by B.4b:
  - [IR C-1](#): "Refers to such activities as program evaluation or evaluation of an intervention at the individual or group level – not the psychological assessment of an individual person"

### Practicum (doctoral programs):

- Demonstrating integration of practicum/placement experiences with academic aspects of the program.
- Documentation of consistency of practicum/placement sites with program's training model.

## DOMAIN C

- No justification of *sufficiency* of faculty/supervisors;
- (*Doctoral*) Definitions of core faculty consistent with [IR C-18](#) (>50% devoted to program under review);
- Providing clarification of the capacity of the supervisory roles of training supervisors – who is providing what kind of supervision?
- Describing APPIC Match process rather than how it determines that intern interests, aptitudes, and prior experiences are a good fit for the goals/objectives specific to that internship program.

## DOMAIN D

- Describing outcomes of diverse recruitment, rather than *efforts* – efforts are in G&P; outcomes are not;
- Education/experiences in issues of diversity not articulated in a thoughtful and coherent plan;
- Remember broad definition of diversity – [Domain A.5](#).

## DOMAIN E

- Not describing *how students/interns are aware of their due process and grievance procedures*;
- Feedback/evaluation process (for students, interns, residents) unclear:
  - How often formal, written feedback is provided: at least annually (doc programs), or semi-annually (internships and postdocs);
  - Does it include ALL elements of Domain E.4a-c (doc/intern) or Domain E.4a-d (postdocs)?
    - Including remediation steps, and written feedback if remediation is unsuccessful?
- Whether or not formal complaints/grievances have been filed, program needs to discuss its process in keeping records confidential should it occur ([IR C-12](#)).

## DOMAIN F

- Unclear how students/interns/residents are involved in self-assessment process;
- Failure in Domain F to evaluate program goals, objectives, and expected student/intern/resident competencies in a manner which is linked to its evaluation benchmarks in an *aggregate* manner, so that the programs' success may be measured proximally and distally on those parameters;
- Lack of aggregate outcome data\* (F.1a or F.1b) – one or both of the following:
  - Not providing *proximal* outcome data that demonstrates how the program evaluates student/intern/resident achievement of competencies while they progress through the program.
  - Not providing data on student/intern/resident views or assessments of the program.
  - Not providing outcome data of its program graduates and how these *distal* measurements demonstrate the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives.

\* required by U.S. Department of Education

- No discussion of *how data has been used* to make changes or adjustments to program;
- Failure to discuss any negative aspects of student and/or alumni survey responses about the program;
- Not answering *each* component of Domain F.2 (doctoral programs), or Domains F.2/F.3 (internships/post-docs):
  - ✓ These areas tend to be glazed over after the data portion has been discussed.
- Read over the CoA's **last decision letter** (re-accred programs)! If any areas have been asked to be addressed "*in the next self-study*," make sure these items have been specifically discussed either within the related domain and/or Domain F.
  - ✓ Areas not discussed may be identified as continuing problematic issues with the program.

## DOMAIN G

- Providing general references to large documents (e.g., Handbook, website) with regard to each of the required public disclosure components.
  - Please specify *where* each piece of information can be found!
- Information presented in the self-study is *different* than the information provided in the program's public documents (i.e., curriculum, goals and objectives, rotations, faculty/staff).
  - Interested applicants should be able to make an informed decision about entering the program.
- Failure to update program web pages, or links not working.
- (Doctoral programs) – Education/training outcomes ([IR C-20](#)) is missing, incomplete, or hard to find.
  - As of 1/1/08 – licensure info and new format for attrition data
- Not providing the CoA contact information in all public documents which cite the program's accredited status (including telephone number: **202-336-5979**)
  - Tell us *where* that info is located within the document!

## DOMAIN H

- Program does not discuss correspondence with the CoA regarding programmatic changes.
  - Know the requirements of [IR C-19](#).

## Accuracy

### Syllabi

- Not being provided for ALL required courses;
- Not being provided for ALL courses which may be used to meet the requirements of Domain B.3;
- Inconsistency in course titles/numbers across self-study, syllabi, and public documents (e.g., Handbook) ;
- Syllabi do not include any of the following:
  - Instructor information
  - Date/semester of course (or syllabus is outdated)
  - Textbook/list of readings → *at graduate level*
  - Course description/objectives
  - Absence of course performance requirements and complete references in syllabi. It is getting more common for syllabi to refer to programs like CTweb and Blackboard for details about a course. The CoA does not have password access to such courses; copies of these materials should be provided.

### Curriculum vitae

- Not provided for ALL required individuals listed on staff/faculty tables (as explained by footnotes);
- Not in required template (abbreviated);
- More than 2 pages in length;
- Missing required information from template;
- CV's provided for people not listed on the staff/faculty tables with no explanation as to their role in the program;
- Listing doctoral, internship, and/or post-doc programs attended as APA-accredited when they are not (especially ones clearly outside the scope of APA accreditation; e.g., doctoral program in Developmental Psychology);
- Primary Professional Appointment listed on CV does not appear consistent with information on staff/faculty table and time devoted to the program under review.

### Tables

- When calculating amount of time devoted to the program, it should only be to the program under review.
  - Should NOT include time spent with an undergraduate, Master's, or other doctoral program in the department; research; administrative duties; private practice; etc
- Use the definitions provided for each faculty/staff category to determine the best placement for each contributing faculty/staff member, to the best of your judgment.
- All student/intern/resident data provided for the last 7 years – despite the date of the last site visit.
- (Doctoral) ALL students who entered the program should be included in Tables 4, 5, and 6 – even those who withdrew.
- Double check the consistency of numbers across all faculty/staff and student/intern/resident tables, including demographics tables.



Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: http://www.apa.org/accreditation/

**For Site Visitors**

[Self-Study Instructions](#)  
 •Based on year of expected site visit  
 •Change each year

[FAQ's on self-study submission and guidelines](#)

[CoA / Office Contact Information](#)


• Doctoral Student # # (197-94)  
 • Doctoral Faculty Member # # (174-94)  
 • U2000 # # (207-94)  
 • International Supervisor # # (128-94)  
 • Postdoctoral Resident # # (183-94)  
 • Postdoctoral Subresident # # (128-94)

[New Self-Study Instructions](#)  
[2008 Self-Study Instructions](#)  
[2011 Self-Study Instructions](#)  
[How do I submit my self-study and other materials?](#)

**"Quick Reference Guides"**  
 • International Programs  
 • Doctoral Programs  
 • Postdoctoral Residency Programs

© 2008 American Psychological Association  
 Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation  
 750 First Street, NE • Washington, DC 20002-4242  
 Phone: 202-336-6070 • Fax: 202-336-6071  
 Email: [apac@apa.org](mailto:apac@apa.org)

**Good luck on your self-study!**



A cartoon illustration of a man with a large head and a single hair curl, sitting at a computer. A glowing lightbulb is positioned above his head, indicating a bright idea or inspiration. The man has a thoughtful expression, looking at the computer screen.