

## AERAC Higher Education Accreditation

### Purposes and Types of Accreditation

Universities go through various levels of scrutiny. This may include accreditation of the entire university or accreditation of programs within a specific discipline. The whole university may be accredited by one of the six regional accrediting agencies. Successful accreditation by one of these agencies is required in order to qualify for the federal loan programs. There are also specialized disciplinary accrediting bodies such as AERAC that look at specific programs of study.

### Specialized Disciplinary Accreditation

AERAC reviews are both summative and formative in their evaluation components. The **summative portion** of the evaluation gathers information relating to such areas as the qualifications of faculty, the ratio of students to faculty, the content that is delivered, and the supervision provided to students. The review is an evaluation of the program's compliance with the standards that represent best practice within the discipline.

The **formative portion** of the evaluation has the added function of working toward continuous program improvement. This evaluation requires the faculty within the program to examine the program's own effectiveness in educating its students. The formative evaluation determines to what extent the instruction results in the learning outcomes desired for students. When weaknesses are identified, faculty examine them and determine the changes that are needed to improve student learning.

### Summative and Formative Evaluation within AERAC Accreditation

The AERAC accreditation program encompasses both summative and formative evaluation structures. The summative portion requires the program to provide information about how well it complies with the administrative standards, the faculty standards, the clinical standards, and the curricular standards. This information must be provided through documents that serve as evidence of compliance.

The formative portion requires the department to show evidence that faculty have engaged in a program of assessment of student learning outcomes and program evaluation designed to pursue continuous improvement. This requires the faculty to evaluate student learning through such measures as performance on critical student learning outcomes, clinical placement evaluations, employer surveys, and certification performance. In addition, student learning outcomes are mapped to desired program outcomes to determine if goals are being met. It is not enough to simply list the stated measurements, but the faculty must also show evidence that the department has met periodically to examine the outcomes and has made changes to courses, instructional methods or program structure to ensure that students learn the outcomes that are required.

For both the summative and formative evaluations each standard is evaluated through evidence submitted to the AERAC. Each standard is marked as met, partially met, or not met on an evaluation form. Interviews with faculty and students help to verify compliance and to answer questions that have

arisen as the evidence has been reviewed. In situations where panel reviewers cannot determine compliance from the submitted data and interviews, an onsite visit may be utilized.

### **The Core Standards**

The Core Standards are composed of Administrative Requirements, Faculty Requirements, Clinical Requirements, and Assessment and Program Evaluation Requirements. The core standards are “absolute” and must be fully achieved for a program to receive full accreditation. The core standards can also be classified into summative and formative standards. The summative standards reflect upon the structure, internal and external university recognition, administrative commitment, accessibility, and nondiscrimination policies of the program. The summative standards are listed as Administrative Requirements, Faculty Requirements, and Clinical Requirements (Roman numerals I through III below). The formative standards require a commitment to continuous program improvement and are based upon ongoing evaluations designated as Assessment and Program Evaluation Standards (Roman Numeral IV below).

### **The Curricular Standards**

The curricular standards (in a separate document for each of the disciplines) are designated as “critical” but not “absolute”. To receive full accreditation, a program must show evidence that it has fully met at least 85% of the curricular standards and has at least partially met the remaining curricular standards.

# The Core Standards

## I. Administrative Requirements

All Administrative Standards are absolute and must be fully met to receive AER approval.

Standards	Possible Documents to Submit	Documents Submitted	Committee Decision		
			Met	Partially Met	Not Met
a. The university must be accredited by a regional higher education accrediting body. Non-US universities can request that their local accreditation system be accepted.	Page from official university publication Link to specific university website stating accreditation status				
b. Educational offerings must be internally recognized as part of a degree program or university recognized certificate program through specific program identification in the catalogue and on the transcript.	Page from official university publication Link to specific university website identifying degree or certification status				
c. The program must offer an established sequence of coursework that includes the curricular content that encompasses the competencies established for each discipline (TVI, O&M, VRT, LVT, and ATIS). All courses and practicum/student teaching experiences are approved by the University as required course work.	Syllabi Curriculum alignment chart				
d. Programs must have been in existence for a year with documentation of student progress.	Dated memo from provost stating program is approved Proof of course scheduling				

e. Training must occur at the baccalaureate or higher level.	Official university document stating degree offered Memo from provost stating degree level for which program is approved				
f. University commitment to the program must be evidenced.	Signed letter from the Dean stating support for the program.				
g. All curricular materials and the physical location of all face-to-face course meetings will meet the requirements of federal law and university policy for accessibility. Programs located in countries without federal mandates for accessibility must make reasonable accommodations for accessibility.	Letter from university ADA compliance officer Brief narrative addressing physical accessibility				
h. University resources should include services to students with disabilities.	Page from official university document Link to exact official webpage describing services to students with disabilities				
i. University and program may not discriminate against applicants or accepted students/candidates based on minority status. Minority status includes disability, race, ethnic/linguistic/cultural background, national origin, socio-economic status, age, gender, and sexual orientation.	Official university non-discrimination policy				

			Met	Partially Met	Not Met
j. The physical plant of the university or the online platform used for distance or support education must be adequate to meet the needs of the program.	Listing of features used in courses				
k. Equipment, assistive technology, and materials are available to guarantee necessary access and hands-on experiences to support candidates learning to use and teach devices, technology, and other materials.	Inventory list Brief narrative explaining how students access materials not available on campus				
l. Library facilities must have adequate holdings to facilitate learning and research including access to significant texts and periodicals in blindness, low vision, education, rehabilitation, and gerontology, as appropriate to the program under review. The University provides extensive, accessible on-line research capabilities with adequate research and technical support for traditional and distance students.	List of applicable journals held by journal Official university document or link to official website detailing university resources				
m. For both face-to-face courses and distance/online courses, faculty will only use teaching methods that are accessible to and usable (i.e., teaching methods can easily be used by adult learners with reasonable skills) by students.	List or brief narrative of teaching resources used				
		<b>Total s</b>	____/13	____/13	____/13

## II. Faculty Requirements

All Faculty Standards are absolute and must be fully met to receive AER approval.

Standards	Possible Documents to Submit	Documents Submitted	Committee Decision		
			Met	Partially Met	Not Met
<p>a. The program must have at least one full time faculty member with the responsibility of administering the program including supervision of or direct provision of the following job responsibilities by qualified program personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. course delivery</li> <li>ii. recruitment</li> <li>iii. budgetary planning</li> <li>iv. student advisement</li> <li>v. supervision of practicum/internship</li> <li>vi. curriculum development</li> <li>vii. program evaluation</li> <li>viii. assessment of candidate learning</li> </ul>	<p>Job description Faculty assignment of responsibility</p>				
<p>b. <b>At least one appointed faculty member</b> must meet the following requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Programs must have a minimum of 1 full time faculty member who dedicates at least .75 FTE to preparation of professionals in visual impairments. This standard can be met by the same person as in (a) above or by a different person. The full-time faculty member will have either:</li> </ul>	<p>CV for all program personnel List of who is responsible for teaching each course, supervising each practicum, etc. Description of training provided to adjunct faculty.</p>				

<p>1. a doctorate with specialization in visual impairments or deafblindness and three years clinical or practical experiences, OR</p> <p>2. a master's in visual impairments or deafblindness, and a doctorate in a related field and three years full time clinical or practical experience with persons with visual impairments.</p> <p>ii. Each additional program beyond the first must have an appointed faculty member with at least a .50 FTE in that program who must</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have completed a university-based degree or certificate program in their specified profession AND</li> <li>2. Must be ACVREP certified or state certified in TVI as appropriate for the program under review.</li> </ol> <p>iii. Programs can decide whether to have one faculty member meet requirements 1 and 2 above or to have two faculty members with one fulfilling the full-time requirement and another fulfilling the certification requirement.</p>	<p>*** Given the varied experience and training of qualified faculty members, programs should submit adequate information to show that the experience and education background of faculty members meet the spirit of this standard.</p>				
<p>c. <b>Adjunct Faculty and additional appointed faculty</b> will meet the following criteria for teaching any course (on campus, distance, or online).</p> <p>i. Faculty teaching skill-based/profession specific courses (e.g., foundation of O&amp;M/VRT, methods of teaching children with VI) must have at least master's level preparation in their professional area, ACVREP or state certification, and at least 3 years full time field-based teaching experience or the equivalent.</p>					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Faculty teaching related-content courses (e.g., research, eye physiology) must have at least masters level preparation and 3 years field-based teaching experience or equivalent.</li> <li>iii. Faculty teaching LVT courses relating to optics and use of optical devices may be qualified by virtue of being certified by ACVREP or may be qualified by virtue of serving as optometrists or ophthalmologists who have specialized in low vision</li> <li>iv. Supervision, mentoring, and regular communication will be provided for adjuncts.</li> <li>v. Adjunct faculty teaching courses that include simulation activities must receive training by the program relative to the aspects of performing simulation training/teaching, including training sequence and methods of providing student feedback.</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Other program staff must meet the following standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. University clinical supervisors must have at least 2 years of direct service experience in specialization, a Bachelor's degree in any related area and must hold proper ACVREP or state certification.</li> <li>ii. Cooperating teacher/onsite supervisor must have at least 2 years of direct service experience in the specialization, have completed a university-based program in the area they are supervising, and must hold proper ACVREP or state certification.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>					

<p>e. Faculty-student ratios should meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Didactic courses: Limited by university standards</li> <li>ii. Clinical courses (i.e., courses such as practicum, fieldwork, and internship in which the candidate is providing observation, instruction and/or assessment to learners through a placement at a school, agency, or clinic under the supervision of a faculty or clinical faculty member): 1 supervisor to no greater than 8 students providing supervision as outlined in III h below.</li> <li>iii. Simulation courses (i.e., courses that include occlusion or low vision simulators as a major component of the course) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For O&amp;M: 1 faculty to no greater than 6 students per course</li> <li>2. For VRT and TVI: 1 faculty to no greater than 15 students per course</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Course roster showing total number of students enrolled in courses</p> <p>*** Given the variety of ways to provide coursework, universities should submit adequate information to show that the faculty-student ratios meet the spirit of this standard.</p>				
<p>f. Plan for or proof of professional development is shown through proof of current certification. If program is in a state in which full time faculty cannot maintain TVI certification, alternative proof of professional development will be accepted.</p>	<p>Copy of faculty/staff certifications</p>				
<p>g. There must be a plan for periodic review of faculty, which includes student evaluations.</p>	<p>Brief narrative of plan for faculty review Summary of student evaluations</p>				

h. Faculty teaching loads are established within the university. Whatever teaching load policy is established will be upheld by the AERAC.	Copy of university policy on faculty teaching load Matrix of established teaching load and faculty teaching load				
		<b>Totals</b>	___/8	___/8	___/8

<b>III. Clinical Requirements</b>					
All Clinical Standards are absolute and must be fully met to receive AER approval.					
Standards	Possible Documents to Submit	Documents Submitted	Committee Decision		
			Met	Partially Met	Not Met
a. Students must attain a minimum of 350 hours of clinical experience. i. Clinical placements may be scheduled over more than one term to meet number of hours and variety of experiences needed ii. Clinical experience is defined as student teaching, internship, practica or a combination of these.	Candidate log of hours and activities Course syllabus				
b. In addition to direct teaching, clinical placements should include observations, assessment, supervision meetings, administrative tasks, consultation, and other activities appropriate to the placement.	Candidate log of hours and activities				

c. Teaching, lesson planning, and assessment must make up at least 250 of the 350 hours of clinical experience. IEP meetings with parents may also count as part of the 250 hours.	Candidate log of hours and activities Candidate lesson plans				
d. The clinical experience must provide a reasonable amount of diversity in settings, skills, and types of consumers.	Candidate portfolios Candidate logs				
e. The university has the responsibility of locating and arranging for clinical placements.	Letters of agreement for placement				
<b>IV. Assessment and Program Evaluation Standards</b>					
All Assessment/Program Evaluation Standards are absolute and must be fully met to receive AER approval.					
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Possible Documents to Submit</b>	<b>Documents Submitted</b>	<b>Committee Decision</b>		
			<b>Met</b>	<b>Partially Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>
a. Each course syllabus lists the major student learning outcomes required for successful completion of the course.	Course Syllabi				
b. Programs indicate specific measures beyond the final grade for a course that will be used to determine if learning outcomes have been met.	Listing of specific measures that may be used for assessment purposes: course student learning				

	outcomes, program learning outcomes, employer surveys, clinical placement evaluations, comps, certification or licensure pass rates				
c. Programs have a plan for conducting the assessment program. This is to include the number of students to be tested, collection of data, and a schedule for reviewing the data.	Plan that outlines the assessment process.				
d. Programs show evidence that they have met each year to review the results of the assessment measurements.	Calendar meeting dates reserved for assessment evaluation. Summaries of assessment outcome meetings for each year.				
e. Programs show evidence that they have used the assessment results to make needed changes that are designed to improve student learning.	Changes to courses or to the program that have occurred as a result of the assessment process				
f. Clinical placement responsibilities should be appropriate to the candidate's present skill level.	Field supervisor's evaluation of candidates Evaluation of candidate by university for appropriate placement Statement from university on how candidates are matched with placements				
g. An accessible clinical placement manual must be available to all clinical placement personnel and candidates and must delineate all procedures and requirements.	Placement manual or link to online placement manual				

<p>h. To provide adequate University supervision for clinical courses, university faculty/adjunct faculty must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Observe the candidate on site or through video and audio recordings and provide written feedback for at least four lessons. If major issues are noted, sufficient additional observation either on-site or electronic must be provided.</li> <li>ii. Have weekly contact with each candidate to address any problems and successes with the placement, supervisor, and consumers/ students. Contact can consist of face-to-face meetings/classes, individual phone calls, teleconferences, accessible/usable chat rooms, or email. Contact must be of sufficient depth to ensure candidate progress. If candidates are not in a full-time clinical placement, contact must occur for every 20 hours of clinical experience rather than weekly.</li> <li>iii. Have weekly contact with each cooperating teacher/onsite supervisor to discuss each candidate, any problems the candidate or supervisor may be experiencing, and the progress of consumers/students with whom the candidate is working. Contact can consist of individual or group meetings, individual phone calls, teleconferences, or accessible/ usable chat rooms.</li> </ul>	<p>University log of contacts Syllabus of internship practicum</p>				
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i. To provide adequate field supervision, the cooperating teacher/onsite supervisor must observe and provide feedback for at least 1 out of every 5 hours of consumer contact at the beginning of the placement, decreasing as candidate skills and judgment improve. Supervision must continue throughout the entire internship.	University log of contacts Candidate observation forms				
j. Programs submit annually to AERAC, any changes to their programs as well as completion rates, graduation rates, retention rates, available employment data, and other available data regarding program effectiveness	Annual data update forms.				
k. Programs provide to AERAC a summary of clinical placement assessments.	Summary with links to evaluation reports: by master teachers, ACVREP report forms				
l. Programs make available to the public the completion, graduation, retention, and employment rates of their graduates.	Public documents and media links				
m. Programs provide public information about their effectiveness through websites, social media, and/or other means.	Links to websites and other media sources				
		<b>Totals</b>	<u>    </u> /9	<u>    </u> /9	<u>    </u> /9