

Division 2's Response to the Questions from the APA Ethics Committee

Submitted by Dr. Kenneth Keith, Division 2 President, on behalf of the Division 2 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division 2 of the American Psychological Association) welcomed the invitation from the APA Ethics Committee to respond to questions pertaining to preparations for drafting a new, visionary, and transformational APA Ethics Code. In accordance with its mission, the responses from Division 2's Executive Committee focus on how changes to the Ethics Code may "advance understanding of the discipline by promoting excellence in the teaching and learning of psychology."

The Division 2 Executive Committee respectfully requests that the Ethics Committee include representation on the Ethics Code Task Force from teachers of psychology in pre-graduate programs. We suggest including at least one committee member who is a member of Division 2 or serves on the Committee on Baccalaureate and Associate Education.

1) What aspects of the current Ethics Code do you believe work well for psychologists and protection of the public?

The General Principles provide a useful framework to educate students and the public on the aspirational foundations for the ethical standards.

2) What would you like to change regarding the current Ethics Code?

APA members who teach psychology do so in many different institutional contexts. However, several of the current principles in the Ethics Code are worded in a way that pertains to those who serve as administrators or teachers in doctoral programs but may not pertain to those who are administrators or teachers in pre-doctoral (e.g., masters, baccalaureate, associate, secondary school) programs. Refer to the response to question 3 for examples of principles that could be revised to apply to teachers of psychology in pre-doctoral programs.

3) What gaps, if any, do you believe exist in the scope or coverage of the current Ethics Code?

Some standards in Section 7 (Education and Training) could be revised to address issues and examples of education relevant to those who teach or work as administrators for undergraduate and pre-college programs. Much of the language currently appears to focus on doctoral programs. Here are some examples that are illustrative but not exhaustive of current principles that may not adequately address ethical issues relevant to teachers of psychology in pre-doctoral programs.

Standard 7.01 refers to designing education programs that "meet the requirements for licensure, certification, or other goals" without specifying the types of goals more common to baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, or completion of introductory courses (e.g., degree completion).

The examples of program content in Standard 7.02 ("counseling, psychotherapy, experiential groups, consulting projects or community service") are mostly relevant for doctoral programs and are less inclusive of program content in pre-doctoral educational settings (e.g., as articulated in the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major*).

Standard 8.04 refers to students as research participants. In many pre-doctoral settings, students may also conduct research supervised by a faculty member. It may be helpful to add a standard on educating pre-doctoral students on the ethical conduct of research in psychological science.

Standard 8.11 focuses on prohibition of plagiarism by psychologists. Educators also need to address the issue of managing plagiarism and other forms of cheating by students.

Standard 8.12c refers specifically to attributing principal authorship to students for research that is “substantially based on the student’s doctoral dissertation.” This standard could be revised to reflect the reality that pre-doctoral students serve as co-inquirers and may co-author presentations and publications with faculty members.

4) How have you managed/addressed these gaps to date?

Division 2 has published books and provides resources on its website that discuss ethical issues for teachers of psychology.

5) What future trends in psychology do you believe a new ECTF should consider in drafting a new Ethics Code? (Examples might include use of technology in research and practice, integrated health care, diversity issues, the internationalization of psychology and others.)

The examples listed in the question are quite relevant to teachers of psychology who may face ethical issues in using technology in educational settings (e.g., checking for plagiarism, maintaining confidentiality of student records), educating students on decisions that may affect their health and personal well-being, and addressing issues of diversity and internationalization in psychology courses and curricula.

In addition, teachers of psychology must address mandates for assessment of student learning outcomes in educational programs, particularly for the baccalaureate major in psychology but also for associates degrees, courses in introductory psychology, and other pre-doctoral educational programs.

6) What do you consider important functions that the new Ethics Code should accomplish? (Examples might include to be a resource for psychologists concerning ethical behavior, provide a foundation for licensing boards to discipline psychologists, provide guidance on ethical decision-making, and others.)

Teachers of psychology might find it useful to have a resource that identifies the ethical standards that are most relevant to the context of teaching that they could use as a reference. Division 2 has published books and maintains web-based resources that address ethical issues in the teaching of psychology. A series of articles in the February 2013, May 2013, and September 2013 issues of *Psychology Teacher Network* addressed ethical issues of teaching, but these are not easily retrievable from the Education Directorate’s website. We suggest that the Education Directorate’s Office of Precollege and Undergraduate Education could prepare and maintain a web-based resource that addresses ethical issues for teachers of psychology.