

Guidelines

FOR PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS:

Course-Based and
Standards-Based Approaches



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Guidelines

FOR PREPARING HIGH SCHOOL **PSYCHOLOGY** TEACHERS:

Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches

Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Working Group on the
Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers

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Executive Summary

The American Psychological Association (APA) Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Working Group for the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers designed the *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches* to promote quality training of high school psychology teachers. Key to student success in high school is an effective teacher who has the knowledge and skills to teach the content specified in the discipline's national standards. Accordingly, APA expects high school psychology teachers to have the preparation necessary to teach the course as specified in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011), a document that provides learning benchmarks for students taking the high school psychology course. The purpose of these guidelines is to outline training models for the preparation of teachers of high school psychology. Two approaches are presented in the guidelines: One approach presents two curricula, and the other approach presents a set of standards.

Use of the Terms *Guidelines* and *Standards*

The term *guidelines* generally refers to pronouncements, statements, or declarations that recommend or suggest specific actions, goals, or endeavors. In the context of this document, the term *guidelines* is used to describe recommended models for teacher training. As noted in the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (APA, 2007), the education community and other scientific disciplines use the term *guidelines* to refer to recommendations that are aspirational or advisory in intent.

Additionally, use of the term *standards* in this document is consistent with national practices in K–12 education when disciplinary societies, teacher organizations, or other nonregulatory groups develop benchmark learning objectives. As used in this document, the terms *guidelines* and *standards* are consistent with the provisions of the 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.

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Process of Developing the Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers

In 2008, the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) recommended archiving an APA policy on *Guidelines for the Specialty and Training and Certification of Secondary School Teachers of Psychology* (1978). The policy was archived in August 2009. In September 2009, upon a recommendation from TOPSS, the APA Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) approved a new Working Group on the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers: Kenneth Weaver, PhD, Chair, Emporia State University (Emporia, KS); Mary Brabeck, PhD, New York University (New York, NY); Jane Halonen, PhD, University of West Florida (Pensacola, FL); Arthur Horne, PhD, University of Georgia (Athens, GA); Debra Park, Rutgers University (Camden, NJ), West Deptford High School, retired (Westville, NJ); and Michael Ray, Verona Area High School (Verona, WI). The BEA Working Group was charged with developing a new policy document that outlines the recommended education and training a high school psychology teacher should have in order to teach the introductory psychology course.

The working group's draft policy was reviewed by the TOPSS Committee in March 2010 and reviewed and approved by BEA in August 2010. In the fall of 2010, APA boards; committees; divisions; and state, provincial, and territorial psychological associations were invited to review and comment on the *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches*. The working group reviewed and responded

to all feedback and revised the document accordingly. The revised document was made available for 90 days of public comment in the spring of 2011, after which the working group reviewed and responded to all feedback, making appropriate revisions.

The document underwent legal review in October 2011 after it was revised to reflect the newly revised *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011). The updated document was circulated to APA boards and committees in the fall of 2011, and the governance groups were asked to recommend that Council approve the revised document as APA policy. The Board of Directors and Council of Representatives both reviewed and approved the *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches* in February 2012.

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Resource Documents

Resources used to create the *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches* included the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011), *Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline* (Halpern, 2010), and *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (APA, 2007), among other resources on the teaching of psychology.

These guidelines are consistent with other APA policy documents, such as the *APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2010) and the *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* (APA, 2003), as specified in the APA policy on *Developing and Evaluating Standards and Guidelines Related to Education and Training in Psychology: Context, Procedures, Criteria, and Format* (APA, 2004).

Feedback

The APA Education Directorate will implement a systematic plan for the future review and revision of this document to reflect developments in the discipline and in education. These guidelines are scheduled to expire 7 years from the date of their adoption, in February 2019. This is consistent with the provisions of APA Association Rule 30-8.3 requiring cyclical review of approved standards and guidelines within periods not to exceed 10 years.

Comments and suggestions on these guidelines are welcome.

4 Feedback may be sent to:

**Precollege and Undergraduate Education
Education Directorate
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750 First Street, NE
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Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches

MANY FASCINATING AND CHALLENGING PROBLEMS ARE LINKED to human attitudes, values, and behavior. Promoting health and safety, learning skills, work productivity, development across the life span, and human effectiveness in a world of technology affect well-being. Crime and violence, poverty and prejudice, and the environment and consumerism influence societal quality of life. Psychology, the scientific study of behavior and mental processes, contributes to the understanding of these areas and promotes improvement. The high school psychology course provides the foundation for students to benefit from psychological perspectives on personal and contemporary issues and learn the rules of evidence and theoretical frameworks of the discipline.

Psychology is one of the most popular elective high school courses. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2009 (the most recent year of available data) nearly 30% of graduating students earned credits in a psychology course during their 4 years in high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). If over 3 million students graduated from high school in 2009, and 30% of these graduates took a psychology course, close to 1 million students graduated in 2009 having taken psychology in high school. In 2011, nearly 198,000 students took the Advanced Placement Psychology Exam (College Board, 2011), and over 16,000 International Baccalaureate Psychology exams were taken worldwide (M. Wilson, Global Management Information Associate Manager at the International Baccalaureate Organization, personal communication, June 16, 2011). This popularity is an indicator of high interest in the course content.

The course content is defined by the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011), which was approved by the American Psychological Association in 1999 and revised in 2005 and 2011. The standards address 20 units of content: Perspectives in Psychological Science; Research Methods, Measurement, and Statistics; Biological Bases of Behavior; Sensation and Perception; Consciousness; Life Span Development; Learning; Language Development; Social Interactions; Sociocultural Diversity; Memory; Thinking; Intelligence; Motivation; Emotion; Personality; Psychological Disorders; Treatment of Psychological Disorders; Health; and Vocational Applications. These 20 units cluster into seven content domains: Scientific Inquiry, Biopsychology, Development and Learning, Sociocultural Context, Cognition, Individual Variations, and Applications of Psychological Science (see appendix).

These standards are designed to achieve four outcomes. Students should be able to:

- ① Explain the complexities of human thought and behavior, as well as the factors related to the individual differences among people.
- ② Demonstrate a basic understanding of the scientific methods that are at the core of the discipline.
- ③ Apply psychological knowledge to their daily lives.
- ④ Appreciate individual differences and demonstrate an understanding of cultural and diversity issues.¹

Key to student success, especially in courses that generate strong enrollments, is an effective teacher who has the knowledge and skills to teach the content specified in the discipline's national standards and who is both scientifically and psychologically literate. The American Psychological Association expects high school psychology teachers to have the preparation to teach the course properly as specified in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*. Across the nation, two kinds of strategies prepare new teachers. One approach emphasizes **course-based strategies**, and the other approach presents a **set of standards**.

¹ As outlined in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011), issues of race/ethnicity, culture, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, national origin, and aging should be infused throughout the psychology course.

The American Psychological Association advocates that state departments of education and teacher preparation programs use or adapt the models in this document to prepare new high school psychology teachers. The Association further promotes quality training through advocating the development of a teaching credential endorsement for psychology in all states.

Course-Based Model and Indicators

The course-based models are based on completing at least 30 credit hours of relevant course work to adhere to the federal definition of a highly qualified teacher. Nationally, colleges vary in their adoption of a 3-credit versus 4-credit model, and the two course-based models are proposed to reflect this difference. Colleges also differ in the specific courses offered in the psychology curriculum and whether general psychology is a general education requirement. Thus, the two models include general psychology as the first course and allow latitude in the remaining course work. The courses in both models cohere with the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (APA, 2007).

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Model Based on Courses Earning 3 Credits (needs 10 courses)

This model consists of three categories of courses and a capstone experience of student teaching.

Category 1: Foundation Courses. Four required core courses include Introductory Psychology, Research Methods, Statistics, and one content-specific laboratory course.

Category 2: Breadth Courses. Four courses, one from each of the following three domains in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*—Biopsychology, Development and Learning, and Cognition—and one course from either the Sociocultural Context, Individual Variations, or Applications of Psychological Science domains.

Category 3: Elective Courses. Two elective courses are geared to application/pedagogical development. Recommended courses include Teaching of Psychology, Social Psychology, Psychological Assessment, Motivation and Emotion, Educational Psychology, Ethics, and Applied Behavior Analysis.

Capstone Experience. Student teaching in a high school psychology class for at least one semester with appropriate supervision is recommended as a capstone experience.

Model Based on Courses Earning 4 Credits (needs 8 courses)

This model consists of two categories of courses and a capstone experience of student teaching.

Category 1: Foundation Courses. Four required core courses include Introductory Psychology, Research Methods, Statistics, and one content-specific laboratory course

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Category 2: Breadth Courses. Four courses, one from each of the following three domains in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*—Biopsychology, Development and Learning, and Cognition— and one course from either the Sociocultural Context, Individual Variations, or Applications of Psychological Science domains.

Capstone Experience. Student teaching in a high school psychology class for at least one semester with appropriate supervision is recommended as a capstone experience.

Indicators

Assessment employs a variety of techniques to determine that students have learned important knowledge and skills. Indicators are examples of potential ways that a student can demonstrate mastery of the material. The following indicators are *examples* of potential ways the preservice teacher can demonstrate mastery of the material using the course-based models.

The teacher should be able to:

- ❶ Identify some of the classic research studies in psychology and provide rationale for what makes their contributions substantial in policy or practice;
- ❷ Develop facility with the principles of sound research procedures;
- ❸ Promote scientific and psychological literacy (i.e., the ability to apply psychology-based problem-solving skills to scholarly works, popular media, and everyday life); and
- ❹ Describe and practice the obligations of ethical practices in psychology.

Standards-Based Model With Indicators

A standards-based perspective to teacher preparation identifies specific skill sets that strengthen effective teaching of the course according to the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*. Each standard is elaborated and followed by examples of indicators of performance to demonstrate meeting the standard. Student teaching, a one-semester experience with appropriate supervision, is incorporated as a capstone experience to align course work with these standards.

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Standard 1

The teacher of psychology knows and can explain the major theoretical approaches, research findings, and historical and contemporary trends in the science of psychology.

The teacher should be able to:

- 1 Describe, compare, and contrast major theoretical approaches in psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, psychoanalytic, and social).
- 2 Explain the contributions of the major theoretical approaches in psychology (e.g., behavioral, biological, cognitive, psychoanalytic, and social).
- 3 Discuss emerging areas in psychology such as cross-cultural and evolutionary psychology.
- 4 Describe applications of psychology such as human factors and health psychology.

Standard 2

The teacher of psychology demonstrates how psychologists use major research methods including design, data analysis, and interpretation.

The teacher should be able to:

- 1 Locate theories, methodologies, and empirical findings necessary to plan, conduct, and interpret results of research studies.
- 2 Formulate a testable research hypothesis.
- 3 Design basic studies to address psychological questions using different research methodologies.

- ④ Adhere to APA guidelines for the ethical treatment of human and nonhuman research participants.
- ⑤ Explain how validity and reliability of observations and measurements relate to data analysis.
- ⑥ Collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics.
- ⑦ Report the results in American Psychological Association style.

Standard 3

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The teacher of psychology applies the major theoretical approaches in psychology to reality-based educational, emotional, ethical, motivational, organizational, personal, and social issues.

The teacher should be able to:

- ① Suggest psychologically based ethical solutions to actual problems including, but not limited to, those encountered in education, business and industry, and the environment.
- ② Explain the various etiologies and ethical treatments for abnormal behaviors.
- ③ Discuss the uses and ethical implications of psychological assessment.
- ④ Incorporate knowledge and research findings concerning human motivation and emotion when teaching in the areas of stress, coping, and health.
- ⑤ Diffuse diversity issues throughout the psychology curriculum and demonstrate cultural competence.
- ⑥ Identify sociocultural factors in the application of psychological research.

Demonstration of Competence

Regardless of the model, the American Psychological Association recognizes the importance of program assessment used by states and colleges across the nation. The Association recommends one of the following methods for preservice teachers to demonstrate their knowledge competence:

- ① Receive a qualifying score on the Praxis II Psychology (0390) test;
- ② Receive a qualifying score on a psychology test developed by the National Evaluation Series; or
- ③ Earn a grade point average of 3.0 or higher in psychology courses.

Conclusion

The models in this document define the baccalaureate preparation of new high school psychology teachers. Given the prevalence of high schools without full-time psychology teachers, the American Psychological Association recommends that preservice teachers complete a second teaching field or endorsement for their teaching credential to enhance their employment prospects.

For current high school psychology teachers who do not have credentials in psychology, the American Psychological Association recommends that the teachers, in conjunction with their school district or state department of education, develop an education plan of workshops, conferences, in-service, and/or course work that will culminate with passing the Praxis II Psychology test or the National Evaluation Series test. The American Psychological Association understands the importance of credentialing professionals at the state level and supports states' efforts to prepare high school psychology teachers who are highly qualified and highly effective.

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Appendix: The Domains and Standard Areas in the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula (APA, 2011)*

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Scientific Inquiry Domain

Perspectives in Psychological Science
Research Methods, Measurement, and Statistics

Biopsychology Domain

Biological Bases of Behavior
Sensation and Perception
Consciousness

Development and Learning Domain

Life Span Development
Learning
Language Development

Sociocultural Context Domain

Social Interactions
Sociocultural Diversity

Cognition Domain

Memory
Thinking
Intelligence

Individual Variations Domain

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Motivation

Emotion

Personality

Psychological Disorders

Applications of Psychological Science Domain

Treatment of Psychological Disorders

Health

Vocational Applications



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