

## **NASP Program Approval Board**

### **Update for Faculty in School Psychology Programs and Others Interested in the NASP Program Review and Approval Process**

**Report Prepared July 2008**

**Patti Harrison, Chair, 2007-2008**

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**Program Approval Board Members: Joe Prus, Nancy Waldron, George Bear, Susan Bartels, Leslie Munson, and Dan Olympia**

In the update below, you will see an overview and history of the NASP program review and approval process, including a description of the relationship between the NASP program review process and NCATE requirements for all specialized professional associations (SPAs) and a comparison between materials provided by programs in the previous paper submission process and now for the new online submission process. Also included are a summary of NASP approval outcomes for the past six program review cycles and a summary of a recent strategic planning discussion by NASP Program Approval Board members. We hope that the update below will provide helpful information to program faculty in school psychology programs and others interested in the NASP program review and approval process.

We would appreciate your feedback and suggestions about the NASP program review and approval process! Please send emails to Patti Harrison, previous Program Approval Board Chair ([pharriso@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:pharriso@bamaed.ua.edu)) or Enedina García Vázquez, new Program Approval Board Chair ([nasppab@psl.nmsu.edu](mailto:nasppab@psl.nmsu.edu)).

#### **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF NASP PROGRAM REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

##### ***Introduction***

Since 1988, NASP has been pleased to provide a national review and approval service for graduate programs in school psychology as part of our efforts to support high-quality school psychology preparation of graduate candidates for effective school psychology practice. NASP program review and approval is part of the association's commitment to enhancing the learning and mental health of all children and youth by promoting the professional development of competent school psychologists in accordance with national standards of quality graduate education.

Specialist level (60+ graduate credits) and doctoral level programs in school psychology are reviewed and approved by NASP. For school psychology programs that submit documentation for a NASP review by trained national reviewers, the NASP Program Approval Board awards "NASP-approval" (national recognition) status for those programs that provide evidence of consistency with the *NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*. The NASP training standards provide the foundation for program review and approval, and school psychology program submissions for NASP-approval/national recognition status are evaluated to determine that programs meet NASP standards in policy and practice.

Currently, the 2000 edition of the NASP training standards is in place and used for program

review. The 2000 NASP training standards consist of the following sections: Program Context/Structure (Standards 1.1 to 1.10), Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice (Standards 2.1 to 2.11), Field Experiences/Internship (Standards 3.1 to 3.5), Performance-Based Program Assessment and Accountability (Standards 4.1 to 4.3), and Program Support/Resources (Standards 5.1 to 5.8). In the next few years, program review and approval will be based on the next revision of the NASP standards, following their adoption in 2010.

It is important to note that the NASP training standards are official *policy* documents of the association and provide statements about program structure, content, and evaluation that reflect NASP's expectations for high quality in all school psychology programs. The processes of program review and approval are considered to be NASP *procedures*. For example, procedures include the requirements for materials submitted by programs, the activities of reviewers, the types of NASP approval decisions, and other procedures described below.

### ***Relationship with NCATE***

NASP is one of the specialized professional associations (SPAs) of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and conducts program reviews as a part of the NCATE unit accreditation process. As an NCATE SPA, NASP does not accredit school psychology programs, but identifies approved programs. NCATE accredits units (e.g., Schools of Education), not programs, but does provide "national recognition" status (full or with conditions) to NASP-approved programs in NCATE-accredited units. In order to provide all school psychology programs with access to the NASP review process and potentially to national approval/national recognition, NASP also conducts reviews of school psychology programs that are not in NCATE units and that submit materials for review by NASP on a voluntary basis.

NCATE and NASP conduct a fall and spring program review and approval cycle each year. Submissions from programs for fall program reviews are due September 15 each year, with an approval decision sent to programs the following January. Submissions from programs for spring program reviews are due February 1 each year, with an approval decision sent to programs the following June.

### ***Previous Paper Submission Process***

From 1988 to 2007, school psychology programs that submitted for NASP review used a traditional "paper" process. In the traditional paper process, programs submitted folios of extensive materials (e.g., handbooks, masked candidate transcripts, internship materials, syllabi, etc.) to demonstrate that program policy and practices were consistent with NASP training standards.

The adoption of the 2000 NASP standards, national accountability requirements at all levels of education (P-12, undergraduate and graduate education, etc.), and new NCATE emphases resulted in an increased focus on program assessment and accountability. In paper submissions for NASP review beginning in 2002, programs included the previously-noted materials to document policy and practice *and* also provided evidence to document that each NASP domain standard (Standards 2.1 to 2.11: NASP Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice) was met, according to the following criteria: (a) *addressed* in program coursework in other experiences, (b) *assessed* in program methods for evaluating competencies of graduate candidates, and (c) *attained* by graduate candidates.

Programs documented that a domain was addressed by providing course syllabi and other materials. To document that a domain was assessed and attained, programs provided information about their assessment methods and two years of candidate attainment data for the assessments. At a minimum, programs were required to document assessment methods and provide candidate data for the following three assessments: state or national (PRAXIS-II) school psychology examination; intern evaluations by field supervisors; and comprehensive, performance based assessment of candidates by program faculty.

In addition, programs were required to provide documentation that all candidates were able to integrate domains of knowledge and apply professional skills in delivering services evidenced by measurable, positive impact on children, youth, families, and other consumers and that systematic and valid procedures were used to evaluate and improve program quality.

### ***New Online Submission Process***

In response to broadening demands for accountability in all levels of education, NCATE developed a standard online program submission and review process for SPAs (called the "Program Review System") in 2006, and NASP made modifications to its submission and review procedures to conform to the required NCATE online procedures for all SPAs. Programs that submitted for full review for re-approval in fall 2006 had the option to use the traditional paper process or the new online submission procedures. Beginning in spring 2007, all programs submitting for full review for new approval or re-approval use the new online submission process. (A program holding NASP-approval with conditions and that initially submitted a full review using the traditional paper process may submit its conditional report using the traditional paper process until fall 2008).

The new online program submission and review process has many similarities with the traditional paper process. The NASP training standards continue to provide the foundation for program review and approval, and programs submit extensive materials online (e.g., handbooks, masked candidate transcripts, internship materials, syllabi, etc. that were also required for paper submissions) to document that programs meet NASP standards in policy and practice. As with paper submissions, programs provide evidence to document that each NASP domain standard (Standards 2.1 to 2.11: NASP Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice) is adequately *addressed* in coursework in other experiences, *assessed* in program methods for evaluating candidate competencies, and *attained* by candidates in the program.

Programs continue to document that a domain is addressed by providing course syllabi and other materials. However, evidence to document that domain competencies are assessed by programs and attained by graduate candidates is more extensive with the new online process. NCATE has structured the new online submission process to require that programs submit information for 6-8 types of required assessments, with types of assessments being standard across all NCATE SPAs. School psychology programs submit information for the following assessments: state or national school psychology credentialing exam; program or course-embedded assessment of candidate content knowledge; practicum evaluations; intern evaluations by field supervisors; comprehensive, performance based assessment of interns by program faculty; and assessment that demonstrates candidate positive impact on student learning.

Although requirements for program assessment methods and candidate attainment data are more extensive for the new online submission process, it should be noted that the new online program submissions require only *two* more assessments than the previous, traditional paper

process: program or course-embedded assessment of candidate content knowledge (which may be candidate grades in courses and other content assessments) and practicum evaluations. For online submissions, NCATE requires that programs submit data that aggregate candidate outcomes on each assessment for the three years prior to the program's submission, although a transition period from NCATE will allow fewer years of assessment data until fall 2009. In addition, programs continue to provide descriptions of use of systematic, valid procedures to evaluate and improve the program quality, as was required for the previous paper review process.

### ***NASP Review of Programs' Submissions***

Following a program's submission for NASP review, each program's materials are reviewed by 2-3 reviewers from a pool of 60+ trained reviewers, who are NASP members (faculty members and practitioners) with extensive training and annual updates about the program review process. Reviewers systematically evaluate the evidence of policy and practice submitted by a program, provide a rating to indicate if each NASP training standard is met or not met by a program, and provide comments and suggestions for the program. Although reviewers are encouraged to confer by telephone, each reviewer conducts an independent evaluation of a program's materials and prepares a separate review report. Beginning in 2007, reviewers evaluate materials submitted online by the program to NCATE's Program Review System website and then submit their review reports online on the NCATE site. Each reviewer contributes approximately 10-20+ hours to the review of a single program.

During its meetings at the conclusion of the fall and spring review cycles, the NASP Program Approval Board members also conduct an evaluation of each program's submission, integrate comments across the 2-3 reviewers of the program, and write additional comments. The board then determines a final rating of met/not met for each NASP training standard, prepares a final report to be sent to the program, and makes a final decision about NASP approval/national recognition of the program.

### ***NASP Review Outcomes: NASP Approval/National Recognition***

There are three types of decisions that result from NASP review of school psychology programs. NASP approval/national recognition may be "full" or "with conditions," or a program may not receive approval/national recognition because further development is needed. Information about the two NASP approval/national recognition outcomes is summarized below:

- *NASP approval/national recognition-full* indicates the NASP review process found that a school psychology program demonstrated consistency with NASP standards. The period of NASP approval/national recognition-full for a program is 5 or 7 years.
- *NASP approval/national recognition with conditions* indicates the NASP review process found that a school psychology program demonstrated general consistency with key NASP standards, but must submit additional documentation, usually within 18 months, to be evaluated for possible continuation of NASP approval.

Programs that receive NASP approval/national recognition with conditions and programs that do not receive approval/national recognition have up to two opportunities to submit conditional reports or revised reports, respectively, within 18 months. Two opportunities to submit conditional or revised reports became available for programs submissions for the new online submission process in fall 2006; the previous paper submission and review process allowed one opportunity for programs to submit conditional or revised reports.

*It should be noted that NASP treats programs with full or conditional status equally in terms of the rights and benefits of NASP approval. This is true of NCATE's national recognition status as well.*

### ***NASP Approval/National Recognition of APA Accredited School Psychology Doctoral Programs***

NASP will accept APA accreditation of a school psychology doctoral program in lieu of a comprehensive doctoral program submission, contingent on the submission of documentation regarding the program's APA accreditation status and compliance with NASP internship standards. The brief process used by APA accredited programs to request NASP approval/national recognition consists of the program submitting copies of its latest APA site visit team report, follow-up correspondence from the program to APA (if any), and the official accreditation letter from APA. In addition, the program submits program policy documents showing internship requirements consistent with NASP standards. The materials are submitted by the doctoral program each time it is reviewed and re-accredited by APA.

### ***Advantages of NASP Program Review and Approval and Link to the NCSP***

The mission of NASP is to represent school psychology and support school psychologists to enhance the learning and mental health of all children and youth. NASP's mission is accomplished through promotion of professional competence; recognition of the essential components of graduate education and professional development; graduate preparation of school psychologists to deliver a continuum of services to children, youth, families, and schools; identification of professional practices that are empirically-based, data driven, and culturally competent; and advocacy for the value of school psychological services and for appropriate research-based education and mental health services, among other important initiatives. The NASP program review and approval process contributes to the development of effective school psychology services through the identification of critical graduate education experiences and competencies needed by candidates preparing for careers in school psychology. NASP program approval/national recognition is an important indicator of high quality graduate education in school psychology, comprehensive content, and extensive, properly supervised field experiences and internships, as judged by trained national reviewers. Thus, NASP approval/national recognition confers multiple advantages to programs, program graduates, the profession of school psychology, and, most importantly, to the children, families, and schools that we serve.

Another advantage of NASP program approval, especially for program graduates, is its link to National Certification in School Psychology (NCSP). All graduates of specialist level graduate programs of study in school psychology are eligible to apply for the NCSP. All applicants for the NCSP must document an internship consistent with NASP standards and attainment of a passing score on the national school psychology examination (PRAXIS II) administered by Educational Testing Service. Applicants for the NCSP also must document having met graduate education requirements consistent with NASP training standards in the 11 domains of knowledge and outcomes. Graduates of NASP-approved programs (full or with conditions) provide evidence of meeting the graduate education requirements by documenting their completion of a NASP-approved program; the NASP program approval process ensures that the program graduates have met these requirements. Graduates of school psychology programs that do not hold NASP-approval must submit a portfolio to document that they have met this graduate education requirement.

## ***HISTORY OF NASP PROGRAM REVIEWS: FALL 2005-SPRING 2008***

Table 1 at the end of this report presents data for the last six review cycles, fall 2005-spring 2008. It should be noted that the number of programs that submit materials for a NASP review has been increasing, and it is expected that program submissions for the next few years will continue to increase. During the last six review cycles, an average of 79% of programs that submitted for NASP review received NASP approval/national recognition. Another important trend in the data reflects the implementation of the new online submission in the last few years, and the comparable percentages of programs that received NASP approval/national recognition during the transition from the paper review to the online review process. This is unique within the NCATE program review system, as the approval rates for many other SPAs fell to levels as low as 20-30% after assessment methods and candidate performance data were required for programs' submissions to SPAs.

## ***NASP PROGRAM APPROVAL: STRATEGIC PLANNING***

During our May 2008 meeting, the NASP Program Approval Board members, joined by Rhonda Armistead (NASP President), Susan Gorin (NASP Executive Director), and Joan Bohmann (NASP Director of Professional Standards and Continuing Professional Development), devoted significant time to discussing NASP program review and approval procedures and identifying strategic plans for the future. We reviewed issues that board members have discussed in previous meetings, especially since NCATE's implementation of the new online program submission and review system for all NCATE SPAs. In addition, we reviewed the numerous comments that we have received from school psychology program faculty members and NASP reviewers through our annual surveys, focus groups and training sessions/workshops held at recent NASP conventions, emails, and listserv postings.

We reviewed a number of positive comments and recommendations, as well as concerns, from program faculty, reviewers, and Program Approval Board members. Topics discussed during our meeting included the importance of NASP program review and approval in promoting high quality graduate education and in preparation of graduate students for effective roles as school psychologists, particularly in relationship to the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) system of individual recognition.

We also discussed a number of concerns about the program review process that board members have identified during the last couple of years and that have been expressed to us by program faculty and reviewers. For example, we discussed the time and commitment required by programs to prepare their submissions and required by NASP reviewers for a program review. We discussed the complexities and demands of the new online submission and review system that has been implemented recently by NCATE and is required for NASP as an NCATE SPA, particularly the more extensive requirements for program assessment methods and candidate attainment data. Many additional topics were discussed. We are appreciative of the many helpful suggestions from program faculty and reviewers and the consistency between their recommendations and the board's own observations about the review and approval process.

We also identified a number of specific action plans. Examples of our plans include preparation of new documents for publication in newsletters and on our website that provide information about the NASP program approval and review process for faculty members, current and prospective graduate students, practitioners, and the public. The current update document is

the first in a series of planned documents and other communications. In addition, we aim to develop additional resources for programs and reviewers to assist in their activities related to NASP program review and approval, including providing more sample materials and implementing activities in which approved programs mentor new or developing programs. The Program Approval Board typically sends annual requests for feedback to programs, as well as NASP reviewers. Because NCATE is no longer conducting a post-review evaluation with program "compilers" (directors or faculty who prepare and submit program reports), we plan to expand our NASP solicitation of feedback and recommendations by using more structured, annual surveys. A number of additional plans were discussed, and some have been discussed with NCATE as well.

We felt that our extensive discussion at our last NASP Program Approval Board meeting provided a good analysis of multiple issues and a foundation for future action plans; we will continue our analysis, planning, and improvements. We also urge NASP leaders, leaders of other school psychology organizations, program faculty, graduate students, internship supervisors, NASP program reviewers, and others to continue to provide suggestions and feedback about the NASP program review and approval process. Although our board members continuously discuss these topics, we depend on YOUR feedback. Please keep sending it!

### ***CONCLUSIONS AND THANKS!***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a brief overview of the NASP program review and approval process, the rigor of our procedures to ensure high quality graduate education in school psychology, and the contributions of the process to professional practice in school psychology. Many individuals participate in NASP program review and approval and support NASP's goal of serving learning and mental health of children and youth by promoting the preparation of competent school psychologists in accordance with national standards of quality graduate education.

Much appreciation goes to the members of the NASP Program Approval Board (Joe Prus, Susan Bartels, George Bear, Nancy Waldron, Eneida García Vázquez, Leslie Munson, and Dan Olympia), who complete reviews themselves, summarize reviews in preparation of our board meetings, attend very lengthy and intense board meetings, make complex decisions about program approval, and prepare program review and approval guidelines and resources. Activities to implement the new online submission and review procedures have required much time and expertise from our wonderful board members!

Also, we are very grateful for our team of over 60 NASP program reviewers for their contributions and time. Most reviewers spend 10-20+ hours on a single program review and contribute their expertise in reviewing program documents to determine that NASP standards are addressed in graduate education for our wonderful profession. The new online submission and review procedures have presented a few challenges and resulted in even more time for a program review; we greatly appreciate the patience and diligence of our reviewers! Their work is very important to our profession and is much appreciated by NASP and the Program Approval Board.

Finally, we thank the numerous school psychology graduate programs that have participated in the NASP program approval process or are developing programs to meet NASP standards. We very much appreciate the contributions of program faculty AND students to strong graduate education in school psychology.

**Table 1. History of Outcomes of NASP Program Review  
Fall 2005-Spring 2008 Review Cycles**

<b>FALL 2005 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (all paper submissions) <sup>a</sup>	22	14	6	91%
Conditional Reports and Revised Reports (all paper submissions) <sup>b</sup>	11	7	1	73%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	1	1		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>SPRING 2006 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (all paper submissions) <sup>a</sup>	12	4	4	67%
Revised Reports (paper submission) <sup>b</sup>	1	1		100%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	1	1		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>71%</b>

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Table 1 continued

<b>FALL 2006 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (13 paper submissions; 11 online submissions) <sup>a</sup>	24	12	9	88%
Conditional Reports, Revised Reports, and Three Year Reviews (all paper submissions) <sup>b</sup>	16	9	5	88%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	4	4		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>89%</b>
<b>SPRING 2007 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (all online) <sup>a</sup>	11	4	4	73%
Revised Reports (all paper submissions) <sup>b</sup>	2		1	50%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	1	1		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>71%</b>

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Table 1 continued

<b>FALL 2007 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (all online) <sup>a</sup>	23	8	13	91%
Conditional Reports and Three Year Reviews (all paper submissions except for one online conditional report) <sup>b</sup>	15	13	1	93%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	8	8		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>SPRING 2008 REVIEW CYCLE Type of Review</b>	<b>Number Reviewed</b>	<b>NASP Approval/National Recognition Decision</b>		
		<b>Full</b>	<b>With Conditions</b>	<b>Percentage Approved</b>
Full Reviews for New Approval or Re-approval (all online) <sup>a</sup>	14	6	1	50%
Conditional Reports and Revised Reports (all online) <sup>b</sup>	4	4		100%
APA Doctoral Program Requests for Approval <sup>c</sup>	1	1		100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>63%</b>

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**Table 1 Notes:**

<sup>a</sup> Programs that submitted for full review for new approval or re-approval used the traditional paper process until spring 2006, had the option to use the traditional paper process or the new NASP-NCATE online submission process in fall 2006, and used the NASP-NCATE online submission process in spring 2007 and after.

<sup>b</sup> “Conditional Reports” were re-submissions from programs previously granted NASP approval/national recognition with conditions. “Revised Reports” were re-submissions from programs previously reviewed but that were not granted NASP approval/national recognition in the previous review. “Three Year Reviews” were re-submissions from programs previously granted a 3 year approval, but that were required to submit additional documentation to demonstrate consistency with NASP standards. Beginning in fall 2006, NASP and NCATE no longer awarded a 3 year approval. Beginning in spring 2007, conditional and revised reports were submitted online only if the previous review was online.

<sup>c</sup> “APA Doctoral Program Requests” included those APA accredited doctoral programs seeking initial approval or re-approval by documenting their APA accreditation, combined with documentation of compliance with NASP internship standards.