

Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology Guidelines for Graduate School Offers and Acceptances

The Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP) adopted a policy on 3/9/93 regarding graduate school offers and is now reaffirming those basic principles with a few modifications. Abiding by these principles has become even more important in recent years as the competition for positions has intensified and electronic communication has made much information about the process highly public. These principles are designed to facilitate the matching process, protecting some students from inappropriate pressure to respond and protecting other students from not receiving offers in a timely manner due to some students' holding multiple offers.

These CUDCP policies support but go beyond the policies already established by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) which were renewed October 2009 (<http://www.cgsnet.org/april-15-resolution>). Institutions that have signed onto the CGS resolution are listed on the CGS website. The CGS policy only holds for offers of financial support, not offers of admission. If an applicant finds that a program violates this policy, that institution should be reported to the CGS. The Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP) endorsed this resolution (February 2008). Neither APA or COA have responsibility to enforce these guidelines but support the principle herein. APA's Graduate Study in Psychology limits entry into that directory to those programs and departments that adhere to the April 15 date. A program listed there that violates this policy should be reported to the Board of Educational Affairs of APA.

The CUDCP policy holds for all offers of admission to its member programs. Violations of this policy should be reported to the CUDCP (<http://cudcp.us/contact.html>).

1. The policies listed here should be sent to all students applying to CUDCP-member graduate programs (or other graduate programs that have adopted these guidelines). Whenever possible, undergraduate advisors for students seeking admission into graduate programs of clinical psychology should familiarize the students with these guidelines, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the guidelines for the benefit of other students.
2. To facilitate decision making for students, training programs should inform students as soon as possible that they have been excluded from consideration for admission.
3. A student can expect to receive offers of admission to programs over a considerable period of time. The timing of offers to students largely is determined by the University's review schedule, which is a strictly internal matter. Regardless of when the offer is made, students are not required to respond to the offer before the decision date of April 15 (by 11:59pm Eastern, or by this time on the first Monday after April 15, if April 15 falls on a weekend), except as specified in Section 6 below.
 - a. Offers usually are made in writing prior to April 1st. Between April 1st and the decision date, universities may choose to facilitate the process by making offers to students over the phone or by email when a position comes up. These offers are official, but should be followed up by a written confirmation within 48 hours.
 - b. Offers, once made, cannot be withdrawn by the university until after the decision date and then can be withdrawn only if the student fails to respond to the offer by the decision date.
 - c. A program may make an offer after the April 15th decision date if it still has one or more open slots. Offers made after the decision date should clearly state how long the student has to decide on the offer. The student should be given sufficient time (at least a week) to visit a program before making a decision.
4. Offers with funding are treated like any other offer. There should be no stipulation by the University that the offer carries funding only if the student accepts by a specific date that precedes the decision date described above.
5. The Director of Clinical Training or the designated person in charge of graduate admissions should make every effort to inform students on the alternate list of their status as soon as possible.
 - a. The procedure of designating all students who have not been offered immediate admissions as alternates is inappropriate. The University Training Program should have a procedure for identifying those students who clearly will not be offered admissions.
 - b. A reasonable designation of the student's position on the alternate list is encouraged, if applicable (e.g., high, middle, or low on the alternate list). If such a designation is used, the operational definition of "high on the alternate list" is that, in a normal year, the student would receive an offer of admission (but not necessarily funding) prior to the April 15 decision date.
 - c. Once the class has been filled, students on the alternate list should be informed that they are no longer under consideration for admission. Students who were designated "high on the alternate list" should be informed by phone or email.

6. A student should not hold more than two offers for more than one week unless there is specific information (e.g. a visit is scheduled, funding decisions, advisor decisions) they are waiting to receive from the program. Difficulty making up one's mind is not considered an adequate excuse to limit the options available to other applicants. Holding multiple offers ties up slots, preventing programs from making offers to other students. This is a complex principle operationalized in the points below.
 - a. It is legitimate for students to want to visit a program, if they have not done so already, before making decisions among offers. Such visits should be scheduled as soon as practical after the offer of admission is received. If after a visit to a program the student decides that the program is rated lower than a program that the student has already been offered admission to, the student should inform the lower rank program that they will be declining their offer.
 - b. Whenever possible, the student applicant should inform training programs by phone or email of a decision, following up within 24 hours with a written confirmation of that decision.
 - c. Once a student has accepted an offer of admission to a Graduate Training Program, the student should inform all programs in which they are currently under consideration that they are either declining outstanding offers of admission or no longer wish to be considered for admission. Students should contact by phone or email those programs that have offered them admission.
7. It is the responsibility of the Director of Clinical Training or the designated person in charge of graduate admissions to keep students informed of changes in their status. Ideally, the student should be informed immediately by phone or email. Offers of admission or offers of funding for students already offered admission should be made over the phone or email with a follow-up letter mailed within 24 hours.
8. The current policy statement of the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology allows students to resign offers they previously accepted up to the April 15th decision date by submitting the resignation in writing (preferably by email immediately followed up by a letter). The purpose of this policy is to avoid pressure on students to accept offers before they have heard from other schools. Although withdrawing an acceptance is legitimate, it is not good form and is very strongly discouraged. A much better approach is to accept a position only if you intend to follow through on your commitment. Students have the right to hold offers as described above if a preferable offer is still possible. Except in very unusual situations (e.g., serious illness or major personal problems), a student who accepts an offer of admission is expected to start the graduate program the following fall. Upon request, programs may grant a deferral, but they are not obligated to do so. Training lines are severely limited, and failing to use a line once it has been offered prevents other qualified students from obtaining training.