

Dr. Chen's Suggested Timeline for Preparing Psychology Internship Materials for the APPIC Match

This is the general timeline I have used while providing intensive individual advising for 40 clinical psychology PhD students since 2011.

Colleagues have sometimes commented that it seems like my timeline seems “early” as many students don’t start the process until August or even September. However, the feedback I’ve received from students over the years is that they appreciated this (loose) framework for various reasons:

- 1) Starting early gave them time to think critically about what they wanted during internship year
- 2) It gave them time to process how they wanted to present themselves (i.e., communicate clearly and in a meaningful way). They could talk and think through what they wanted to include in their essays (and work through multiple revisions for each essay).
- 3) Having a timeline with milestones for different parts of the application helped alleviate anxiety and decrease procrastination
- 4) Finishing essays “early” gave them time to finalize their site lists and focus on tailoring each cover letter
- 5) Having a longer timeline provided flexibility for short breaks to focus on dissertation proposals or vacations and self-care (what’s that, you say?).

Ultimately, most of them were ready to send out applications by mid-October. Sometimes their biggest holdups were waiting for references.

The internship application process will be stressful no matter what, but this timeline seems to help relieve the students’ stress a little bit and make everything feel more manageable. (To provide some context, we would usually meet for 1 hour every 2 weeks throughout the summer, so there were regular check-ins. I recommend finding a classmate or two to check in with regularly to help you keep on track if you don’t have an advisor or supervisor who can meet that often for application advice/feedback.)

JUNE –

- Start working on internship essays (at least 1 or 2 essays). Choose an essay topic you feel motivated to tackle and start there. (Most students I’ve worked with do the research essay last, as it feels more straightforward.) Ask for feedback on your draft(s). Talk through your ideas if you have writers’ block. Drafts should aim to be within 15 words of the 500 word limit (don’t make them too short or too long to begin with).
- Review internship program descriptions in the [APPIC Directory](#) when you need a break from essays. (Remember to filter “Program Type” to “Internship”; otherwise, postdoc programs will also appear in the results.) Keep in mind that not all programs are updated for the upcoming application cycle at this point.
 - o **Tip:** when you create a filter search on the APPIC directory, you can export the search results into a spreadsheet, which includes the hyperlinks for the APPIC directory profile of the internship sites (helpful for future reference as internship sites update their profiles).

- **Tip:** go beyond the APPIC directory profile and review the internship program's brochure for more detailed information (usually found on the internship program's agency website). Download and save the internship program brochures in a folder.
- **Tip:** create a spreadsheet to track which sites you've reviewed, and your level of interest at this point.
- Subscribe to [APPIC list-serves](#)
 - **Match News list-serve** – this is the official line of communication from APPIC and includes a minimal number of emails.
 - **Intern-Network** – email forum for questions from applicants. Keep in mind this list-serve includes thousands of students and hundreds of training directors and DCTs. Post judiciously. (There is a daily digest setting if you want to minimize emails. This list-serve has been much quieter the past couple of years.)

JULY –

- Continue revising essays – you should be on 2nd or 3rd essay at this point. Continue to ask for feedback on your drafts and incorporate feedback that resonates with you. (See my thoughts about feedback in [Writing the Most Interesting Internship Essays Ever.](#))
- Continue reviewing internship programs in the APPIC Directory – more programs will be updated at this point but not all. See APPIC's comments about [number of internship sites to apply to](#) – remember, it's what makes up the site list (i.e., goodness of fit) that is most significant (not how many applications you send out). In general, if you're geographically flexible, around 15 (+/-2) sites is a good target number of applications (this aligns with APPIC's comments). Application fees are per site.

AUGUST –

- The [AAPI Online Application](#) becomes available – when you feel tired of writing about yourself in essays, start inputting information in the AAPI portal. It can be tedious and often takes more time than students anticipate. Be sure to follow your doctoral program's instructions for the Director of Clinical Training (DCT) section of the application.
- Submit transcript requests when summer grades are in (for all graduate programs you've attended) – you need to start the AAPI online application in order to request transcripts. 1) Follow AAPI instructions for transcript requests; 2) Follow your university(ies)' instructions for transcript requests. Do not wait until October to submit requests when AAPI becomes backlogged with requests. (There is a manual aspect of AAPI processing transcripts into your AAPI application, and it can take 2 weeks or more.)
- By the end of August/early September, essays and your internship list should be mostly finalized. Your internship site list should include details about deadlines (each site varies), minimum qualifications (hours, coursework, types of assessment administered), and the training opportunities you like about each site.

- Identify your reference writers and ask if they are available and willing to provide a strong recommendation using the AAPI's [Standard Reference Form \(SRF\)](#) – attach the SRF document for them to use.

SEPTEMBER –

- Focus on cover letters – if you are applying to a couple different types of settings (e.g., VA and hospital settings), then develop templates for each type of setting and have someone review for you. Ask for feedback and revise accordingly.
- Finish completing the AAPI online application.
- Provide your DCT information that would be helpful for their portion of the AAPI – bullet point list of your professional goals/interests; your CV; highlights of accomplishments, such as awards, publications, works in progress, service (professional or student organization leadership positions); clinical supervisor comments from practicum evaluations, etc.
- Provide your reference writers same information as above and include the SRF again for easy reference. Each reference writer only needs to complete the SRF once; they upload it directly to the AAPI online portal. Additionally, while the reference writer does not have to individually address the Standard Reference Form to each internship site, provide a list of internship sites you are applying to so they have a sense of your aspirations. Provide a deadline that is at least 7-10 days before your first deadline.

OCTOBER –

- Based on the cover letter templates you've developed, tailor each cover letter to the specific training opportunities you're interested in for each internship program you're applying to. Do not use the generic "I'm interested in your site" – just write out the name of the site so they don't feel like it's a form letter (even though it's based on a template).
- Convert your essays and cover letters into pdf format. All 4 essays will end up in one document – you may simply label "Essay 1", "Essay 2", etc. before each essay (include your full name at the top of the document).
- Follow your DCT or doctoral program's instructions for getting your AAPI approved by the DCT. Once you receive your DCT's approval and have all of your completed materials uploaded, start sending out your applications (you pay a fee for each application).
- Register for the APPIC Match on [NMS](#) (this is different from the AAPI). There is a fee to participate in the match.

NOVEMBER –

- Continue sending out applications. Start chewing your nails as you wait to hear back from sites (usually early December, mostly around December 15th).

- Create a spreadsheet of possible interview dates and identify tight timelines or overlapping dates so you are ready to schedule interviews when you hear back from sites. University counseling centers are more likely to offer phone or video interviews, which helps with scheduling and keeping travel costs down.

DECEMBER –

- Send thank you notes to your references.
- Prepare for interviews through mock interviews – with clinical supervisors, advanced trainees, faculty advisor, family, friends. Review interview questions and practice talking through case vignettes.
- Practice with at least one person who knows you well and at least one who doesn't know you very well (e.g., a supervisor or professor you haven't worked with closely). The people who know you well can point out things you forget to highlight about yourself, and the people who don't know you as well can give you more of the "first impressions" feedback that is more similar to how an interviewer would experience you.
- Review your application materials before you interview – oftentimes interviewers reference specific information from your materials, and you want to be familiar with your own materials so you don't get caught off guard.
- Review each internship program's brochure and information about clinical supervisors and people involved in the training program before each interview.
- Some interviews start in mid-December. Make notes after each interview – details can be difficult to remember after a few interviews.
- Practice self-care so you don't get sick.

JANUARY –

- Attend interviews – remember to make notes after each interview. Send thank you emails to training directors.
- Continue to practice self-care so you don't get sick.
- Talk with your faculty advisor, clinical supervisor, and family about your ranking choices. Worried about how the match works? Review NMS's explanation of the [match algorithm](#).

FEBRUARY –

- The waiting period between submitting your rank order lists and match day can be challenging. Practice self-care. Perhaps use this time to pay some attention to dissertation and make some progress.

- MATCH DAY – if possible, make plans for a quiet match day (usually on a Friday) and weekend. If you do not match, work closely with your DCT to determine if participating in Phase II is a good option for you.

Good luck!

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