

Trainee-Focused Data Can Complement Accreditation Processes

Rylan Mahoney, Dylan Moore, Trisha Lenhart
Em Meyer, Ph.D., and Tammi Ohmstede, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska at Kearney

Contact: mahoneyr@lopers.unk.edu or ohmstedetj@unk.edu

Abstract

The elements of school psychology graduate training programs—approval and accreditation—are performance-based outcomes, self-study, and continuous improvement. The time and documentation required for re-accreditation are significant. Program directors may incorporate feedback from trainees and seek input from colleagues directing other programs to inform programmatic changes, though this is not explicitly stated in accreditation materials that are reviewed to determine approval status. We will present key points within the accreditation process, particular to NASP approval, that allow for a trainee-focused approach (trainee experience in addition to outcomes) and discuss future directions for collaboration across programs to gain more from the process itself.

Benefits of Accreditation

There are many benefits of accreditation in relation to school psychology graduate programs, as noted by NASP (2021). Accreditation provides important benefits the public, profession, credentialing agencies, employers, higher education administration and faculty, graduate students, and programs. Accredited programs ensure high quality training opportunities that meet professional standards and are consistent with other accredited programs. School psychologist that graduate from an accredited program are thoroughly trained in all aspects related to the field and acquire the needed skills that are expected in the professional setting.

Acquiring and maintaining national accreditation requires a program to engage in ongoing self-evaluation, continuous improvement and to develop effective systems for accountability. This process allows faculty members to examine all areas of their program in order to identify areas of strength and weakness. The School Psychology program at UNK has been nationally accredited for over 25 years and found ways to involve trainees in the evaluation and improvement process, but only recently integrated that into the accreditation process. This poster identifies components of the accreditation process along with ways in which trainees are involved.

Standards Addressed

Identify 2-3 Courses Linked to Each NASP Standard

- Standard by course matrix

Course Syllabi

- Descriptions, objectives, requirements, policies, grading rubrics

Course Descriptions

- Reflective of standards, content, and expectations

Course Objectives

- Specific objectives linked to standards and assignments

Assignment Descriptions

- Details and expectations for course completion

Praxis II Review Sessions

- Review of program course content, Praxis II review materials

PREPaRE Trainings

- Workshops 1 and 2 provided by program

Practicum Contract

- Completed and signed by student, site supervisor and faculty

Internship Contract

- Completed and signed by student, site supervisor and faculty

Standards Assessed and Attained

Praxis II Test

- Scores meet minimum standards for certification

Course Grades

- Grades of B- or better in all clinical courses

Course Embedded Rubrics for Assignments Linked to Standards

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1

Practicum Evaluation – Skills Linked to Standards and Dispositions

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1

Internship Evaluation – Skills Linked to Standards and Dispositions

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1

Faculty Evaluation of Internship – Skills, Dispositions and Portfolio

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1

Comprehensive Case Study Evaluations – Faculty Ratings, Impact on Learning

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1, Effect Size, and PND

Application for Candidacy

- Praxis I passing scores, faculty ratings, course grades, dispositions

Employer Evaluations – Skills related to NASP Standards

- 1-3 scale, minimum of 2 with no scores of 1

Trainee Involvement

- Mid-term and Final Course Questionnaires
- Informal Class Discussions
- Formal Course Evaluations
- Student – Faculty Annual Reviews
- Advisory Committee Meetings
- Practicum Seminar and Evaluation Reviews
- Internship Seminar and Evaluation Reviews
- Graduate Exit Survey

Discussion

The importance and benefits of accreditation are clear. The process of becoming and staying accredited can be lengthy and tiresome for the program faculty. By integrating trainee feedback into the process, the School Psychology program at UNK has made the process more meaningful to faculty and students. Some of the benefits noted by students include: **a stronger awareness of professional standards, increased confidence in their training, feelings of being part of the team, more collaboration with faculty, better understanding of requirements and their future role and responsibilities.**

Faculty report benefits of having students more involved and connected to the program, leading to more collaboration and understanding. Future plans for making the process even more beneficial includes collaborating more with colleagues through the TSP conference, TSP Listserv and considering the establishment of an online resource center or database for program materials linked to the accreditation process.

References

NASP. (2021). Graduate Program Approval and Accreditation. National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). <https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/graduate-program-approval-and-accreditation>