



June 30, 2022

Simmons University
300 The Fenway
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Dr. Gretchen Dittrich,

On behalf of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) Accreditation Board, I write to inform you that the Board has deferred decisions on the re-accreditation of the on-campus master's program and initial accreditation of the online master's program, pending receipt of evidence that the programs have made specific improvements within two years.

The Board agreed with the site visit reports, there are commendable aspects to the Simmons University master's programs, especially as the on-campus program has historically been an effective training program. There are also two areas in which improvements are needed.

First, the Board indicated it was difficult to determine which faculty are teaching, supervising, and the overall workload is amongst them. Therefore, the Board was unable to make judgement as to whether the programs adequately meet standard area 6 – faculty.

Within the first year of the deferral period, the programs must provide evidence and information about the faculty arrangements, detailing the workload and responsibilities. For both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years, please provide a list of faculty members (core, adjunct, or other) who had teaching, advising, or student supervision, across both the on-campus and online programs.

1. teaching assignments (specific courses)
2. advising assignments (number students)
3. practicum supervision (number of students)
4. other details as needed to clarify the faculty members' workload and roles

The faculty report must be submitted by July 1, 2023.

Second, the Board determined the program does not meet the thesis or equivalent standard (9-104). The site visitors indicated that students engage in fieldwork projects with oral and written presentations during their fieldwork. Though, there are no demonstratable research projects conducted amongst the students nor specified requirements in the program materials.



The Board recommends your programs begin offering a thesis/equivalent **option** to students currently enrolled, ensure it is a requirement for the next incoming cohort, and then provide evidence (products) once implemented.

The thesis/equivalent plans must first be submitted by July 1, 2023. The evidence and products must then be included in the (re)accreditation self-study report applications by July 1, 2024.

In accordance with item 3-1-103, from the ABAI Accreditation Handbook, the previous grant of accreditation of the on-campus master's program is automatically extended during the deferral period. The online master's program remains unaccredited.

By July 1, 2023, the program must provide evidence and information about the faculty arrangements, detailing the workload and responsibilities. By July 1, 2024, the program must have incorporated and provide evidence of meeting the thesis/equivalent standard. If both items are satisfactorily completed within the specified timeframes, and approved by the Board, the programs can then apply for (re)accreditation by submitting formal applications and conducting a site visit. Please know the reports and subsequent self-study applications may be submitted sooner, if criteria are met before the two-year deferral period expires.

The Board understands that this is not the decision you sought. The Board respects the programs at Simmons University and its success in training quality graduates. In the end, however, the Board could not grant accreditation to the programs absent the thesis/thesis-equivalent nor without further details about the faculty and their workload. The improvements first must be implemented and documented. By extending the accreditation of the on-campus master's program during the deferral period, the Board believes it has acted as generously as its governance document allows.

I am available to help. I will be glad to discuss the Board's requirements with you and, if you would like, we can include Mike Perone, the Board Coordinator, in the discussion.

As the on-campus master's program remains accredited, the program is required to pay an annual sustaining fee as described in Title VII Section 7-1-104 of the *Accreditation Handbook*, and to remain in compliance with the Board's policies and procedures. I would like to call special attention to three important policies related to public disclosure. Your program is required to:



1. share the program's accreditation status and display the Board's masters-level accreditation seal on the program's web site. (See the Board's *Policy on Public Disclosure of Accreditation Status*.) The on-campus program is compliant with this requirement.
2. display on your website a prominent link to the aggregate report of the program's student outcomes that is posted on the Board's website. The link to your program's page and aggregate report is:
<https://accreditation.abainternational.org/apply/accredited-programs/simmons-university.aspx> (See Title IX, Chapter 3 of the *Accreditation Handbook*.) The on-campus program is compliant with this requirement as it links to the annual reports page.
3. submit an annual report and annual fee, normally due April 1 of each year, as described in Title VII of the *Accreditation Handbook*, using the form posted at <https://forms.gle/hjStiMjAu2FduRp79>. We received your 2021 report information – thank you. We will issue an invoice for the 2022 annual, sustaining fee for the on-campus program.

The aforementioned policies can be found via the “Documents” tab at <https://accreditation.abainternational.org>.) As program administrator, you should familiarize yourself with the materials in this section of the Board's web site.

If your program assigns a new program administrator during the current grant of accreditation, please notify me immediately so I can update our records.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We look forward to the continued developments and improvements of the programs.

Sincerely,

--

Jenna Mrljak, Ph.D., BCBA
Director of Education
Association for Behavior Analysis International
ABAIaccreditation@ABAIInternational.org

cc: Michael Perone, Ph.D., ABAI Accreditation Board Coordinator