



CACREP Adopts New Accreditation Decision Options

CACREP is pleased to announce the adoption of new accreditation decisions that will go into effect January 1, 2023. The adoption of these decision options is the culmination of a multi-year strategic planning process that began in 2019. The decision options represent just one of a series of strategic initiatives in development aimed to support accredited programs and programs seeking accreditation, and to enhance transparency and accountability in the CACREP accreditation review and monitoring processes for public protection. The enhanced decision options provide the Board with a wider variety of tools to reflect the findings of accreditation reviews. This in turn provides better clarity to programs, students, and the public on what decisions mean and what may need to occur for a program to demonstrate continued compliance with the accreditation standards.

Accreditation Decisions

The CACREP Board of Directors (BOD) makes decisions to accredit or reaffirm accredited status following what is termed a full accreditation review. Full accreditation reviews occur when a counseling program applies for first-time accreditation or when an accredited program seeks a reaffirmation of its accredited status at the conclusion of its current grant of accreditation. Full reviews consist of a desk review of the application and self-study report materials, an accreditation site visit, and a final BOD-level review of the entirety of the review record. The decision categories include Accredited, Defer, and Deny. There are multiple decision options within some of the categories. The Board may also elect during a full accreditation review to impose a sanction on a program's prior grant of accreditation, should the circumstances and facts warrant it.

Compliance with the Accreditation Standards

The BOD's accreditation decisions are rooted in a program's demonstration of compliance with the CACREP accreditation standards and policies. The BOD will determine the degree to which a program demonstrates compliance with the CACREP accreditation standards. This is a primary consideration in deciding to accredit or deny accreditation, or to defer an accreditation decision. An additional factor is whether a counseling program is seeking reaffirmation of accredited status. Accredited programs are expected to be in continuous compliance with the accreditation standards and policies.

There are multiple levels of compliance that factor into the BOD's accreditation decision making.

1. **Full Compliance:** The counseling program has demonstrated compliance with all applicable accreditation standards and policies.
2. **Substantial Compliance:** The counseling program has demonstrated that it has policies and practices in place that generally comply with accreditation standards and policies, but which may require minor modifications. The BOD may accredit or reaffirm accreditation with a progress report or reaffirm accreditation with a progress report and a notice of concern. The BOD believes that the identified areas of noncompliance can be remedied within a prescribed timeframe.

3. Noncompliance Concerns: The counseling program has not demonstrated compliance with one or more accreditation standards or policies. The BOD may defer making an accreditation decision and request additional responsive information from the program, or deny accreditation. There is an expectation that accredited programs will continuously maintain compliance with the accreditation standards and policies.

Accreditation Decisions		
Category	Types of Decisions	Notification
<p>Accredit A decision by the BOD to accredit places a new applicant counseling program into accredited status or continues an already accredited counseling program in accredited status.</p> <p>The BOD makes a positive decision to accredit when it determines that a counseling program is in full or substantial compliance with the CACREP accreditation standards and policies.</p>		CACREP: Public.
	<p>Accredit or Reaffirm Accreditation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BOD determines that a counseling program is in full compliance with all accreditation standards and policies. The counseling program enters directly into maintenance of accredited status with the associated reporting requirements. 	CACREP: Public via announcement of accreditation decisions and entry in Directory of Accredited Programs.
	<p>Accredit or Reaffirm Accreditation with a Progress Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BOD determines that an applicant for initial accreditation or reaffirmation is in substantial compliance with the standards and policies. <p>The counseling program must submit a progress report on improvements in its policies and practices relative to compliance with specific accreditation standards, policies and procedures designated by the BOD.</p>	CACREP: Public via announcement of accreditation decisions and entry in Directory of Accredited Programs.

	<p>Accreditation with a Progress Report and Concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BOD determines that a counseling program seeking reaffirmation of its accredited status is in substantial compliance with the accreditation standards and policies ○ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The notice of concern reflects the needed improvements in the program’s policies and practices that if not addressed, may lead to noncompliance with the standards and polices. <p>The counseling program must submit a progress report addressing the remedying of the identified areas of noncompliance within the time frame designated by the BOD ○ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A failure on the part of the program to adequately address the issue(s) within the prescribed timeframe may result in the imposition of a sanction or loss of accredited status. </p>	<p>CACREP: Public via announcement of accreditation decisions and entry in Directory of Accredited Programs.</p>
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Note

* **Progress report:** any kind of follow-up report addressing specific standards- or policy-related compliance issue(s). This terminology replaces the prior term Interim Report.

The Board prescribes the timeframe for when a progress report is due, taking into consideration the type(s) and breadth of the standards and/or policies cited, the associated level of concern regarding resolution, and the upcoming schedule of BO D meetings. The prescribed timeframe may vary; this replaces the prior automatic interim report timeframe of two years.

<p>Deny The BOD denies accreditation or reaffirmation of accredited status when it determines, after notice to the program and an opportunity for the program to respond, that a counseling program has not demonstrated substantial compliance with the accreditation standards and/or policies.</p> <p>Additional factors that can result in a decision to deny accreditation include the breadth and seriousness of the identified areas of noncompliance, concerns about the program’s ability to address them and the extent to which the noncompliance may pose a potential risk to students and the public.</p>		<p>CACREP: Public via announcement of accreditation decisions and entry in Directory of Accredited Programs.</p>
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<p>Notes A decision to deny accreditation or reaffirmation of accredited status is identified as an adverse action. As such, it is appealable under CACREP Policy 3.e – Appeal Policy and Procedures.</p> <p>A decision to deny accreditation for a new applicant counseling program results in the program not achieving accredited status under the current application. To become accredited, the program will need to submit a new application and go through the full review process again.</p> <p>If the Board denies accreditation for a counseling program seeking reaffirmation of accredited status, the result is a revocation of accreditation for the program. Recognition of program graduates from an accredited program will be in accordance with CACREP Policy 5b – Graduates of Withdrawn or Denied Programs. To become accredited again, the program will need to submit a new application and go through the full review process again.</p>

<p>Defer The BOD may defer making an accreditation decision until a later time. The BOD determines the timeframe for the deferral based on individual facts and circumstances.</p>

<p>Defer for Compliance Concerns There is an expectation that accredited counseling programs continuously maintain compliance with the accreditation standards and policies. The BOD may defer a decision to reaffirm accreditation due to the nature and/or breadth of compliance concerns that emerge during a full review. In this instance, the BOD ensures adequate due process through requesting a response from the counseling program prior to making a decision on its accreditation status. The BOD will extend the counseling program’s accredited status and may impose a sanction.</p>

The BOD may also defer an accreditation decision, for new applicants or programs seeking reaffirmation of accredited status, in order to resolve issues that emerge during its review of the accreditation record such as ambiguities in the site visit report or needed clarification of information provided by the program relative to compliance with accreditation standards and policies.

CACREP: Public notification via announcement of accreditation decisions and entry in Directory of Accredited Programs. Programs will remain in the status of accreditation at application. Programs seeking reaffirmation will remain in Accredited status and programs seeking initial accreditation will remain in In-process status.

Note

A deferral is a delay, not a sanction. An accredited program will retain its accredited status until a decision is made. The BOD, at its discretion and based on the individual facts and circumstances, may backdate the decision to the original date the decision would have been made, following a positive decision.

Public Notice

All accreditation decisions are public information and as such will be published in the CACREP Directory of Accredited Programs and in the reporting of accreditation decisions following each meeting of the CACREP BOD. The resolution of noncompliance requirements will be noted by subsequent changes in status in the CACREP Directory of Accredited Programs and in the reporting of accreditation decisions following each BOD meeting.

Programs are required to post accurate accreditation status information in program materials. It is strongly recommended that counseling programs regularly and actively inform students and stakeholder groups about the accredited status of all counseling specialty areas and doctoral programs and, if applicable, pending accreditation reporting requirements and potential outcomes.

Conclusion

These enhanced accreditation decision options will facilitate the CACREP BOD's decision-making, which in turn will benefit accredited counseling programs, counseling programs seeking accreditation, and the public, including prospective students. The accreditation decision options provide tools that can be tailored more precisely to different circumstances that present in a program's compliance with accreditation standards and policies. This change aims to support counseling programs and the public, and to achieve greater transparency and accountability in the accreditation process.