



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

**A TAXONOMY FOR  
POSTDOCTORAL AND CONTINUING  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
IN PSYCHOLOGY**

PREPARED BY  
THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA)  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POSTDOCTORAL  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PSYCHOLOGY  
NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 1994

### Acknowledgments

The American Psychological Association (APA) National Conference on Postdoctoral Education and Training in Psychology were led by the Steering Committee of Drs. Bourg, Bourne, Kilbey, McNamara, Parsons, Pryzwansky, Turner, Weinstein, Farelly, Fox, Lambert, Spielberger and Wiggins and over 115 participants whose expertise covered the whole spectrum of the teaching, research and practice of psychology. The taxonomy was developed from the chapter on taxonomy of the conference proceedings prepared by Drs. Parsons, Pryzwansky, Weinstein, and Wiens with special assistance from Dr. Cynthia Baum at that time a member of the APA Education Directorate's staff.

Jill N. Reich, Ph.D., Convener and Co-Chair  
Harry A. Sands, Ph.D., Co-Chair  
Arthur N. Wiens, Ph.D., Co-chair

## Introduction

Taxonomy, or classification, serves the purpose of defining, clarifying and ordering substantive areas; in this case, postdoctoral education and training. In this report, a taxonomy of various general models or types of postdoctoral education and training is presented followed by the more specific taxonomies and terminologies of practice, research and teaching. Finally, a summary table utilizing a seven-variable model that can be applied to any postdoctoral education and training program is provided.

This taxonomy was developed during the National Conference on Postdoctoral Education and Training in Psychology in 1994. It was subsequently approved by the Council of Representatives in August, 1996 with the recommendation that it be reviewed at least biannually and updated as appropriate:

B. (11) On recommendation of the Board of Directors and the Board of Educational Affairs, Council voted to approve the proposed revisions to the "Taxonomy;" approve the "Taxonomy" for standard usage to be promulgated through journal articles, announcements and discussions; and request that BEA regularly reviews and revises as needed the "Taxonomy" developed and incorporates terms currently used in education by clinical placements, mental health groups, and others. Council requested that the "Taxonomy" be amended to include the following footnote:

This Taxonomy has been approved for promulgation by the American Psychological Association which has also directed that the Board of Educational Affairs regularly review and revise the Taxonomy as needed. Nothing in this document should be construed as constituting standards or guidelines.

Postdoctoral education and training should be considered within the framework of lifelong learning. It is inherent in the role of psychologists to be educated throughout their lifetime whether their chosen area of functioning is in teaching, research or practice.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This taxonomy has been approved for promulgation by the American Psychological Association which has also directed that the Board of Educational Affairs regularly review and revise the Taxonomy as needed. Nothing in this document should be construed as constituting standards or guidelines.

## Models for Education and Training Beyond the Doctoral Degree

The following types of postdoctoral training and education are presented as an initial conceptualization for the field to consider. They should serve as the impetus for further discussion and refinement of postdoctoral activities in the coming decade.

1. **Formal Organized Program:** A formal organized program provides advanced education and training in one of the areas of research, practice, or teaching beyond the predoctoral level. They are comprised of specific goals, duration of training, and specified methods and have stated criteria for evaluation. They differ from the next two types in the degree of organization and in that the program may have had peer review and support from an outside organization such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), foundations, etc. Such formal organized programs are found often in the research area.

One of the oldest of these models, the psychoanalytic model, has some of the same characteristics as the two other models. The trainee is intensively supervised in psychoanalytic therapy over a period of at least several years, takes formal courses throughout that period, undergoes personal analysis, and completes a scholarly project.

2. **Individualized Mentorship Program:** Sometimes known as the apprenticeship model, the postdoctoral trainee works for one to three years under the direction of an active, established psychologist (Mentor) in an adequate learning environment and carries out an organized program of a focused nature. Such mentorships are typically found in research and occasionally in practice and teaching programs.
3. **Individualized Supervision Program:** Two types of these programs are present. The emphasis in both is upon individualized supervision of the trainee.

The first type of program provides advanced training in a given area of practice, e.g., cognitive-behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, clinical neuropsychology, pediatric psychology, clinical geropsychology, etc. Individual supervision is required; readings and/or didactic course work may be required. Training may be for one or two years.

A second type requires individualized supervision of the trainee's professional experience by a licensed psychologist for state licensure purposes. It is usually for a one-year period and has not proscribed or prescribed didactic requirements. It may or may not follow a predetermined plan of experience.

4. **Sabbatical/Paid Leave:** Institution-sponsored faculty development time usually involving a range of educational activities designed and proposed by the recipient. Sabbaticals are typically for six months or one year; paid leaves may range from one or two months to a year.
5. **Continuing Education:** Continuing education offers a wide range of education and training experiences designed to provide or update knowledge and skills above the doctoral level. Continuing education is the hallmark of lifelong learning. Continuing education provides the opportunity for updating the psychologist's knowledge base in a given area and expanding the base in light of new knowledge derived from other sources (e.g., other disciplines), the developing interactive technologies, and the changing societal needs and shifts in national policy. Continuing education programs can be both formal and informal.

**Formal Continuing Education Programs:** These programs typically offer continuing education training credits and are well structured, including specific goals and objectives and evaluation. They may range from short course and workshops (e.g., several hours) to one or several weeks of presentations as well as formal structured Continuing Education home study programs which include examinations of knowledge acquisition. Other continuing education credits are gained for attendance at weekly conferences or presentations (as in clinical case conferences of a teaching nature).

**Informal Continuing Education:** Faculty/Staff development programs, peer consultation, and a variety of self-study activities, as described in the section below, fall under this heading.

6. **Faculty/Staff Development, Peer Consultation, and Self-Study:** These three types of postdoctoral education and training are combined under one heading, as they are typically of a more informal and less systematic nature.

**Faculty/Staff Development:** New faculty or staff members may be given supervision by a more senior colleague on their activities. For example, a practice supervisor may provide training in supervision for the new clinician who will be supervising clinical students. A senior teacher or researcher may serve as a resource person for new PhDs in teaching and research, respectively. Typically, there is no accountability aspect to this type of activity, even if there is evaluative feedback.

**Peer Consultation:** This is communication with and from colleagues, e.g., peer reviews of research papers and grants, peer evaluations of teaching, discussions with peers concerning professional or practice problems, study groups, etc.

**Self-Study:** Preparation and updating of courses, preparation of papers and grant requests, literature reviews, reading current journals, reading background material for current professional practice cases, reading of new scientific or practice advances in current issues of the APA Monitor, etc.

## Practice Taxonomy

**Formal Organized Programs Postdoctoral Residency in Professional Psychology:** (from the National Conference on Postdoctoral Training in Professional Psychology, Ann Arbor, 1992): An organized education and training program that follows receipt of a doctoral degree based upon a program of study in professional psychology; it is designed to develop advanced competency and expertise for the professional practice of psychology. It does not refer to training that focuses solely on increased competency in research. It is usually one or two years in duration.

**Individualized Supervision Programs:** See descriptions in preceding section.

**Resident:** A post-doctoral person receiving training in a post-doctoral residency training program in professional psychology (see above definition of residency training.)

**Postdoctoral Fellow:** A term sometimes used for postdoctoral training in a specialty area of professional psychology (e.g., child, advanced therapy skills, neuropsychology), although "resident" is preferred.

**Specialty:** (from Draft of Joint Interim Committee, March 10th, 1994): A defined area of psychological practice which requires advanced knowledge and skill acquired through an organized sequence of education and training obtained subsequent to the acquisition of core scientific and professional foundations. A specialty may be defined at both the predoctoral and postdoctoral level.

**Respecialization:** Extensive training designed to prepare doctoral psychologists to practice in a different specialty than the one for which they were originally trained.

**Postdoctoral Intern:** A title sometimes given to non-applied doctoral psychologists obtaining basic internship training as part of a formal respecialization program.

**Specialist:** A doctoral graduate who has completed specialization training as defined above.

**Postdoctoral Training for Licensure:** Refers to supervised postdoctoral work experience to meet licensure requirements.

**Proficiency or Practice Certificate Training:** The training of a psychologist in a specific skill or area of function (e.g., substance abuse treatment).

## Research Taxonomy

**Postdoctoral Mentorship Program in Research:** Trainee spends from one to three years under the direction of an active established researcher, in an adequate research environment, carrying out an organized program of research in order to gain advanced research and professional skills.

**Formal Organized Postdoctoral Program in Research:** See definition in first section. Differs from mentorship in that it may have a greater degree of organization, have several trainees as opposed to one individual, more explicit evaluation criteria, and usually funded by a federal agency (NSF, NIH, Navy, etc.)

**Postdoctoral Fellow in Research:** A postdoctoral trainee who is receiving one to three years training in research in either a mentorship program or a formal organized program in research. An alternative title is Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Other titles, such as Research Associate or some employment title in the lexicon of an organization may be used to fund the position while the post-doctoral trainee is receiving research training.

# Teaching Taxonomy

**Postdoctoral Mentorship Program in Teaching:** Postdoctoral trainee works for a minimum of one year under the direction of an established, recognized, skilled teacher in an adequate scholarly environment, carrying out an organized program designed to improve teaching skills.

**Postdoctoral Fellow in Teaching:** A predoctoral trainee who is receiving one to three years training in teaching in a formal organized postdoctoral program. As in research, other titles in the lexicon of a specific organization, e.g., Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, may be used to fund such a position. To our knowledge, there are few, if any, current programs that meet this definition, although several programs approach it.

**Sabbaticals and Paid Leaves of Absence, Visiting Scholars:** Institution sponsored faculty development time that may be used to develop and enhance teaching skills.

**Within Institution Programs to Improve Teaching:** Some higher education organizations have in-house programs to help faculty members increase their teaching skills. Participation in such programs usually falls under the rubric of faculty development.

The following seven-variable model appears to capture the major taxonomic dimensions for each type of postdoctoral education and training.

*Format:* organized, formal, informal, didactic, self-study;

*Orientation/Target Population:* the orientation of the training (practice, research, or teaching) or the target psychologists and other professionals, who would benefit from the experience;

*Purpose:* goals and behavioral objectives stated;

*Content:* generic, specific, disciplinary, interdisciplinary;

*Duration:* length of sessions, frequency, or number of sessions (where appropriate);

*Funding:* cost of program, potential for financial support of participants;

*Evaluation/Competency:* established criteria evaluating whether the stated goals and desired outcomes of the postdoctoral program are achieved.

An eighth category, the "Setting" (medical school, city, clinic, institute, practice group) could be added when it would help clarify the nature of the educational experience beyond the doctoral degree for specific purposes.

*Table 1 is a matrix presenting each of the variables listed above with the proposed taxonomy for practice, research and teaching beyond the doctoral degree.*



# TAXONOMY TO DESCRIBE POSTDOCTORAL EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE, RESEARCH, TEACHING IN PSYCHOLOGY

VARIABLES	MODELS					
	Formal Programs	Individualized Mentorship Program	Individualized Supervision	Continuing Education	Sabbatical Paid Leave	Faculty Development Peer Consultation Self Study
ORIENTATION/ TARGET POPULATION	Practice Research Teaching	Research	Practice	Practice Research Teaching	Research Teaching	Practice Research Teaching
PURPOSE	Specialization Re-specialization	Specialized Research	Advanced Practice Competencies	Update/Renew Knowledge	New Knowledge Consolidation of Knowledge	Update, Confirm and Share Knowledge
CONTENT	Clinical Competence Advanced Research Teaching Competence	Individualized Focus	Clinical Care Readings	Selected Topic Areas	Individualized Tailored	Selected Topic Areas
DURATION	1-2 years	1-3 years	1-5 years	1 day-2 weeks	3-12 months	Ad Hoc
FUNDING	Institutional Governmental	Institutional Governmental	Institutional Self	Self	Institutional Self	Self
EVALUATION/ COMPETENCY	Stated Criteria	Stated Criteria	Established Criteria	(Examination) Established Criteria	Self-Evaluation Products	Self-Evaluation

Table 1