

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY
ASSOCIATION



THE ACCREDITATION OF
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING
PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGY

Part 2

How to Apply for Accreditation

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

The International School Psychology Association (ISPA) has developed two documents related to the accreditation of school psychology training programs. This document (Part 2) provides information for training providers on how to apply to ISPA for accreditation and on the accreditation process itself. A separate document (Part 1) provides details about the goals and standards that students enrolled on such programs should achieve on completion of their training program. Both documents are available on the ISPA website (www.ispaweb.org/accreditation). Further details about ISPA accreditation can be obtained from the Chair of the ISPA accreditation committee.

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Note: - Although both documents use the term *school psychologists*, ISPA recognizes that, in many countries – for example Hong Kong, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Malta, the term ‘*educational psychologist*’ is used to describe the work that in other countries would be carried out by school psychologists. There are also some countries where terms such as ‘*educational and child psychologist*’ or ‘*school and community psychologist*’ are used. ISPA takes the view that the standards described in this document apply to *all* the above groups and that those running professional training programs using these or similar titles are welcome to apply for accreditation provided they consider that their program addresses the ISPA goals and standards.

1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides details on how to apply for International School Psychology Association (ISPA) accreditation of school psychology programs. It should be read in conjunction with Part 1, “The International School Psychology Association’s Training Standards ”

Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental, professionally developing and supervised process of self-study and external review intended to evaluate, enhance, and publicly recognize quality institutions and programs in higher education. Accreditation is intended to benefit the public, protect the interests of students, serve the interests of professional preparation programs and improve professional practice.

Accreditation may offer various benefits to school psychology programs. The process of accreditation encourages self-study, leads to changes, assists program faculty in its effort to establish suitable preparation standards and to acquire additional needed resources, and unites school psychology programs in a common mission. Accredited programs that acquire international recognition are more attractive to qualified students and facilitate student and staff exchange, particularly between countries.

The accreditation process is intended to promote consistent quality and excellence in education and professional preparation and thus to provide tangible benefits for consumers of school psychological services, students, the profession, and programs.

The accreditation process involves evaluating the degree to which a program has developed goals consistent with those of a profession as well as the degree to which a program’s goals have been achieved. In order for a program to be accredited by ISPA its goals and standards should match those that have been set out by the Association. However, when viewed internationally, diversity in program goals and policies can be expected in light of differences between countries in their histories, cultures, political policies, institutional structures, professional entry levels, licensure requirements, educational needs and services, legal standards, and other important defining qualities. Thus, accreditation procedures would recognize and anticipate program differences.

2 PLANNING FOR ACCREDITATION

ISPA acknowledges that the development of training programs varies considerably between countries. Some programs have become established only recently and, at this stage, may believe they are not yet ready to submit themselves for formal accreditation. Others have a longer history but they are based in countries that do not have an appropriate professional association that provides accreditation. There are also many programs have been accredited by recognised authorities in their state or country. In order to reflect these differences, ISPA offers two options for accreditation and one for a program review.

Options for ISPA accreditation

Option 1: a review of program documentation together with a site visit that leads to full accreditation.

Option 2: Those programs that have been accredited through a national accreditation process following standards that are in line with ISPA standards may be eligible for full international accreditation from ISPA if they can demonstrate that 1) the standards used to accredit their program are in keeping with ISPA standards, and 2) they have undergone an accreditation process and have been accepted for accreditation by their national accreditation body. In this instance ISPA accreditation may be granted following a review of program documentation and without a site visit

Option for an ISPA program review

Option 3: a review of program documentation, without a site visit, that leads to a written report as to possible strengths and weaknesses and *not* to full accreditation. Information obtained from a program review should be considered advisory and may be preparatory to full Option 1 accreditation.

3 THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The accreditation process is as follows.

- 1 Staff responsible for running a school psychology training program that is seeking accreditation should read this document and decide which of the three options would be appropriate for them. In coming to this decision they are encouraged to hold informal discussions with the Chair of the ISPA Accreditation Committee.
- 2 Having decided on the appropriate option, they should apply in writing to the ISPA president who will forward the request to the Chair of the Accreditation Committee.
- 3 In consultation with the Committee, the Chair will nominate a Team Leader and will select a team comprising a minimum of two, but no more than four, ISPA members who will be responsible for undertaking the accreditation/review. This team will be made up of trained school psychologists all of whom will be ISPA members with at least one being an experienced school psychology practitioner and one being a senior staff/faculty member of an accredited school psychology program. All members will have received training on how to accredit school psychology programs using the ISPA standards. On some occasions the accreditation team may also co-opt an observer – an ISPA member who is interested in learning more about the accreditation process.
- 4 The accreditation team leader -
 - i) will take responsibility for communicating with the director ¹ of the school psychology program, provide advice on the submission of documentation and agree a timeline for the accreditation (see appendix 1 for a suggested timeline);
 - ii) will invite the program director to submit full documentation about the program in accord with the guidelines presented in the *Section 4* below.
- 5 The accreditation team will read through the documentation, hold tele/video conferences e.g. via Skype as appropriate, and prepare a set of preliminary questions for the program director that will be forwarded to him/her.
- 6 For Option 1 accreditations. On receipt of the answers to these preliminary questions the accreditation team will, in consultation with the program director, make preparations for undertaking a 3 day site visit from two

¹ In this document we use the term ‘program director’ to refer to the person (or persons) who take the main responsibility for running the school psychology programme. We recognise that other names to describe this person(s) may be used by different training institution in different countries.

members of the accreditation team.

- 7 The timetable for the site visit will include the following: - meetings with the academic staff responsible for the program, senior academics from the institution in which the program is based, current and former students and schools psychologists from the local region. (Tele/video conferences e.g. via Skype will be used for some meetings with accreditation team members who could not undertake the site visit). In addition, the accreditation team will undertake visits to schools and to psychological services. (A draft timetable for a site visit is in appendix 2).
- 8 Following the site visit the accreditation team will prepare a report on the program with recommendations as to whether it should receive ISPA accreditation.

9 For Option 2 and 3 accreditations. On receipt of the answers to the preliminary questions (step 6 above) the accreditation team will consult further with the program director via email and tele/video conferences e.g. via Skype.

10 Following these consultations the team will prepare a report on the program.

- i) Option 2: - The report will include recommendations as to whether the program should receive ISPA accreditation.
- ii) Option 3:- The report will comment on the strengths and weakness of the program and make suggestions on how improvements could be made and about the steps that would need to be taken for the program to be ready to apply for full accreditation.

- 11 The first version of the accreditation/review report (for options 1, 2, and 3) will be sent to the program director (minus the recommendations), who will be asked to comment on matters of accuracy.
- 12 On receipt of comments from the program director, the accreditation team will provide a final report with recommendations that will be signed by the ISPA President and sent to the program director and to the Chair of the ISPA Accreditation Committee.
- 13 The accreditation report will be both formative and summative. At the formative level it will contain suggestions as to how the program could improve, while at the summative level it will contain a number of recommendations, the most important of which (for options 1 and 2) will be whether the program achieves the goals and standards set out by the Association indicating that it should receive formal ISPA accreditation lasting for up to 5 years. In some circumstances the program may receive

conditional accreditation, conditional on the staff being able to implement key recommendations by a specified time.

4 INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE ACCREDITATION TEAM.

In preparing for an accreditation/review (for each of the three options) the program director should provide a *Program Accreditation Document (PAD)*. This should be divided into two parts.

Part A - Program information

This should include the following:-

- A Program Handbook;
- A brief outline of the development of the school psychology programme which also outlines plans for its long term sustainability;
- Staffing levels, including the numbers of staff who teach on the program, their qualifications and experience, use of visiting speakers, etc.,
- Information about entry requirements and selection procedures;
- Introductory and other key reading lists;
- A core curriculum including information about units/courses taught on the program and their credit rating;
- Information about teaching methods used on the program;
- Assessment arrangements for both academic and practical work;
- The organization and support of practicums and internships, including the proportion of time students spend undertaking this work;
- A sample timetable;
- The curriculum vita of staff with a major responsibility for teaching in the program.
- Examples of recently completed students' work of high, average and low performance – 3 research portfolios/assignments; 3 academic assignments and 3 portfolios of practicum/internship work, provided the latter can delete personal identifying information.
- Copies of questionnaires from current and former students that may have been completed during previous 'in-house' quality assurance exercises.
- Other relevant information
- An appendix containing a brief overview of the current provision of school psychological services in the country/state in which the program is based

Part B – Students' achievements on the ISPA Goals and Standards

This should contain explicit evidence of students' achievements on the program for each of the ISPA goals and standards referred to in Part 1 of this document. It should include information on where and how each of the goals and standards are covered on the program, how they dovetail into the academic curriculum, practicums and

internships and the ways in which the students' knowledge and performance is assessed on each goal and standard.

5 ACCREDITATION/REVIEW COSTS

For Options 2 & 3 (no site visit) – School psychology programs will be required to pay an administration fee to ISPA of US\$500 to cover the cost of accreditation/review.

For Option 1 involving a three-day site visit – In addition to the administration fee of US\$500 the school psychology program will need to cover the costs of travel and accommodation for evaluation team members.

6 PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR RE-ACCREDITATION

This section is for staff involved in running school psychology programs that have already been accredited by ISPA who are seeking to apply for re-accreditation. ISPA accreditation normally lasts for up to 5 years and programs wishing to maintain their status as an ISPA accredited program need to apply to the association for re-accreditation approximately 1 year before their accreditation expires.

The process for re-accreditation will normally be paper based and not involve a site visit from the accreditation team – i.e. equivalent to an Option 2 accreditation. However ISPA recognises that universities running school psychology programs gain more out of an accreditation if a site visit is involved. Hence we would be happy to follow Option 1 procedures and include a site visit in the re-accreditation if this is what is requested.

The re-accreditation fee (excluding the cost of funding a site visit) will be \$500 payable to ISPA on receipt of the final accreditation report.

The procedures for applying for re-accreditation will be identical to those described in Section 3 above. Similarly the documentation required by the accreditation team is identical to that described in Section 4 with the *following exception*. Programs seeking re-accreditation should add a section in Part A of the Program Accreditation Document in which they comment on the extent to which their programme has developed since the previous accreditation – in particular changes to staffing arrangements, curriculum content and to practicums/internships. Furthermore they should comment on the extent to which each of the recommendations contained in the original accreditation report have been implemented.

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Appendix 1 Suggested timeline for an accreditation

Option 1 (Including site visit)

EVENT	TIME
Program director formally requests an ISPA accreditation to the ISPA president	Week 1
Accreditation team selected including the team leader	Week 4
Team leader agrees accreditation timetable with program director and requests documentation.	Week 6
Program director sends documentation to team leader	Week 12
The team reads documentation, hold teleconferences etc., prepares a set of questions for the program director	Week 16
Program director responds to these questions	Week 18
Accreditation team plans site visit with the program director	Week 20
Site visit takes place (at a time to suit all parties)	-
Accreditation team prepare report minus recommendations	4 wks after site visit
Program director responds to the report	6 wks after site visit
Final report to ISPA and the program director	12 wks after site visit

Options 2 & 3 (No site visit)

EVENT	TIME
Program director formally requests an ISPA accreditation to the ISPA president	Week 1
Accreditation team selected including the team leader	Week 4
Team leader agrees accreditation timetable with program director and requests documentation	Week 6
Program director sends documentation.	Week 12
The team reads documentation, hold teleconferences/e.g. Skype meetings etc., prepares a set of questions for the program director	Week 16
Program director responds to these questions	Week 18
Accreditation team hold further meetings and teleconferences with program director.	Week 24
Accreditation team prepare report minus recommendations	Week 26
Program director responds to the report	Week 28
Final report to ISPA and the program director	Week 30
Accreditation team hold a debrief (via email or tele/video conference) to review the accreditation process and advise the accreditation committee accordingly on how improvements could be made.	Week 30

Appendix 2 Draft Timetable for a site visit (Option 1 accreditation)

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
am	Meetings with: - a) Head of Department in which the program is based (or equivalent) b) Program director and key staff who teach on the program c) Other staff associated with the program	Visits to school psychology services and other settings where students undertake practical work	Meetings with:- a) School psychologists working in the region b) others (as appropriate)
pm	Meetings with:- a) Current students on the program b) Former students	Visits – (contd.) Meeting practicum and internship supervisors	Private meeting of the accreditation team Preliminary feedback to the program director and other relevant staff

Note: At least one tele/videoconference e.g. via Skype will be held with accreditation team members who are not included in the site visit.