

Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education
August, 2007

Clarifying Statements for the

FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF A SINGLE ACCREDITING BODY FOR AUDIOLOGY

The conceptual framework for a single accrediting agency and process for audiology was first proposed by the ACAE in October, 2006 during a meeting of representatives of the ACAE, ASHA, AAA, CAA and CAPCSD. The following are clarifying statements which further expand on the concepts contained in the framework.

Element 1: Modification of the Structure of the CAA

- The current structure of the CAA will be reorganized to separate the audiology and speech-language pathology functions. While the CAA will remain as a title of the agency, the audiology and speech-language pathology boards will be separated into independent bodies. The Audiology Division of the CAA will be solely responsible for the development of standards, the accreditation process, and decisions regarding accreditation status of academic programs in audiology. Similarly, the Speech-Language Pathology Division of the CAA will be solely responsible for academic programs in Speech-Language Pathology.
- There will be no governing body or other such umbrella organization above the Audiology Division or Speech-Language Pathology Divisions.
- A conference group with representatives of the Audiology Division and Speech Language Pathology Division will coordinate administrative functions relative to assuring commonality of forms, site visits, etc. The conference committee will not have the power to coordinate standards or decisions of the separate Divisions.
- The reorganized CAA will seek recognition from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an independent agency accrediting audiology entry-level graduate programs in the Audiology Division and speech-language pathology entry-level graduate programs in the SLP Division.
- At such time that the re-organization is complete, the ACAE will be dissolved.

CLARIFYING COMMENTS:

The necessity for essentially separate agencies to accredit audiology and speech language pathology is of critical importance to the ACAE. Beyond the underlying concerns of many audiologists of the unnecessary relationship to SLP, the two professions do not have identical professional or academic goals. Thus, having an agency with inter-related accrediting systems would not be in the best interest of either profession. The ACAE would not accept any structure whereby the audiology section participates in any part of the SLP accreditation process (including, but not limited to, standards, the accreditation process or accreditation decisions) or vice versa.

The CAA as an entity would need to be removed from the umbrella of the ASHA and set up as an autonomous and independent agency. The perception that the new agency was tied to either ASHA or AAA would likely create political concerns within one or both professional organizations. Furthermore, a new name should be chosen for the accrediting agency (neither CAA or ACAE). To retain either name would likely predispose reactions from within the profession that will impede progress in this the development of a merger entity.

The ACAE has adopted the position that the Doctor of Audiology degree is the only degree for the practice of audiology. While other degree structures may include coursework and clinical experiences consistent with that necessary for practice, the use of other degrees (e.g. Ph.D., Sc.D.) is inappropriate given the position statements of groups such as the Council of Graduate Schools. Moreover, the Doctor of Audiology degree and the designator (Au.D.) has the added value of increasing public awareness for the profession of audiology. The ACAE would not support the development of a single agency with the position that other designators were appropriate.

Element 2: Relationship of New Accrediting Agency to Professional Organizations

- The Board of the Audiology Division of the CAA will be composed of individuals selected by appropriate professional organizations.
- The individuals selected should be based on their qualifications and commitment to accreditation. They should not be considered to “represent” the respective organizations. An accrediting agency must be capable of making independent decisions and, thus, the concept of “representing” a professional organization would create the perception of undue influence.
- Academic representatives to the Audiology Division must be from accredited audiology programs.

CLARIFYING COMMENTS:

The new accrediting body should not be tied to the professional organizations, such that those organizations play any role in selecting members of the Board. The necessity of being independent in thought is paramount and the concept that any individual “represents” one of the professional organizations compromises the independent thought process. Neither ASHA, AAA, nor CAPCSD should be involved in the selection of the individuals who compromise the Board. Rather, a process which assures independence and transparency should be developed. The board of the organization should include members who have an inherent interest in advancing the educational foundation of the profession. Representatives of academic programs should be from accredited audiology programs.

Element #3: Merger of Accreditation Processes and Standards of CAA and ACAE

- The Audiology Division of the CAA (or the preliminary working group) will review the accreditation processes (including submission format, verification and site visit process,

determination of accreditation status, appeals process, etc.) and standards developed by the ACAE and the CAA and determine the 'best fit' for a consolidated accreditation process.

- The Audiology Division of the CAA will acquire the Web-based Computerized Accreditation Program (CAP) developed by the ACAE as a basis for the accreditation process.
- The Speech-Language Pathology Division may seek to acquire the Computerized Accreditation Program as the basis for the accreditation process of programs in speech-language pathology. The process would have to be adapted to meet the standards of the Speech-Language Pathology Division.
- The ACAE and CAA must continue to provide accreditation services to their respective academic programs until such time as a reorganization is finalized.
- The AAA, ASHA, and CAPCSD will each provide financial support for the Audiology Division of the CAA.
- The amount of financial support should not be related to the number of representatives on the new board. This further removes the specter of undue influence from the professional organizations.
- The AAA, ASHA, CAPCSD, and other participating organizations, if any, will each provide financial support for the Audiology Division of the CAA. The amount of financial support provided by each organization will require ongoing discussion.

CLARIFYING COMMENTS:

The cost factors for such a merger are not insignificant, particularly given the investments the AAA and ASHA have made to date. Given that these professional organizations have been the primary source for funding, it is incumbent upon ASHA and AAA to make the determination as to their willingness to re-invest in a new process. The CAPCSD should also consider their role in assisting with meeting the financial burdens associated with this venture.

The Computerized Accreditation Program developed by the ACAE must be adopted by the new agency. This unique and forward thinking process positions audiology (and subsequently SLP) at the forefront of accreditation across all professions and agencies. The process is consistent with calls from all areas of higher education (universities, Pew Commission, Department of Education, CHEA, etc.) for changes in the accreditation process. (Note: This statement refers to the software and web-based system only, not standards, fee structures, policies, etc.)

The CAPCSD resolution implies that two different accrediting processes would create burdens for academic programs which offer programs in both SLP and audiology. The adoption of the CAP program would create the same situation – the CAP program for audiology and the traditional accrediting process for SLP – which would continue to burden academic programs. Therefore, SLP would have to adopt the CAP program in order to make the accreditation systems similar.

Costs associated with a merger would include software development (CAP for SLP), working groups for standards, mergers, bylaws, legal consultation, staff, and other such necessary expenses to achieve merger.

Element #4: Relationship to Certification

- No standards, guidelines, or requirements should be included that tie the accreditation of programs to the certification requirements of any professional organization.

CLARIFYING COMMENTS:

Current accreditation standards by either CAA or ACAE do not reference certification standards; however, the certification agencies of ASHA and AAA must remove any and all requirements imposed on educational programs necessary to meet certification standards (including, but not limited to, references to clock/contact hours, knowledge or skill requirements, supervision conducted by individuals with CCC, etc.) Certification agencies must accept that graduating from an accredited program is sufficient. Certification agencies are free to impose post-graduate requirements. This position is not negotiable.