

## Student concerns: Removal of APA Accreditation in Canada

Darlene Walker, Ph.D. Student  
Student Member, CPA Accreditation Panel

**Source:** Walker, D. (2006). Student concerns: Removal of APA Accreditation in Canada Profile of Psychology. *Psynopsis: Canada's Psychology Newspaper*, 28(1), 25.

On May 2, 2005, the APA's Committee on Accreditation proposed the end of concurrent accreditation in Canada (see [http://apa.org/accreditation/public\\_comment.html](http://apa.org/accreditation/public_comment.html)).

This proposal has evoked significant discussion at professional programmes and internships across Canada. From speaking with students and reading some of the comments on the APA website (see <http://apaoutside.apa.org/accredsurvey/public/>), two general themes have emerged: fear of reduced mobility for internship and job positions, and reduced competitiveness of programmes within Canada. This article presents a possible response to each of these concerns.

The first concern involves the possibility of reduced mobility for internship and staff placements. Students worry that lack of knowledge of CPA accreditation will put Canadian students at a disadvantage when applying for internship or employment positions. In 2001, CPA surveyed the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centres (APPIC) in addition to the Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP) and the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) members. 33 of 38 APPIC respondents said they would treat CPA and APA applications equivalently for an internship or staff position, 4 of 38 said that U.S. citizenship was required for hire, while 1 was unsure. Similar results were found for CUDCP

members (7/9 would hire CPA graduates, 1 was unsure and 1 would hire but was concerned with eligibility for NIH grants). All respondents from ASPPB (4/4) would license CPA graduates.

In 2002, CPA revised their accreditation standards. These standards are thought to be more stringent than APA standards, holding Canadian programmes to a high standard of excellence. Thus, CPA-accredited programmes would meet APA requirements due to the high standards necessary for CPA accreditation.

In the fall of 2002, Dobson and Gauthier wrote 'An "Open Letter" about the Future', an article published in *Psynopsis* (see [http://www.cpa.ca/Psynopsis/psynopsis\\_fall\\_02.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/Psynopsis/psynopsis_fall_02.pdf)). They reported that students from CPA-only programmes have obtained APA-accredited internships and found employment in various countries (e.g., U.S., Australia, New Zealand, England, Switzerland). In addition, "most U.S. states that recognise APA accreditation as a high standard of training and permit a 'fast track' to licensing on that basis, similarly recognize CPA accreditation". They also mention that Canada is the only country in the world where doctoral and internship psychology programmes seek accreditation from another country.

The main impediment to obtaining an internship or staff placement in the U.S. appears to be citizenship. Some sites require their students to be U.S. citizens, such as

VA hospitals. This 'barrier' is on the American side and is something they must decide to change.

Students, faculty, and clinicians in psychology need to understand the issues surrounding mobility and work together to educate others about the value and excellence associated with CPA accreditation. An article by Hall and Lunt entitled "Global Mobility for Psychologists" (American Psychologist, October 2005) helps individuals understand the current role of organizations around the world in increasing mobility.

The second concern for students is that if APA accreditation is no longer available, currently CPA/APA accredited programmes would not be able to distinguish themselves from other programmes in Canada who have CPA-only accreditation. However, several things must be kept in mind. The lack of APA accreditation to Canadian programmes will not change or degrade programmes in Canada. These programmes will continue their high standards of excellence in education. Other professional programmes in Canada do not determine the quality of their education based on foreign accreditation status, but rather on the evaluations received from students, faculty and national associations that help to improve their standards of education.

Some excellent programmes in Canada are not APA-accredited because they have chosen not to pursue this avenue. This may be because they do not feel it is worth the cost to apply. The money used for site visits and preparation of the paper work would be better put to use for education of their students. It may also be that they don't feel APA accreditation is necessary for their education to be of the highest standards. If CPA accreditation is of the highest quality and more conservative than APA accreditation, it is meaningful enough to have CPA only accreditation. The cost, in both time and money, may be better used elsewhere.

In January 2006, the CoA will decide whether APA accreditation will be withdrawn from Canada. Regardless of APA's decision, both CPA and APA are working together on mechanisms for international mutual recognition and accreditation. If an agreement of mutual recognition cannot be formed, then the development of an international accreditation body may be an acceptable alternative. As has been acknowledged elsewhere, whatever the outcome, the CPA is extremely grateful for its collegiality with the APA and appreciates all the support, encouragement, and information they have received from APA over the years. It may be, however, time to grow up and move out on our own.