

THE APA OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION IN PSYCHOLOGY

The Office of Continuing Education in Psychology (CEP) offers a wide range of continuing professional education opportunities for psychologists. This office works with the Continuing Education Committee (CEC) which is responsible for overseeing the review and approval of CE Workshops and sessions at the APA annual convention.

APA CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE) PROGRAM CRITERIA

Definition of Continuing Education for Psychologists

Continuing education (CE) in psychology is an ongoing process consisting of formal learning activities that (1) are relevant to psychological practice, education and science; (2) enable psychologists to keep pace with the most current scientific evidence regarding assessment, intervention, and education as well as important legal, statutory, or regulatory issues ; and (3) allow psychologists to maintain, develop, and increase competencies in order to improve services to the public and enhance contributions to the profession.

Continuing education builds upon a completed doctoral program in psychology. It is not a substitute for the basic academic education and training needed for entry to the field of psychology, nor should it be the primary vehicle for career changes from one APA-recognized specialty area (e.g., clinical, counseling, school psychology) to another.

What are the APA Standards and Criteria for Continuing Education?

APA recognizes the responsibility of psychologists to continue their educational and professional development, building upon the foundations of a completed doctoral program in psychology. The APA CE Sponsor Approval System and the APA Continuing Education Committee work to establish standards for those organizations wishing to offer continuing education for psychologists and to maintain the highest level of quality in those programs. The standards are outlined in the document, Standards and Criteria for Approval of Sponsors of Continuing Education for Psychologists (<http://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/about/standards/manual.pdf>).

While the Continuing Education Committee selects workshops to be offered at convention based on consideration of a number of factors, demonstration of adherence to the standards is required.

The description of your workshop's curriculum will be rated based on how it responds to Standard D of the Standards and Criteria.

Standard D: Curriculum Content

PRINCIPLE

The content of continuing education is the crucial component intended to maintain, develop, and increase conceptual and applied competencies that are relevant to psychological practice, education, and science. All CE programs offered for CE credit for psychologists must comply with Standard D criteria. CE programs must be grounded in an evidence-based approach. CE programs that are focused on application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods must include content that is credibly supported by the most current scientific evidence. CE programs may also provide information

related to ethical, legal, statutory or regulatory policies, guidelines, and standards that impact psychology.

CRITERIA

1. Sponsors must document that the content of each CE program meets one of the following:
 - 1.1 Program content focuses on application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that have overall consistent and credible empirical support in the contemporary peer reviewed scientific literature beyond those publications and other types of communications devoted primarily to the promotion of the approach;
 - 1.2 Program content focuses on ethical, legal, statutory or regulatory policies, guidelines, and standards that impact psychological practice, education, or research;
 - 1.3 Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.
2. Sponsors are required to ensure that instructors, during each CE presentation, include statements that describe the accuracy and utility of the materials presented, the empirical basis of such statements, the limitations of the content being taught, and the severe and the most common risks.
3. Sponsors must offer program content that builds upon the foundation of a completed doctoral program in psychology.
4. Sponsors must be prepared to demonstrate that content is relevant to psychological practice, education, and/or science.
5. Sponsors must have a process to identify any potential conflict of interest and/or commercial support for any program offered, and they must clearly describe any commercial support for the CE program, presentation, or instructor to program participants at the time the CE program begins. Any other relationship that could be reasonably construed as a conflict of interest also must be disclosed. Individual presenters must disclose and explain the presence or absence of commercial support or conflict of interest at the time the CE program begins.

Educational and Technical Assistance

Program Content

Acceptable programs must adhere to the definition of continuing education in that they improve service to the public and enhance contributions to the profession. Acceptable programs must also adhere to the American Psychological Association policy on Quality Professional Development and Continuing Education (APA, 2013). Determination of eligibility is not made on the basis of topic alone.

Because psychologists work in a variety of professional settings, sponsors are encouraged to offer a wide range of topics that can meet the diverse CE needs of psychologists. The Committee encourages innovative programs, only if clear and sufficient evidence is provided that demonstrate the criteria for Standard D are met by these programs.

Content related to the professional practice of psychology, business of practice, education, administration, conducting research, or career management programs should be carefully considered to determine whether or not the content of the programs can be deemed appropriate CE content for psychologists.

Empirical support for the application of psychological assessment methods and interventions can be demonstrated through a variety of scientific methods. In-text citations to recent peer-reviewed journal publications embedded in the Sponsor's narrative response to Standard D are one method to provide this foundation. It is recognized that some psychological interventions may not yet be supported by positive results from clinical trials, and yet be considered to be sufficiently evidence-based. The sponsor is responsible for providing sufficient information for the Continuing Education Committee to judge the evidence-based foundations of the proposed content covered.

The responsibility is on the applicant to provide substantive and convincing evidence that the programs meet the requirements of Standard D. Applicants must adequately establish the bridge between program content and the elements of the criteria using appropriate evidence. Assertion on the part of the applicant that the program meets the criteria is insufficient. The more distant a topic appears from core disciplinary knowledge, the greater the responsibility of the sponsor to demonstrate the connection to improvement of services to the public and contributions to the profession. At least three (3) current, relevant, supporting, and complete references (in APA format) must be provided as evidence that program content has met the requirements of a specific D.1. criterion. The narrative provided for each of the four programs should explicitly link the references provided as evidence to the program content of the program, both of which should be linked to a specific D.1. criterion. In addition to the response to Criterion D.1., appropriate content should be conveyed in program titles, learning objectives, and promotional materials.

If you are teaching psychologists interventions or assessments that they will use with clients, you will address Standard D1.1.

Examples:

Interpersonal psychotherapy for depression

The utilization of the DSM 5 in children and adolescents

Behavioral analysis in the treatment of autism spectrum disorder

Treatment of post-traumatic stress in immigrant families

If you are teaching psychologists about ethical, legal, statutory or regulatory policies, guidelines, and standards in practice or research, you will address Standard D1.2

Examples:

Ethical considerations in telehealth

Compliance with HIPPA regulations

Ethical considerations in substance abuse research with adolescents

Mental health care under the Affordable Care Act

If you are teaching psychologists content other than psychological intervention, assessment, and ethics, you will address Standard D1.3

Examples:

Learning about the “new statistics”

Mental health advocacy for marginalized populations

Writing for professional psychology journals

Neurobiological changes following exposure to trauma

Full Disclosure

Sponsors ensure that instructors provide a sufficient basis for the interpretation of program information by informing participants of limitations of the content being taught, including contradictory evidence and its source. For example, presentations that include discussions of clinical assessments, treatments, or interventions also describe the evidence for this information, including the basis (e.g., research, established psychological practice, clinical expertise, patient acceptability) of such descriptions or claims, their limitations, and the severe risks, if any, and also those risks that are most common.

Potential conflict of interest, commercial support, or commercial interest applies to sponsoring organizations, the presenter, and the content of the presentation. Sponsors should advise participants of the potential biases inherent in accepting inducements that might affect the selection of texts, the use of particular tests, and/or sponsorship of CE courses.

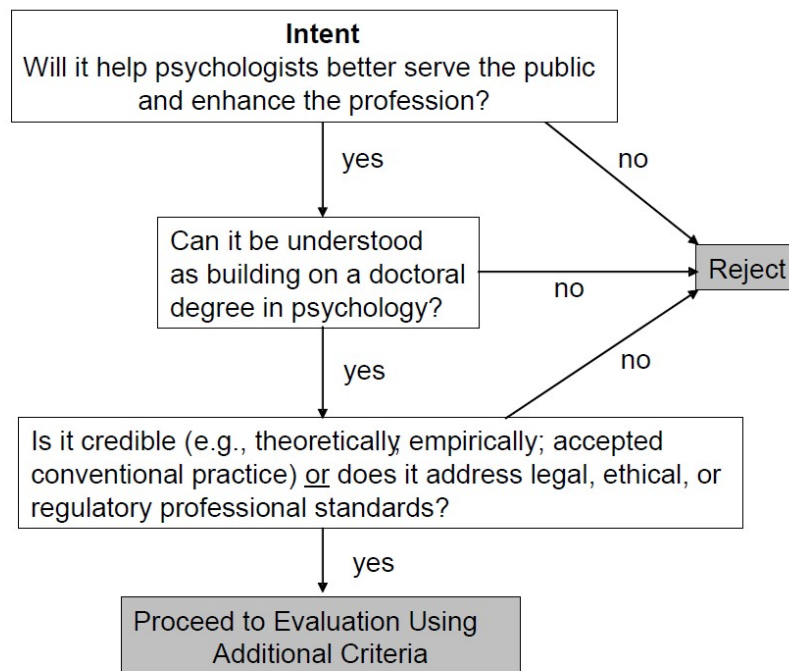
Sponsors are required to provide information that demonstrates their adherence to Standard D. In the normal course of program preparation, instructors should be able to provide information that demonstrates compliance with the standard. Sponsors could address this in some combination of the program learning objectives, participants’ evaluation of content, citations to research references, or a clause in a contract with instructors.

Criteria and Processes for Determining Proposed Programs' CE-Eligibility

Acceptable programs must adhere to the definition of continuing education in that they improve service to the public and enhance contributions to the profession. Programs that address the personal or professional well-being of the psychologist must also demonstrate how they meet the above definition.

Determination of eligibility is not made on the basis of topic alone. The responsibility is on the applicant to adequately establish the bridge between program content and the elements of the criteria. The more distant a topic appears from core disciplinary knowledge, the greater the responsibility of the sponsor to demonstrate the connection to improvement of services to the public and contributions to the profession.

The CE Committee will use the Standards and Criteria for Approval of Sponsors of Continuing Education to evaluate proposals. In so doing, they will employ the following evaluative steps:



Illustrative Example: Building Your Practice

Insufficient Learning Objectives	Acceptable Learning Objectives
Compare advantages and disadvantages of buying versus renting office space.	Identify the professional, legal and ethical issues related to buying versus renting office space.
Learn to read a financial report.	Learn about regulatory issues concerning electronic medical records and billing systems.
Maximize income from managed care.	Negotiate contracts for managed care services that maximize patient care.
Develop successful strategies for locating subletters for office space.	Analyze and minimize confidentiality concerns involving shared office space.
Maximize case load through successful marketing.	Create ethically sound marketing tools and techniques.
Design promotions to attract the self-pay clientele.	Provide effective client advocacy to third party payors.

Note: Insufficient learning objectives successfully articulate the advantages that might accrue to the practitioner, but do not extend these to underscore their value to the clients or the broader society that may follow from the knowledge gains associated with this program. Acceptable learning objectives, by comparison, clearly identify the broader contributions that might support the welfare of the consumer and the society by addressing ethical and regulatory implications associated with successful business practice.

Sample Response to D.1. – Course Content Requiring Citations

The demonstration of program credibility can include citations to relevant peer-reviewed research, and reference to broader, recognized traditions of research and theory, among others:

Example D.1. “The Use of Expressive Arts in Psychotherapy”

Insufficient Response

The use of expressive arts in psychotherapy has a longstanding tradition. Music, dance and other creative arts are valuable additions to successful psychotherapeutic practice. This program illustrates a range of expressive arts and their potential applications in the treatment of emotional distress.

Drawing from their extensive clinical experience, the presenters demonstrate a variety of expressive techniques that help open clients to new forms of mental health, adjustment, and optional functioning by helping them to recognize and experience their internal response.

This program is derived from the work of S. Smith, *Clinical Applications of the Expressive Arts* (New York: Stonewall Publications, 2000).

Acceptable Response

The use of expressive arts in psychotherapy has a longstanding tradition. Music, dance and other creative arts are valuable additions to successful psychotherapeutic practice. This program illustrates a range of expressive arts and their potential applications in the treatment of emotional distress.

Drawing from the fields of art therapy, dance therapy, and other allied fields of recreational and occupational therapy, this program overviews the historical traditions, current research findings, and practice knowledge that inform the application of arts in psychotherapeutic practice.

This program is derived from the following works:

McNamara and Scott (2000), *Historical Research in Music Therapy*, 3rd Edition.

Douglas, D.B., (2001). Effectiveness of the Expressive Arts in Psychotherapeutic Practice:

Documentation of Research in Clinical Practice. *Journal of Arts in Medicine*, 3, 121-134.

Stanford, L.M. and Dickson, E.E. (2001). A controlled study of the effects of expressive arts as adjunctive techniques in psychotherapy. *Journal of Psychotherapy Research*, 33, 211-228.

Note: The insufficient program description draws primarily from presenter experience and only minimal, non peer-reviewed publications. The acceptable response clearly identifies relevant research literature that supports both the application of the expressive arts and their associated outcomes within relevant clinical contexts.

Standard C: Educational Planning and Instructional Methods

PRINCIPLE

Successful continuing education in psychology requires: (1) careful educational planning that results in a clear statement of educational objectives; (2) the use of appropriate educational methods that are effective in achieving those objectives; 3) a clear connection between program content and the application of this content within the learner's professional context; and (4) the selection of instructional personnel with demonstrated expertise in the program content.

CRITERIA

1. Sponsors must develop educational objectives that clearly describe a) what participants are expected to learn; and b) how participants can apply this knowledge in practice or other professional contexts.
2. Sponsors must include instructional methods that actively engage the learner to enhance acquisition of knowledge and, where appropriate, facilitate translation into practice.
3. Sponsors must select instructors with expertise in the program content and who are competent to teach this program content at a level that builds upon a completed doctoral program in psychology.

Educational and Technical Assistance

Every program offered for CE credit must have predetermined learning objectives. Rather than a description of topics to be covered, learning objectives should clearly define what the participant will know or be able to do as a result of having attended the program, and these objectives must be stated in measurable terms. As a guideline, there should be three to four objectives for a four hour program; five to six objectives for a seven to eight hour program, etc.

CE activities can be delivered via numerous methods which include, but are not limited to: workshops, seminars, conferences, conventions, grand rounds, lectures, books, videotapes, audiotapes, CD-ROMs, and web-based activities. All CE activities, regardless of the delivery method, must adhere to the Standards of the APA Approval of Sponsors of Continuing Education for Psychologists.

Although it is not required that instructors be psychologists, they must have expertise and be competent in the areas in which they teach. Expertise might be demonstrated by some combination of the following: relevant educational experience such as holding a doctoral degree in psychology, review of records of previous teaching experiences, years of clinical experience, publications in areas relevant to the content being taught, evaluation forms from previously offered programs, personal knowledge of the instructor's teaching ability, and references.

Writing Behavioral Learning Objectives

Learning objectives, or learning outcomes, are statements that clearly describe what the learner will know or be able to do as a result of having attended an educational program or activity.

Learning objectives must be observable and measurable.

Learning objectives should (1) focus on the learner, and (2) contain action verbs that describe measurable behaviors

Verbs to consider when writing learning objectives:

- ✓ list, describe, recite, write
- ✓ compute, discuss, explain, predict
- ✓ apply, demonstrate, prepare, use
- ✓ analyze, design, select, utilize
- ✓ compile, create, plan, revise
- ✓ assess, compare, rate, critique

Verbs to avoid

- ≠ know, understand
- ≠ learn, appreciate
- ≠ become aware of, become familiar with

Illustrative Learning Objectives for "Succeeding in an Academic Career"

Based on the content of the session, participants will be able to . . .

Insufficient Learning Objectives

1. identify the advantages in advancing one's career of having a systematic research program
2. manage the complexities of scheduling research assistants, supervisees and other helpers
3. negotiate the ins and outs of getting publications and grants
4. discharge advising obligations while still having time to write
5. increase chances for retention, tenure and promotion through understanding academic policies and the administrative structure

Acceptable Learning Objectives

1. Identify the practical applications for teaching effectiveness of building a systematic research program.
2. Identify relevant ethical codes associated with research, clinical or academic supervision with students.
3. Negotiate the regulatory and ethical information regarding publication and grant writing with colleagues or students.
4. Apply appropriate mentoring skills for maximal student growth.
5. Use an understanding of academic policies and the administrative structure to create more efficient classrooms and labs.

Note: Insufficient learning objectives identify the advantages that might accrue to the individual faculty member, but fail to link these to improved services and the broader regulatory, ethical or professional issues that might also serve broader constituents within this context. By contrast, the acceptable learning objectives effectively tie the knowledge gains associated with this program to the effective functioning of the students and the administrative units associated with the faculty's functioning, and highlight the professional and scientific gains that would be expected to accrue as a result of the program.