Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

Standards and Guidelines
for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in
Personal Fitness Training

Essentials/Standards initially adopted in 2007;
revised in 2013

Adopted by the
American College of Sports Medicine
American Council on Exercise
American Kinesiotherapy Association
National Academy of Sports Medicine
National Council on Strength & Fitness
The Cooper Institute
Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences
and
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredits programs upon the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences (CoAES).

These accreditation **Standards and Guidelines** are the minimum standards of quality used in accrediting programs that prepare individuals to enter the Personal Fitness Training profession. Standards are the minimum requirements to which an accredited program is held accountable. Guidelines are descriptions, examples, or recommendations that elaborate on the Standards. Guidelines are not required, but can assist with interpretation of the Standards.

Standards are printed in regular typeface in outline form. *Guidelines* are printed in italic typeface in narrative form.

Preamble

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Council on Exercise, The American Kinesiotherapy Association, the National Academy of Sports Medicine, and The Cooper Institute cooperate to establish, maintain and promote appropriate standards of quality for educational programs in Personal Fitness Training and to provide recognition for educational programs that meet or exceed the minimum standards outlined in these accreditation **Standards and Guidelines**. Lists of accredited programs are published for the information of students, employers, educational institutions and agencies, and the public.

These **Standards and Guidelines** are to be used for the development, evaluation, and self-analysis of Personal Fitness Training programs. On-site review teams assist in the evaluation of a program's relative compliance with the accreditation Standards.

Description of the Profession

Personal Fitness Trainers are skilled practitioners who work with a wide variety of client demographics in one-to-one and small group environments. They are familiar with multiple forms of exercise used to improve and maintain health-related components of physical fitness and performance. They are knowledgeable in basic assessment and development of exercise recommendations. In addition, they are proficient in leading and demonstrating safe and effective methods of exercise, and motivating individuals to begin and to continue with healthy behaviors. They consult with and refer to other appropriate allied health professionals when client conditions exceed the personal trainer's education, training, and experiences.

I. Sponsorship

A. Sponsoring Institution

A sponsoring institution must be at least one of the following:

1. A post-secondary academic institution accredited by an institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to provide a post-secondary program, which awards a minimum of a certificate/diploma at the completion of the program.

2. A foreign post-secondary academic institution acceptable to CAAHEP that awards a minimum of a certificate/diploma.

3. A branch of the U.S. Armed Forces or other governmental educational or medical service, which is affiliated with an accredited post-secondary educational institution or equivalent that is authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to provide a post-secondary educational program which awards a minimum of a certificate/diploma at the completion of the program, or a national organization authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to approve college credit.

B. Consortium Sponsor

1. A consortium sponsor is an entity consisting of two or more members that exists for the purpose of operating an educational program. In such instances, at least one of the members of the consortium must meet the requirements of a sponsoring institution as described in I,A.

2. The responsibilities of each member of the consortium must be clearly documented in a formal affiliation agreement or memorandum of understanding, which includes governance and lines of authority.

C. Responsibilities of Sponsor

The Sponsor must ensure that the provisions of these **Standards** are met.

II. Program Goals

A. Program Goals and Outcomes

There must be a written statement of the program's goals and learning domains consistent with and responsive to the demonstrated needs and expectations of the various communities of interest served by the educational program. The communities of interest that are served by the program must include, but are not limited to, students, graduates, faculty, sponsor administration, employers, physicians, and the public.

Program-specific statements of goals and learning domains provide the basis for program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Such goals and learning domains must be compatible with the mission of the sponsoring institution(s), the expectations of the communities of interest, and nationally accepted standards of roles and functions. Goals and learning domains are based upon the substantiated needs

of health care providers and employers, and the educational needs of the students served by the educational program.

B. Appropriateness of Goals and Learning Domains

The program must regularly assess its goals and learning domains. Program personnel must identify and respond to changes in the needs and/or expectations of its communities of interest.

An advisory committee, which is representative of at least each of the communities of interest named in these **Standards**, must be designated and charged with the responsibility of meeting at least annually, to assist program and sponsor personnel in formulating and periodically revising appropriate goals and learning domains, monitoring needs and expectations, and ensuring program responsiveness to change.

C. Minimum Expectations

The program must have the following goal defining minimum expectations: "To prepare competent entry-level Personal Fitness Trainers in the cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior) learning domains."

Programs adopting educational goals beyond entry-level competence must clearly delineate this intent and provide evidence that all students have achieved the basic competencies prior to entry into the field.

Nothing in this Standard restricts programs from formulating goals beyond entry-level competence.

III. Resources

A. Type and Amount

Program resources must be sufficient to ensure the achievement of the program's goals and outcomes. Resources must include, but are not limited to: faculty; clerical and support staff; curriculum; finances; offices; classroom, laboratory, and, ancillary student facilities; clinical affiliates; equipment; supplies; computer resources; instructional reference materials, and faculty/staff continuing education.

B. Personnel

The sponsor must appoint sufficient faculty and staff with the necessary qualifications to perform the functions identified in documented job descriptions and to achieve the program's stated goals and outcomes.

1. Program Director
   a. Responsibilities

      The Program Director must ensure achievement of the program's goals and outcomes, and is responsible for all aspects of the program, including the organization, administration, continuous review, planning, development and general effectiveness of the program. The Program Director must provide supervision, administration, and coordination of the instructional staff in the academic and practical phases of the educational program.

      Administrative and supervisory responsibilities of the Program Director should be recognized as a department assignment. The amount of time devoted to these responsibilities should be consistent with departmental or institutional policy, but should be deemed appropriate in view of the administrative responsibilities of the Program Director.

   b. Qualifications

      The Program Director must possess a minimum of a Master's Degree and a minimum of two years of work-related experience in health and fitness.

      A Program Director should be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution and have work-related experience in Personal Fitness Training, Exercise Science, or Exercise Physiology.

2. Faculty and/or Instructional Staff
    a. Responsibilities
    In classrooms, laboratories, and all applied instructional settings where a student is assigned, there must be (a) qualified individual(s) clearly designated as liaison(s) to the program to provide instruction, supervision, and timely assessments of the student's progress in meeting program requirements.

    All faculty members, regardless of the extent of their participation, should be familiar with the goals of the program and should be able to demonstrate the ability to develop an organized plan of instruction and evaluation.

    b. Qualifications
    Instructors must possess appropriate credentials and knowledge in subject matter by virtue of training and/or work-related experience, in teaching their assigned subjects.

    Qualified faculty and/or instructional staff should possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree and two years of work-related experience.

C. Curriculum

The curriculum must ensure the achievement of program goals and learning domains. Instruction must be an appropriate sequence of classroom, laboratory, and clinical activities. Instruction must be based on clearly written course syllabi that include course description, course objectives, methods of evaluation, topic outline, and competencies required for graduation.

The curriculum must meet nationally accepted standards, as described by the CoAES Sponsoring Organizations in Appendix B, which include cardiopulmonary resuscitation training, and a supervised internship experience.

Nationally accepted standards of roles and functions should include job analysis research and widely accepted best practices.

A supervised internship should occur at the end of the academic program as a culminating experience.

All students should receive First Aid, Automated External Defibrillator (AED), HIPAA training, and appropriate OSHA blood-borne pathogens training prior to program completion.

D. Resource Assessment

The program must, at least annually, assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the resources described in these **Standards**. The results of resource assessment must be the basis for ongoing planning and appropriate change. An action plan must be developed when deficiencies are identified in the program resources. Implementation of the action plan must be documented and results measured by ongoing resource assessment.

IV. Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment

A. Student Evaluation

1. **Frequency and purpose**
    Evaluation of students must be conducted on a recurrent basis and with sufficient frequency to provide both the students and program faculty with valid and timely indications of the students' progress toward and achievement of the competencies and learning domains stated in the curriculum.

2. **Documentation**
    Records of student evaluations must be maintained in sufficient detail to document learning progress and achievements.

B. Outcomes

1. Outcomes Assessment

The program must periodically assess its effectiveness in achieving its stated goals and learning domains. The results of this evaluation must be reflected in the review and timely revision of the program.

Outcomes assessments must include, but are not limited to: national credentialing examination(s) performance, programmatic retention/attrition, graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction, job (positive) placement, and programmatic summative measures. The program must meet the outcomes assessment thresholds.

Programmatic summative measures should contribute to assessing effectiveness in specific learning domains.

"Positive placement" means that the graduate is employed full or part-time in a related field; and/or continuing his/her education; and/ or serving in the military.

2. Outcomes Reporting

The program must periodically submit to the *Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences* the program goal(s), learning domains, evaluation systems (including type, cut score, and appropriateness), outcomes, its analysis of the outcomes, and an appropriate action plan based on the analysis.

Programs not meeting the established thresholds must begin a dialogue with the *Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences* to develop an appropriate plan of action to respond to the identified shortcomings.

V. Fair Practices

A. Publications and Disclosure

1. Announcements, catalogs, publications, and advertising must accurately reflect the program offered.
2. At least the following must be made known to all applicants and students: the sponsor's institutional and programmatic accreditation status as well as the name, mailing address, web site address, and phone number of the accrediting agencies; admissions policies and practices, including technical standards (when used); policies on advanced placement, transfer of credits, and credits for experiential learning; number of credits required for completion of the program; tuition/fees and other costs required to complete the program; policies and processes for withdrawal and for refunds of tuition/fees.
3. At least the following must be made known to all students: academic calendar, student grievance procedure, criteria for successful completion of each segment of the curriculum and for graduation, and policies and processes by which students may perform clinical work while enrolled in the program.
4. The sponsor must maintain, and make available to the public, current and consistent summary information about student/graduate achievement that includes the results of one or more of the outcomes assessments required in these Standards.

   The sponsor should develop a suitable means of communicating to the communities of interest the achievement of students/graduates (e.g. through a website or electronic or printed documents).

B. Lawful and Non-discriminatory Practices

All activities associated with the program, including student and faculty recruitment, student admission, and faculty employment practices, must be non-discriminatory and in accord with federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations. There must be a faculty grievance procedure made known to all paid faculty.

C. Safeguards

The health and safety of patients, students, and faculty associated with the educational activities of the students must be adequately safeguarded.

All activities required in the program must be educational and students must not be substituted for staff.

D. Student Records

Satisfactory records must be maintained for student admission, advisement, counseling, and evaluation. Grades and credits for courses must be recorded on the student transcript and permanently maintained by the sponsor in a safe and accessible location.

E. Substantive Change

The sponsor must report substantive change(s) as described in Appendix A to CAAHEP/CoAES in a timely manner. Additional substantive changes to be reported to CoAES within the time limits prescribed include:

1. The institution's mission or objectives if these will affect the program;
2. The institution's legal status or form of control;
3. The addition or deletion of courses that represent a significant departure in content;
4. The method of delivery of course(s);
5. The degree or certificate/diploma awarded;
6. A substantial increase/decrease in clock or credit hours for successful completion of a program.

(Note to CoAs: List specific "substantive changes" to be reported)

F. Agreements

There must be a formal affiliation agreement or memorandum of understanding between the sponsor and all other entities that participate in the education of the students describing the relationship, roles, and responsibilities of the sponsor and that entity.

APPENDIX A

*(This Appendix will be added by CAAHEP after final approval of the **Standards and Guidelines** document.)*

Application, Maintenance and Administration of Accreditation

A. Program and Sponsor Responsibilities

1. Applying for Initial Accreditation

a. The chief executive officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor completes a "Request for Accreditation Services" form and returns it electronically or by mail to:

Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences
401 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202

The "Request for Accreditation Services" form can be obtained from the CAAHEP website at www.caahep.org/Content.aspx?ID=11.

Note: There is **no** CAAHEP fee when applying for accreditation services; however, individual committees on accreditation may have an application fee.

b. The program undergoes a comprehensive review, which includes a written self-study report and an on-site review.

The self-study instructions and report form are available from the [committee on accreditation]. The on-site review will be scheduled in cooperation with the program and [committee on accreditation] once the self-study report has been completed, submitted, and accepted by the [committee on accreditation].

2. Applying for Continuing Accreditation

a. Upon written notice from the CoAES, the chief executive officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor completes a "Request for Accreditation Services" form, and returns it electronically or by mail to:

Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences
401 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202

The "Request for Accreditation Services" form can be obtained from the CAAHEP website at www.caahep.org/Content.aspx?ID=11.

b. The program may undergo a comprehensive review in accordance with the policies and procedures of the CoAES.

If it is determined that there were significant concerns with the conduct of the on-site review, the sponsor may request a second site visit with a different team.

After the on-site review team submits a report of its findings, the sponsor is provided the opportunity to comment in writing and to correct factual errors prior to the [committee on accreditation] forwarding a recommendation to CAAHEP.

3. Administrative Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation

a. The program must inform the Committee on Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences (CoAES) and CAAHEP within a reasonable period of time (as defined by the committee on accreditation and

CAAHEP policies) of changes in chief executive officer, dean of health professions or equivalent position, and required program personnel (Refer to Standard III.B.).

b. The sponsor must inform CAAHEP and the CoAES of its intent to transfer program sponsorship. To begin the process for a Transfer of Sponsorship, the current sponsor must submit a letter (signed by the CEO or designated individual) to CAAHEP and the [committee on accreditation] that it is relinquishing its sponsorship of the program. Additionally, the new sponsor must submit a "Request for Transfer of Sponsorship Services" form. The [committee on accreditation] has the discretion of requesting a new self-study report with or without an on-site review. Applying for a transfer of sponsorship does not guarantee that the transfer of accreditation will be granted.

c. The sponsor must promptly inform CAAHEP and the CoAES of any adverse decision affecting its accreditation by recognized institutional accrediting agencies and/or state agencies (or their equivalent).

d. Comprehensive reviews are scheduled by the CoAES in accordance with its policies and procedures. The time between comprehensive reviews is determined by the [committee on accreditation] and based on the program's on-going compliance with the Standards, however, all programs must undergo a comprehensive review at least once every ten years.

e. The program and the sponsor must pay the CoAES and CAAHEP fees within a reasonable period of time, as determined by the CoAES and CAAHEP respectively.

f. The sponsor must file all reports in a timely manner (self-study report, progress reports, probation reports, annual reports, etc.) in accordance with CoAES policy.

g. The sponsor must agree to a reasonable on-site review date that provides sufficient time for CAAHEP to act on a CoAES accreditation recommendation prior to the "next comprehensive review" period, which was designated by CAAHEP at the time of its last accreditation action, or a reasonable date otherwise designated by the CoAES.

Failure to meet any of the aforementioned administrative requirements may lead to administrative probation and ultimately to the withdrawal of accreditation. CAAHEP will immediately rescind administrative probation once all administrative deficiencies have been rectified.

4. Voluntary Withdrawal of a CAAHEP- Accredited Program

Notification of voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from CAAHEP must be made by the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor by writing to CAAHEP indicating: the desired effective date of the voluntary withdrawal, and the location where all records will be kept for students who have completed the program.

5. Requesting Inactive Status of a CAAHEP- Accredited Program

Inactive status for any accredited program other than one holding Initial Accreditation may be requested from CAAHEP at any time by the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor writing to CAAHEP indicating the desired date to become inactive. No students can be enrolled or matriculated in the program at any time during the time period in which the program is on inactive status. The maximum period for inactive status is two years. The sponsor must continue to pay all required fees to the [committee on accreditation] and CAAHEP to maintain its accreditation status.

To reactivate the program the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor must provide notice of its intent to do so in writing to both CAAHEP and the [committee on accreditation]. The sponsor will be notified by the CoAES of additional requirements, if any, that must be met to restore active status.

If the sponsor has not notified CAAHEP of its intent to re-activate a program by the end of the two-year period, CAAHEP will consider this a "Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation."

B. CAAHEP and Committee on Accreditation Responsibilities – Accreditation Recommendation Process

1. After a program has had the opportunity to comment in writing and to correct factual errors on the on-site review report, the CoAES forwards a status of public recognition recommendation to the CAAHEP Board of Directors. The recommendation may be for any of the following statuses: initial accreditation, continuing accreditation, transfer of sponsorship, probationary accreditation, withhold of accreditation, or withdrawal of accreditation.

   The decision of the CAAHEP Board of Directors is provided in writing to the sponsor immediately following the CAAHEP meeting at which the program was reviewed and voted upon.

2. Before the CoAES allows the Initial Accreditation of a program to expire, the sponsor must have the opportunity to request reconsideration of that decision or to request voluntary withdrawal of accreditation. The CoAES' decision is final and CAAHEP will not entertain any appeal on behalf of the program. CAAHEP will notify the sponsor in writing of the CoAES' decision.

3. Before the CoAES forwards a recommendation to CAAHEP that a program be placed on probationary accreditation, the sponsor must have the opportunity to request reconsideration of that recommendation or to request voluntary withdrawal of accreditation. The CoAES' reconsideration of a recommendation for probationary accreditation must be based on conditions existing both when the committee arrived at its recommendation as well as on subsequent documented evidence of corrected deficiencies provided by the sponsor.

   The CAAHEP Board of Directors' decision to confer probationary accreditation is not subject to appeal.

4. Before the CoAES forwards a recommendation to CAAHEP that a program's accreditation be withdrawn or that accreditation be withheld, the sponsor must have the opportunity to request reconsideration of the recommendation, or to request voluntary withdrawal of accreditation or withdrawal of the accreditation application, whichever is applicable. The CoAES' reconsideration of a recommendation of withdraw or withhold accreditation must be based on conditions existing both when the CoAES arrived at its recommendation as well as on subsequent documented evidence of corrected deficiencies provided by the sponsor.

   The CAAHEP Board of Directors' decision to withdraw or withhold accreditation may be appealed. A copy of the CAAHEP "Appeal of Adverse Accreditation Actions" is enclosed with the CAAHEP letter notifying the sponsor of either of these actions.

   At the completion of due process, when accreditation is withheld or withdrawn, the sponsor's Chief Executive Officer is provided with a statement of each deficiency. Programs are eligible to re-apply for accreditation once the sponsor believes that the program is in compliance with the accreditation Standards.

Note: Any student who completes a program that was accredited by CAAHEP at any time during his/her matriculation is deemed by CAAHEP to be a graduate of a CAAHEP-accredited program.