



PCSAS Letter of Intent Instructions
Initiation Packet
Revised 2025

Thank you for your interest in participating in the accreditation process of the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (“[PCSAS](#)”). Accreditation procedures are designed to take applicant programs through several stages of documentation, review, and analysis. Depending on the outcome of a review, PCSAS may require varying amounts of additional follow-up reporting.

The normal review cycle for programs receiving positive evaluations is ten years; however, PCSAS expects annual reports and may request a more detailed intra-cycle review if concerns from annual reports or other information warrant closer monitoring. Depending on the Review Committee’s determination, a program’s accreditation status may be changed at any point during the ten-year cycle. PCSAS reserves its right to alter its accreditation process, including but not limited to eligibility standards for applying for accreditation.

Application Steps:

The first step in the PCSAS accreditation process requires the submission of an “Initiation Packet,” consisting of: (1) a Letter of Intent, and; (2) An executed version of the attached Applicant Agreement. Programs deemed eligible to apply then will receive an application template that provides detailed instructions about the formal application, which is the next step in the process. The current document describes the Letter of Intent and the criteria for eligibility. Our standard Applicant Agreement, which is required of all eligible programs, is attached.

Your Letter of Intent and the executed Application Agreement should be sent by email to: jsteinmetz@pcsas.org

Once received, a countersigned Application Agreement will be emailed back to you.

Letter of Intent Overview:

The Letter of Intent should give written notice of the program’s interest in applying for accreditation and provide sufficiently detailed preliminary information to allow a determination of whether the program meets PCSAS’s *eligibility standards* (see [PCSAS Review Criteria](#), also listed below) for applying for accreditation. There are no deadlines for submitting the Letter of Intent, which is processed quickly upon receipt. Each Letter of Intent is read and evaluated by two reviewers. If the reviewers deem the program to be eligible, then the program has up to two years to submit an application. If a program is deemed *ineligible*, it may appeal this decision to

the full Review Committee, beyond which there is no additional appeal. Programs deemed ineligible must wait at least one year before submitting a new Letter of Intent.

The Letter of Intent should be on appropriate letterhead, should not exceed three pages single-spaced, and should be drafted to address each of the specific eligibility criteria outlined below. As noted above, the Letter of Intent should be submitted by email to PCSAS Executive Director Joe Steinmetz: jsteinmetz@pcsas.org.

Eligibility Criteria: Interested programs must satisfy the following minimal requirements to be judged eligible to apply for PCSAS accreditation.

- The scope of PCSAS accreditation is limited to doctoral training programs that grant Ph.D. degrees in psychology with a core focus on the specialty of psychological clinical science. Programs must be housed in departments of psychology (or their equivalent) within accredited, nonprofit, research universities in the U.S. and Canada.
- Accreditation is limited to programs that subscribe to an empirical epistemology and a scientific model--i.e., an educational and clinical training model in which the advancement of knowledge and its application to problems are driven by research evidence, and in which research and application are integrated and reciprocally informing.
- Accreditation is limited to Ph.D. programs with a primary mission of providing all students with high-quality, science-centered education and clinical training that arms them with the knowledge and skills required for successful careers as clinical scientists, broadly defined.
- Accreditation is limited to programs within the intellectual and educational domain of clinical psychology. This may include hybrid varieties, such as health-psychology, clinical-neuroscience, clinical-behavioral genetics, etc. However, to be acceptable the hybrid model must involve the integration of clinical psychology - a focus on psychological knowledge and methods to research and clinical application relevant to mental and behavioral health problems - with one or more complementary scientific perspectives for the purpose of gaining added leverage on specific target problems. In all cases, clinical psychology must be the core component of the model.
- Accreditation is limited to programs with the primary goal of producing graduates who are competent and successful at (a) conducting research relevant to the assessment, prevention, treatment, and understanding of health and mental health disorders; and (b) using scientific methods and evidence to design, develop, select, evaluate, implement, deliver, supervise, and disseminate empirically based clinical assessments, interventions, and prevention strategies.
- In their Letters of Intent and in public documents (including websites), potential applicants must demonstrate a commitment to providing an education within the boundaries that define PCSAS accreditation -i.e., in scope, epistemology, mission, goal, and domain.
- Potential applicants must agree to conduct a detailed self-study prior to preparing an application, and to provide an accurate summary of the self-study's results in their application materials. Each

program must agree to full disclosure of all information the Review Committee requires to carry out its responsibility of evaluating programs and reaching accreditation decisions.

- Applicants must agree to arrange, coordinate, and complete a site visit of their program after submitting the application and prior to the scheduled Review Committee review.
- Applicants must have paid the non-refundable application fee and have signed the PCSAS Applicant Agreement prior to the review of their application.
- Finally, applicants must agree to accept the Review Committee's decision as specified in the Applicant Agreement. However, the decision process may include an appeal in keeping with PCSAS procedures. (See [appeal policy](#).)

Fees and Dues:

A nonrefundable Application Fee of \$12,000 must be paid by check or be electronically transferred to Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System before an application is reviewed. (Not needed at the time of the Letter of Intent.) The Application Fee includes the costs of a site visit. Once accredited, Annual Fees are \$2,750 (through December 31, 2026).

Template for Letter of Intent and Request for Eligibility Review

The Letter of Intent should be brief (no more than three pages). It should address each of the following eligibility standards (see *Review Criteria, Eligibility Standards* at www.pcsas.org) but need not offer detailed documentation.

1. An explicit statement of the program and institution's intention to apply for PCSAS accreditation; a request to be deemed eligible; and a general time frame for the intended submission, if deemed eligible.
2. An identification of the program and institution (including statement of the institution's overall accreditation status and accrediting body), and an explanation of fit to the eligibility criteria (e.g., program's degree & scope; university's fit to PCSAS qualifications; etc.).
3. A brief description of the program's philosophy, scope, educational goals, and general approach to doctoral education and training, with an emphasis on the science-centered commitment of the faculty and students.
4. A brief statement of the program's outcome goals for graduates, with an agreement to provide detailed outcome evidence in an application to document the program's success in achieving these goals.
5. The program's website address.
6. An endorsement of the following statement (Please include this specific statement in the Letter of Intent.):

We agree that if deemed eligible for PCSAS accreditation, we will (a) conduct a detailed self-study prior to preparing our application and will provide an accurate summary of our self-study results in our application materials; (b) provide the PCSAS Reviews Committee with all the

information it requires; (c) arrange and host a site visit of our program; and (d) accept and abide by the Review Committee's eventual accreditation decision.

7. Signature, title, and contact information for the person submitting the Letter.
8. Full eligibility is contingent on the institution's acceptance of the terms of the PCSAS Applicant Agreement.

Letters of Intent should be on letterhead, submitted electronically (as a Word file or PDF file) to Joe Steinmetz, PCSAS Executive Director. (Note that the \$12,000 application fee due later, but prior to submission of the final application, is waived if the institution has joined the [PCSAS Founders' Circle](#). To learn more about the Founders' Circle, contact Joe Steinmetz.)

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