

**Clinical Psychology Graduate Program  
Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING TO  
PRE-DOCTORAL INTERNSHIPS**

Most of the policies and procedures described in this document have been standard practices of the Clinical Psychology Program for a considerable time. As has always been the case, ultimate responsibility for obtaining and successfully completing the required full-year full-time accredited internship rests entirely with the student. As applicants navigate through the internship process, the Clinical Program provides considerable guidance and assistance, in order to help maximize the chances of a successful match via APPIC.

**1. In the Spring and Summer prior to the Internship Application Year (starts in Sept.)**

Students should have initial discussions with their thesis supervisor, the Director of the Clinical Program (DCT) and the Clinical Practica Co-ordinator (CPC) very early in the spring to determine whether it would be appropriate to apply for internships that fall. Students should also read the “Determining Readiness to Apply for an Internship” document on our Clinical Program website, for further information and instructions. This document specifies the details of both thesis progress and clinical readiness that are required in order to apply for internship. For each student considering applying to internship, these requirements are formally reviewed by core clinical faculty early in the summer.

As part of the review process, the DCT may consult with the student’s thesis supervisor, advisory committee, and any other relevant faculty, to determine whether the student is sufficiently advanced on thesis research to apply for internship. At an absolute minimum, students should have all dissertation data collected before leaving for internship. However, the Clinical Program *strongly recommends* that students have completed several further components of the thesis prior to leaving for internship. This would include, for example, completing all data analysis and a write-up of major sections of the thesis. In fact, it would be most preferable for a draft of the entire thesis to be handed in prior to the start of internship. The CPC may consult with the student’s clinical supervisors, core clinical faculty, and any other relevant parties, to determine whether the student, from a clinical skills standpoint, will be ready for internship by the time it would begin.

The core clinical faculty will meet in early summer of each year (typically in late June) to review the thesis progress and clinical readiness of those students indicating they would like to apply for internship that fall. Based upon the outcome of this meeting, the DCT will then provide a letter of initial approval for those students deemed “ready to apply for internship”. The Clinical Program review process and approval letter are both required in order to apply for internships. As described below, there will be three further “checkpoints” along the way, regarding thesis progress.

1. Early in September, each student applying for internship should arrange to have a 20-30 minute meeting with the DCT to provide:

- a) a detailed update of thesis progress, and
- b) an initial list of CPA/APA internship sites they are considering applying to

This meeting will also review the application process and various other tasks and deadlines associated with internship applications.

2. By October 1, your thesis supervisor should send a brief E-Mail to the DCT indicating that you are “on track” with respect to meeting the thesis progress timetable you submitted to the program in June. If this is the case, you will then receive a brief E-Mail from the program director indicating that you can now proceed with the next phase of the application process (i.e., sending out your applications). If not, the

program director will then consult with your supervisor, your thesis committee, and other core clinical faculty to determine whether or not it would be appropriate for you to proceed further with the application process.

3. By January 10, your thesis supervisor should send a second E-Mail to the DCT indicating that you are "on track" with respect to the thesis progress timetable you submitted to the program in June. If this is the case, you will then receive a brief E-Mail from the program director indicating you can now proceed with the remaining steps of the application process (i.e., submitting your rank ordered list of internship settings to the APPIC match, participating in the match, and so on). If not, the program director will then consult with your supervisor, your thesis committee, and other core clinical faculty to determine whether or not it would be appropriate for you to proceed further with the application process.

## **2. In the Fall of the Internship Application Year**

Students should apply to, interview at, and rank, via the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Training Centers (APPIC) website, as many CPA and APA accredited internships as reasonably possible. The expectation of the Program is that students apply to a minimum of 10 accredited sites. (Ideally 12-15)

*It is important to note that the program expects that all of our students will apply for and secure CPA or APA accredited internship placements.* Thus, as students engage in this process, they should keep the following information in mind, so as to maximize the possibility of a successful internship match.

- Based on APPIC survey data obtained over the past four years ...
  1. Applicants end up ranking roughly 50% of the internships to which they apply.
  2. Matched Canadian applicants submitted an average of 6.6 rankings, whereas unmatched applicants submitted an average of 3.6 rankings.
- Some internship sites are considerably more competitive to obtain than other sites. This should be kept in mind when applying.
- Students should rank a minimum of 6 internship settings.

As students engage in the internship application process, they need to meet with the DCT at appropriate points during the internship application year, both to review the settings to which they are applying and subsequently ranking. The goal here is to maximize the likelihood that students will match successfully.

## **3) Notification of Internship Matching results**

### **Successful Internship Applicants**

Successful students should notify the DCT in writing (E-Mail is adequate) as soon as possible after the notification day (typically the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in February) that they have matched. On the following Monday, once successful students know with which setting they have matched, they are to convey this information (along with their ranking for this setting) in writing to the DCT.

### **Unsuccessful Internship Applicants**

The Western Clinical Program has a strong record of students matching successfully with internship programs. Not matching with an internship is extremely difficult for students and they will benefit from additional support and guidance from the program. If a student learns through APPIC that they have not been matched with an internship, then they must immediately contact the DCT to arrange a meeting for that day. Students should be prepared to discuss with the DCT strategies they plan to use to secure a

match via Phase II of the APPIC match. Many students who do not successfully match in the initial process can secure a match through Phase II.

#### **4) Strengthening Internship Applications for Re-application**

The above procedures are designed to maximize student success in applying for an internship. However, in the unfortunate event that a student does not match with any internship sites for the first year application process, the following should occur to enhance the likelihood of a successful match in *the subsequent year*.

- Strengthening of Internship Applications for subsequent year.

This can include taking more practica. The program also strongly encourages each student to solicit feedback from the internship settings applied to in the previous year, so that they can maximize the chance of being successful in the application process the next fall/winter. If students so desire (and, with their written permission), the DCT will attempt to solicit this feedback on their behalf, and convey the information to the students.

- Finishing the Doctoral Dissertation

Completion of the doctoral thesis prior to internship is viewed as a clear strength by internship sites. If a student successfully defends their thesis at the School of Graduate Studies PhD Examination prior to at least one term before the start of internship, then the Psychology Graduate Program would make a request to the School of Graduate Studies that the student be given a Leave of Absence until the internship commences.

#### **5) Re-applying in Year 2 for Internship after an Initial Year 1 Unsuccessful Match**

The procedure for students who are re-applying for an internship in Year 2, after not matching with an internship site in their initial application year, are the same as specified above in Sections 1-3. Students should also consider, with their supervisor and the DCT & CPC, the points raised in Section 4.

#### **6) Procedure for students not matching after a 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Application**

If, after appropriately following all of the above procedures in the second year, a student once again does not secure a match on notification day, or via Phase II of the APPIC matching system, a meeting will then be arranged with the student, their supervisor, the DCT & CPC, to discuss the best course of action. One possible option for students enrolled in the PhD program *prior to September 1, 2003*, and depending upon their specific circumstances, is that the student be allowed to propose to the Clinical Psychology Program that they complete an internship in a non-CPA or APA-accredited, non-APPIC site. *Please note, however, that this option may not always be the most appropriate, nor may it be viable. In this regard, it is the clear expectation of the Program that students have structured all aspects of their internship applications, from the outset, to maximize a successful match with an accredited site.*

Should the above option be allowed by the Program, the procedure to follow for consideration and approval of this non-accredited placement is the same as that specified previously for a non-CPA or APA accredited APPIC internship placement procedure. In particular, students must first complete the **Proposed Internship Site, Supervisors, and Plan of Supervision** document. This document will then be reviewed by the Clinical Psychology Program to determine if the proposed internship placement meets the standards and criteria as specified in **Appendix A**.

**Applying to an APPIC site that is not CPA or APA accredited.** If one of the internships to which students are applying is not CPA or APA accredited, it should, at minimum, be a member of APPIC.

Please note that the student is required to provide an extremely strong written rationale for considering and including any CPA or APA non-accredited APPIC internships as part of their application process. Thus, the student needs to provide the DCT with a completed “**Proposed Internship Site, Supervisors, and Plan of Supervision**” document. The specifics of what should be included in this document are stated in Appendix A.

## APPENDIX A

### **Application Process for Western Clinical Psychology Program Approval of a Non-CPA or APA- Accredited Internship Placement**

**Note:** *The program expects that all of our students will apply for and secure CPA or APA accredited internship placements, and thus, the process outlined in this Appendix will be rarely used.*

The onus and responsibility is on the student to submit materials about the proposed internship training program to the DCT for approval. The completed submission should describe the nature of the proposed internship in enough detail to allow the Clinical Psychology Program to determine whether appropriate standards would be met.

To recommend a student to any non – CPA or APA accredited site, the DCT will request that the student provide written information, in a timely fashion. The details of what information is required in this document, and how this information will be reviewed by the program, are specified below.

#### **1. Document: Proposed Internship Site, Supervisors, and Plan of Supervision**

All documentation and accompanying materials should be submitted in a timely fashion (e.g., very early spring for those who did not secure an APPIC match two years in a row, and are now proposing a non-APPIC internship). It is expected that the student will provide relevant written information about the site, such as: the number of interns in that setting, the setting's history of training, seminars, supervision, structure of rotations, plans for future accreditation, membership in training councils, etc. The student would also be required to provide detailed information about the proposed supervisors regarding their suitability as internship advisors. This should include an up-to-date vita which will include information about clinical experiences and experiences with clinical training and supervision. The student should also submit a detailed plan of supervision and activities that would be engaged in, in that setting, with the proposed supervisors.

#### **2. Guidelines for Assessing the Suitability of a Non-CPA or APA Accredited Internship**

In order to assure the quality of training and to protect students from being placed in a position (i.e., assuming the role of underpaid or overworked staff) that is not consistent with the focus on training that is the fundamental aspect of an internship, the following guidelines serve as standards for non-CPA or APA accredited internship programs [see also CPA (2002) Accreditation Standards and Procedures for Doctoral Programmes and Internships on Professional Psychology: sections on Standards and Criteria for Internships in Clinical and Counseling Psychology].

The site must meet the following criteria (modeled, in part, after APPIC membership criteria):

2.1 The internship is an organized training program which, in contrast to supervised experience or on-the-job training, is designed to provide the intern with a planned, programmed sequence of training experiences. The primary focus and purpose is assuring breadth and quality of training.

2.2 The student must be clearly designated as a trainee as opposed to being hired as a junior staff member.

2.3 The program must have a registered/certified/licensed psychologist (PhD, Psy.D) who functions as training director and who is responsible for:

- (a) establishing a contract with the trainee regarding the content of the training program.
- (b) insuring that the trainee's program is evaluated periodically (at least at the mid year mark) so that the training program can be modified, if necessary.
- (c) insuring that mid-year and end-of-year evaluation is made of the trainee's skills and deficits as a clinical psychologist and that it is sent to the DCT.

2.4 The trainee's internship experiences must represent a reasonable balance of activities undertaken by a clinical psychologist, including activities such as direct assessment and treatment, group and individual contact, consultation, program development, program evaluation and research. A variety of different treatment approaches and client populations should also be available. However, we recognize that the range of experiences will vary widely. The decision about whether the activities are appropriate will be made in light of professional standards for defining an area of competence in the student's area of choice.

2.5 The trainee must be supervised by at least two different registered/licensed psychologists for a minimum of two hours per week of scheduled individual supervision. The total amount of regularly scheduled supervision must be at least four hours per week, supplemented by additional unscheduled or group supervision, or supervision by staff who are not registered psychologists (e.g., social workers, psychiatrists, psychological associates).

2.6 The internship must be completed as a full-year full-time experience, with a minimum of 1800 hours.

2.7 At least 25% of trainees' time is in face-to-face psychological services to patients/clients.

2.8 The internship must provide at least two hours per week in didactic activities such as case conferences, seminars, in-service training, or grand rounds.

2.9 The internship must have at least one other predoctoral intern in clinical psychology (in addition to any practicum students or trainees in other disciplines). This is to promote peer interaction and learning.

2.10 The internship setting has documented due process procedures that describe separately how programs deal with (1) concerns about intern performance, and (2) intern's concerns about training. These procedures include the steps of notice, hearing, and appeal, and are given to the interns at the beginning of the training period.

2.11 The following will serve as positive evidence of a non-CPA or APA accredited program's commitment to qualify in training:

- (a) membership in the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC);
- (b) application for accreditation underway with either CPA or APA;
- (c) application for membership underway with APPIC;
- (d) membership in the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCPPP).

### **Further Points**

- Even if a non-CPA or APA accredited, or a non-APPIC internship site meets or is trying to meet the requirements above, there may still be questions concerning the quality of the program, and more documentation may be requested before any decision concerning approval of the site. The decision rests with the DCT & CPC, in consultation with the core clinical psychology faculty.
- A decision with which the student disagrees may be appealed to the Executive Officer for Graduate Affairs, and then if necessary, to the School of Graduate Studies. The final University of Western Ontario level of appeal would then be the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA). All appeals will follow procedures as specified by Senate, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the Psychology Graduate Program.