

Postdoctoral Trainee Selection Process Frequently Asked Questions for Training Directors

There are a mix of internship and PD TDs in the audience so we are trying to give applicant and postdoc TD perspectives.

Difference Between Internship and Postdoc Selection

- There is an imbalance favoring postdoctoral applicants but nobody know how large since the universe of postdoctoral programs is not known.
- Internship has a standardized application process for all APPIC member programs using the APPIC DOL, the AAPI, and the Match. For postdocs, we are trying to organize selection but there is no standardization. In the spring of 2016, there was a Postdoctoral Training Summit; one of the main recommendations was to move towards greater standardization of postdoctoral selection processes to benefit the community of programs as well as the trainees. Recent initiatives include the new UPPD, APPA CAS and the Selection Guidelines. PD programs are still free to handle the application and selection process however they wish. It is worth noting that last year, approximately 95% of the programs listed in the UPPD agreed to follow the Selection Guidelines and the Uniform Notification Date. Thus, programs are likely at a disadvantage if they do not utilize the UPPD and Selection Guideline.
- In Neuropsychology, there is a national match system; however, not all programs participate. There are some recent efforts to open conversation between “match” and “non-match” programs. We advise trainees in our webinars to make sure they understand whether or not the program(s) they are applying to participate in the match, and if not, what is their timeline regarding interviews and offers.

Purpose and Type of Postdocs

1. What is the purpose of postdoctoral training?
 - Postdoctoral training is for advanced or specialized training as opposed to the broad and general training received on internship. This is consistent with consensus at the PD summit and the new Standards of Accreditation (SoA).
2. What do the terms “specialty training,” “emphases,” and “focus mean? How are they different?
 - The term specialty refers to specialties recognized by the Council of Specialties (e.g. Forensic Psychology). There are clear Education and Training Guidelines for recognized specialties. Emphasis can resemble areas of specialization but may include other areas of concentration or focus (that are not recognized specialties). The taxonomy has levels of opportunity for the training provided in a recognized specialty: Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, and lastly Major Area of Study. The term “focus: is a new term that synonymous with and intended to replace the term

“emphasis.”

Universal Psychology Postdoctoral Directory (UPPD)

1. What is the UPPD?
 - The UPPD is a Universal Psychology Postdoctoral Directory. One recommendation that came from the recent postdoctoral training Summit was to have a central location for applicants to search for all programs. The UPPD has advantages over the APPIC directory in that there are nearly 3 times as many programs listed and the search functions are more specifically geared towards postdoctoral training using specialty and emphasis areas. WE ARE REALLY EXCITED ABOUT IT. Currently, there are 928 program listings in the UPPD
2. What happened to the APPIC listserv and why is it not listing postdocs any longer? Will this impact my ability to attract applicants?
 - Success of the UPPD is crucial for organizing PD programs across the nation. For it to serve as the main source to market PD programs, we had to limit the other advertising venues such as the APPIC PD Network. The VA also agreed to prohibit advertising of PD programs on its mail groups as did APPIC.
 - The effectiveness of posting on email groups is questionable given the volume and people habituating to the multiple postings. The UPPD vastly more efficient since this is where applicants will look. Email postings were hit or miss if they actually got to potential applicants.
 - Based on applicants’ responses to the APPIC survey, out of 1100, responses approximately 80% of position offers were from programs listed in the UPPD.
3. How much will trainees use the UPPD?
 - Based on applicants’ response to the APPIC survey, we believe this is now the “go to” source to search for postdoctoral programs with well over 927 listings. As noted in the previous item, based on applicants’ responses to the APPIC survey, out of 1100, responses approximately 80% of position offers were from programs listed in the UPPD.
4. Will all postdocs be listed in the new UPPD?
 - The full universe of postdoctoral programs is not known. We made great progress this year and are working hard to recruit all programs to list their positions in the directory to provide more centralized search information. A concerted effort is being placed on getting all research focused programs listed in the UPPD.
 - Some, but not all, neuropsychology programs have listed their information.
5. Other logistical issues on the UPPD from the training director perspective.
 - Last year there were some glitches particularly for APPIC member programs

logging in and editing their program listing. These issues have been corrected and the UPPD has undergone several enhancements to its interface and search capabilities.

- The UPPD has some unique advantages over the APPIC DOL – fields for specialty areas, focus/emphasis areas or tracks, research focus, and indication if the program is following the APPIC Guidelines, and what date/time they intend to make offers.
 - Many have asked if their administrative personnel can get access to the program listing. For now, there is only one login per program. TDs may choose to share their log-in information with administrative personnel.
6. What if I make changes or list my opportunities late, such as in December, January, or even later?
- The UPPD is a work in progress. We have alerted applicants that opportunities continue to emerge as the year progresses. There is a button on the search result page to sort by recently updated program listings.

Application Process

1. What is the optimal timeline for this process? When is program information available? When are applications due? When are interviews?
 - Since there is no formal structure to postdoctoral selection, this varies by program. However, for most programs that have a clinical training component to them, it is recommended that applicants start searching in early fall. Deadlines for applications tend to fall between December and January. Interviews typically occur in late January and February. Although not all programs will adhere to the APPIC suggested guidelines, the date programs are asked to make offers is 2/26/18.
 - This can be variable for research positions depending on the source of funding.
2. What kinds of application materials do postdoc programs request?
 - Programs differ but most require a CV, transcripts, a cover letter expressing interest and fit, and letters of recommendation. Some will require work samples or an essay. Some TDs have started asking for applicants to submit a copy of their AAPI (internship application).
 - Check the program website or with the TD.
3. Why would I use the APPA-CAS as an application portal? (The centralized postdoctoral application)?
 - APPA CAS is free for both APPIC and non-APPIC programs. There are base application requirements such as demographics, education and training background, transcripts, and internship information.

- APPA CAS is easily customizable for programs defining letters you require and any supplemental materials.
 - It is an efficient way to receive applications and letters of recommendation.
 - You can easily track and manage applications and sort by track or specialty. You can easily email applicants in categories or statuses that you define.
 - Applications can be accessed online in a single PDF File and easily rated and reviewed (online).
 - The only possible downside could be becoming familiar with a new web-based application and modifying your review and selection process. However, there are many APPA CAS training resources listed on the APPIC Website on the Postdoctoral main page.
7. Should I consider offering phone/skype interview? Does that put my program “at risk” by interviewing people who may be less motivated, or may have issues that might come up in an in-person interview that we can’t observe over the phone?
- The APPIC Selection Guidelines encourage programs to offer the option for phone/skype interviews based on the substantial financial burden of travel and the impact on time away from internship. Some programs will have more than one person conduct phone/skype interviews with a given applicant to provide a greater sample of the person’s fit for the program and interpersonal skills. If you require in-person interviews we strongly suggest that you give applicants ample notice so they are able to make flight arrangements (if necessary) in a timely fashion (and acquire less expensive tickets).

APPIC Postdoc Selection Guidelines

1. Brief overview of Selection Guidelines
 - Postdoc selection has become increasingly more challenging for applicants and programs.
 - The Postdoctoral Selection Guidelines are an attempt to provide some structure and organization to postdoctoral selection. This is challenging given the heterogeneity of programs and the absence of a formal national structure or organization for postdoctoral training.
 - Programs are free to choose whether they follow the guidelines since there is no mechanism to ensure compliance.
 - The VA has agreed that all of its programs will follow the guidelines, and APA Division 54 has publicized a list of child-focused programs that have indicated intention to follow the guidelines. Similarly, ACCTA has encouraged all of its program to follow the guidelines.

Simple Overview

1. Be explicit in public materials (websites, UPPD) and throughout the interview process

about the intention to follow the APPIC Postdoctoral Selection Guidelines

2. Give applicants at least two weeks' notice.
3. Consider using remote interview formats.
4. Wait to make offers until 10:00 AM Eastern Time on Monday February 26, 2018
5. Utilize the reciprocal offer option prior to February 26, 2018 only if the top applicant receives a bona fide offer from another postdoctoral training program. Program may require validation of the offer. Inform applicants about how they should contact the TD if requesting a reciprocal offer.
 6. Allow applicants to hold regular (non-reciprocal) offers for at least 4 hours.
7. For all filled postdoctoral positions (before, during and following the UND) applicants should receive an email with an official confirmation of the agreement within 48 hours.
 8. Notify applicants as soon as they are no longer under consideration and when all positions are filled.
 - ** Two-year clinical neuropsychology programs and predominantly research are exempt.

2. How do I let applicants know if our program is following the APPIC postdoc selection guidelines?

- This can be indicated in the UPPD listing. You should also provide this information on your program's website or other public materials.
- Please only indicate this if you are following all of the APPIC postdoc selection guidelines (e.g., not if you are using the date but not allowing 4 hours for applicants to accept or decline).

3. How long can I let an applicant hold an offer?

- The guidelines suggest that programs offer at least 4 hours but some applicants ask for longer. If it does not create undue burden or cause you to lose potential applicants, you may consider allowing more time.

4. If my program is following the guidelines, what happens when someone requests a reciprocal offer?

- Not all programs will use the guidelines and adhere to the 2/26/18 notification date. Such programs may make other applicants an offer at any time.
- If an applicant requests a reciprocal offer, if they are your top ranked applicant, you may make them an offer on the spot.
- You may request some form of verification of the offer such as an email. Some programs accept the applicant's word. You can also ask what program made the offer.
- The applicant must accept the offer if you make it.
- If that applicant is not your top ranked applicant, you cannot make them a reciprocal offer since they are not your top ranked applicant. Ties are possible but rare, so you could potentially have two top ranked applicants. Some of this is governed by ethics

- and the honor system since there is no way to police or enforce compliance.
- The applicant may ask where they stand in your rankings. You can respond if you want to. It is recommended that letting the applicant know they are not highly ranked, if you believe there is little to no chance that you would make them an offer. With this information they may accept the original offer or another offer.
 - The idea behind the reciprocal offer is to prevent programs from losing their top rank applicant; similarly, this allows applicants the opportunity to get their top ranked site, if they are also the site's top choice.
 - If you get a request for a reciprocal offer from a #2 or lower ranked applicant, you should not contact your top-ranked applicant.

5. What do I do if I do not have positions filled on February 26th?

- Don't panic. The UPPD allows programs to indicate unfilled positions following 2/26. The UPPD allows applicants to then search for open positions. Many positions get filled after the UND.
- IT IS CRITICAL THAT PROGRAMS UPDATE THEIR UPPD LISTING ON 2/26 WITH UNFILLED POSITIONS. WE WILL BE EDUCATING AND REMINDING PROGRAMS ABOUT THIS.

6. What do I do when all my positions for a program, track or specialty are filled?

- Notify all remaining applicants that your positions are filled and that you are releasing them from your pool. This will be very helpful in informing their current options.
- For all filled postdoctoral positions (before, during and following the UND) applicants should receive an email with an official confirmation of the agreement within 48 hours.

7. What are the costs/benefits of following the selection guidelines for my program/the applicants/the field?

- As we mentioned earlier, there has been a strong push toward greater consistency in this process through a number of initiatives. At this point, over 927 programs have listed in the UPPD. 95% of non-except (neuro and research) programs listed in the UPPD indicate that they will follow the selection guidelines – overall, these data indicate a substantial increase in using these guidelines and a uniform notification date relative to prior years.
- Programs that don't follow the guidelines will likely be at a distinct disadvantage. If you choose not to follow the selection guidelines, it is possible that you will get turned down by your top applicant if you are not their top-ranked program since they can evoke the reciprocal offer option.
- An additional benefit is for ethical reasons and the betterment of the profession. It is true that by following the guidelines, you do not get to make offers whenever it is convenient for your program (i.e., if you would prefer to have things resolved earlier

than late February).

- As for applicants, we believe the more that there is consistency in the process and the offer date, the more it is of benefit to them as they are more likely to be able to make the best decision when their options occur on a coherent timeline – they do not have to accept a less-preferred offer early because they are afraid there won't be options later. Overall, more consistency means some compromise on the part of us all for the benefit of the field.