# THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION

# THE ACCREDITATION OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

## Accreditation Document Part 2

## How to Apply for ISPA Accreditation

# INTRODUCTION

Two critical aspects of the mission of the International School Psychology Association (ISPA) are to promote high standards for the education of School Psychologists nationally, regionally, and internationally and for the practice of school and educational psychology worldwide.  To accomplish these aspects of ISPA's mission, the Executive Committee first approved training standards in 2002.  These standards were revised in 2008, 2014, and again in 2018.   ISPA began to accredit programs in 2011, and currently, programs in Hong Kong, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States, are accredited.

To aid programs in the accreditation process, ISPA has developed two resource documents.  This document (Accreditation Document Part 2) provides information on how to apply to ISPA for accreditation and the accreditation process itself. A separate document (Accreditation Document Part 1) details the goals and standards students enrolled in ISPA-accredited programs should achieve upon completing their training.  Both documents are available on the ISPA website (**www.ispaweb.org/accreditation**).

Although these documents use the term School Psychologist, ISPA recognizes that many countries use different terms.  For example, Hong Kong, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Malta use the term' educational psychologist." Other countries use terms such as 'educational and child psychologist' or 'school and community psychologist.' ISPA views these as equivalent terms, and professional training programs using similar titles are welcome to apply for accreditation if their programs meet ISPA goals and standards.

Although ISPA accreditation involves meeting the goals and standards described in The International School Psychology Association's Training Standards (Accreditation Document 1), ISPA is a transnational organization.  Thus, ISPA recognizes that differences in programs can exist in light of historical, cultural, educational, and political differences between countries. These differences can affect many aspects of program organization, including the legal standards governing the profession, licensure requirements, and the structure of the education system.  Given this, the ISPA accreditation process is designed to be flexible enough to allow for these and other contextual differences in programs.

ISPA accreditation is an indicator of the program's quality to potential applicants and to consumers of the services provided by graduates. In addition, ISPA accreditation is unique from other national and regional accreditations.  It communicates that the program is committed to a multicultural and transnational perspective, which is critical for School Psychologists in the 21st century.

## PLANNING FOR ACCREDITATION

ISPA acknowledges that the development of School Psychology and related training programs varies between countries. ISPA accredits masters, specialists, and doctoral programs in different academic fields, e.g., School Psychology, Psychology, or Education, etc. as long as the emphasis in School Psychology is clear. Some programs may believe they are not yet ready to apply for formal accreditation but would like feedback on their program's strengths and areas of improvement. Other programs may exist in countries where School Psychology is well established, but they do not have access to a rigorous accreditation process by a professional organization or a government body. Lastly, programs may exist in countries where School Psychology is well-established and has undergone accreditation by an established professional organization or a government body with standards similar to ISPA.

Given these differences, ISPA offers two options for accreditation and one for a preliminary program review.

> **Option 1** includes a complete review of program documentation and a site visit by an accreditation team.

> **Option 2** is for programs accredited by a national or regional body that follows standards similar to ISPA. These programs may be eligible for accreditation from ISPA following a review of program documentation if they can show that 1) the standards used to accredit their program are similar to ISPA standards and 2) they have undergone an accreditation process of equivalent detail and vigor. An accreditation team will review the program's documentation, but this option does not involve a site visit.

> **Option 3** is for programs that want feedback on their readiness to pursue ISPA accreditation. The program will complete a short self-study and provide this information to the Accreditation Committee Chair. A team consisting of the Chair and at least one other ISPA member familiar with the accreditation process will review the program's information and produce an advisory report on the program's strengths and actions needed to seek full accreditation.

## THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

1  The program leadership is encouraged to engage in informal discussions with the ISPA Accreditation Committee Chair to determine the most appropriate option.

2  Once this decision is made, the program should apply in writing to the ISPA Central Office and to the current Chair of the Accreditation Committee. The current President of ISPA should be copied on this communication.

3  In consultation with the Accreditation Committee, the Chair will nominate an Accreditation Team Leader and two to four ISPA members to serve on the

Accreditation Team. Those chosen as members of the Accreditation Team will be a mix of experienced practitioners and trainers familiar with the ISPA Standards and the accreditation process. The accreditation team leader, working collaboratively with the Accreditation Committee Chair, will take responsibility for communicating with the leadership of the School Psychology program. The Team leader, in consultation with the Accreditation Committee Chair, will also advise on preparing accreditation documentation and negotiate a timeline for the submission of the documentation and the subsequent review.

4    The program will submit documentation consisting of two parts.

Part A - Program information
- A two-part introductory essay that includes:
    o An overview of the status of the profession of School Psychology and how school psychological services are structured in the country where the program is based.
    o The history and development of the school psychology program and plans for its long-term sustainability.
- Staffing of the program, including the number and qualifications of full and part-time faculty members who teach in the program and non-teaching staff who support the program. The program should also include the curriculum vitae of staff who teach full-time or part-time instructors who play a vital role in the program.
- Entry requirements and admission selection procedures.
- The core curriculum including a sample timetable, the number of credits, program course sequence, course names, and descriptions.
- Introductory and other essential reading lists.
- Information about teaching philosophy and pedagogical methods used in the program.
- Assessment procedures for both academic courses and fieldwork.
- Overview and discussion of the assignments included in Appendix 2 below.
- Copies of questionnaires from current and former students completed as part of internal quality assurance processes.
- The organization and support of fieldwork, such as practicums and internships, including the amount of time spent in fieldwork.
- Appendix 1 - A Program Handbook.
- Appendix 2 - Examples of recently completed students' work of high, average, and low quality. These examples should include three research portfolios/assignments, three academic assignments, and three portfolios of practicum/internship work. Personal information should be removed from all samples. If required, at least one example of student work should be a master's level thesis or doctoral dissertation. The program should also provide a list of the titles in English of all thesis or dissertations completed in the prior academic year.

<u>Part B – Students' Performance and Achievement on the ISPA Goals and Standards</u>

- Part B should explicitly show how students have met the ISPA goals and standards. For example, Standard 1.1 – Cognition and Learning requires knowledge and performance assessments. Knowledge might be demonstrated by performance on an academic assignment or exam in a designated course. Performance might be assessed by a fieldwork case study assignment requiring knowledge of cognition and learning to develop accommodations or interventions for children. Part B should include information regarding 1) where and how each of the goals and standards is covered in the program's academic curriculum, practicums, and internships and 2) the specific assessment methods used to determine how students meet each goal and standard. Whenever available, the program should include data gathered over multiple years that demonstrates student competence over time.

5   The accreditation team will review and discuss the documentation and prepare preliminary questions for the program leadership. Upon receiving a written response to preliminary questions, the Accreditation Team Leader in consultation with the Chair of the Accreditation Committee, will recommend either:

i)   Option 1 – Schedule a 3-day site visit from at least two accreditation team members. The site visit will include the following: a) meetings with the academic staff responsible for the program, b) senior academics from the institution where the program is based, c) current and former students, and d) school psychologists who supervise the program's students from the local region. In addition, the accreditation team may want to visit schools and psychological service centers where students gain fieldwork experience. (See Appendix 2 for a raft timetable for a site visit).

ii)  Option 2 – Arrange a video conference meeting that includes the Accreditation Team, program leadership, other full-time faculty, core part-time faculty, students, and administrators responsible for the program.

iii) Option 3 – Arrange a video conference meeting that includes the review team, program leadership, and other interested faculty or administrators.

6   Following the site visit or video conferences and review of the program's documentation, the accreditation team will prepare a draft written report with a narrative addressing the program's strengths and areas of improvement. This report will also indicate if the program has met, met with conditions, or not met each of the standards. This draft report will be sent to the program's leadership to review the accuracy of the information cited.

7   For Options 1 and 2, upon receipt of comments on the draft report, the Accreditation Team will prepare a final report that includes program strengths, areas of improvement, and a recommendation regarding full (5 years) or conditional ISPA Accreditation. Conditional accreditation will consist of a list of key recommendations that must be implemented by a time agreed upon by

the program leadership and the accreditation team.  In addition to a written document, the final report can be presented to the program leadership and faculty in a video conference if requested by the program.

8   For Option 3, the program will receive a report that includes program strengths and suggestions to prepare the program for a full accreditation review.

9   For Options 1 and 2, the program will receive an official letter from the Chair of the Accreditation Committee copying the ISPA President documenting the outcome of the accreditation process (full or conditional accreditation).

## ACCREDITATION/REVIEW COSTS

For Option 1 (a three-day site visit) – In addition to the administration fee of €500, the school psychology program will be responsible for travel, meals, and accommodation costs for on-site accreditation team members.

For Option 2 (no site visit) – School psychology programs will be required to pay an administration fee to ISPA of €500 to cover the cost of accreditation.

For Option 3 - School psychology programs will be required to pay an administration fee to ISPA of €100 to cover the cost of the review.

## PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR REACCREDITATION

Full accreditation is for five years. Conditional accreditation is for a period negotiated by the program but will typically be for no more than three years. In most cases, reaccreditation will be paper-based and not involve a site visit from an accreditation team. ISPA recognizes there are advantages to an in-person site visit, and programs are welcome to request a site visit if that would better meet their needs. The reaccreditation fee of €500 should be paid to ISPA within one month of receiving the final report.

The procedures for applying for reaccreditation are similar to those described above. Program leadership should contact the Chair of the Accreditation Committee to negotiate a timeline. Once this is decided, the Program Leadership should apply in writing to the to ISPA Central Office and to the chair of The Accreditation Committee with cc the President. The Chair will identify an accreditation team of two or three ISPA members experienced with the accreditation process.

The required documentation is similar to what is needed for first accreditation but focuses on the findings made in the initial accreditation report. In addition, the program should add two sections to Part A of the Program Accreditation Document. The first new section should discuss how their program has developed and changed since the earlier accreditation. This section should discuss changes in staffing, curriculum content, and practicums/internships. The second new section should discuss how the recommendations in the prior report have been addressed.

## Appendix 1    Suggested timeline for accreditation.

**Option 1 (Including site visit)**

| EVENT | TIME |
|---|---|
| The program director formally requests an ISPA accreditation from the ISPA Central office and the Chair of the Accreditation Committee. | Week 1 |
| The accreditation team selected, including the team leader | Week 4 |
| The team leader agrees to the accreditation timetable with the program director and requests documentation. | Week 6 |
| The program director sends documentation to the team leader | Week 12 |
| The team reads documentation, holds teleconferences, and prepares questions for the program director. | Week 16 |
| The program director responds to these questions. | Week 18 |
| The accreditation team plans a site visit with the program director | Week 20 |
| Site visit takes place as agreed upon by all parties. | - |
| The accreditation team prepares a draft report | 4 weeks after the site visit |
| The program director responds to the report | 6 weeks after the site visit |
| Final report to ISPA and the program director | 12 weeks after the site visit |

**Options 2 & 3 (No site visit)**

| EVENT | TIME |
|---|---|
| The program director formally requests an ISPA accreditation from the ISPA Central office and the Chair of the Accreditation Committee. | Week 1 |
| The accreditation team leader and members are selected. | Week 4 |
| The team leader agrees to the accreditation timetable with the program director and requests documentation. | Week 6 |
| The program director sends documentation. | Week 12 |
| The team reads documentation, holds video/teleconferences, and prepares questions for the program director. | Week 16 |
| The program director responds to these questions | Week 18 |
| The accreditation team holds further meetings and video/teleconferences with the program director. | Week 24 |
| The accreditation team prepares a draft report | Week 26 |
| The program director responds to the report | Week 28 |
| Final report to ISPA and the program director | Week 30 |
| The accreditation team holds a debrief (via email or tele/video conference) to review the accreditation process and advise the accreditation committee on the suggestions for improvements to the accreditation process. | Week 30 |

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

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