

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION REPORT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report from the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program in the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa.

Executive Summary: The Department of Psychology offers the Clinical Psychology Program that underwent the accreditation process. The program (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. In December 2011, the Department of Psychology was informed that the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program was accredited for the maximum period of 10 years. All of the required standards were met and no further reports were required to be submitted. This report, which addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact” as well as Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive,” was submitted to the Board of Regents in October 2012. This review is to discuss the program improvements resulting from the accreditation visit.

Background:

◇ Description of Program.

⇒ The primary emphasis of the **Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program** is on the training of scientists; however, clinical skills are essential for graduate students who will engage in research on clinical populations. A rigorous scientific approach that includes the blending of academic preparation, research training, and clinical practice is considered the best training model. The program recognizes that first-hand clinical experience and clinical competence are important for clinical research; therefore, it closely integrates practicum experience with course work and supervised research. Advanced students can gain additional clinical experience through a variety of facilities in the geographic area. Students who choose to have the designation “clinical psychology” on their transcript must satisfactorily complete a one-year internship at an approved site. The internships follows the completion of all course work and most of the dissertation project.

☑ The Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program is also accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). The program has held APA accreditation since 1948; the department plans to continue APA accreditation, at least through the remainder of the accreditation period.

◇ Purpose of Accreditation. An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification. Accreditation is also intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice. Accreditation is also critical for recruitment of new students.

- ◇ Accrediting Agency. The accrediting body is the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS). This new accreditation opportunity will most accurately represent the aspirations and focus of the clinical program. Without PCSAS accreditation, the Program is likely to be at a disadvantage in recruiting the best research-oriented graduate students.

- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the program contained the responses to the five general areas required by the accrediting body. “The scope of PCSAS accreditation is limited to doctoral training programs that grant Ph.D. degrees in psychology with a core focus on the specialty of psychological clinical science, and that are housed in departments of psychology (or their equivalent) within accredited, nonprofit, research-intensive universities in the U.S. and Canada. To be eligible for PCSAS accreditation, an applicant program must demonstrate a strong commitment to high-quality science-centered education and training in clinical psychology, with an emphasis on integrating research and application. This commitment must be articulated explicitly in the program’s documents, public disclosures, and web site; must be operationalized through a coherent educational plan, curriculum, and allocation of resources; and must be demonstrated in the activities and accomplishments of the program’s faculty, students, and graduates.” The review committee makes qualitative evaluations of each program in five general areas.¹
 - ⇒ Conceptual foundations. The review committee considers how well the program has endorsed the mission, goals, epistemology, and scope that define PCSAS accreditation. Are they clearly stated? Do the goal statements include objectives that can be measured? Are the activities of the faculty, students, and graduates consistent with the program’s conceptual foundations?
 - ⇒ Design, operation, and resources. The review committee considers how the program’s design, operation, and use of resources contribute to the program’s realization of its mission and goals. Specific criteria relate to:
 - ☑ Student recruitment, selection, and mentoring.
 - ☑ Curriculum design and how student progress and success is monitored as they move through the curriculum.
 - ☑ Is research training at the core of the program? Do students receive individualized mentoring in faculty labs, author or co-author high quality research presentations and publications, produce high quality dissertations that advance psychological science, and do graduates of the program function as productive research scientists?
 - ☑ Is application training characterized by students being trained at a professional level of competence in the most cost-effective, efficient, empirically supported procedures for the assessment and treatment of specific populations and problems and being capable of training and supervising others? The review team examines syllabi for courses and training experiences, performance evaluations, student publications, and outcome data from application research.

¹ The full text of the accreditation process review standards and criteria is available at <http://pcsas.org/review/php>.

- ☑ Program faculty should have active research laboratories; high quality/high impact research publications; research grant support; peer recognition, influence and awards; evidence of teaching influence; and embody the integration of research and application.
- ☑ Resources and environment. The program should have sufficient resources to achieve its mission and goals, a faculty of sufficient size and diversity, sufficient student financial support, and sufficient facilities, equipment, and staff to engage in cutting-edge scientific research.
- ⇒ Quality of the science. The review committee evaluates the overall quality of the scientific content, methods, and products of the program's doctoral training and education, including how well the program embodies the very best, cutting-edge science of the discipline (evidence of quality seen in syllabi, faculty and student research publications, dissertations, colloquia topics, and selection of applications).
- ⇒ Quality improvement. The review committee examines the program's investment in continuous quality improvement, such as its on-going critical self-examination, openness to feedback, flexibility and innovation, and monitoring of program results.
- ⇒ Outcomes. The review committee's evaluations place the greatest weight on each program's record of success shown by a solid record of successfully producing graduate who have gone on to lead productive careers and make high quality contributions as psychological clinical scientists. In order to document this outcome, programs must provide detailed records for all graduates during the past 10 years.
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In September 2011, the visiting team identified strengths of the program. The team also noted that all of the standards had been met and that no required changes were identified. Suggestions were made for program enhancement or improvement; however, these do not require an institutional response or constitute an accreditation or compliance requirement.
- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ⇒ "The University of Iowa's program constitutes a remarkably effective integration of research and clinical practice, yielding a very high rate of clinical scientists.
 - ⇒ This model program has compiled an impressive record of training students who have gone on to prominent careers and made significant contributions to the field.
 - ⇒ The program has also instilled strong scientific, ethical and professional values in its students; armed the students with cutting edge knowledge, skills, and methods; and continued to support and mentor its graduates once they leave the program.
 - ⇒ The faculty are outstanding, productive and skilled researchers and have active labs and impressive publication records; research training is the core of the program and is well integrated with both the formal coursework and the applied training."

- ◇ Suggestions Identified by the Visiting Team. (Institutional responses are in italics.)
 - ⇒ “The program might develop a handbook specifically for the clinical science graduate students.
 - ⇒ The program has experienced significant personnel changes in recent years and suggested that the program attend to such challenges and the opportunities they present.” *The program will clearly need to replace highly productive faculty who have left the program through retirement and resignations. Those replacements are conditional on a number of factors, including the financial resources within the College and the Department.*

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In December 2011, the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System awarded accreditation to the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa for the maximum period of ten years to 2021 without reporting requirements. The site team described the program as an “exemplary clinical science program, richly deserving of PCSAS accreditation.”