

Position Statement on Diversity – A Broad Concept of Differences

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is committed to working collaboratively with institutions to ensure that the principles of differences, fairness, and access for all students, foundational to the Counseling profession, remain integral to graduate counseling and mental health education. CACREP is dedicated to supporting programs as they prepare competent Professional Counselors and is committed to protecting the public.

The CACREP Standards, consistent with CACREP's mission, core values, and beliefs, are written by expert stakeholders in the Counseling profession, including practitioners, employers and industry representatives, educators, professional associations, and other communities of interest. The CACREP Standards are the minimum preparation requirements to ensure professional competence to enter the Counseling profession and to subsequently safeguard and protect the public.

The construct of diversity is defined as the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, qualities, or different social and ethnic backgrounds; of being different or varied, and there being many different things that exist together as a group (Servaes, Choudhury, Parikh, 2022; Togioka & Young, 2024). The CACREP Standards and Policies encompass this definition in multiple ways: CACREP recognizes a variety of types of institutions, variability and innovation in program delivery, and the uniqueness of each program in demonstrating compliance with the Standards. The Standards seek to ensure ethical and competent professionals enter the Counseling profession, understanding the complexity of the human experience and the intersectionality of unique personal identities.

Diversity of Institutions of Higher Education

The mission of every institution drives the respective institution's business operations and academic programs. These varying missions target different populations to educate and serve. CACREP-accredited programs are housed at public and private institutions that self-identify as fully in-person, fully online, and/or faith-based institutions, to name a few selected characteristics within the wide range of accredited programs and institutions.

Diversity of Counselor Education Programs

CACREP requires counselor education programs to state their mission and program objectives. These program objectives should align with the mission of the institution in which they are housed. At many institutions, a significant portion of their student body is comprised of first-generation college students, post-traditional or second career students, and/or military or veteran students, as is the case with many faculty and administration at the institutions. Counselor education programs are delivered along a continuum of delivery methods from fully in-person to fully online, with many including elements of both program delivery methods. In implementing the CACREP Standards, programs must attend to and ensure alignment of their practices with all applicable institutional policies and state laws.

Diversity of Ways to Demonstrate Compliance with CACREP Standards and Policies

While the 2024 CACREP Standards delineate requirements for resource allocation, curriculum, skills development, and academic quality, the Standards do not dictate the manner in which programs may choose to demonstrate compliance with the Standards and policies. Appropriately, programs vary in how they demonstrate compliance with the Standards. Program innovation is encouraged to meet both the intent and spirit of the 2024 CACREP Standards. Program faculty and accreditation reviewers understand that counselor education programs can meet the accreditation requirements in a variety of ways consistent with their program and institutional missions, as well as federal and state laws.

Diversity of Individuals

A foundational principle of working with a client is to understand them holistically. How a person defines themselves is an amalgamation of their intersectional identities that may be defined by but are not limited to the following: age and generational status, disability status, race, ethnicity, gender, affective/relational/sexual identity, religion and spirituality, social class, national origin, language, migration status, and veteran status among others (CACREP, 2024). A person's experience may be influenced and affected by their multiple roles and personal and social characteristics, including visible and non-visible dimensions. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (ACA) is integrated throughout the CACREP Standards. The ACA Code of Ethics defines the expectation of ethical practice that includes sensitivity to all individuals, avoiding harm and imposing or assuming values, and being a culturally competent counselor who respects all clients (ACA, 2014).

Program Integrity

CACREP values heterogeneity of the student body and of the teaching faculty as is reflected in the accreditation of programs at varied types of institutions. Each institution espouses a distinctively different mission and targets different populations to educate to be future Professional Counselors who might serve distinct segments of the population. CACREP requires that programs it accredits be housed at institutions that hold institutional accreditation. CACREP intentionally expanded its recognition of institutional accreditors beyond the formerly defined regional institutional accreditors in recognition of the changing nature of higher education and the breadth of institutional accreditors representing the breadth of missions and program delivery. By virtue of recognizing these institutional accreditors, CACREP honors institutional autonomy and accepts the varying ways in which programs may demonstrate compliance with the CACREP standards.

Relevant 2024 CACREP Standards

The following CACREP Standard addresses assessment of the potential to work with a wide range of future clients:

Standard 1.J Entry-level admission decision recommendations are made by the counselor education program and include consideration of each applicant's

- 1. career goals,*
- 2. aptitude for graduate-level study consistent with program delivery type, and*
- 3. potential success in forming effective counseling relationships with diverse populations.*

This standard requires programs to consider the prerequisite elements that create the foundation for entry into the program, successful completion of the program, and fulfilling future employment working with all populations.

The following CACREP Standards address the program accountability for the identified differences of the learning and teaching community at the entry-level:

Standard 2.A.3 The counselor education program has a mission statement that reflects counseling practice in a diverse, multicultural, and global society with marginalized populations

This standard is to ensure that the program prepares future Professional Counselors to work in a variety of settings and with all populations in a dynamic and changing society, and that the program mission statement is consistent with the institutional mission.

Standard 2.B.1 The program objectives reflect current knowledge and projected needs concerning counseling practice in a diverse, multicultural, and global society with marginalized populations

This standard is to ensure that the program's desired educational outcomes are consistent with the current and future needs of society, and that future Professional Counselors have the requisite knowledge to be effective in their work with all populations.

The following CACREP curricular standards provide essential knowledge and skills for a skillful, ethical, and effective Professional Counseling workforce.

Standard 3.B SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES

1. *theories and models of multicultural counseling, social justice, and advocacy*
2. *the influence of heritage, cultural identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, understandings, within-group differences, and acculturative experiences on individuals' world views*
3. *the influence of heritage, cultural identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, understandings, within-group differences, and acculturative experiences on help-seeking and coping behaviors*
4. *the effects of historical events, multigenerational trauma, and current issues on diverse cultural groups in the U.S. and globally*
5. *the effects of stereotypes, overt and covert discrimination, racism, power, oppression, privilege, marginalization, microaggressions, and violence on counselors and clients*
6. *the effects of various socio-cultural influences, including public policies, social movements, and cultural values, on mental and physical health and wellness*
7. *disproportional effects of poverty, income disparities, and health disparities toward people with marginalized identities*
8. *principles of independence, inclusion, choice and self-empowerment, and access to services within and outside the counseling relationship*
9. *strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination*
10. *guidelines developed by professional counseling organizations related to social justice, advocacy, and working with individuals with diverse cultural identities*
11. *the role of religion and spirituality in clients' and counselors' psychological functioning*

This foundational curriculum area supports student learning about the unique characteristics of and potential influences on all groups in a dynamic society in order to make an accurate diagnosis and provide effective treatment of individuals across the developmental spectrum, of couples, and of families throughout the family life cycle.

The following CACREP Standard addresses the types of variations within the Counselor education learning and teaching community at the advanced-level:

Standard 6.A.3.e commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice;

This doctoral-level standard considers prerequisite elements that create the foundation for entry and successful completion of the program to facilitate skillful, ethical, and effective counselor educator, researcher, and advanced practitioner.

The following CACREP curricular standards provide essential knowledge and skills to function effectively as a counselor educator, researcher, and advanced practitioner:

Standard 6.B.3.f TEACHING integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice principles and practices in the counselor education curriculum

Standard 6.B.3.l TEACHING culturally sustaining strategies for counselor education

These doctoral-level curricular standards address ways in which to develop pedagogy to prepare entry-level counselors to be skillful, ethical, and effective Professional Counselors to enter the workforce.

Standard 6.B.5.h LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY current sociopolitical and social justice issues and how those issues affect the counseling profession

This doctoral-level curricular standard addresses ways in which to prepare future leaders to be adaptable to social contexts at any given point in time and to be flexible in promoting best practices for skillful, ethical, and effective Professional Counselors.

Standard 6.B.5.k LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY strategies of leadership in relation to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice issues

This doctoral-level curricular standard addresses ways in which to develop leadership approaches and methods while considering differences, fairness, and access.

Standard 6.B.5.l LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY culturally sustaining leadership and advocacy practices

This doctoral-level curricular standard addresses ways in which to develop leadership and advocacy practices that promote the well-being of all clients and in all settings as appropriate.

CACREP Policy

When ethical preparation of Professional Counselors, as defined in the accreditation standards, conflicts with state laws, CACREP Policy A.2.i affords programs the opportunity to demonstrate alternate ways in which to meet the intent of the Standards and Policies in question to ensure preparation of a competent professional and to protect the public.

References

American Counseling Association (ACA). (2014). *2014 ACA code of ethics*.

<https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

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