



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

MEMO

To: APA Accredited Programs

From: Janay Sander, Ph.D., Chair, APA Commission on Accreditation

Date: March 21, 2025

RE: Addressing Accredited Program Questions about the Enforcement of Diversity Accreditation Standards

Recent executive and legislative actions have implications for accredited master's, doctoral, doctoral internship, and postdoctoral residency programs, as well as programs seeking accreditation and those under accreditation review. In response, the APA Commission on Accreditation (CoA) voted on March 13, 2025, to immediately and temporarily suspend evaluation of programs for compliance with several specific accreditation standards. The suspended standards are those related to faculty and student program actions in the areas of diversity in recruitment, admission/selection, and/or retention efforts.

As the sole APA governance body responsible for making accreditation decisions on professional education and training programs in psychology, the Commission – a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency of health service psychology programs - is implementing this interim action while awaiting further court guidance on the enforceability of [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity Executive Order \(EO\) \(Jan. 21, 2025\)](#) (“Ending Illegal Discrimination EO”) (Jan. 21, 2025). Of note, on February 21, 2025, a federal district court enjoined President Trump’s Ending Illegal Discrimination EO. The Trump administration challenged the district court's action that had ruled the EO was not be enforced during the litigation. On March 14, 2025, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit upheld as legal, at least temporarily, the president’s EO seeking to end “illegal DEI.” This means that the Ending Illegal Discrimination EO is currently law while litigation is pending.

Programs will continue to adhere to accreditation standards specific to professional competency and curriculum in psychology where the educational benefit of diversity is a core tenet. These accreditation standards include the obligation for accredited programs to engage in offering teaching that indicates respect for and understanding of cultural and individual differences to promote the provision of quality psychological services to all individuals. Additionally, the accreditation standards mandate that programs avoid any actions that would restrict program access or completion on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training or the profession of psychology. Accordingly, accredited programs will continue to have the obligation to “engage [] in actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural and individual differences and diversity,” Master’s § I.A.1.c; Doctoral § I.A.1.c. Similarly, accredited programs will continue to be required to “document nondiscriminatory policies and operating conditions and avoidance of any actions that would restrict program access or completion on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training or the profession,” Master’s § I.D.1.g; Doctoral § I.D.1.g; Doctoral Internship § I.C.1.j; and Postdoctoral Residency § 1.C.1.b.x.

No accredited program is required to violate the law to become or to remain an accredited program. The commission’s actions are based on its understanding that the executive order does not prevent state or local governments, federal contractors or federally funded state and local educational agencies or institutions of higher education from engaging in First Amendment-protected speech.

750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
(202) 336-5500
(202) 336-6123 TDD



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The Standards of Accreditation that the CoA will temporarily not review for compliance, either in part or entirely, under this interim policy are listed below:

Level of Training	Standards Not Reviewed for Compliance
Master's	<p>I.B.2.: The following statements will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain students and faculty from diverse backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of individuals who are diverse and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training, either directly or by imposing significant and disproportionate burdens on the basis of the personal and demographic characteristics set forth in the definition of cultural diversity.</p>
	<p>I.D.1.a: The following underlined clause from the statement below will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>Academic recruitment and admissions, <u>including general recruitment/admissions and recruitment of students who are diverse.</u></p>
	<p>II.A.1.b: Entire Standard</p>
	<p>III.B.3: The following underlined clause from the statement below will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>To ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment <u>for a diverse student body</u>, the program must avoid any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training.</p>
	<p>III.C.2: Entire Standard</p>
	<p>IV.B.5: Entire Standard</p>
Doctoral	<p>I.B.2: The following statements will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain students and faculty from diverse backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of individuals who are diverse and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training, either directly or by imposing significant and disproportionate burdens on the basis of the personal and demographic characteristics set forth in the definition of cultural diversity.</p>
	<p>I.D.1.a: The following underlined clause from the statement below will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>Academic recruitment and admissions, <u>including general recruitment/admissions and recruitment of students who are diverse.</u></p>
	<p>III.A.1.b(i)-(ii): Entire Standard</p>

Doctoral (cont.)	<p>III.B.3: The following underlined clause from the statement below will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>To ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment <u>for students who are diverse</u>, the program must avoid any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training.</p> <p>III.C.2: Entire Standard</p> <p>IV.B.5: Entire Standard</p>
Doctoral Internship	<p>I.B.3: The following statements will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain interns and faculty/staff from diverse backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of diverse individuals and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training, either directly or by imposing significant and disproportionate burdens on the basis of the personal and demographic characteristics set forth in the definition of cultural diversity.</p> <p>I.D.1(a)-(b): Entire Standard</p> <p>III.A.2.a-b: Entire Standard</p> <p>IV.B: Entire Standard</p> <p>V.A.1.c: Entire Standard</p>
Postdoctoral Residency	<p>I.B.3: The following statements will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain interns and faculty/staff from diverse backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of individuals are diverse and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training, either directly or by imposing significant and disproportionate burdens on the basis of the personal and demographic characteristics set forth in the definition of cultural diversity.</p> <p>I.D.1.a-b: Entire Standard</p> <p>III.A.3: Entire Standard</p> <p>IV.B.2.a: Entire Standard</p> <p>V.A.1.a: The underlined clause will not be reviewed for compliance:</p> <p>The program demonstrates its commitment to public disclosure by providing accurate and complete written materials and other communications that appropriately represent it to all relevant publics. At a minimum, this includes general program information pertaining to its aims, recruitment and selection, <u>implementation of strategies to ensure resident cohorts that are diverse</u>, required training experiences, use of distance education technologies for training and supervision, and expected training outcomes.</p>

Please note that Implementing Regulations (IRs) associated with the Standards listed above will not be used to evaluate a program's compliance with these Standards. In addition, programs should refrain from submitting diversity-related substantive changes until further notice.

Programs are encouraged to contact the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation at apaaccred@apa.org with any questions.