

## What you need to know about APPIC's new Standardized Reference Form

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Applicants participating in the APPIC internship match program for the upcoming year will be required to use the new Standardized Reference Form (SRF). This change comes as the result of efforts to improve the usefulness of reference letters submitted with the AAPI. In 2013, a workgroup was formed by the Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC) in response to concerns that letters of recommendation were not particularly useful when evaluating candidates. Specifically, internship training directors expressed frustration with letters that were vague and overly positive. Because of this trend it became increasingly difficult to assess an applicant's strengths and growth areas, and by extension determine goodness of fit for the internship site.

The resulting form is a modified version of the standardized reference form previously developed by the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCPPP) and will be used by all programs participating in the APPIC match, including Canadian Programs. This will standardize the reference process for all of North America, benefiting those programs who accept trainees from both Canadian and American programs, as well as students applying to programs in both countries. The new form also represents the psychology field's shift toward focusing on competencies, including prompts for letter writers to address the applicant's skills in providing evidence-based practice with regard to assessment and intervention, written and oral communication, individual and cultural diversity, interpersonal effectiveness, professionalism, ethical practice, research, and use of supervision and consultation. In addition,

letter writers will be prompted to address relevant personal characteristics of the applicant, and will be asked to outline specific areas for growth and development.

The new SRF has a multitude of other benefits for applicants, letter writers, and internship sites. For applicants, the standardization will provide transparency about areas in which they will be evaluated and can serve to reduce anxiety related to choosing their letter writers, as they will know ahead of time the areas letter writers will be addressing. This will serve to ensure that all relevant information will be included, and that all applicants will be evaluated on similar criteria. For letter writers, this change will hopefully reduce the burden of letter writing by providing clear and consistent guidelines, effectively streamlining the process and making it less time consuming. Perhaps, the largest benefit to both the applicant and internship site will be the ability to better evaluate goodness of fit. While applicants may have concerns about growth areas being highlighted, this will actually promote a focus on identifying goals for the internship year, and ultimately facilitate a match that can benefit the student by providing them with a site equipped to help them reach those goals, and further hone their skills in a meaningful way. For more information about this change or to view the new reference form, check out the FAQ section on APPIC's website at <https://appic.org/AAPI-APPA>.