

Information for Prospective Members of the APA Commission on Accreditation (CoA)

Prospective members of the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) are drawn from those who are knowledgeable about education and training in psychology and who have had broad, national exposure to multiple aspects of the profession. Members of CoA are appointed by the Board of Educational Affairs (BEA).

The CoA meets four times per year in Washington D.C., for approximately 4 days each (Thursday starting at 8:00 a.m. through Sunday ending at noon). The first meeting of each calendar year, typically held in late January or early February, is focused on developing and reviewing accreditation policies and procedures. No program reviews are conducted during the policy meeting. The subsequent three meetings each year, typically held in late March/early April, July, and late October/early November, are focused primarily on comprehensive reviews of doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral residency programs in professional psychology. As time permits the CoA also addresses policy issues during these three program review meetings. On rare occasion and with substantial advance notice, an additional day will be added to one of these three program review meetings to allow the Commission's extended work on policy related tasks.

Considerable preparation is required prior to each of the three program review meetings. Each CoA member is usually assigned 5-8 programs for which s/he serves as a reviewer. Review of a program is very thorough, including review of the program's self-study, the program's response to preliminary review of the self-study, the site visit report, the program's response to the site visit report, and all the program related correspondence. As an important note, the accreditation program review process is going online - this exciting change will result in these materials being reviewed from the new online portal. Each member will serve as a reviewer for programs that represent their particular substantive area or specialty as well as for programs from other areas. In addition, all CoA members are responsible for the review of programs at the doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral residency level. Preparation time for these reviews is quite substantial, requiring detailed study that typically runs anywhere from 5 to 15 hours for each review, depending on complexity. All program reviews are completed within the four weeks immediately preceding each of the three program review meetings.

In addition, the agenda for the Commission's policy discussions generally requires a number of hours of preparation. Policy issues range across a broad spectrum and include topics such as specific provisions of the accreditation standards as well as the general conduct of the accreditation review process. To facilitate this policy work, each CoA member participates on a CoA work group (e.g. Communication, Training, Research, or Complaints) and a policy group (e.g. Doctoral, Internship, Postdoctoral Residency).

Beyond the expectations described above, other potential service tasks for CoA members include:

- preliminary reviews of self-studies from applicant programs
- chairing or co-chairing a program review panel during a program review meeting
- serving as a chair or co-chair of a work group or policy group
- conducting workshops for site visitors or training directors (usually 1-day at the annual convention or at gatherings of various constituent groups, such as midwinter training council meetings)
- representing CoA at various group meetings (such as CCPTP, APPIC, CoS, etc.)
- participating in CoA governance via membership on the CoA executive committee
- occasionally participating in special site visits

Work as a member of CoA is clearly a heavy work-load appointment and an appropriate allocation of time and effort is an important consideration. Finally, prospective members need to know that while serving as a CoA member (and for one year after ending CoA membership), they may not serve as a regular accreditation site visitor and may not serve as a formal or informal consultant to any program. However, CoA members can serve as special site visitors on behalf of the Commission.

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