

# **CACREP**

## **Policy Document**



Approved April 26, 2024

## Section A –Accreditation Expectations and Processes

### 1. Institution

- a. Institutional accreditation. CACREP requires its accredited degree programs and applicants to be housed in institutions that hold institutional accreditation granted by an accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education (ED) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- b. Impact of Institutional Accreditation Decisions on CACREP Degree Programs. If the institutional accreditation status is at risk for any reason, the counselor education program must notify CACREP within 20 calendar days of notification from the institution. The Board will review the circumstances of the institution's accreditation being at risk and the impact on the counselor education program(s) and may monitor and/or take action regarding the degree program's accreditation status.
- c. Site fees for counselor education programs sponsored by US institutions offered outside of the United States. Counselor education programs offered outside of the United States will be expected to pay any additional costs to cover the travel expenses of site team members.

### 2. Counselor Education Program

- a. Counseling Program Identity. Counselor education programs applying for CACREP accreditation must clearly demonstrate a Counseling identity in the following areas at the time of application:
  1. Foundational Counseling Curriculum (e.g., course prefixes, course titles, course content)- Section 3,
  2. Specialized Practice Areas (e.g., School Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling) degree program descriptions and curricula content,
  3. Descriptions of specialized practice area degree program(s) in counselor education program materials (e.g., website, student handbooks, catalogs),
  4. Core counselor education faculty identification with the Counseling profession -. Standard 1.Z,
  5. Student identification with the Counseling profession – Standard 1.L, and
  6. Core and/or affiliate faculty supervisor qualifications – Standard 4.N.
- b. Use of Degree Program Name and Degree Titles. Programs may not use degree program names or degree titles that have the potential to mislead or misrepresent CACREP accreditation status. Therefore, when an institution seeks CACREP accreditation for one or more graduate specialized practice area degree programs (e.g., School Counseling, Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling), the institution must use titles that 1) clearly identify the specialized practice area degree programs and degree titles as Counseling programs and 2) Counseling degrees, and 2) accurately reflect the CACREP specialized practice area in which accreditation is being sought.
- c. Equivalent Degree Program Requirement. Counselor education programs may not run an alternative Counseling degree program in the same specialized practice area as that of a CACREP-accredited specialized practice area degree program that does not have equivalent requirements in terms of credit hours, foundational counseling curriculum, and supervised clinical experiences.

- d. Graduate Level Coursework. The Board will accept only graduate-level coursework to complete the CACREP degree requirements.
- e. Program Training Requirement. Beginning July 1, 2026, programs, regardless of program delivery method, require and deliver synchronous experiences to observe and assess counseling skills and professional dispositions for all students at least at two points throughout the student's program of study of which one occurs prior to the practicum.
- f. Duration of Practicum. The duration of a student's supervised practicum experience is to extend across a full academic term, as defined by the institution, to allow for the development of basic counseling skills and the integration of knowledge. CACREP standards do not allow for extra hours completed during practicum to be counted toward the 600-clock hour internship requirements.
- g. Counselor Education Program Innovation. CACREP supports the design and implementation of new initiatives that advance academic quality. New initiatives must be consistent with the counselor education program's stated mission and objectives.
- h. State Licensure Notification. Consistent with federal mandates, counselor education programs must inform current and prospective students if the accredited degree specialized practice area(s) program(s) meets the state licensure and/or certification requirements to practice in the state in which the student resides.
- i. When CACREP Standards Conflict with State/Local Laws. If CACREP Standards, policies, or procedures conflict with any local or state laws governing an institution, it is the responsibility of the counselor education program to notify CACREP of the conflict and suggest one or more alternative resolutions that demonstrate the counselor education program's willingness to meet the intent of the Standards, policies, or procedures in question.
- j. Degree Program Pathways. Counselor education programs offering different degree program completion options (i.e., pathways) consisting of variances and/or combinations of location(s) and/or delivery method(s), must identify the different pathways by which their degree program(s) may be completed; demonstrate equivalency of student experience, curricula, and access to resources and faculty, and program quality/integrity in each pathway; and determine and report the achievement of established minimum thresholds and analysis of trends over time for each pathway.
- k. Adding a Degree Program during an Accreditation Cycle. An institution that holds one or more accredited counseling specialized practice area degree program(s) may apply for additional accredited specialized practice area degree program(s) and/or a doctoral degree program. An application to add new degree program(s) must be submitted within four years of the current grant of accreditation.

If the program has any encumbrances, including but not limited to delinquent fees, cited standards, imposed sanctions, or an issued notice to show cause, this may result in the adding program(s) review being delayed until the encumbrance(s) are satisfactorily resolved, or in the review being canceled.

- l. Substantive Change in an Accredited Degree Program. Significant changes affecting the nature, substance, or delivery of a counseling degree program must be reported to and reviewed by CACREP. Anticipated changes must be reported for review prior to implementation of the change. Unanticipated changes must be reported as soon as possible.

The decision as to whether a change is substantive is a judgment specific to an individual program, since the change must be considered in the context of the whole program and institution. In cases where programs are unsure whether a planned change would be substantive, CACREP staff members are authorized to determine whether a Substantive Change Report is required.

Only after a reported Substantive Change is approved by the CACREP Board of Directors may a program consider such a change (a) to be included in its current accreditation and (b) not to have affected the validity of its accreditation.

- m. Teach-out of an Accredited Degree Program. Programs holding accredited status are expected to maintain compliance with the accreditation policies and standards. Institutions planning to close, voluntarily withdraw from accredited status, or forgo reaffirmation of accreditation for one or more of their CACREP-accredited degree programs must submit a substantive change teach-out report on how the counselor education program will maintain compliance with the standards and policies throughout the teach-out (i.e., the period during which the accredited degree program(s) will continue to operate in an accredited status with students who will graduate from an accredited program). Failure to resolve any concerns identified during the review of the program's teach-out plan or failure to pay annual fees may result in revocation of accreditation or determination of an end date for accredited status earlier than the cycle end date.
- n. Significant Degree Program Changes. In the event that significant changes occur in a degree program that may call into question a degree program's ability to maintain compliance with the standards, the CACREP Board reserves the right to take monitoring actions.
- o. Policy Addition- Effective July 1, 2026. Prerequisite for Doctoral Programs. All programs seeking to add or that hold accreditation for a doctoral Counselor Education and Supervision program must have at least one accredited Master's Counseling specialized practice area degree program. New applicant programs may apply for accreditation for a doctoral Counselor Education and Supervision degree program if the application also includes an entry-level Counseling specialized practice area degree program.

### 3. Process

- a. Integrity of Accreditation Process. Information regarding the counselor education program and institution resources and operations must be accurately conveyed in all reports and during all reviews. If verbal or written misrepresentation is determined to have occurred, the Board reserves the right to void the counselor education program's current review process, reconsider the accreditation decision, or withdraw accreditation.

- b. Disclosure of Accreditation Materials. CACREP will disclose accreditation-related reports and correspondence only if legally required to do so or if permission has been obtained from a representative of the institution in writing. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of documents and correspondence.
- c. Site Visits. For programs seeking initial accreditation, including accredited programs adding new specialized practice areas, CACREP prefers to schedule site visits when degree programs can document graduates; however, CACREP may schedule a site visit when students are in the last term of their degree program prior to graduation. For new doctoral degree programs, a site visit cannot be scheduled until there are students who are likely to complete their programs within a two-year timeframe.
- d. Site Team Findings. The Board may not reverse any site team findings that a program is in compliance with a CACREP Standards without first giving the counselor education program notice and an opportunity to respond.
- e. Materials Due for Board Decisions. Unless directed otherwise, counselor education programs engaged in a review process for which a decision from the Board of Directors is required must submit all materials for review at least 45 calendar days prior to the scheduled start date of the Board meeting.
- f. Notification of Decisions. All accreditation status-related decisions resulting in a change to a program's accreditation status will be communicated only via formal written correspondence within 30 calendar days of the conclusion of the Board meeting at which the decision is made. All other accreditation-related decisions will be communicated via formal written correspondence within 60 calendar days of the conclusion of the Board meeting at which the decision is made.
- g. Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation Status. A counselor education program may withdraw from any status of accreditation at any time by forwarding such notice, in writing, to CACREP. An accredited program must submit a report on how the counselor education program will maintain compliance with the standards throughout the teach-out (see also Policy A.2.m). An applicant for initial accreditation may withdraw from the accreditation process at any time prior to final action being taken by the CACREP Board. In both cases, the request for withdrawal must be made in writing by an authorized institutional representative.
- h. Extension of Accreditation Status. A counselor education program may request an extension of accredited status for cause if it can demonstrate extenuating circumstances. If the extension is granted, upon completion of the accreditation review process, the counselor education program's next cycle of accreditation would be reduced by the length of the extension granted in the prior cycle.
- i. Student Qualification as Graduate of Accredited Program. Graduates of a degree program receiving initial accredited status shall be considered graduates of a CACREP-accredited degree program if they received their degree within eighteen (18) months prior to when accreditation is granted. The degree program graduate must have completed the program of study that is granted accreditation.

In cases where the Board defers an accreditation decision and subsequently decides to grant initial accreditation, the 18-month period of retroactive recognition of graduates will be based on the date of the Board's decision to grant initial accreditation, not the deferral date.

- j. Graduates of Withdrawn or Denied Programs. Students in a CACREP-accredited degree program for which accreditation is ending – as a result of accreditation being revoked, reaffirmation of accreditation being denied, the program being taught out, or the program voluntarily being withdrawn from accredited status - must graduate before or in the academic term during which accreditation ends in order to be recognized as graduates of a CACREP-accredited degree program.
- k. Completion of multiple accredited specialized practice areas. If a student wishes to graduate with multiple counseling specialized practice areas concurrently, the student must meet the degree requirements of each CACREP-accredited specialized practice area. This includes meeting the curricular requirements for each specialized practice area, and a minimum of a 600-clock hour internship for each specialized practice area. All specialized practice areas must be included in the degree at the time it is awarded.
- l. Revocation of Accreditation for Failure to Submit Required Reports or Fees. Failure to submit any required reports or fees may result in revocation of accreditation.
- m. Use of New Standards. Counselor education programs submitting applications for accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation on or after the effective date of new or revised standards must demonstrate compliance with the new standards. All currently accredited degree programs must come into compliance with new or revised standards within two years of the effective date of the new standards. All reports submitted on or after the two-year transition period must be based on the new or revised standards. CACREP will conduct all reviews and make all accreditation and monitoring decisions based on the new or revised standards following completion of the two-year transition period. Counselor education programs submitting reports during the two-year transition period may elect to submit reports under either set of standards, unless otherwise directed.
- n. Complaints. CACREP will review, in a fair and timely manner, complaints that reasonably allege instances of noncompliance with CACREP accreditation Standards, CACREP Policies, and/or CACREP procedures by: accredited programs or active applicant programs; and complaints that reasonably allege instances of noncompliance with CACREP Policies and/or CACREP procedures or instances of undue subjectivity, unfair treatment, or other improper actions in relation to codes of conduct or other requirements by: CACREP Site Team members, CACREP Board Directors, or CACREP staff.
- o. Policy Addition- Effective July 1, 2026. Reporting Deadlines. For programs actively engaged in the reaffirmation of accreditation review process, accredited status will not lapse, provided that:
  - 1) The program has made timely and adequate report submissions in accordance with the reporting deadlines,
  - and
  - 2) The program is in good standing for fees.

The Board reserves the right to interrupt a reaffirmation of accreditation review process in instances:

- 1) Where programs do not adhere to the established time frames for report submissions;
- 2) Where programs do not submit reports that sufficiently describe and document compliance with the accreditation standards;  
and/or
- 3) Where significant compliance concerns with the standards become apparent during the review.

Failure on a program's part to submit an application, application fee, and self-study report for reaffirmation of accreditation by the established due date may result in a gap in accredited status.

## **Section B –Reconsideration and Appeals**

1. Counselor Education Program Requests for Reconsideration of a Board Decision. A counselor education program may request a secondary review, when the program can demonstrate that materials provided by the program addressing a standard or policy cited by the Board were overlooked, not given sufficient weight, or misinterpreted.
2. Revised policy- effective July 1, 2026. Decisions by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Board of Directors (Board), to deny initial accreditation or re-affirmation of accreditation at the conclusion of an accreditation review process or to withdraw accreditation from an accredited program for cause may be appealed. No other accreditation decisions of the Board are subject to appeal.

## **Section C –Accreditation Operations**

1. Public Notice of Accreditation Status.
  - a. Within 30 calendar days of the conclusion of the Board meeting accreditation decisions will be posted on the CACREP website. The publicly available information will include the following: 1) the accreditation status of the degree program, 2) the end date for the most recent accreditation grant made to the degree program, and 3) a summary of the reasons for which the Board made its decision.
  - b. CACREP maintains a public directory that provides information regarding degree programs' accreditation status and cycle end date, applications in-process, and previously accredited degree programs. Applications voluntarily withdrawn will remain posted on the CACREP website for a minimum period of 2 years or until the counselor education program submits a new application seeking accreditation.
2. Publicizing Accreditation Status and Use of CACREP Certification Mark. Institutions with one or more degree programs accredited by CACREP must assure accuracy when publicizing the degree program's CACREP-accredited status. Accredited counselor education programs may use the CACREP Certification Mark, not the CACREP logo, to promote their CACREP-accredited status. Accredited counselor education programs must obtain permission prior to using the

CACREP Certification Mark, which is trademarked. Permission may be obtained by submitting a written request to the CACREP office. Unauthorized use of the Certification Mark is subject to legal action. Neither institutions nor counselor education programs may use the CACREP logo in any promotional materials.

3. Nonrefundable Fees. All accreditation fees submitted to the CACREP office are nonrefundable.
4. Fees Set by CACREP Board. All required fees are set and enforced by the CACREP Board of Directors.
5. Remitting fees in the review process. Applicant counselor education programs must pay the requisite accreditation review fees (application, site visit) at each stage of the review process prior to commencement of that stage.
6. CACREP accreditation of non-US-based program. CACREP accreditation may be granted to counselor education programs sponsored by an institution based outside the U.S., provided that: the counselor education program is in compliance with CACREP Standards and Policies and is sponsored by an institution authorized by a governmental agency in their country to confer degrees.
7. New Standards. The Board will adopt a new set of standards every seven years following a systematic, comprehensive review of the existing CACREP Standards, to include input from all CACREP constituents.
8. Revision of current Standards. The Board will consider modifications to existing Standards for clarification or for which an imminent change is needed. These revisions may be initiated by the Board or requested by the public.
9. Adding a new specialized practice area to existing Standards. The Board will consider proposals for adding new specialized practice area(s) standards at any point.
10. Conflict of interest. CACREP expects all individuals engaged in the accreditation review process and decision-making to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical conduct, and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes avoiding potential, actual, and perceived conflicts of interests. If the CACREP Board determines that a conflict of interest by a Board member, Site Team member or staff member, has occurred that compromised the integrity of the accreditation review process, the Board reserves the right, as applicable, to void the pending counselor education program's review or reconsider an accreditation decision.
11. Policy revisions and additions. Current policies may be revised, or new policies added at the discretion of the CACREP Board as the accreditation review or decision-making processes require and may occur at any time with advance notice to accredited programs.
12. Policy waiver. The CACREP Board will consider requests to waive the application of an accreditation policy only when the program can demonstrate that there are exigent circumstances that would present a hardship to the program and/or to its students if the policy were to be applied, that a waiver of the policy will not present a hardship to students, and the purpose and intent of the policy will be met notwithstanding the waiver.

Waivers will be granted in particular circumstances and for an amount of time to be determined by the Board. A denial of a waiver is not appealable.