

Continuing Professional Development: Start Early and Get Connected

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Abstract

Continuing professional development is an expectation and requirement once a person becomes a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP), so why not start early? The need to prepare students for the future as well as enhance content of required courses in the program led faculty to add a CPD requirement to the school psychology program. Students admitted into the program are expected to obtain a minimum of 300 CPD hours throughout their time in the program. There is flexibility in the ways in which this requirement is met to allow diversity in content, mode of instruction/participation, time, and resources required. Students have reported this requirement as being extremely beneficial to their training and professional networking.

Introduction

Continuing education and networking are necessary in most professions. Previous research has found that organizations who promote and strongly support further development correlate positively with career potential and success (Collin et al., 2012). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has gone as far as to provide a template for a professional growth plan to help its members create a proactive, structured, and data-based plan for professional development and growth. It is important for each person to be able to personalize their professional growth plan as needs will be different depending on previous experiences, job expectations and primary interests. Students admitted into the UNK school psychology program are expected to obtain a minimum of 300 CPD hours throughout their time in the program. Students are given the opportunity to choose what those hours include with an emphasis placed on expanding current knowledge, seeking knowledge and experiences in the students' areas of interest, collaborating with colleagues, and professional networking. Although 300 hours seems like a high expectation, many of our students obtain more than 300 hours and the majority speak strongly of the benefits this CPD requirements provides. Faculty check in with students' progress towards the CPD requirement each year during the annual student review meetings.

NASP CPD Requirements

NCSP Renewal: 75 hours every 3 years

CPD Credit: One CPD credit is 1 contact hour or actual clock hour spent in direct participation

Documentation: documentation of attendance provided by CPD sponsor, Official Transcript for college/university credit, Activity Documentation Form

Categories:

Category A: Attending Workshops or In-Service Training (No Max. Credits)

Category B: College University and Coursework (No Max Credits)

Category C: Delivering and Preparing Training and In-Service Activities (Max Credits: 30)

Category D: Research and Publication (Max Credits: 25)

Category E: Supervision or mentorship of Graduate Students or Early Career Professionals (Max Credits: 20)

Category F: Supervised or Mentored Experience (Max Credits: 20)

Category G: Program Planning/Evaluation (Max Credits: 25)

Category H: Self-Study (Max Credits: 40)

Category I: Professional Organization Leadership (Max Credits: 10)

UNK CPD Requirements

Graduation Requirement: 300 hours between the time of admission and the time of graduation

CPD Credit: One CPD credit is 1 contact hour or actual clock hour spent in direct participation

Documentation: CPD Log, students are to complete a log which keeps track of all CPD hours and includes the date, event title, presenter/organization, documentation, category, hours, and location of each event

Categories: Same as NASP; however, anything that is required specifically by the program or courses within the program does not count towards CPD. Students are not able to count an activity for both meeting a program/course requirement and CPD.

Data on Outcomes

Activity Type	Average Hours Obtained (3 years)
NASP Attendance	80
NE School Psych. Association Annual Conference	36
UNK Early Childhood Annual Conference	30
Kids and Dreams Autism Conference	24
NE MTSS Summit/MTSS Conferences	36
Graduate Association of School Psychologists (GrASP) Events	60
Workshops, Conferences, Webinars, Volunteer Hours, Professional Networking, Etc.	40

Personal Quotes from Students

"The CPD requirement in the program has given me the opportunity to learn about various areas in the field of school psychology that draws my interest. Along with learning, attending conferences provides an opportunity to network with other school psychologists and educators." - DM, 2022-2023 UNK Practicum Student

"CPD has helped me to gain knowledge from an abundance of different professionals' perspectives, helping me to become a more knowledgeable professional myself." MJ, 2022-2023 UNK Practicum Student

"CPD has helped me to expand my knowledge of the profession of school psychology, as well as has helped me to focus my interests in behavior and mental health. It has also provided lots of opportunities for me to make connections across the state with other school psychologists that have helped to mentor me throughout my degree and program." AH, 2022-2023 UNK 1st Year

References

Collin, K., Van der Heijden, B. and Lewis, P. (2012), Continuing professional development. International Journal of Training and Development, 16: 155-163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2419.2012.00410.x>