



# CACREP Guiding Statement

## Guiding Statement on Best Practices for Bachelor to Master Bridge Programs

The Board recognizes that *Bachelor to Master Bridge programs* (in which undergraduate students are allowed to take graduate-level courses that may later also count toward a graduate degree in counseling) are not specifically addressed in the 2016 CACREP Standards. Furthermore, the Board believes each institution housing CACREP-accredited counseling programs has the ultimate authority to determine and implement bridge program policies within their system. However, many programs request guidance from CACREP on bridge program dilemmas and best practices.

The goal of bridge program decisions is to ensure that all degree-seeking students have met the same curricular requirements upon graduation from a CACREP-accredited graduate degree program in counseling.

To that end, the Board endorses the following Bridge Program Best Practice Guidelines for programs to consider.

- Each program develops specific bridge program policies to be approved by their institution. These policies should address whether credit for a given course may be counted toward both a bachelor's and a graduate degree (i.e. "double dipping"), eligibility requirements for participation in the bridge program (e.g., year in college, undergraduate GPA, eligible undergraduate majors), admission procedures, transfer credit implications, time-to-degree implications; and which graduate courses may be taken as part of the bridge program.
- Each program works with its institution to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations (e.g., state authorization reciprocity agreements, financial aid regulations, state licensure laws and rules) and regional accreditor requirements.
- Each program provides students with information including but not limited to financial aid implications, time-to-degree limits, maximum credit hours and specific coursework that may be taken at the undergraduate level, course performance expectations, grade requirements for future application of credit toward a graduate degree, and implications for licensure (including out-of-state licensure).
- Each program specifies whether admission into a bridge program guarantees admission into the counseling graduate degree program. If a program guarantees admission of bridge program students into the graduate degree program, they must apply the same admissions requirements to both types of applicants.

- Each program allows only graduate level coursework to be applied toward graduate degrees. Credit from cross-listed courses taken at the undergraduate level cannot be applied toward graduate degrees. (See policy 1.e.)
- Because CACREP accredits only graduate programs, institutions refrain from advertising Bridge programs as CACREP accredited and from utilizing the CACREP logo on bridge program websites. (See policy 4.b.)
- Each program allows undergraduate students to take no more than 24% of the credit hours needed for the graduate degree, as Policy 8.e Substantive Change in an Accredited Program must be approved by CACREP if 25% or more of the credits are altered (in this case, taken before the bachelor's degree is awarded)
- Each program ensures that undergraduate students enrolled in a course are required to complete the same assignments and are held to the same standards as the graduate students enrolled in the course.
- In the event that bridge program courses contain key performance indicators (KPI) or other essential aspects of the program's assessment plan, the program records the bridge program student's performance in those areas (including assessments of dispositions) and includes this data in its analyses and assessment reports. The program also disaggregates this data to evaluate student performance at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Each program includes all students in the bridge program in its calculation of student FTE and in its calculation of faculty-student ratios.
- Each program ensures that all students, regardless of whether they participated in the bridge program, complete the same curriculum for program specialization.
- To safeguard against potential threats to ethical practice and clinical competencies, only students who have completed an undergraduate degree and have matriculated into the graduate degree program are allowed to enroll in clinical courses involving client interaction.