GUIDANCE FOR TRANSITIONING TO THE TIERED MODEL OF EDUCATION

ABAI has reviewed several inquiries from programs about the Tiered Model of Education. One common inquiry relates to ABAI's support for programs as they transition to the Tiered Model standards, most notably related to the eligibility requirement of having one graduate *and* logistical considerations to maintain graduates' eligibility for BACB certification. We hope this updated guidance clarifies our continued support for programs transitioning to the Tiered Model.

Updated Eligibility Criteria

ABAI evaluated and updated the eligibility criteria to aid in this transitionary period. The eligibility criteria to apply for recognition (Tiers 2a-4b) is as follows:

> Established training programs in the United States must be housed in a public or private institution authorized to confer degrees in its state of operation, be accredited by an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). ABAI will not award initial recognition to a program that is subject to an action by a recognized institutional accrediting organization or government agency that could lead to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or authority to provide post-secondary education.

> For established training programs outside the United States, eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis and upon evidence that the programs fall within the scope of the ABAI Tiered Model of Education, that there is legal authority to confer higher education degrees (as applicable), that recognition will be beneficial to the programs and their students, that there is a commitment by program administrators to remain current on changes to educational standards and policies and to participate in continuing professional development opportunities (including those offered by ABAI). The request must indicate how the program meets the eligibility criteria. Programs located outside of the United States are permitted to apply to Tiers 1-4b, but those outside a higher education institution are only permitted to apply to Tier 4a or 4b.

All programs, regardless of location, are evaluated via an identical process using the standards, policies, and procedures of the ABAI Tiered Model of Education and with regard for applicable laws, regulations, and cultural environments. The standards are publicly available to download from our website without needing to submit a letter of intent or formal application. We strongly recommend programs download and study the standards before seeking eligibility.

The eligibility criterion, requiring the program to have at least one graduate, is temporarily waived for established VCSs transitioning to the Tiered Model and applying for recognition (Tiers 2a-4b) through December 31, 2025. This does not apply to accreditation – programs applying for accreditation must meet all of the accreditation eligibility requirements, including having at least one graduate (from the entire degree program that is aligned with the standards).

Application Guidance

The Tiered Model standards and process evaluate the entirety of a training program. The applying program must demonstrate they meet all the standards prior to ABAI's review. ABAI acknowledges programs may engage in curriculum changes over the next several years and understands the challenges of timing such changes.

If the program i) is in good standing, ii) demonstrates it meets the standards, and iii) transitions from an established 5th Edition BACB VCS to the Tiered Model, ABAI can consider the applying program for recognition via Tiers 2a-4b. It is important to note that an applying program is not automatically granted recognition – it must demonstrate it meets the standards.

The program coordinator may submit supporting documents/attachments in the application to demonstrate the program has fully developed components and meets the standard(s). The information below highlights a few example areas from the curriculum requirements and the scope of information needed from the applying program. ABAI must be able to fully evaluate the program and all relevant components (even if new to the curriculum) at the time of the application review.

Basic Behavior Analysis: The following items are required as evidence for standard 9-102 (doctoral), 9-107 (masters/graduate), or 9-111 (bachelors/undergraduate), in addition to the requirements of Standard Area 9.

- Qualified instructor(s) for the basic principles course(s).
- A fully developed syllabus (schedule, readings, activities, modality, etc.) designed and approved by the institution. This means the course(s) received final approval (e.g., by the senate curriculum committee, university president, etc.) evident by an attestation or signed notification indicating the approved course(s) by someone outside of the department.
- Information as to when the course will be offered for the first time.

Conceptual Analysis: The following items are also required as evidence for standard 9-102 (doctoral), 9-107 (masters/graduate), or 9-111 (bachelors/undergraduate), in addition to the requirements of Standard Area 9.

- Qualified instructor(s) for the conceptual analysis course(s).
- A fully developed syllabus (schedule, readings, activities, modality, etc.) designed and approved by the institution. This means the course(s) received final approval (e.g., by the senate curriculum committee, university president, etc.) evident by an attestation or signed notification indicating the approved course(s) by someone outside of the department.
- Information as to when the course will be offered for the first time.

Thesis/Equivalent: The following information is also required as evidence for standard 9-104 (doctoral) or 9-109 (masters/graduate), in addition to the requirements of Standard Area 9.

- Current (or proposed) arrangement and activities to fulfill the thesis/equivalent. This requires some information about the Institutional Review Board process (or other approval mechanisms as needed), faculty supervision, presentations or products/papers, and details about the course codes or credit-bearing arrangements (if applicable).

- A description of how the activities completed for the thesis/equivalent requirement are separate from the other course content areas.
- Evidence of the thesis/equivalent requirement(s) in the program handbook and course catalog (indicating it as a program requirement),
- A description of the timeline for implementing it with current and future students.
- Details about the faculty supervising the theses and equivalent projects.

Please also review the Accreditation Board's recently issued guidance document for the Thesis or Equivalent standard. Programs aspiring for recognition (Tiers 2a-4b) should have these items in place, as part of their curriculum requirements, when applying for initial recognition. The Accreditation Board expects to see these thesis/equivalent items in place for at least the last two years of data in the application for accreditation or renewal of accreditation (Tier 1). Please be sure to thoroughly review the Thesis or Equivalent standard, the Supervised Experiential Learning standard, and the corresponding prompts and requirements in the self-study report application (available in the application templates).

Supervised Experiential Learning: If the program includes supervised experiential learning, the following information is also required for standard 9-103 (doctoral), 9-108 (masters/graduate), or 9-112 (bachelors/undergraduate), in addition to the requirements of Standard Area 9.

- Details about the supervising faculty and onsite supervisors and their roles.
- Description of activities and areas (applied or basic research), objectives, and evaluation systems.
- A description of the timeline for implementing it with current and future students.
- Description of when the experiential learning activities occur during the program and how the program manages it as a requirement (e.g., number of credits, academic terms, grading, competencies, or other performance measures).
  - o Contact hours may not be counted more than once per content area (e.g., contact hours designated for Applied Behavior Analysis cannot be designated to Supervised Experiential Learning)
- General information about the sites (e.g., location, supervisors, population, activities).

Please also review ABAI's supervised experiential learning guidance for additional considerations and examples of how programs may demonstrate they meet each component standard.

Additional Supports

ABAI also acknowledges that some programs may decide to develop entirely new courses or greatly revise their curriculum to align with the Tiered Model. Therefore, to support programs during this transitionary period, ABAI is developing two support systems:

1. A mechanism for programs to submit syllabi for review. The goal is to ensure the syllabi meet the purpose of the content area(s) and are well developed courses, prior to the program submitting it to their institutional for final approval (e.g., by the senate curriculum committee, university president, etc.).
2. A sample of syllabi exemplars that meet the purpose and scope of the required content areas.

Additional information and details about these two processes are forthcoming.