**Response to the ABA External Program Review**

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An external review was completed of the Applied Behavior Analysis on-line graduate program and the report was received in April 2021 and was completed by Sarah E. Bloom, PhD, BCBA-D, University of South Florida, Matthew T. Brodhead, Ph.D., BCBA-D Michigan State University, and Jennifer Ninci, PhD, BCBA-D, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The overall feedback we received from the external reviewers was positive and supportive of the program development process and curriculum. There were only a few areas for improvement identified. Below I copied the areas for improvement identified in the report and the ways in which we plan to address these concerns or suggestions.

Potential identified weaknesses:

*Frontloading the traditional coursework in the first year with a second year focus in*

*optional supervised fieldwork may have cons for students including 1) less potential to*

*synchronize coursework and experience for optimal learning outcomes and 2) a longer delay*

*between coursework and the time in which candidates are eligible to sit for the BCBA exam,*

*potentially negatively affecting pass rate data. It can take about two years for candidates to*

*meet current BACB standards in completing the supervised fieldwork experience so it may be*

*beneficial to encourage or embed supervised experiences from the onset of the program. In this*

*case, expediting coursework to be completed in only one year does not seem to have much*

*benefit. As the program is piloted, this could be explored and adaptations may be considered*

*down the line. The proposed model could alternatively be of benefit to students so that they are*

*fully immersed in their fieldwork component, entering the bulk of their supervised experiences*

*with a strong foundational knowledge-base.*

Students in both tracks of the program (i.e., 1 year Master’s program only versus 2 year Master’s program with licensure) must complete a minimum of 90 hours of supervised practica. We have considered changes to the coursework carefully and as suggested by the reviewers, we would like to wait until a cohort has progressed through the program to make changes which would lengthen the length of their program. Our rationale is that while it is true that a lack of integration between coursework and practice can contribute to lower exam scores, there is not data to suggest this and our coursework builds in fluency measures in each course such that the entirety of their knowledge is assessed in an ongoing fashion to ensure mastery and success on the exam. As most programs, we would also offer study support to students sitting for the exam which addresses concerns about low exam scores. Additionally, the coursework in Year 1 and supervision in Year 2 approach mirrors the internship approach of our sister program in School Psychology and would allow School Psychology students to map onto the Master’s in Applied Behavior Analysis and accrue supervised hours in their internship year. Finally, we suspect that a number of students may find the current proposed option of utility if they are a working professional without current access to employment that affords the opportunity for practice of applied behavior analysis. They could obtain a Master’s Degree in 1 year which could expand their options for employment where supervised experiences in applied behavior analysis are both possible and paid for by their employer. The ability to work while completing supervised fieldwork will be attractive especially to non-traditional students.

*An optional fieldwork component can lead to uncertainty with addressing ongoing needs*

*with faculty and their respective workloads, while on the other hand, the flexibility allowed for*

*students may attract candidates from diverse contexts thus improving enrollment. This potential*

*issue could be mitigated by having students select their program line option early on in their*

*programs. The program could also have a cap for the number of students admitted to the longer*

*supervision program to ensure faculty capacity. Having approved fieldwork sites, as proposed,*

*should also help this potential issue (i.e., established partnerships will help with planning*

*anticipated enrollment numbers). The supervised fieldwork option for students will be more*

*expensive and thus could be generally less desirable for students. We recommend comparing*

*the program costs associated with the two lines and posting that for prospective students. The*

*relative costs of each program line to gain revenue for the department should also be explored,*

*as offering supervised fieldwork through faculty loads can be more demanding and costly than*

*traditional coursework.*

In the College of Education, we have experience assisting students from different cohorts and programs to navigate requirements. Incoming students will have conversations with their assigned major advisor to ensure the right program plan is developed; although some flexibility is inherent in our graduate programs, students will be required to select a program of study prior to beginning the program and will require additional advising and approval from their advisor and the prior to changing their program of study. The costs of the program plans will be calculated and provided to students during recruitment, orientation, and to assist them in making their decision about a program plan. The costs of offering supervised fieldwork are a concern and we have explored options for working with local providers of applied behavior analysis (i.e. Board Certified Behavior Analysts; BCBAs) to serve as cooperating professionals as adjunctive supervisors for students enrolled in this program of study. Similar to our teaching programs, the cooperating professional and UO supervisor would both join the student for beginning of term, mid-term, and final meetings to provide evaluation of student competencies and suggestions for future professional development. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) allows students to accrue supervision hours from multiple supervisors during the same period of time. Thus, the supervision load and fte will be shared with cooperating professional. We do not plan to pay the cooperating professional, but the connection with the UO can be beneficial to the employer through professional development, access to graduates in a tight hiring market with many job postings for BCBAs, and access to students who they may hire as therapists during their time in the program. This is a fairly common arrangement in applied behavior analysis so once the program is approved, the cultivation of collaborations with employers in Oregon will be a central way we ensure our supervision is cost efficient and revenue producing. Certainly, we can also revisit the revenue versus cost of the supervision and decide to not offer supervision if most students declare the coursework only option.

*We are concerned that the two additional hires will each be expected to teach 8*

*independent courses a year. From our understanding, this teaching load comes in addition to*

*advising students (which may include research supervision, which is incredibly time-intensive).*

*Any efforts to reduce that load would strengthen the program and increase the likelihood of*

*integration with existing strengths of the department. Supporting these new faculty by fostering*

*their research productivity as well as teaching requirements will improve the likelihood that the*

*faculty search will yield candidates that can contribute to University of Oregon’s reputation as a*

*research-1 institution. Overburdening faculty with teaching and advising responsibilities may*

*make the positions less desirable to talented candidates. One way that might be accomplished*

*is by providing mentored-to-independent teaching opportunities for PhD students, post-doctoral*

*fellows, or both. This approach may further strengthen and diversify University of Oregon’s*

*research reputation.*

There is an allotment of GEs to the college every year and several PhD students in the special education and school psychology program generally hold BCBAs and they could potentially support this program in the ways suggested. We will pursue the effective use of these students to support instruction.

*We suggest that one of the new hires has a translational science background so that*

*they can effectively teach the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (EAB) course required for*

*accreditation by the ABAI and meet the requirements for the BACB Verified Course Sequence*

*(VCS). A translational science background would combine the expertise needed to deliver*

*high-quality instruction in EAB but also make sure that it is a relevant and dynamic course that*

*will yield research ideas as well as broaden the research funding opportunities for the*

*department, perhaps to National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) or*

*National Science Foundation (NSF).*

A background in the Experimental Analysis of Behavior will be a preferred qualification when hiring new faculty. However, we are cognizant of the relative lack of EAB researchers who wish to relocate in order to work within an applied program so will also consider pro-tem hires for this particular component (2 courses) of the program or the ability for the right individual (with both EAB and applied behavior analysis expertise) to telecommute given the online nature of the program. We are optimistic that allowing for someone to telecommute increases the degrees of freedom in locating the right individual for teaching this content.

*The current recommendations for total personnel could potentially benefit from an*

*additional tenure-track faculty member. The responsibilities associated with maintaining a VCS*

*for accreditation as well as the fieldwork component can be demanding so it could be*

*recommended to grant an annual course release or two to a coordinator, depending on their*

*other responsibilities.*

As enrollments increase the submission of an institutional hiring plan for an additional tenure track position will be submitted for review. Tenure track faculty hires are not decided upon at the college level and therefore we need to strategically request a tenure track position when the program has demonstrated longevity and viability.

*In our meetings, we discussed the pros and cons of requiring faculty be operating locally*

*versus via distance for a fully online program. The faculty we interviewed were open to*

*possibilities to prioritize goodness of fit to areas. One such niche area of need, as mentioned*

*above, will be a translational research professional. We also suggest adding faculty member(s)*

*with a strong record of publication in the field of applied behavior analysis so that they can*

*independently lead students through research requirements associated with the program.*