



The Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS)

The Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS) is an independent, non-profit organization that provides rigorous and objective accreditation of Ph.D. programs that follow a *clinical science* model for training clinical psychologists. By supporting and expanding the scientific foundation for mental health care, this approach increases the quality and quantity of clinical scientists contributing to all aspects of public health.

The Need

Nearly half of all Americans are expected to be diagnosed with a mental illness sometime in their lives, often with substantial delays between the onset of their condition and the application of appropriate treatments.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to train clinical psychological scientists who can provide patients with the best available treatments while also developing more effective interventions for use by all practitioners.

Concern about the nation's pressing mental health needs, coupled with a commitment to a scientific perspective in all aspects of clinical psychology, gave rise to PCSAS. By promoting science-centered doctoral training in clinical psychology, PCSAS aims to spark treatment innovations that will lessen the burden of mental illness and promote psychological well-being.

Evolution of the Idea

The origins of PCSAS are rooted in a 1992 Summit Meeting on The Future of Accreditation that brought together 140 leading scholars in psychological science.

Three key partners sponsored the 1992 Summit: the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the \$1.9B federal agency that funds a major portion of psychology's mental health training; the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP), the umbrella group for some 250 Chairs of Psychology Departments; and the Association for Psychological Science (APS), the 35,000-member international organization dedicated to advancing the science of psychology.

Consensus emerged from the three-day Summit regarding "the need for urgent reform of the accreditation system in psychology."

When efforts to achieve this reform through the prevailing accreditation system were unsuccessful, PCSAS was founded in 2007. It began accrediting programs in 2009 and was

recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 2012, as soon as it was eligible.

Since its inception, PCSAS has accredited 44 [clinical science doctoral programs](#). These programs are housed in some of the top rated, major research universities in the US and Canada.

Accreditation Process and Success

PCSAS accreditation requires an intensive self-study by doctoral training programs, followed by a site visit in which peers review a comprehensive set of evaluative criteria.

Because training students to be productive scientists and effective practitioners is a challenging undertaking, no single training approach can guarantee these desired outcomes. Therefore, PCSAS affords programs considerable flexibility and encourages innovation in the design and implementation of their training programs.

Strict quality control is maintained among PCSAS-accredited programs by focusing intently on training outcomes. The PCSAS accreditation process prioritizes careful examination of the careers of program graduates to determine whether they are contributing to high-quality science, clinical practice and training, and their integration.

Consequences of PCSAS Accreditation

Data from accreditation reviews indicate that most students in PCSAS-accredited programs go on to pursue careers that involve the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge and the delivery of empirically-supported mental health services.

With regard to clinical practice, students in PCSAS-accredited programs compete successfully for clinical internships, with well over 90% obtaining accredited internships compared to fewer than 80% of students in non-PCSAS programs. Following graduation, 73% of all students from PCSAS-accredited programs report engaging in clinical service delivery. PCSAS students also excel on state and national licensing exams, with an average 98% pass rate.

More information about PCSAS, the accreditation process and accredited doctoral programs is available at www.pcsas.org.