

Master's Accreditation

The APA Commission on Accreditation (APA-CoA) is working towards accrediting master's degree programs in health service psychology, comprised of clinical, counseling, and school psychology programs and combinations of these areas. As the only psychology accreditor recognized by both the United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the APA's CoA tends to be at the forefront of accreditation trends in psychology and the creation of quality accreditation standards. The actions for accrediting programs at the master's level address [changes](#) in the field of psychology accreditation and the increased demand from the public for psychological services.

Background

The APA Council of Representatives first approved the accreditation of master's programs in health service psychology in 2018 and charged the CoA with directing and developing policies, procedures, and processes to develop an accreditation system for this educational level. For education and training at the master's level, the Commission has focused on developing an accreditation system that will demonstrate quality in educational programs. Aspects associated with other facets of master's trained providers in psychology, such as professional identity and title, licensure and certification, employability, etc. have not been addressed by the CoA outside of the intersections of these areas with education.

To establish standards, the Commission established the Master's Accreditation Work Group, comprised of current and former



[Master's Programs in Health Service Psychology](#) (SoA-M) which was provided to the public for comment on two separate occasions in 2020 before approval by the Commission in October 2020. In February of 2021, APA's governing Council of Representatives [approved](#) the SoA-M as APA policy. Following a round of public comment and approval by the CoA, the APA Board of Directors approved the [Accreditation Operating Procedures](#) (AOP) with additions for master's-level programs in February of 2022.

After approval of these policy documents, the Master's Work Group started the iterative process of developing Implementing Regulations (IRs) that correspond with the SoA-M and Master's AOP respectively. At this time, the IRs related to the SoA-M ([Section C](#)) and modifications to the IRs regarding self-governance and regulation ([Section E](#)) with the inclusion of master's accreditation have been approved by the Commission. As the CoA and the Master's Work Group develops policies and procedures for the accreditation of master's program, documents will continue to be made available for public comment which the Commission values in the creation of policies that benefit accreditation stakeholders. To see information about any documents available for public comment, please visit the Public Comment [page](#).

Alongside the later stage of policy development, the CoA will be developing processes, such as creating self-study items, identifying and training site visitors, and establishing how the accreditation reviews will be implemented. This page will be updated as more information becomes available.

Virtual Town Hall Presentation

The CoA hosted a virtual town hall presentation titled: Master's Accreditation Update and Brief Overview of Key Points for Programs on Friday, January 12, 2024. [Click here to view the presentation and transcript.](#)



<p>Phase 1</p> <p>Public comment review of developed IRs for SoA, with additional public comment period(s) as warranted</p> <p>Development of additional IRs for SoA with public comment period(s)</p> <p>Development of procedures for accrediting master's programs including AOP revisions and public comment</p>	<p>Phase 2</p> <p>AOP submitted for APA Governance review (Board of Education Affairs & Board of Directors)</p> <p>Finalizing IRs for SoA with public comment period(s)</p>	<p>Phase 3a*</p> <p>Development of practices for accreditation review</p> <p>IRs for procedures with public comment period(s)</p> <p>Implementation of initial accreditation review</p>	<p>Phase 3b</p> <p>All programs are eligible to apply for accreditation review</p> <p>Submission of scope expansion to recognition bodies</p>
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concerning the program's qualifications for APA accreditation. Policies regarding provision of third-party testimony can be found in the Accreditation Operating Procedures under [Section 4](#). The CoA can accept third-party testimony on programs that are applying for initial accreditation; it must include the name of the person(s) or the party(ies) represented by the testimony and issues must be limited to a program's consistency with the SoA-M.

Master's programs are listed alphabetically in the following Table. The "application received" date in the tables below reflects the date when a program's submission was received, and it is considered complete.

Applicants

Program Name
Capella University
Farleigh Dickinson University
University of Denver Graduate School of Professional Psychology
University of Jamestown
University of North Dakota



FAQs about Master's Accreditation

When will APA start accrediting master's programs?

Currently, the Commission on Accreditation is working to develop policies, procedures, and processes for the accreditation of master's programs in health service psychology. The actual implementation of these endeavors is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2024.

Will APA accredit master's programs in specialty areas and in combined areas?

The CoA plans to accredit master's programs including distance education master's programs in health service psychology (HSP). This includes programs in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, and any combination of these areas. While the SoA-M may accredit programs in other practice areas (e.g., forensic, family therapy), the practice area must first apply for inclusion in the scope of accreditation and be approved by the CoA. There is a forthcoming Implementing Regulation (IR) that will describe this process. A program cannot be reviewed for accreditation in a practice area until that practice area has been added to the scope of accreditation.

What outcomes should programs collect?

The CoA requires all accredited programs to provide outcome data on the extent to which the program is effective in achieving its aim(s) and demonstrating student attainment of required discipline-specific knowledge, profession-wide competencies, and program-specific



Specific DSK areas are defined in Standard II.B.1.a in the SoA-M.

Profession-wide competencies (PWC) include certain competencies required for all students who graduate from programs accredited in health service psychology. Specific PWC areas are defined in Standard II.B.1.b in the SoA-M. While not a requirement, some programs accredited in health service psychology may require that students attain additional competencies specific to the program, otherwise known as program-specific competencies (PSC). Details about PSC can be found in Standard II.C of the SoA-M.

It is each program's responsibility to collect, present, and utilize aggregated proximal and distal outcome data that are directly tied to PWC and PSC (if applicable). Proximal data are defined as outcomes on students as they progress through and complete the program, whereas distal data are defined as outcomes on students after they have completed the program. In addition to perceived assessment of the degree to which the program promoted mastery of PWC and PSC, distal data must also reflect completion of professional activities and accomplishments (e.g., licensure or appropriate credential to practice at the master's level, employment, memberships, and affiliations). Details regarding proximal and distal data are found in Standard II.D.3 in the SoA-M and a forthcoming Implementing Regulation.

Can graduates of an APA-accredited master's program become licensed?

The CoA deals with the evaluation of education programs and does not make any regulations regarding practice or licensure requirements. Each state in the U.S. makes its own laws regarding educational requirements for licensure. There is a good deal of information at the web site of the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards



licensure laws.

Can graduates of an APA-accredited master's program practice as "psychologists"?

The CoA deals with the evaluation of education programs and cannot determine title as the title of a master's-level practitioner appears to vary by state and may be a question for each states' licensure boards (if they provide licensure to master's-level practitioners).

What are the required minimum number of credits?

The CoA does not have a minimum number of required credits for master's programs. The program's length must meet the requirements established in Standard I.C.2 of the SoA-M.

What is the required ratio of faculty to students?

There is no required ratio of faculty to students. The SoA-M describes requirements of faculty sufficiency as being large enough to supervise students' development, engage in scholarly activity, attend to administrative duties, provide appropriate class sizes and sufficient course offerings to meet program aims, etc. Standard IV.B.4 in the SoA-M describes the specific parameters of faculty sufficiency in more detail.

How are core faculty defined (versus



Core faculty are distinct from other faculty in that they are centrally responsible for the program's activities, educational offerings, and quality. Core faculty consist of individuals to whom the institution has demonstrated a multiyear commitment and who have theoretical perspectives and academic and applied experiences appropriate to the program's aims. Additional detailed requirements and qualifications for core faculty can be found in Standards IV.B.1 and IV.B.2 in the SoA-M. Programs may also have associated program faculty, contributing faculty, and adjunct faculty, which do not meet the criteria for core faculty. In other words, they are not centrally involved in program development, decision making, but they still make a substantial contribution to the program and take on tasks often associated with core faculty. Standard IV.B.3 in the SoA-M provides more detailed information.

Will the CoA accredit both stand-alone (or terminal) master's degrees and master's degrees acquired while completing a doctoral program?

The SoA-M have been written for master's level programs. A program may be awarded accreditation if it meets the criteria established by the SoA-M, whether it is stand-alone or within a more advanced program.

Does the CoA take suggestions during the creation of policies and procedures for master's accreditation?

During the creation of policy documents, the CoA will regularly put out policies for a period of public review and comment. Comments received during these periods are greatly appreciated and help form the Work Group's



consultants who have expertise in training and education at the master's level to develop IRs for Section C. These consultants included professionals holding master's degrees who are involved in professional practice, persons who educate at the master's level in HSP, and those who supervise master's professionals.

Is there a requirement for the number of practicum hours?

The SoA-M does not have a minimum number of required practicum hours. Programs must meet the requirements established in SoA-M Standard II.B.3 and Implementing Regulation C-12 M: Clinical Experiences Guidelines for Master's Programs.

How does the date of the accreditation decision relate to current and recent program graduates?

There is no retroactive accreditation. The effective date of accreditation for a program is the final day of the program's site visit that immediately precedes the CoA's decision (see AOP Section 8.6). Students graduating before the effective date do not complete an APA-accredited program.



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