ADMINISTERING A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM: IDEAS AND ISSUES

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BACKGROUND

Although designed primarily to provide guidance to new programs, this Technical Assistance Brief offers ideas that all programs might find useful for administering a school program. For new programs, it is assumed that the reader has already read the Technical Assistance Brief “First Steps in Planning a School Psychology Program.” This brief is more specific to issues of administering a program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and institute a program policy and procedures manual.
  This is for documenting all strategic, operational, and tactical agreements (i.e., policies and procedures) made by the faculty of the program. The manual should be updated and maintained after every program meeting. This would include the addition of meeting minutes, as well as any changes in policies and procedures.

- Develop procedures for effective communication within the program (and include them in the program manual).
  The first major procedures the program faculty should agree on are how to communicate. This includes consensus building, civility, decision making, and lines of communication within the program. Amongst a civil faculty, consensus is usually sufficient with some rules of order (such as Robert’s or Keesey’s) to be used when consensus cannot be reached. For less civil faculty, it may be necessary to stick with rules of order until civility can be worked out.

- Develop procedures for effective communication outside of the program.
  The administration of a university-based school psychology training program is just one level of administration in a university. Lines of communication should be established from the student all the way to the provost of the university. Clarifying lines of communication allows for preventive measure to be put in place and allows all faculty and students to know to whom they should be talking. This prevents individuals jumping over the next person in the line of communication and makes it easy for a decision maker to ask, “Have you talked to so and so before coming to me?” What needs to be communicated,
and to whom, also needs to be established (e.g., program minutes and/or periodic reports to the chair or dean).

- **Determine early how the program director will be selected and the terms of office.**
  Select the director to lead the program’s development. How the director is selected should be included in the manual, as well as how the director will be reviewed. Even if these are lifetime appointments by the dean, it makes sense to have a formal review period and process built into the program policy and procedure manual.

- **Determine the program’s budgetary needs and the process for meeting them.**
  Another major aspect the program director needs to understand is university budgeting cycles and processes. What resources are needed, and from whom does one ask for resources? How are decisions about resources allocated on an annual basis? Is there an annual capital and operating budget process? How can the program build its faculty or gain additional controllables for increasing costs of tests and materials? Because resources are notoriously limited, the program director should become fluid in understanding these variables to provide adequate representation on these sensitive matters.

- **Develop a Student Handbook.**
  This is for consumption by the students in the program as well as accrediting bodies. The student handbook is largely procedural and helps students navigate university, school, and program policies. It also is used to codify the student’s personal responsibility to the program including registration, care for tests, confidentiality, conduct, and more. To get ideas on what should be included in the handbook, review those of other programs.

- **Establish an agenda format for the program’s faculty meetings.**
  The following is recommended for meeting agendas. It is likely to be more comprehensive than necessary, but attempts to cover all program stakeholders and serves as a good reminder of items that a program should be addressing.
  - Review and approval of previous meeting minutes
  - Agenda review (All faculty should be able to add to the agenda.)
  - Budget (All faculty should have input into controllable spending, if available.)
  - Performance-based accountability data (This is an important category to review program-generated data and make programmatic improvements based on these data.)
  - New and ongoing teams (Unlike Robert’s rules of order suggests, one might not need to figure out the difference between new and old business.)
  - Facilitator reports (If the program director has faculty with facilitator roles such as recruitment, accreditation, website, and/or graduate student facilitator, then progress should be reviewed here.)
  - Strategic initiatives (This is a category for big initiatives based on the program’s strategic plan.)
  - Student issues (This is a category to review concerns the faculty have about students and site supervisors. If there is a student representative to the program meetings, it would make sense to go into executive session for this item.)
  - Student-raised issues (Students may submit agenda items via their student organization.)
  - Parked items (This is a list of items that the program is not going to act upon in the short run, but does not want to lose sight of.)
  - +/- (plus/delta; This is a time at the end when everybody gets a chance to weigh in on what is working well about the meeting and what could be changed. This is designed to have group-level accountability for each other on the faculty.)
• **Develop comprehensive cyclical calendars for the program operations and for student expectations.**
  
  This is important for program assistant turnover and when someone new steps up as the program director. The minutia that a program director or program assistant deals with on a daily basis can be mind-boggling to a new director or assistant. An example of a cyclical calendar for student activities, as used at the Duquesne University, is attached.

• **Develop a mission or identity statement, program objectives, and a strategic plan for initiating and developing the program.**
  
  This can happen earlier or later in this list. As Fullen points out in *Transformational Leadership*, sometimes to get a system going, we need to take a ready-fire-aim approach. That is, you can dive right into building a system for program meeting agendas and other procedures that may not be so strategic, rather pragmatic. A highly effectively administered program will begin to rely upon its mission statement, program objectives, and strategic plan to guide agenda items for the program. As strategies are met and the program matures it will need to review its strategic plan to move to the next level of excellence.

**SAMPLE CYCLICAL CALENDAR FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**

**School Psychology Student Requirements**

The following is a list of student requirements, both course specific and program specific, separated by year in the program. Each item has a deadline. Failure to adhere to these deadlines may result in an “I” (Incomplete) grade for course specific requirements or dismissal from the program for program specific requirements. All of this documentation must be submitted to the program office.

**First Year**

- Submit Child Abuse Clearance
- Submit Criminal Clearance
- Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education
- Career Services – Optional
- Role and Function Field Placement Form (Fall)
- Consultation and Intervention Field Placement Form (Spring)
- Individual Testing Accrued Hours Form
- Annual Student Self Evaluation
- Apply for Master’s Graduation (as of Summer Year One)

*Remember to accumulate all documentation for portfolio per Appendix EE*

**Second Year**

- Counseling Practicum – Fall Semester
  - Field Placement
  - Monthly Log
  - Site Evaluation
- Integrated Practicum – Spring Semester
  - Field Placement
  - Monthly Log
  - Site Evaluation

- Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education
Career Services – Optional
CAGS Only – Workshop on Internship Application Procedure

October

Successfully Pass CAGS Comprehensive Exam / 
PhD Preliminary Exam

May – 2nd Week

Annual Student Self Evaluation

Due 5/15

CAGS Students Only – Approved Internship Site

July 1

*Remember to accumulate all documentation for portfolio per Appendix EE*

Third Year – CAGS Only

Internship Contract

Due 9/1

Review Portfolio With Internship Seminar Professor

Due 9/15

Internship Field Placement Form

Due 9/15

Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education

Career Services – Optional

October

Comprehensive Case Study

Due 11/15, 4/15

Internship Quarterly Log

Due 10/15, 12/15, 3/15, 5/15

Internship Competency Evaluation

Due 5/15

Internship Site Evaluation

Due 5/1

Praxis Exam Taken

Due 5/1

Application for State Certification

Due 5/1

Submit Final Complete Portfolio to Internship Seminar Professor

Due 5/1

Annual Student Self Evaluation

Due 5/15

Successful Completion of Internship

Due 5/15

Third Year – PhD Only

Schedule PhD Oral Comps (summer following Year 3)

Research Paper

August 1

3rd Week July

Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education

Career Services – Optional

October

PhD Practicum

by Spring Year 4

PhD Practicum Contract

1st Week of Practicum

PhD Practicum Field Placement Form

1st Week of Practicum

PhD Practicum Monthly Log

Completion of Practicum

PhD Practicum Site Evaluation

Completion of Practicum

Annual Student Self Evaluation

Due 5/15

*Remember to accumulate all documentation for portfolio per Appendix EE*

Fourth Year

Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education

Career Services – Optional

October

Workshop on Internship Application Procedures

October

Annual Student Self Evaluation

Due 5/15

Approved Internship Site

July 1
*Remember to accumulate all documentation for portfolio per Appendix EE*

**Fifth Year**

- Review Portfolio With Internship Seminar Professor Due 9/15
- Internship Contract Due 9/1
- Field Placement Form Due 9/15
- Annual Seminar on Résumés – Director of Education Career Services – Optional October
- Comprehensive Case Study Due 11/15, 4/15
- Internship Quarterly Log Due 10/15, 12/15, 3/15, 5/15
- Internship Competency Evaluation Due 5/15
- Internship Site Evaluation Due 5/15
- Praxis Test Due 5/1
- Annual Student Self Evaluation Due 5/15
- Submit final portfolio to Internship Seminar Professor Due 5/15
- Successful Completion of Internship Due 5/15

Dissertation Committee Formed
- Proposal Defense
- Dissertation Defense

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