

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING GUIDELINES

*A Taxonomy for Education and Training in  
Professional Psychology Health Service Specialties*





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The *Education and Training Guidelines: A Taxonomy for Education and Training in Professional Psychology Health Service Specialties* was approved as APA policy by the APA Council of Representatives in February 2012. It is available online at <http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/taxonomy.pdf>.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the *Education and Training Guidelines: A Taxonomy for Education and Training in Professional Psychology Health Services Specialties* (hereinafter referred to as the *guidelines* or *taxonomy*) is to provide a consistent set of terms and definitions related to education and training in health service psychology specialties recognized by the American Psychological Association (APA). The *Guidelines* also provides a structure for the use of these terms within the education and training sequences for each of these approved specialties. The overarching goal of the *Guidelines* is to facilitate clear and consistent communication in the use of terminology for training programs, students, professional organizations, and members of the public. The *Guidelines* addresses the type and intensity of specialized training opportunities offered by individual education and training programs at the doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure stages of education and training.

These guidelines are intended to be aspirational in nature. The term *guidelines*, as used in this document, is consistent with the provisions of APA policy on “Developing and Evaluating Standards and Guidelines Related to Education and Training in Psychology” (Section I C[1]) (APA, 2004), as passed by the APA Council of Representatives.

The guidelines are predicated on a number of preexisting policies, fundamental assumptions, and definitions:

1. The use of the term *specialty* in this taxonomy refers to the current APA policy specifying that:

A specialty is a defined area of professional psychology practice characterized by a distinctive configuration of competent services for specified problems and populations. Practice in a specialty requires advanced knowledge and skills acquired through an organized sequence of education and training in addition to the broad and general education and core scientific and professional foundations acquired through an APA or CPA [Canadian Psychological Association] accredited doctoral program.\* Specialty training may be acquired either at the doctoral or postdoctoral level as defined by the specialty.

\*Except where APA or CPA program accreditation does not exist for that area of professional psychology (APA, 2011).

2. As of November 2011, APA recognizes 12 specialties: clinical neuropsychology, clinical health psychology, psychoanalytic psychology, school psychology, clinical psychology, clinical child psychology, counseling psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, behavioral and cognitive psychology, forensic psychology, family psychology, and professional geropsychology. Each of these specialties is reviewed by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) every 7 years for continued recognition by APA. Specialties are recognized only after an organized group of psychologists who carry out research, practice, and teach in that specialty area work together to formally petition APA for new or ongoing recognition. CRSPPP reviews these requests using 13 predetermined criteria based directly on APA-approved policy.

The criteria include the distinctiveness and public need for the specialty, peer-governed oversight of the specialty, documentation of the importance of diversity in education and training in the specialty, theoretical and scientific advances in the specialty, practice parameters for the specialty, models of education and continuing professional development for the specialty, service delivery guidelines and measurement of effectiveness for the specialty, quality assurance mechanisms for the specialty, and how individual specialists are recognized as board certified in a given specialty. A specialty must substantially meet these criteria to be recognized by APA and, in the case of these guidelines, to be included in this discussion and the figures illustrating the guidelines.

3. APA recognizes specialties that are related to the direct provision of health services and those that involve other aspects of applied professional service (e.g., industrial-organizational psychology). The present guidelines relate only to those specialties in health service provision. In the future, separate guidelines may be developed that describe education and training in other applied professional specialties of psychology.

4. These guidelines presuppose that any doctoral or internship program that provides opportunities for specialty training related to health service provision in professional psychology is accredited by APA and therefore meets all of the requirements for broad and general training in professional psychology. This is consistent with APA's own definition of *specialties*, described previously, that notes that "a specialty requires advanced knowledge and skills acquired through an organized sequence of education and training in addition to the broad and general education and core scientific and professional foundations."
5. The present guidelines refer to the educational and training sequences as having four stages: doctoral education, internship, postdoctoral training, and postlicensure learning opportunities. Thus, while the guidelines outline recommended terminology that may be applied at all stages of training, it is the role of each specialty to designate which stages are appropriate for education and training in that particular specialty. The Council of Specialties (CoS), an organization that brings together all specialties to discuss common issues, has been involved in the evolution of these guidelines and intends to further their development, specialty by specialty, as well as help with their dissemination.
6. Within each of the stages in the sequence of professional training (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure), these guidelines propose four distinct levels of education and training opportunities in a specialty. In order of increasing intensity, these levels are *Exposure*, *Experience*, *Emphasis*, *Major Area of Study*. A model for operationalizing these levels by specialty is presented within the *Guidelines*.
7. Although these guidelines are specific to education and training in APA-approved specialties, it is understood that education and training programs may want to inform students and the public about other educational and training opportunities with specific populations or in areas of practice that are not formally recognized by APA as specialties. These might include a range of learning opportunities such as multicultural professional activities or treatment opportunities with individuals who have posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, or autism.

Because the ongoing utility and fidelity of these guidelines are dependent on the consistent use of the descriptors *Exposure*, *Experience*, *Emphasis*, *Major Area of*

*Study*, programs are strongly encouraged to use these four terms only in public descriptions of training within APA-approved specialties. It is suggested, however, that the term *focus* be used to describe opportunities in other training areas and that programs strive to provide explicit explanations of the type of training provided in these nonspecialty areas. Consistent use of the term *focus* for this purpose will enhance the clarity of communication regarding educational and training opportunities across programs.

8. These guidelines are not intended to prescribe the training paths of individual students or specialists, nor is the completion of a specialty experience at one stage of education and training meant to imply that training must be completed by an individual at subsequent stages. Rather, the levels (*Exposure*, *Experience*, *Emphasis*, *Major Area of Study*) and stages (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure) in which education and training opportunities are required for specialization are defined for the field by the individual specialties themselves.
9. These guidelines recognize the "general practice of professional psychology" and the fact that any practicing psychologist can provide a full range of services within the boundaries of his or her professional competence, as delineated in APA's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (Standard 2: Competence; APA, 2010b). Further, the general practice of psychology as defined in APA policy and in these guidelines reflects that policy (see, e.g., APA, 2010a) and the range of competencies in that policy that include the observation, description, evaluation, interpretation, and modification of human behavior by the application of psychological principles, methods, and procedures. These guidelines acknowledge that these competencies are based on broad and general training for general practice in professional psychology and in no way delimit practice. When the general practice of psychology is noted in this document, this 2010 policy definition is used.

# INTRODUCTION

## DEFINITION OF TAXONOMY

A taxonomy is simply the orderly classification or arrangement of a set of related concepts based on their common factors. There is typically a hierarchical structure with clear rules defining components of the taxonomy and how the structure is to be organized (see, e.g., Bailey, 1994). In the current guidelines, the taxonomy reflects four stages of training in professional psychology (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure) and, within each stage, levels of increasing intensity of education and training opportunities (Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study).

## PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE GUIDELINES

These guidelines were prepared by APA's Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP). The guidelines are based on a consensus developed during the course of several cross-group meetings, including ongoing feedback on the need for a taxonomy in education and training in professional psychology, as detailed in the next section.

## HISTORY OF THE TAXONOMY

The need for a taxonomy for professional psychology has been raised frequently and increasingly by individuals, groups, and organizations, both within and outside of APA. A range of groups and organizations such as APA's CRSPPP, the Council of Specialties in Professional Psychology (CoS), and the Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology have had a series of explicit discussions about the need for a taxonomy to organize and clearly define the multiple terms used to describe the educational and training opportunities in professional psychology. Historically, each of these groups has independently developed its own definitions for key terms to remedy this problem, but their diligent efforts have often resulted in continued inconsistencies.

Past efforts to develop a single, consistently used taxonomy for professional psychology have been limited in scope or have not been pursued as a broad policy of APA. For example, in 1996, APA endorsed a policy—*A Taxonomy for Postdoctoral and Continuing Education and Training in Psychology*—based on the discussions at the National Conference on Postdoctoral Education and Training in Psychology that took place in Norman, OK. Although that document remains APA policy, its scope is focused only on postdoctoral education and training. In 2004, the Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology drafted *A Conceptual Framework for Specialization in the Health Service Domain of Professional Psychology*. That document proposed definitions of key terms and provided a series of guiding principles related to specialization in the health service domains of psychology. The document, after further review, was not recommended for endorsement as policy by APA.

In 2005, the APA Task Force on Quality Assurance of Education and Training for Recognized Proficiencies in Professional Psychology concluded that “there appears to be a need for a *clearer taxonomy of terminology* [emphasis added] in describing the structure of professional psychology, from its education and training foundations, through credentialing and practice representations to the public.” Then, in 2007, the APA Board of Directors authorized funds to support a 2½-day meeting of a task force to begin the development of such a taxonomy.

CRSPPP has built upon that task force's work product, and the previously described history, to construct this taxonomy in the form of these guidelines. CRSPPP's process that led to these guidelines involved additional conversations with multiple constituency groups and presentations at two APA conventions, during which feedback was solicited and received and then incorporated into several iterations of the guidelines. Then, after a round of public comment, additional suggestions were reviewed and incorporated in the guidelines.

## STATEMENT OF NEED

There has been a growing need for a taxonomy to guide those seeking education and training in a recognized specialty.<sup>1</sup> Such a taxonomy would also provide a structure for the field in general to facilitate better communication concerning how professional psychologists are educated and trained beyond the broad and general training consistent with accreditation standards (APA, 2009b). Currently there is no consistent use of definitions or terms in the education and training community to describe training opportunities in areas recognized as specialties by APA (APA, 2009a, Section 90-5). For example, in describing training opportunities, education and training departments and programs use a range of terms like *area of study*, *track*, or *concentration*. These terms may refer to the same or to different amounts of course work or practica from department to department or from program to program. Such inconsistency jeopardizes a consistent “truth in advertising” that would be helpful to students as they seek graduate education or to later describe the educational and training opportunities provided in their graduate or postgraduate education.

Lack of consistency in the use of such terms is also evident across professional organizations and groups whose focus is on education and training in professional psychology. For example, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) asks programs to describe the types of training available using the terms *major rotation* and *informal/minor/external rotation*, whereas the Committee on Accreditation (CoA) uses the phrase *areas of emphasis* to refer to training opportunities in specialty areas other than the *substantive traditional practice* areas of clinical, counseling, and school (APA, 2003, IR C-6[a]).

As further evidence of both the need and timeliness of this taxonomy, the CoS formed a work group in 2010 that included representatives from the CoS, the American Board of Professional Psychology, and APA’s CoA and CRSPPP to resolve the potential confusion resulting from the lack of a consistent definition of the term *specialty* among these groups. A draft definition was developed and approved by the CoS. Then that definition of *specialty* was recommended by CRSPPP to the APA Council of Representative in August 2011 and was accepted as APA policy at that time. This was a great stride forward in building a consistent set of definitions in professional psychology and led directly to the formulation of the current guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> APA currently recognizes the following specialties in professional psychology: clinical neuropsychology, clinical health psychology, psychoanalytic psychology, school psychology, clinical psychology, clinical child and adolescent psychology, counseling psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, behavioral and cognitive psychology, forensic psychology, family psychology, and professional geropsychology.

The guidelines discussed here provide a structure to help organize the interrelationship of terms used and provide consistency to the descriptions of educational activities within each stage of the education and training sequence (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure). The intent of these guidelines, then, is that they be used by graduate programs, internships, postdoctoral training programs, and postlicensure professional development programs to consistently describe a hierarchy of education and training activities (*Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study*) within each stage of the education and training sequence.

## PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

By providing both a structure and a consistent terminology to reduce current inconsistencies and enhance communication within the field, the proposed taxonomy is likely to have a broad impact. Specifically, the guidelines will have the following effect:

- For students, they will provide a clearer understanding of the definitions of terms used to describe the type and intensity of educational and training activities within a specialty area provided by doctoral, internship, and postdoctoral programs. A clear taxonomy will help students by providing a structure for consistent “truth in advertising” by programs.
- For those already providing psychological services, the guidelines will provide clarification of the structure of programs available for lifelong learning and further professional development.
- For consumers of psychological services and those who make educational and services policy decisions, the guidelines will provide a better understanding of the education and training of psychologists.

It is expected that each APA-recognized specialty will use this taxonomy to help to describe the recommended type and intensity of education and training opportunities within each stage of the education and training sequence within their specialty. The CoS already has agreed to work with all recognized specialties to provide this information for each stage of education and training (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure) and for each level of intensity of education and training opportunities (*Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study*) within each stage.

## WHAT THESE GUIDELINES ARE NOT

- These guidelines are not designed to define specifics of the training or practice of individual psychologists but rather to describe programmatic structure and terms only.
- These guidelines are not intended to be a mechanism for defining the actual content of education and training of professional psychologists or to limit academic freedom or the general practice of psychology; instead, the taxonomy is conceptualized as an organizing construct such that each specialty can describe its recommended set of educational and training opportunities within each stage of the education and training.
- Although these guidelines are specific to education and training in APA-approved specialties, it is understood that education and training programs may want to inform students and the public about other educational and training opportunities with specific populations or in areas of practice that are not formally recognized by APA as specialties. These might include a range of learning opportunities such as multicultural professional activities or treatment opportunities with individuals who have posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, or autism.

Because the ongoing utility and fidelity of these guidelines are dependent on the consistent use of the descriptors *Exposure*, *Experience*, *Emphasis*, *Major Area of Study*, education and training programs are strongly encouraged to use these four terms only in public descriptions of training within APA-approved specialties. It is suggested, then, that the term *focus* be used to describe opportunities in other training areas and that programs strive to provide explicit explanations of the type of training provided in these nonspecialty areas. Consistent use of the term *focus* for this purpose will enhance the clarity of communication regarding educational and training opportunities across programs.

- These guidelines and the taxonomy for professional psychology are not designed to arbitrate conflicts within the field but rather to provide an organizing framework with common definitions that can help better illuminate rules to resolve definitional confusion.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

CRSPPP will serve as the entity responsible for oversight of the implementation process. However, implementation will require close cooperation among the following groups:

- CoS to establish specialty-specific recommendations for each of the four levels of education and training opportunities presented in the taxonomy within each stage of education and training.
- CoS to help with the dissemination of the completed taxonomy.
- Member organizations represented on the Council of Chairs of Training Councils, including doctoral training councils and APPIC, to inform and encourage adoption of the taxonomy.
- APA Boards and Committees to encourage consistent use of terms and definitions within APA itself.

Implementation and dissemination of the *Guidelines* will occur through regularly established meetings between members of CRSPPP and CoS, presentations at national training council meetings and APA annual conventions, written materials such as pamphlets and submissions to newsletters/journals, and posting of information on the CRSPPP section of the APA website. Ongoing interaction between CRSPPP and students in psychology as represented by the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS) will be encouraged to help monitor the impact of the adoption of the guidelines. This process will directly inform the feedback process described below and is consistent with the cooperative and iterative process used to develop the actual guidelines.

## FEEDBACK

The *Guidelines* is a “living document.” Accordingly, APA has established a systematic plan for periodically reviewing and revising such documents to reflect developments in the discipline and the education and training process. Formal reviews will occur every 7 years, which is consistent with APA Association Rule 30-8.3 requiring cyclical review of approved standards and guidelines within periods not to exceed 10 years. Comments and suggestions are welcomed at any time.

Feedback on the *Guidelines* may be sent to [edmail@apa.org](mailto:edmail@apa.org).

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING GUIDELINES: A Taxonomy for Education and Training in Professional Psychology Health Service Specialties

The taxonomy that forms the basis of the *Education and Training Guidelines* provides a structure to organize the interrelationship of terms used to describe the type and intensity of didactic and health services training opportunities within each stage of the professional psychology education and training sequence.<sup>2</sup> It is expected that each APA-recognized specialty will use the structure of this taxonomy to organize its description of the expected type and intensity of didactic and training opportunities within each stage of the education and training sequence for that specialty.

It is hoped that these guidelines, although aspirational in nature, will be used by each education and training program in professional psychology to consistently describe the type and intensity of opportunities offered at the doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, or postlicensure stage in the education and training sequence beyond the broad and general training expectations currently used in accreditation standards. Thus, the definition of *specialty* that forms the basis for the guidelines and the taxonomy is as follows:

A specialty is a defined area of professional psychology practice characterized by a distinctive configuration of competent services for specified problems and populations. Practice in a specialty requires advanced knowledge and skills acquired through an organized sequence of education and training in addition to the broad and general education and core scientific and professional foundations acquired through an APA or CPA [Canadian Psychological Association] accredited doctoral program.\* Specialty training may be acquired either at the doctoral or postdoctoral level as defined by the specialty.

\* Except where APA or CPA program accreditation does not exist for that area of professional psychology (APA, 2011).

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE TAXONOMY

The taxonomy provides a structure for the consistent labeling of the type and intensity of education and training opportunities available in professional psychology programs. Four levels (from lower to higher intensity: **Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study**) are described within each stage of the education and training sequence (**doctoral, internship, post doctoral, or postlicensure**). It is recommended that each education and training program in health service psychology, regardless of the stage in the sequence, use these levels of intensity of education and training to describe learning opportunities for those specialties offered within its program.

The four levels proposed and the accompanying descriptions form the key components of the *Education and Training Guidelines*. The examples of didactic and supervised experience presented in the Appendix are only intended to illustrate the hierarchy of opportunities that the taxonomy provides and are not meant to offer specifics. Each recognized specialty will provide its own recommendations for these amounts for each level

of intensity within each stage of the education and training sequence.

### 1. MAJOR AREA OF STUDY

Major area of study should be used by programs to describe the highest level of education and training opportunity with respect to the types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would be developed and to the intensity and amount of involvement in training to acquire those competencies. This includes expectations for acquisition of knowledge through didactics, practical training and direct service expectations (hours, number of cases, and competencies), and research and scholarly expectations.

*It is hoped that these guidelines, although aspirational in nature, will be used by each education and training program in professional psychology to consistently describe the type and intensity of opportunities offered at the doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, or postlicensure stage.*

<sup>2</sup>APA recognizes specialties that are both related to the direct provision of health services and those that involve other aspects of applied professional service (e.g., industrial-organizational psychology). The present guidelines relate only to those specialties in health service provision. In the future, separate guidelines may be developed that describe education and training in other applied professional specialties of psychology.

For example, programs accredited by the APA's CoA in a traditional substantive professional area (i.e., clinical, counseling, or school) would offer opportunities consistent with a "major area of study" in the respective area of their programs. Organized sequences of education and training might be offered in a program in other recognized specialties as well and might likewise meet the guidelines for a major area of study within that area. While specific details regarding individual programs will likely vary somewhat, they would be consistent with the recommendations of that specialty area's description of major area of study at a particular stage in the training sequence. **Major Area of Study is used to convey the highest level of education and training available in that (specialty) area of study.** Postdoctoral education and training in a specialty is by definition a major area of study requiring 80% or more of time spent in that specialty area, but it would allow for an exposure to other specialty areas (with the actual percentage or other descriptors defined by each specialty).

## 2. EMPHASIS

Emphasis is the level just below major area of study, with distinctly different expectations for the type and intensity of the education and training experience. A programmatic emphasis permits a structured, in-depth opportunity for knowledge acquisition, practical experience, and scientific study in a given specialty area. Again, a program stating that it offers an emphasis in a recognized specialty would be expected to follow the guidelines established by that specialty for this level of education and training within that program's stage in the sequence of training (doctoral, internship, postlicensure). It should be noted that at the *postdoctoral stage* of education and training, it is expected that 80% of a program's time is within a major area of study. Further, if a postdoctoral program offers an exposure in a specialty (up to but not more than 20% of the time) or two exposure opportunities (of 10% or less each), then there would be no program emphasis or experience level within the postdoctoral stage.

## 3. EXPERIENCE

The experience level falls between emphasis and exposure; the type and intensity of the opportunity for learning that the program offers will be clearly distinct from the other levels, with the specific parameters of knowledge acquisition, practical experience, and scientific study defined by that specialty. A programmatic "experience" would go beyond simply acquainting a student with a specialty but would allow more acquisition of knowledge and experience than an exposure to that area.

## 4. EXPOSURE

Exposure represents an education and training opportunity that is limited in type and intensity. An exposure is identified by the

program as a structured learning activity and would be seen as an opportunity to acquaint an individual with that specialty area.

## BROAD AND GENERAL TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

This taxonomy affirms the following:

- Broad and general training forms the core of education and training in professional psychology.
- Programs are themselves accredited by APA.
- Programs clearly show how they integrate their broad general training with those educational and training activities related to recognized specialties.
- Programs properly evaluate their students/graduates as being competent within and across each stage in the education and training sequence.

# A GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES AND TAXONOMY

**a** comprehensive visual representation of the taxonomy is presented in the Appendix, which consists of four figures. Explanations of what each figure represents and of the relationships among elements in each figure are provided here to guide an understanding of the graphics.

**FIGURE A1** (see p. 12) provides an overview of the discipline of psychology. The guidelines focus on the steps of training in the Education and Training box in the center of the figure (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure). This figure conveys the dynamic interplay of science and practice that informs education and training; the educational experience prepares those involved in the practice of psychology and research in the field. The taxonomy also recognizes both the basic and applied nature of research in psychology. Within the Area of Practice box, the relationship between the general practice of psychology and the recognized specialties in professional psychology is noted, and the recognized specialties are further articulated in Figure A2. Figure A1 also introduces the concept of recognized proficiencies in professional practice within both the general practice and specialty practices in professional psychology; proficiencies are further elaborated in Figure A3.

**FIGURE A2** (see p. 13) portrays the APA-recognized specialties in professional psychology within the practice of psychology. As shown in this figure, the areas of practice include both “health service psychology” and “other applied services.” Within these areas of practice are “the general practice of psychology” and the recognized specialties in professional psychology. In this taxonomy, the term *specialty* reflects the recently approved version of the APA policy defining the term (APA, 2011).

**FIGURE A3** (see p. 14) illustrates those circumscribed activities—*proficiencies*—that are formally recognized by APA. Proficiencies are presented simply to illustrate that along with specialties, which APA policy regards as *defined areas* of professional psychology practice, APA also recognizes profi-

ciencies, or *circumscribed activities* in the general practice of professional psychology or one or more of its specialties (APA, 2008). While not specifically the purview of the *Education and Training Guidelines*, if a program at one of the stages of education and training (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, postlicensure) offers learning opportunities in a defined proficiency, that program may wish to note that it provides a “focus” in that proficiency. The program is encouraged to define operationally what that focus includes regarding didactic, practicum, and research opportunities. At some point in the future, organizational groups in professional psychology that petition or have petitioned for formal recognition of a proficiency may be asked to help further demarcate a taxonomical structure for each proficiency, but such a structure is beyond the purview of the current guidelines for education and training in professional psychology’s health service specialties.

**FIGURE A4** (see p. 15) presents the constructs that are the focus of the taxonomy. It details the distinctions between the type and intensity of education and training activities as a guide to help programs more consistently label the nature of the programming they offer. The guidelines and taxonomy describe programmatic definitions and are not meant to be used to describe the qualifications or competency of an individual. This taxonomy was created because the type and intensity of education and training activities within each stage of the sequence leading to practice are not defined consistently within the field of psychology or used consistently across programs. Using this taxonomy and its definitions should provide for consistent use of structure and terms.

- *Stages of education and training.* The taxonomy addresses **four stages** in the sequence of education and training in professional psychology: doctoral programs, internship programs, postdoctoral programs, and postlicensure education and training programs.
- *Levels of education and training.* **Within each of the stages** of the education and training sequence, the taxonomy illustrates an **increasing intensity of educa-**

**tion/didactic, research, and supervised practice** (Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study).

- Thus, these guidelines provide a **hierarchical definition of these education and training activities from lowest to highest intensity** within each stage. Use of the guidelines allows programs the flexibility to describe their program accurately and consistently but with the use of now commonly accepted terms. The terms, in hierarchical order (from lowest to highest intensity), are *exposure, experience, emphasis, and major area of study*.
- It is expected that each recognized specialty will provide guidance to the field for their specialty-specific activities within the increasing levels of education and training and across the sequence of training, as shown in Figure A4. That is, each specialty will provide a listing of the didactic, research, and experiential opportunities that define and distinguish between an exposure, an experience, an emphasis, and a major area of study at the doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, and postlicensure steps in the education and training sequence.
- This common use of programmatic descriptors will help education and training programs present the content and range of opportunities in their program in a consistent manner.
- This common use of programmatic descriptors will help students compare and contrast programs and use common terms to describe the education and training opportunities within their programs.
- The number of courses and didactic experiences and the percentage of supervised experiences provided in Figure A4 **are exemplars only** and do not represent specific recommendations. The descriptors included in this figure and those developed by the specialties are not intended to be “bright lines” but rather to provide guidance regarding the degree of activities that discriminate among the four hierarchical points of education and training (Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study) within each stage of, and across, the educational and training sequence (doctoral education, internship, postdoctoral training, and postlicensure education and training).

With the implementation of these guidelines, the following terminology might be used to describe programs in professional psychology education and training.

*On the website for an APA-accredited doctoral program, we might see:*

In our doctoral program at *Our University*, we offer a **major area of study** in clinical psychology with at least 3 years of didactic course work and supervised clinical training in that area of study, which includes a dissertation or research project. We offer students an **exposure** to clinical neuropsychology, with one course in that area, and an **experience** in clinical child psychology, with two courses and two semesters of supervised practicum in that area. We offer a **focus** in personality assessment as part of our advanced practicum, wherein an advanced assessment course and two additional practica semesters are available.

*On the website of an APA-accredited internship program, we might see:*

Our internship program is accredited in professional psychology and offers a **major area of study** in counseling psychology at *Our University Student Health Center*. At least 75% of trainee time will be devoted to training in our center in direct counseling activities. There is an optional **experience** in clinical health psychology at our clinic. This experience would involve up to 25% of supervised time working with medically ill students and health promotion services.

## THE IMPACT OF THE GUIDELINES AND ITS TAXONOMY

Clear, consistent communication to enhance “truth in advertising” for the education and training opportunities in professional psychology education and training provides many benefits:

- Such program descriptions, with the consistent use of the terms and structure recommended within the *Guidelines*, will continue to clarify the education and training opportunities for students in professional psychology.
- This will allow programs to use consistent terms when describing education and training opportunities and will clarify for the consumer the intensity of training activities in professional psychology (Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, Major Area of Study) within each step of education and training (doctoral, internship, postdoctoral, postlicensure).
- These guidelines continue to support the cooperative work of our education and training community in preparing the next generation of professional psychologists and to enhance clear, consistent communication with them.

# REFERENCES

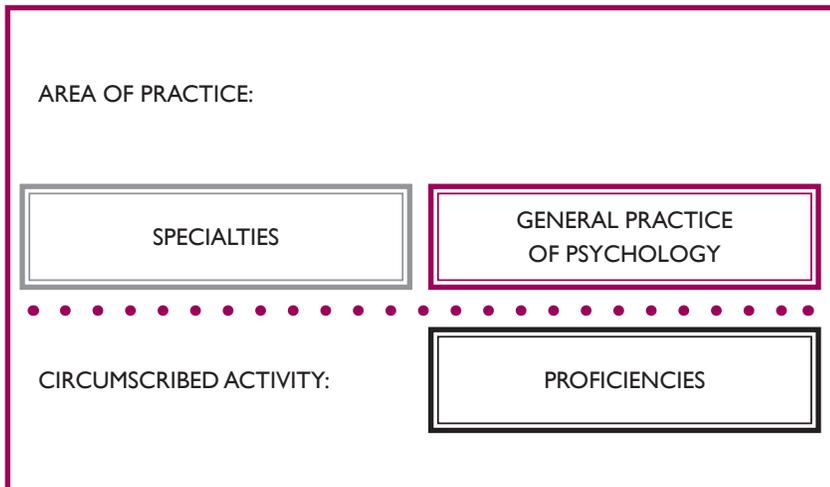
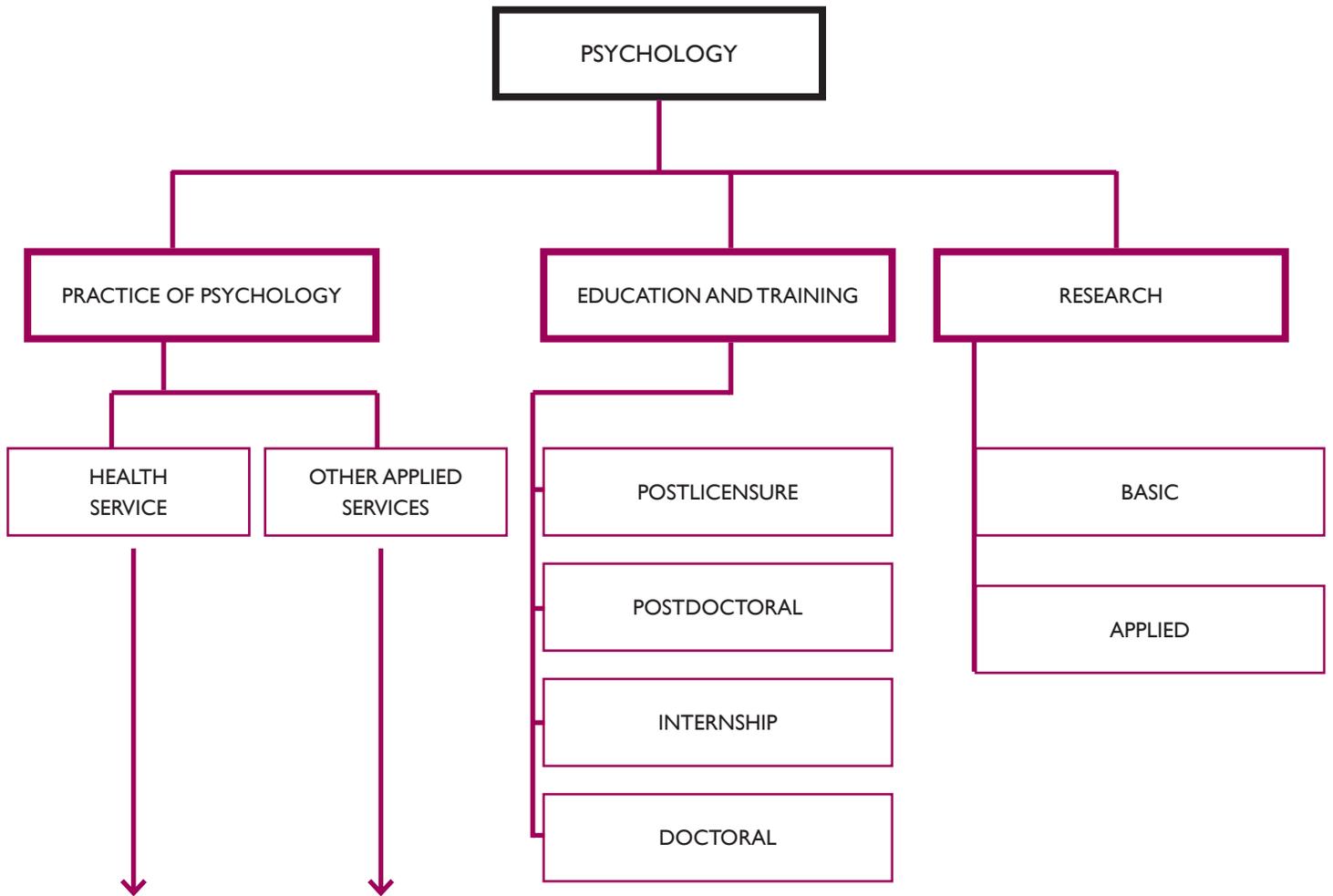
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# APPENDIX

## A TAXONOMY FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGYHEALTH SERVICE SPECIALITIES

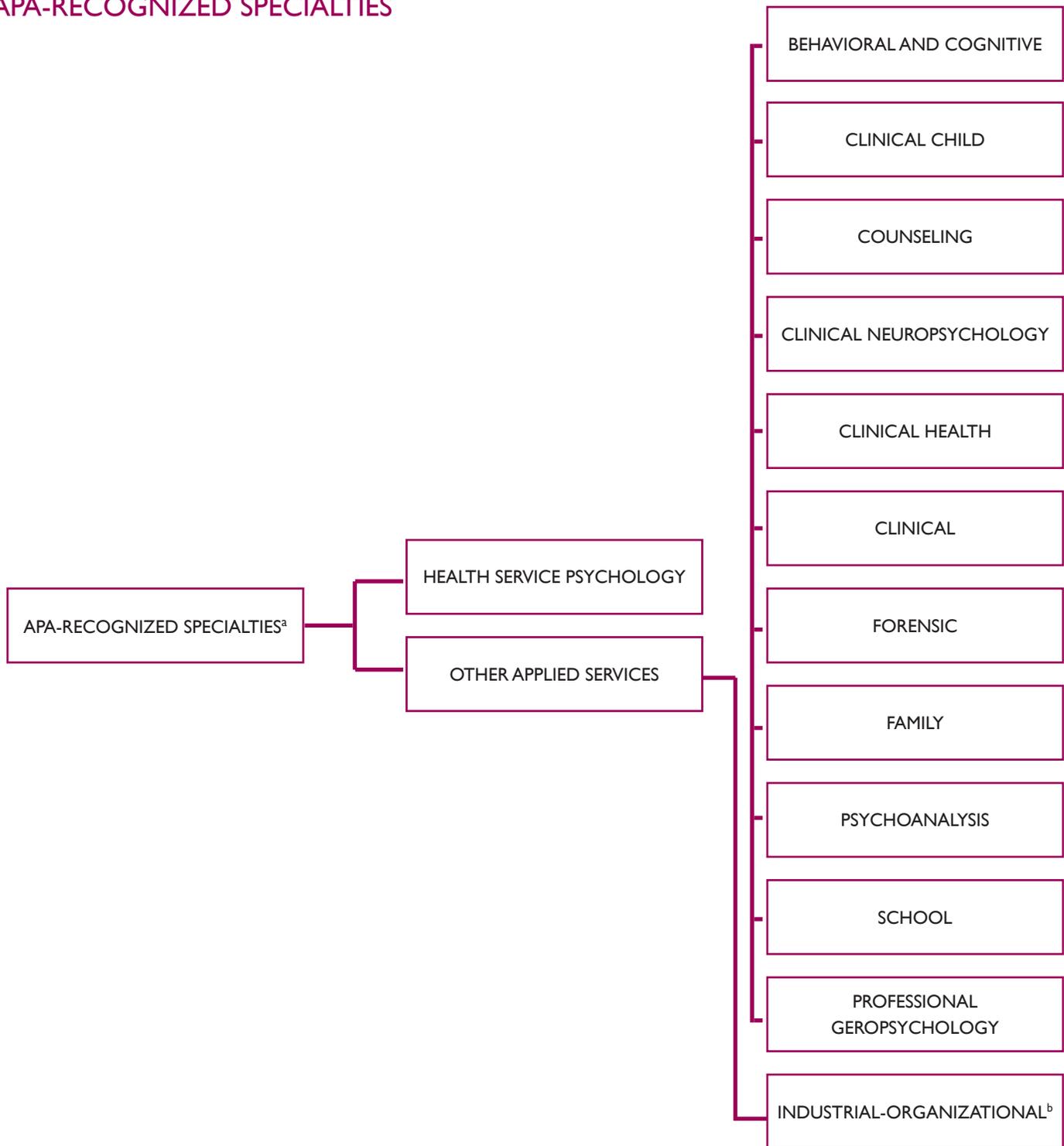
# FIGURE A1

## OVERVIEW OF THE TAXONOMY



# FIGURE A2

## APA-RECOGNIZED SPECIALTIES



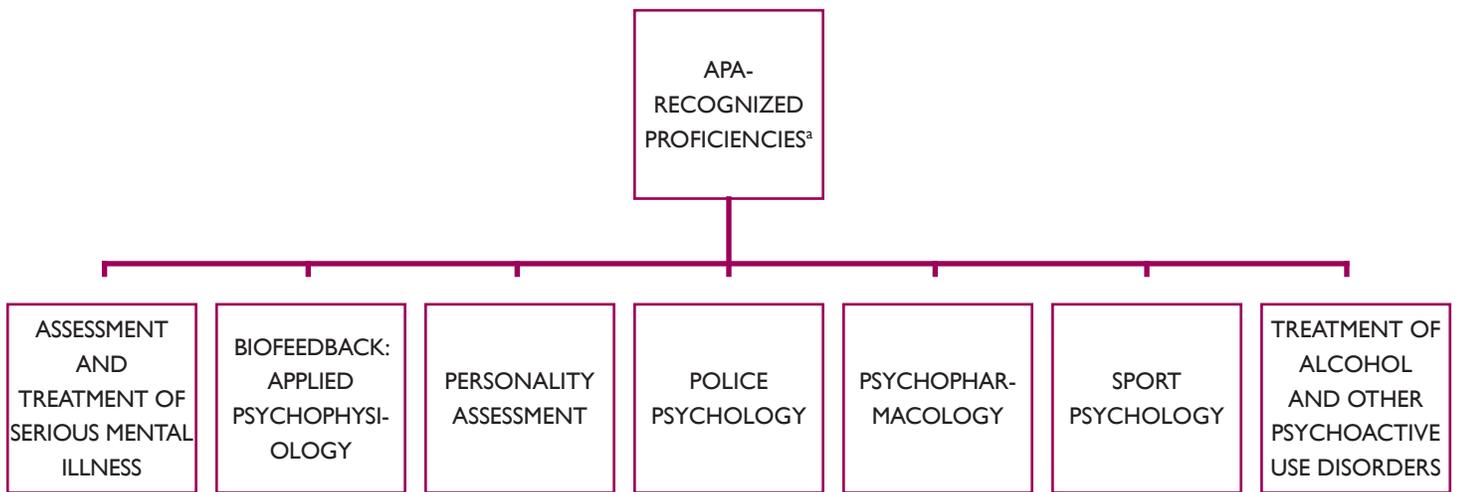
<sup>a</sup>A *specialty* is a defined area of professional psychology practice characterized by a distinctive configuration of competent services for specified problems and populations. Practice in a specialty requires advanced knowledge and skills acquired through an organized sequence of education and training in addition to the broad and general education and core scientific and professional foundations acquired through an APA or CPA [Canadian Psychological Association] accredited doctoral program.\* Specialty training may be acquired at either the doctoral or postdoctoral level as defined by the specialty.

\*Except where APA or CPA program accreditation does not exist for that area of professional psychology (APA, 2011).

<sup>b</sup>APA recognizes specialties that are related to the direct provision of health services and those that involve other aspects of applied professional service (e.g., industrial-organizational psychology). The present guidelines relate only to those specialties in health service provision. In the future, separate guidelines may be developed that describe education and training in other applied professional specialties of psychology.

# FIGURE A3

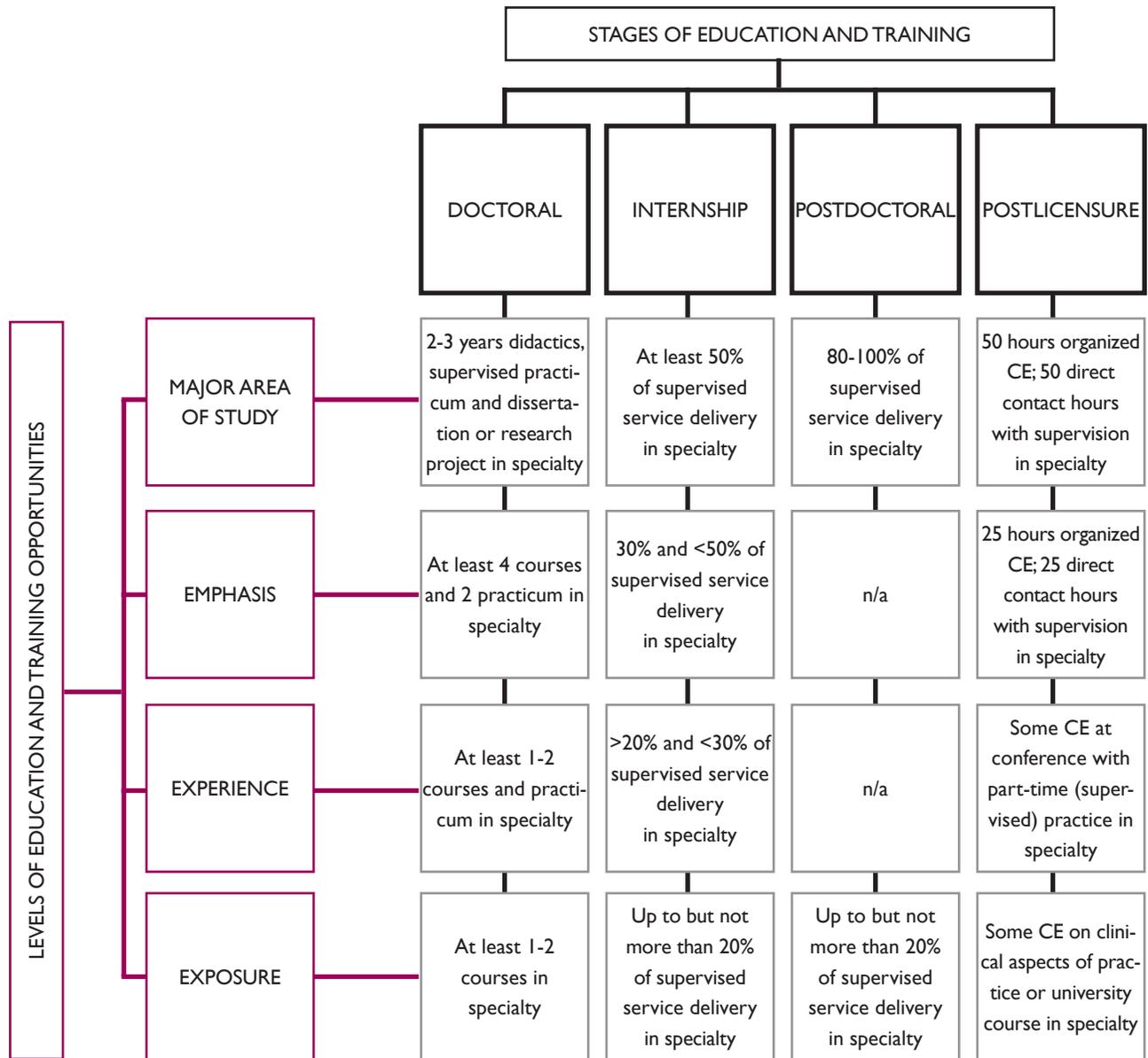
## APA-RECOGNIZED PROFICIENCIES



<sup>a</sup>A *proficiency* is a circumscribed activity in the general practice of professional psychology or one or more of its specialties that is represented by a distinct procedure, technique, or applied skill set used in psychological assessment, treatment, and/or intervention within which one develops competence (APA, 2008).

# FIGURE A4

## STAGES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



*Note.* This is a guide to be used by education and training programs to describe, using consistent language, the nature of the education and training opportunities in recognized specialties that they provide such that it is clear to both students and the public. The descriptors provided are not meant to be “bright lines” or standards but to provide guidance to help education and training programs establish clear distinctions. The Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP), however, recommends the consistent use of these terms across the field to provide consistency. Each recognized specialty will provide its own recommendations for these amounts for each level of intensity within each stage of the education and training sequence.

Specialties vary with regard to how or if education and training can be acquired solely at the postlicensure level. For purposes of the taxonomy, an example is provided.

Postdoctoral education and training in a specialty is by definition a major area of study requiring 80% or more of time spent in that specialty area but would allow for an exposure to other specialty areas.

Because the ongoing utility and fidelity of these guidelines are dependent on the consistent use of the descriptors *Exposure*, *Experience*, *Emphasis*, *Major Area of Study*, programs are strongly encouraged to use these four terms only in public descriptions of training within APA-approved specialties. It is suggested, then, that the term *focus* be used to describe opportunities in other training areas and that programs strive to provide explicit explanations of the type of training provided in these nonspecialty areas.

The taxonomy is NOT designed to define specifics of individual training or practice or to be used to define the qualifications of individuals but to describe programmatic structure such that there is “truth in advertising” by education and training programs.

NOTES:





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