



Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs
Conseil canadien des programmes de psychologie professionnelle

CANADIAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
DE PSYCHOLOGIE

Student COVID-19-related Questions & Answers

April 23, 2020

Below, the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programmes (CCPPP) and the Canadian Psychological Association Accreditation Panel (the CPA Panel) provide some answers to the questions that students submitted. These questions and answers are offered in addition to the [CCPPP's Guiding Principles document](#) and the [package of statements](#) issued jointly by the CCPPP, the CPA Accreditation Panel, and the Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations (ACPRO).

Note that we have removed the questions that refer to specific provincial regulatory bodies. Questions that are specific to a provincial regulatory body should be directed to the relevant College directly because each regulatory body recognizes the uniqueness of each individual's circumstances and cannot answer generically. Note that in some cases, they may not be able to answer your question until a full application for licensure has been submitted.

1. I am wondering how these various organizations and accrediting bodies will be taking into consideration student applications who are missing client contact hours due to terminating prematurely with our clients?

We recognize that there are significant concerns about how COVID 19 will disrupt the complex process individuals take to get from academia to fully autonomous practice. This first question is at the heart of many of the more specific questions that follow. All organizations will work together to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on those currently in training who are hoping to become licensed in the not too distant future. The CCPPP issued a document ([relations among stakeholders](#)) to help highlight all of the relations among the different stakeholders in the system. Programs and regulators will be reasonable and flexible in their response to this unprecedented situation. It is difficult to provide concrete answers to specific situations, as each student/applicant will come with a unique portfolio of training, experience, and skills.

It is important to understand that decisions about training will be made at several levels. The first level is between the internship program and the university, as they jointly determine if the requirements for the internship have been met. The second level of decision making lies with the regulators, who will make independent decisions on a case-by-case basis about whether a candidate for licensure/registration/certification has met the provincial standards that are outlined in legislation and bylaws. The CCPPP [Guiding Principles document](#) explains much of this context.

Questions about Registration & Hour Requirements

- 2. I am a current resident at [Internship Name] in an Adult stream. I wonder if there will be a "minimum # of hours" requirement for those in Adult-focused streams for graduation from residency, and if this will be uniform across residencies or unique and tailored to each training program? The thought of potentially having to extend my residency year is unsettling, given that many of us have jobs lined up and have signed contracts elsewhere already for September/October start dates supervised practice year.**
- 3. If internships do not resume with normal clinical activities this year (e.g., collect appropriate # of hours), will students be able to graduate?**
- 4. I was just wondering if you could speak to whether there might be any adjustments in requirements to complete our internship as well as if there will be any changes to registration requirements for the Colleges across the province to account for what's going on right now? And if not, whether there is anything that could be done to advocate for College requirements to be flexible to account for these impacts on our internship year?**
- 5. To explain my specific situation, I'm currently doing a neuropsych assessment rotation, which we are unfortunately unable to do via telehealth/online services. My other rotation is currently at a standstill right now, I believe because I am an intern at a hospital and therefore there is a greater amount of red tape for interns to be doing confidential client work from home, and many of the staff psychologists (and my supervisors) are unable to see patients anyways I believe due to the possibility of being redeployed. I know other sites are able to employ zoom or telehealth services more rapidly and so other interns' hours may not be as affected. However, I'm just concerned about whether or not I will have enough clinical contact hours by the end of my internship that will allow me to be registered in my home province (BC). Any information on this would be greatly appreciated as I am quite concerned about the impact to my training, as I'm sure you can understand!**
- 6. Could programs "force" us to extend and stay longer to meet their requirement, would this time be compensated for or unpaid? The message I have been getting here is that extending beyond our year here is "not off the table completely", though for many of us residents it is not possible to extend, nor do we feel it would be necessary, given the**

strong 6 1/2 months of training we have accumulated to date prior to the pandemic, and the remainder of the year where we should be able to accrue close to a sufficient number of hours via telephone counselling, if not permitted back on site.

- 7. I am currently completing neuropsychological assessment and clinical research rotations, which just commenced March 2nd (my previous rotations were assessment and intervention). As we are all working from home and all outpatient appointments have been cancelled, I am unable to engage in any direct clinical hours at the moment (i.e., neuropsychological assessment can't be done virtually, which is my only clinical patient involvement at this time). I am wondering if you have any information on the CPA/APPIC/CCPPP stance on minimum required direct hours for fulfillment of residency requirements during this COVID-19 crisis? As it stands, I worry that I will not be able to accrue enough direct hours to fulfill requirements.**

Internships are being asked to exercise flexibility to ensure completion of the internship by August 31, 2020. Extensions should be considered only as a last resort.

It is important for individuals to contact the specific provincial regulatory body directly to determine how to proceed. The Colleges will make the ultimate decisions on a case-by-case basis with each specific situation, as each student/applicant will come with a unique portfolio of training, experience, and skills.

It is important to stress that the mandate of regulators is the protection of the public, and as such the primary focus of the regulatory effort at this time must continue to be protective. In a practical sense this means that there may be some issues and/or circumstances where flexibility is not possible. It is essential to ensure that you maintain all documentation from your training as this may be required at licensure.

- 8. What advocacy/communication is being done with the colleges who regulate psychology practice across our country? COVID-19 will likely impact the number of direct service hours that we will be able to accumulate, which will make us ineligible for registration given the current requirements... I am eager to find out what accommodations, if any, that the colleges will extend students/trainees during this unprecedented pandemic.**
- 9. Will there be accommodations or leniencies made to 1) total hours needed, and 2) percentage of total hours being comprised of direct client contact, to meet provincial licensure requirements for this cohort of interns? Can you be as specific as possible about what this will look like?...**
- 10. I am wondering how these various organizations and accrediting bodies will be taking into consideration student applications who are missing client contact hours due to terminating prematurely with our clients?**

ACPRO is made up of all the regulatory bodies of psychology across the country and is party to this response. The member jurisdictions are sensitive to what is occurring and are in regular communication with each other and stakeholders about how to address the challenges that the

pandemic is creating in terms of licensure, regulation, and importantly, in addressing the public's mental health needs. ACPRO jurisdictions will be as reasonable as is allowed within the legislative framework in which they must regulate. Licensure standards differ across the country, and applications must be considered on their own merit. It is best to directly contact the regulator in the jurisdiction in which you hope to license to discuss your specific situation.

11. There have been a number of statements made from CPA, APPIC etc., but they have generally been vague and have encouraged "flexibility" from all parties involved. While my internship program has been quick to get us working from home (including telephone client hours by hopefully next week) and have stated they would change their internal requirements, I am much more concerned about the college's requirements. Are the provincial colleges going to be coming out with either joint or individual statements anytime soon? I am specifically interested in Ontario's response, but I would like to know if the colleges are going to approach this from a unified or separate fronts, considering the differences in requirements across provinces. Is there going to be a concrete statement made about hours requirements?

You are correct that the standards for licensure differ across the country. Each jurisdiction regulates under different legislation, and different political, social, and economic realities. ACPRO member jurisdictions are communicating regularly in regard to the impacts of the pandemic on the regulatory responsibilities and functions, and are trying where possible to “do the same thing”. It is difficult to apply one approach to all jurisdictions. As mentioned above, it is ultimately the best to contact the jurisdiction in which you intend to become licensed with your specific situation and concerns.

12. I'm currently completing my residency with [Internship Name – not in home province]. My primary site is in the process of setting up telehealth procedures so that residents can work from home and continue to provide service to clients (therapy via phone). I am completing my PhD at the [University Name] and all of my family members are in [home province]. During this difficult time and as discussions about closing provincial borders are ongoing, I have been considering returning to [home province] during this outbreak stage of the pandemic to be closer to family, as several family members have existing health issues and are at increased risk from the virus. Given the shift towards providing telehealth services I am wondering if there have been discussions about providing psychological services across provinces. I've started discussing this scenario with supervisors and recognize that it may not be possible, but am curious if others have looked into the question particularly in these unprecedented times. In this situation, the client would be in [one province], as would my supervisor whose license I am working under, but I myself would be in [a different province].

Currently most ACPRO jurisdictions have made agreements about allowing tele-practice during the pandemic between provincial boundaries for those licensed for independent practice in

another Canadian jurisdiction, under certain conditions. Students or their supervisors should inquire with the jurisdiction where the clients are located about whether this would be allowed. It is critical that the supervisor is in agreement, will provide direct oversight of the practice, and will take full responsibility for the practice.

- 13. If residency programs terminate prematurely, will this be done in coordination with our academic institutions and provincial regulatory bodies? We are concerned that if our residency program terminates early, our internship (either as a whole or in terms of hours) won't be recognized by our PhD programs and/or provincial colleges.**
- 14. If Canadian residency programs are extended past August, will there be any exceptions made for residents who have already accepted jobs in September?**
- 15. I know of a number of interns (myself included) who have already secured supervised practice positions starting in September. If there is a requirement to extend the length of internships, this would threaten our graduation dates and jobs. Is there going to be a more concrete statement made about whether internships will need to be extended (and what the requirements for this would be), and about what is being done to minimize these potential consequences?**
- 16. For people on residency/ internship now dealing with childcare problems, what is the plan/accommodations/expectations for residents who are suddenly without full time child care in a residency program that cannot extend the residency time frame?**

Internship programs and doctoral programs are working closely to address considerations of training disruptions and are working together to utilize early termination as a last resort. Refer to the CCPPP's [Guiding Principles document](#) for more details about how internship programs and university programs are being encouraged to work together.

In order to be eligible to apply for licensure one must have an acceptable degree in psychology from an acceptable degree granting institution. In general across Canada degrees from CPA accredited programs are accepted for licensure. If the degree has been awarded but the internship and/or practicum hours have been truncated how this is managed will be determined by the individual regulatory body. It is important to contact the specific College directly about your specific situation.

Student Advocacy/Additional Support:

- 17. I read the joint statement from CPA, APA, APPIC, etc. and it did not say much other than that these associations are aware of the potential challenges that students/trainees may face in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. What advocacy/communication is being**

done to protect/represent student/trainee interests (both by students and psychologists)?

18. Will CPA/CCPPP issue some more specific guidance for DCTS/TDs to consider when amending their training programs?

This document includes current perspectives from the CCPPP, CPA, and ACPRO and addresses the Canadian response to the ongoing challenges to Psychology Training. Also, refer to the CCPPP's [Guiding Principles document](#) for information on the guidance that is being given to internships and university programs. Also, check in regularly with the CPA Accreditation website for updates <https://cpa.ca/accreditation/>

Employment Opportunities

19. As a graduating masters' student who is hoping to find work during this pandemic, how do you foresee the needs of clinics and clients changing as well as how can we best equip ourselves to meet those needs?

We think it would be short-sighted of our profession to assume that things will return to 'baseline' even at the end of the active stage of the pandemic. We would encourage you to take advantage of any and all free webinars, workshops, pdf's and documents that are circulating now to better prepare yourself for more fulsome integration of technological advances that have arisen in response to this pandemic.

20. I'm writing to see what knowledge you may be able to provide to students who would have been completing their internship right now, or in the coming weeks and now will not be able to find employment as planned. My internship was unpaid, and so I don't qualify for the COVID benefit from the government; however, I have applied to multiple job sites and for the moment no one is hiring, which means I'll likely go the next few months without an income. Is there a possibility the COVID benefit would be extended to myself or other students in the same situation as me? Do we have other options?

Unfortunately, this important question is beyond our scope to address. We would, however, encourage you to reach out to your local MP, MPPs to put these concerns on their radar as they continue to roll out economic relief to Canadians during this time. Note that most recently (April 22), the Government of Canada announced their intent to create a Canada Emergency Student Benefit.