

FAQ: Internship Training

Question 1: What is the difference between an MSPP internship, an APA-accredited internship and an APPIC internship?

MSPP INTERNSHIPS: A significant difference between MSPP and APA/APPIC internships is that MSPP's internship experience is an integrated one. Internships are two years, half-time either at one site or two different sites. Students are in the academic setting concurrently, attending classes and working on doctoral projects while in the field. All MSPP internships exceed the Massachusetts Board of Registration requirements for licensure as a psychologist/health service provider and meet or exceed a significant majority of other state internship licensing standards. Approximately 40% of the current MSPP half time internship positions provide a small to modest student stipend.

APA ACCREDITATION: An internship program that has been accredited by APA has received an external level of review by colleagues. The accreditation process involves considerable time and money, and requires the program to submit a lengthy self-study and to host an on-site visit by representatives of the accrediting body. APA internships are generally full-time for one year and are required to provide a stipend for the student.

APPIC MEMBERSHIP: APPIC is not an accrediting body. However, in order for an internship program to be a member of APPIC, it must submit an application that describes how the program meets APPIC's membership criteria. No site visit is required. APA programs that are accredited automatically qualify for APPIC membership. Generally, APPIC internships are full-time for one year and usually provide a student stipend.

Question 2: Why should an MSPP student consider an APA or APPIC accredited internship?

It is important to note that there are excellent and varied MSPP internships that are neither APA accredited nor APPIC programs as well as the nationwide pool of internships that are APPIC members. Many MSPP internships have not sought accreditation and/or APPIC membership because of cost; others have not done so because they cannot meet all of the criteria set out by APA and/or APPIC such as the requirement of a substantial stipend.

MSPP students train at non-APPIC member internship programs each year and experience no difficulty with their future employment or licensure. However, it is important to carefully consider the requirements of the following three different entities.

MSPP DOCTORAL PROGRAM: MSPP does NOT require students to attend an APA accredited or APPIC internship. MSPP requires that students complete an internship that has been approved by the MSPP Director of Training and the Office of Field Education. This process has been approved by APA to fulfill internship requirements for MSPP students. The approval is based on criteria that are similar to APA/APPIC internships as well as the Massachusetts licensing regulations. Completing two half-time internships in two years (2000 hours) meets MSPP program requirements for internship and graduation.

LICENSING BOARDS: Each state and provincial licensing board has its own rules for determining the types of internships that are acceptable. If an internship is acceptable to a doctoral program, it doesn't mean that it will be acceptable to a particular licensing board.

As of this writing, there may be a few jurisdictions that require an APA accredited internship in order to be licensed. State psychology licensure boards require the internship to meet certain criteria (which varies across jurisdictions). Most of the time, an MSPP internship will meet those criteria since Massachusetts has one of the strictest set of regulations for licensure as a psychologist/health service provider. Not completing an APA-accredited internship may mean demonstrating how your internship meets the standards of a particular licensing board.

If you plan to stay within a single jurisdiction, you can check with that licensing board to learn about its requirements for internship. If you don't know where you might want to get licensed, or if you might move to a different jurisdiction in the future, it can be difficult or impossible to know in advance whether your internship will meet the requirements. We will work with you to examine the particulars of your training interests and the licensing requirements of the areas in which you may choose to live in the future.

MSPP students are encouraged to speak with the Director of Training early in their program so that appropriate planning can take place.

FUTURE EMPLOYERS: Some positions in psychology require applicants to have completed an accredited internship program. For example, psychologist positions at Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) hospitals and clinics require completion of an APA-accredited internship program. Furthermore, a number of employment and postdoctoral fellowship positions prefer applicants who have completed accredited internships. Some hospitals, medical centers and post-docs in Health Psychology or Neuropsychology require an APA pre-doctoral internship as well. Attending an accredited internship can help in those settings for future employment. On the other hand, most MSPP graduates have reported that completing the MSPP-approved internship has not hurt them in the job market. Over 90% of MSPP graduates are successfully employed in the field of psychology.

CONCLUSIONS: There is not a right answer to the question of whether you should consider training at an APA accredited or APPIC member internship program. Attending an accredited program is certainly the "safest" option, as you almost certainly won't have to explain or to justify the quality of your internship to anyone in the future. It makes it unlikely that your internship program will be a barrier to licensure, specialty post-docs and/or employment in traditional settings. However, it is also true that MSPP students do very well overall given the integrated, field-based education they receive.

The decision as to whether to seek an APA accredited or APPIC member internship can be a difficult one, particularly if you are geographically restricted. Consult with the Director of Training, the MSPP faculty or other knowledgeable individuals, to carefully consider your career interests and options, and to become familiar with issues related to licensure and/or future employment.

This document was created as a modification of the 2010 APPIC Board of Directors' Memo to the Match News listserv.