



Accreditation and Approval Review Committee
on Education in Human Lactation and Breastfeeding
2501 Aerial Center Pkwy, Suite 103, Morrisville, North Carolina 27560 USA
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Questions About AARC Process and Policies

What is the difference between Approval and Accreditation?

AARC either provides [Approval](#) of an individual course or formulates recommendations to CAAHEP for [Accreditation](#) of an academic program. Approval is through AARC and accreditation is through CAAHEP. AARC Approved programs are taught by independent educators and contribute in part to the preparation of students who wish to enter the Lactation Consultant profession. CAAHEP Accredited programs are taught through post-secondary academic institutions and provide all requirements for students who wish to enter the Lactation Consultant profession.

I saw that there is a specified amount of time a program must be in existence for the approval of a course, is there one for accreditation?

AARC is exploring this. Some disciplines within the CAAHEP accreditation system allow a new program to receive initial accreditation before they have students. They go through the process with the Self Study Report and hold on doing a site visit until there are students enrolled. This information will be updated when a decision is made. (2/1/12)

What is a learning domain?

As stated in the Standards, learning domains are cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior).

The AARC Approval process is didactic programs only. Am I correct that accreditation requires clinical experience as well?

That is correct. The program must provide both didactic and clinical instruction.

The outcomes assessment requires data on "national/international credentialing examinations performance." How can we acquire that information if we can't get it from the certification board?

CAAHEP review committees have found that there are ways for colleges to get this information (as opposed to individual course directors of independent courses).

My college is already accredited and this much reporting to an outside agency will be a new venture. How can I defend the need for this additional accreditation?

The college being accredited as an institution is different from having a particular program within the college accredited that is specific to a profession. CAAHEP requires that any CAAHEP accredited program be provided at an accredited institution. CAAHEP accreditation provides another layer of accreditation specific to the program (in this case Lactation Consultant) that will prepare a graduate for a specific profession.

What is the outcome if a collegiate program decides not to pursue this accreditation? Would the student still be eligible to sit for the certification exam?

In the current climate, not being accredited doesn't preclude a program's graduates from qualifying for the exam.



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How do we know if we are ready for accreditation?

Prior to applying for accreditation, you can review the Standards and Guidelines for the profession located on the AARC website. All CAAHEP-accredited programs for lactation consultants must comply with the Standards and Guidelines, which include a curriculum that provides students with a broad base of support coursework to serve as a foundation for lactation consultant practice and the core competencies for lactation consultant practice.

Am I correct that the director of an accredited program does not need to be IBCLC nor recertified?

The people who need to be IBCLCs are those who teach the lactation content, both didactic and clinical. If the director of the program is an administrator and not lactation faculty, she/he does not need to be an IBCLC.

How is a “one year program in lactation” defined? Is this an academic year or a calendar year? Are there minimum credits?

While CAAHEP’s minimum for accreditation is one year, what you really need to look at are the Standards and Guidelines on the ARC website. With all the general education college courses and the lactation curriculum (both didactic and clinical) the program will probably be closer to two academic years.

We aren't clear on whether we could require the general education content prior to the student’s entry into the program.

Those are the kinds of decisions the college makes. The CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines are intentionally broad enough to leave those kinds of administrative decisions at the discretion of the college.

What types of fees are associated with accreditation?

Once accredited by CAAHEP, CAAHEP charges an annual institutional fee (currently \$450). This fee is for the institution and is NOT based on the number of CAAHEP accredited programs an institution has. In addition, AARC has fees for the accreditation process as well as an annual fee. After the first year of accreditation an \$800 Annual Accreditation Services Fee will be due.

Current fees for initial accreditation are:

- \$400 Registration Fee due with Request for Accreditation Services
- \$1000 Self-Study Report Fee due with SSR report
- \$1800 Site Visit Fee due with SSR report

What is the process for a program to become accredited?

To become accredited, a program must successfully complete a CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services (RAF), and an on-site review. To begin the accreditation process, complete the CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services form located on the [CAAHEP website](#) and submit it to AARC.

AARC will contact your program and forward materials about accreditation fees, the self-study document and the comprehensive on-site review. Once a program has successfully completed these steps, AARC will forward an accreditation recommendation to the CAAHEP Board of Directors for the Board to vote on.

These are the individual elements of the application process:

1. **Self-Study:** The program does its own analysis of how well it measures up to the established Standards.



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2. **On-Site Evaluation:** A team of site visitors travels to the institution to determine how accurately the self-study reflects the status of the program and to address any questions that arise. This is a peer review process and often, after the formal part of the site visit is concluded, team members will share ideas for how a program can be strengthened or improved.
3. **AARC Review and Recommendation:** AARC will review the report from the site visitors. If there are areas where the program fails to meet the Standards, these "deficiencies" will be identified and progress reports will be requested to assure that each program continues its efforts to fully comply with all Standards. AARC will develop a recommendation and send it to the CAAHEP Board of Directors.
4. **CAAHEP Board of Directors:** The CAAHEP Board of Directors will act on the recommendations forwarded from AARC, assuring that due process has been met and that Standards are being applied consistently and equitably. The CAAHEP Board of Directors reviews accreditation recommendations six times per year (January, March, May, July, September, and November).

Immediately following the meeting of the CAAHEP Board of Directors (in which your program was presented), a letter will be sent to the President of your institution and copied to both the Dean and the Program Director indicating the outcome of the meeting. If accreditation was conferred, a CAAHEP certificate of accreditation will be included in the program director's letter.

How long does the accreditation process take?

The accreditation process from application to the actual awarding of accreditation is approximately one year. This time period can vary based on the overall readiness of the program, the quality of the self-study document, and the availability of volunteers for the on-site review.

Does CAAHEP accreditation expire?

With the exception of initial accreditation, CAAHEP accreditation does not expire. Initial accreditation is for 5 years. At the end of the 5-year initial accreditation period, a program may be awarded continuing accreditation or its initial accreditation may be allowed to expire.

Once a program has received continuing accreditation, accreditation remains in place until the CAAHEP Board of Directors votes otherwise. CAAHEP policy does currently require a comprehensive review at least once every 10 years. The CAAHEP Board of Directors reserves the right to place a program on probation or withdraw accreditation at such time that the program no longer meets CAAHEP Standards and has been appropriately notified.

What reporting is required?

Accredited programs are required to file an annual Report of Current Status with AARC. The report will include outcomes assessment data, action plan for improvement, and any major changes in the program. Outcome measures such as graduation rate, graduate employment rate, and employer comments regarding the competencies of program graduates are a few examples of the critical measures AARC will evaluate. You are also required to report any changes in key personnel within ten business days.



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Questions About Accreditation and CAAHEP

What Is Accreditation ... and Why Is It Important?

Accreditation is an effort to assess the quality of institutions, programs and services, measuring them against agreed-upon standards and thereby assuring that they meet those standards. In the case of post secondary education, there are two kinds of accreditation. Institutional accreditation helps to assure potential students that a school is a sound institution and has met certain minimum standards in terms of administration, resources, faculty and facilities. Programmatic (or specialized) accreditation examines specific schools or programs within an educational institution (e.g., the law school, the medical school, the nursing program). The standards by which these programs are measured have generally been developed by the professionals involved in each discipline and are intended to reflect what a person needs to know and be able to do to function successfully within that profession. Accreditation in the health-related disciplines serves a very important public interest. Along with certification, accreditation is a tool intended to help assure a well-prepared and qualified workforce providing health care services.

My university is already accredited so why would we need additional accreditation?

The college being accredited as an institution is different from having a particular program within the college accredited that is specific to a profession. CAAHEP requires that any CAAHEP accredited program be provided at an accredited institution. CAAHEP accreditation provides another layer of accreditation specific to the program (in this case Lactation Consultant) that will prepare a graduate for a specific profession.

What is CAAHEP?

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is the largest programmatic/specialized accreditor in the health sciences field. In collaboration with its Committees on Accreditation, CAAHEP reviews and accredits more than 2000 educational programs in 19 health science occupations across the United State and Canada. Prior to 1994, accreditation in most of these disciplines was a function of a Committee within the American Medical Association (AMA). When the AMA decided to turn over accreditation of these programs to another entity, CAAHEP was born. CAAHEP is a broad-based membership organization with five categories of membership.

CAAHEP Membership Categories:

Organizational members: Each of these organizational members is entitled to appoint one commissioner to represent the interests and concerns of that organization:

Category 1: Sponsoring Organizations – ILCA and IBLCE are the two sponsoring organizations for AARC

Category 2: Committees on Accreditation – CAAHEP refers to these as CoAs. The Committees on Accreditation (CoA) represent the actual profession and are CAAHEP's experts in evaluating and working with programs. The Accreditation of Educational Programs in Human Lactation and Breastfeeding (AARC) is the CoA for the Lactation Consultant profession.

Category 5: Associate Member Organizations

Educational program sponsors:

Category 3 is comprised of the schools, colleges and universities that maintain accredited programs.

Allied health graduates and the general public:

Category 4 includes members from accredited programs and the public. This representation in the CAAHEP system is an acknowledgement that the society to be served by the graduates of our accredited programs has an important role to play in the decisions about accreditation.



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Is program accreditation through CAAHEP mandatory?

No. There is no mandatory requirement for any institution to apply for accreditation through CAAHEP. Program accreditation through CAAHEP is a voluntary process.