



## Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology

### POLICY Counting Research and Clinical Experiences as Program-Sanctioned Hours (*program-sanctioned hours must be pre-approved*)

Date: September 21, 2012

#### ***Preamble:***

The University of Western Ontario's Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology recognizes there has been an overemphasis on internship applicants accruing a greater number of practicum hours to increase the probability that they will be matched for residency training. For many years, internship training directors have noted that the *quality* of hours is more important than the *quantity* of hours and that those individuals who rank applicants are (or at least should be) concerned most with the "goodness of fit" between the residency applicant and the placement.

The Clinical Program also recognizes that other important factors increase the probability that one will be successfully matched (e.g., defending one's dissertation prior to beginning internship; depth of training experiences; how the applicant's materials are organized and written).

Notwithstanding the importance of demonstrating goodness of fit, completing dissertation requirements and ensuring that the candidate is well-prepared for the application and interview process, the issue of "hours" remains important. The Clinical Program believes that permitting students to count appropriate research and clinical experiences that are accrued outside of regular practicum placements may (a) continue to foster growth and development as scientists and as clinicians and (b) enhance our students' competitiveness for the APPIC match.

#### ***Policy Guidelines:***

##### **A. Counting Research Experiences**

Students will be able to count paid, volunteer or dissertation-relevant research experiences provided that the following conditions are met:

- 1) The research experience must involve direct (face-to-face) contact with a clinically-relevant sample.
- 2) The research experience must involve interviewing (e.g., structured clinical interviews), the provision of an intervention or treatment and/or the administration of intellectual or personality assessment. The administration of self-report, paper-and-pencil measures may not count as program-sanctioned hours. \*NOTE: According to APPIC, paid assessment hours cannot be counted as program-sanctioned hours.

- 3) Students must submit in writing justification for why particular research experiences should be counted as program-sanctioned hours (i.e., the onus is on the student to demonstrate that a particular experience is clinically-relevant and continues to provide incremental learning). The intended supervisor must also “sign off” on this justification.
- 4) The research activity must be performed under the supervision of a registered doctoral-level psychologist.
- 5) The experience must involve some regular supervision (ideally maintaining the 4:1 ratio that is required of practicum experiences).
- 6) The hours must be documented by the student and verified by the supervisor.
- 7) The student must be meeting or exceeding objective benchmarks for their thesis or dissertation progress.
- 8) Students must carry their own professional liability insurance.<sup>1</sup>

#### **B. Counting Paid or Volunteer Clinical Experiences**

Students will be able to count paid or volunteer clinical experiences provided that the following conditions are met.

- 1) The clinical experience involves interviewing (e.g., structured clinical interviews), the provision of an intervention or treatment and/or the administration of intellectual or personality assessment. The administration of self-report, paper-and-pencil measures may not count as program-sanctioned hours. \*NOTE: According to APPIC, paid assessment hours cannot be counted as program-sanctioned hours.
- 2) The clinical experience must be consistent with evidence-based practice.
- 3) Students must submit in writing justification why particular clinical experiences should be counted as program-sanctioned hours (i.e., the onus is on the student to demonstrate that a particular experience is clinically-relevant and continues to provide incremental learning). The intended supervisor must also “sign off” on this justification.
- 4) The clinical activity must be performed under the supervision of a registered doctoral-level psychologist.
- 5) The experience must involve regular supervision (ideally maintaining the 4:1 ratio that is required of practicum experiences).
- 6) The hours must be documented by the student and verified by the supervisor.
- 7) The student must be meeting or exceeding objective benchmarks for their thesis or dissertation progress.
- 8) Students carry must their own professional liability insurance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coverage for professional liability insurance through BMS, or another carrier, is on a claims-made basis (i.e., the insurance will respond to claims made during the policy term). As such, students should continue obtaining coverage throughout the tenure of their career.

#### **C. Procedure for Approval**

Prior to commencing the research or clinical activity, the student will submit in writing a request (no more than 1 page) to the Director of Clinical Training (DCT) outlining the proposed research or clinical experience, number of hours, the supervisor and arrangements with respect to

supervision. The student will also justify why this experience should be counted as program-sanctioned hours and provide detailed evidence that he or she is meeting or exceeding the benchmarks for thesis/dissertation progress. The DCT may then consult with the student's supervisor, the clinical practicum coordinator and/or other relevant individuals. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. All approvals will be granted for a period of no more than 6 months at a time.

At the end date of the contract (and prior to approval of any further program-sanctioned hours), students will submit a log and tally of their hours co-signed by their clinical supervisor.

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