

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ABOUT THE PROFICIENCY IN PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

“Standards for education and training in psychological assessment” (SPA, 2006) emphasizes that Personality Assessment is a complex practice within the field of psychology that requires advanced levels of specialized expertise and training, cultivated through both doctoral and intensive postdoctoral training and experience. The Proficiency in Personality Assessment was created to identify and recognize professional/health service psychologists who have obtained this level of competence in personality assessment.

The process of proficiency recognition in personality assessment continues to be adjusted and improved as we move forward with expanding opportunity for application. Please be patient as we continue to address more questions and concerns as they arise.

WHAT IS THE PROFICIENCY IN PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT?

The American Psychological Association (APA) officially recognizes Personality Assessment as a Proficiency in Professional (Health Service) Psychology.*

The Proficiency in Personality Assessment involves (but is not limited to)

- The administration, scoring, and interpretation of empirically supported measures of personality traits and styles in order to refine clinical diagnoses, structure and inform psychological interventions, and increase the accuracy of behavioral prediction in a variety of contexts and settings (e.g., clinical, forensic, organizational, educational)
- Meaningful integration of information from multiple data sources, including personality tests, into coherent and relevant written reports that facilitate appropriate interventions and estimate likely outcomes as well as a basis for providing verbal feedback that is clear, useful and responsive to the client or patient

*The Association’s actions in conferring recognition are not intended to, nor shall they constrain, the general and broad practice of psychology by any psychologist duly licensed to practice who is acting (a) in conformity with relevant statutes and administrative rules and (b) within the Association’s ethical principles. In addition, and unless required by statute or by administrative rule, recognition does not create a duty for a psychologist to secure any credential beyond licensure as a condition for practice.

UNDER WHAT AUTHORITY IS SPA RECOGNIZING THIS PROFICIENCY?

SPA completed a lengthy application process with APA to have personality assessment formally recognized as a proficiency. A proficiency committee including distinguished SPA members was formed to develop the proficiency application process and steps. SPA is committed to the field of personality assessment and doing all it can to increase the competence and proficiency of psychologists providing service in our field.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR THE PROFICIENCY?

To qualify to apply for proficiency, a psychologist 1) must be licensed in the state in which they practice or have a certificate to practice and 2) must be currently providing personality assessment services to the public. Assessment services may include conducting personality assessments, supervising assessments, and assessment consultation. In addition, while less direct, psychologists who teach personality assessment may also qualify for the proficiency. Since the proficiency is focused on demonstrating certain skills in the interest of protecting the public, those who are primarily involved with assessment research and scholarship do not qualify for the proficiency. This is not to say that such individuals are not proficient in personality assessment. The same goes for those who are no longer practicing assessment due to retirement or other reasons. Finally, at this time, the proficiency recognition is only relevant to those in the United States and Canada as they fall under APA jurisdiction.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROFICIENCY RECOGNITION?

By participating in the proficiency process, you are helping to ensure the maintenance of standards for personality assessment. You are also aiding the Society in developing the public's recognition of personality assessment as a valuable service psychologists provide. Upon being deemed proficient, you will have a means to communicate to professional colleagues and members of the public information about your own competence and background.

IS THE PROFICIENCY A CREDENTIAL?

The proficiency is not a credential like board certification in that it does not grant privileges. However, because it attests to competence in personality assessment, it may be useful to report in various assessment work contexts.

HOW IS THE PROFICIENCY DIFFERENT FROM A DIPLOMATE OR FELLOW STATUS?

The proficiency in personality assessment recognizes psychologists who demonstrate competence in a particular set of skills at a basic (rather than advanced) level. The focus is on informing and protecting the public by ensuring psychologists who offer psychological assessment services are proficient. The SPA Fellowship recognizes psychologists who have demonstrated high levels of competence and/or leadership in the field of psychological assessment. This is not restricted to clinical practice or service to the public. For example, one can become a fellow based on having published high quality research or a history of successful teaching in the area of personality assessment, but not practice whatsoever. The ABAP is the only international certification board for doctoral level psychologists with specialized expertise in psychological testing, test development and test battery administration. The Diplomate status is a formal credential achieved following a more in depth process. Therefore, whereas the Diplomate represents expertise in a given area, proficiency reflects basic competence.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE PROFICIENCY?

Application guidelines as well as all necessary materials are available on the SPA website (see link below). Application materials differ slightly depending on years of experience. Please

review the materials available carefully and contact the Proficiency Coordinator with any questions. <http://www.personality.org/about/proficiency-application/>

HOW MUCH DOES THE APPLICATION COST?

The application costs \$150 and can be paid by check or credit card.

WHERE DOES THE APPLICATION FEE GO?

The fee is used to offset the considerable costs associated with administering the proficiency recognition process, such as those associated with maintaining an on-line data base of proficient practitioners. Fees will also help support future proficiency related trainings offered by SPA.

WHERE DO I SEND MY APPLICATION?

You can send your application via regular mail to:

The Society for Personality Assessment
Attn. Proficiency Application
6109H Arlington Blvd.
Falls Church, VA 22044

Or via email to: manager@SPAonline.org

In the near future all applications will be completed electronically.

WHAT DOES THE APPLICATION AND RECOGNITION PROCESS ENTAIL?

As noted previously, the materials necessary for the proficiency applications depend on 1) years of experience in the field and 2) whether or not the applicant has achieved Diplomate or Fellow status. In general, application materials are reviewed by 3 psychologists who have either been recognized as proficient by the SPA Board of Trustees or who meet the criteria for proficiency established by the SPA Board of Trustees. Applicants are then either approved for recognition or not. Those who are recognized receive a formal proficiency certificate and they may choose to have their information listed on the SPA website.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF I DO NOT GET RECOGNIZED?

There are no formal ramifications for not being recognized as proficient in personality assessment. However, the feedback provided in the decision letter can help you understand those areas where your assessment skills may be enhanced to bring you closer to proficiency, and improve your practice in this area. We encourage those not recognized to consider and utilize the recommendations provided in the decision letter. Psychologists are encouraged to re-apply for the proficiency at a later time.

IS THERE A WAY TO APPEAL A DECISION?

An appeal process is currently being developed.

HOW DO I REPRESENT THIS PROFICIENCY RECOGNITION IN MY CV OR WEBSITE?

You can write, “Recognized as proficient in personality assessment by the Society for Personality Assessment Board of Trustees. (Personality Assessment is recognized as a Proficiency in Psychology by the American Psychological Association)”.

IS THE PROFICIENCY A REQUIREMENT?

The proficiency is not required, but is strongly encouraged. It is an opportunity for psychologists to get recognized for their demonstrated skills and to inform professional colleagues and the public that they are proficient in the area of personality assessment.

WHY DO I NEED TO RENEW THE PROFICIENCY EVERY 5 YEARS?

Such renewal demonstrates psychologists are maintaining their proficiency including updated research on personality assessment as well as revised and updated measures.

WHAT ARE PSYCHOLOGISTS SAYING ABOUT THE PROFICIENCY?

“Although the proficiency status is voluntary and has no ramifications for licensing at the moment, I believe it enhances the reputation of personality assessment and supports the idea that expertise in personality assessment is an achievement we can be proud of” (Dr. Stephen Finn, SPA Exchange Winter 2014)

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROFICIENCY?

You may contact the SPA Proficiency Coordinator with any questions or concerns.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To review additional information about the proficiency in personality assessment:

http://storage.jason-mohr.com/www.personality.org/General/pdf/Proficiency_Criterion.pdf

To review additional information about proficiencies recognized by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP):

<http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialize/personality.aspx>

