

Rallying Around a Cause

ACAIE's Proposed Standards

By Doris Gordon

The word *standard* comes from the flags that were raised to rally forces to a cause. In education, standards are the set of measures that we rally around to display our confidence that programs are operating at an expected level of quality. ACAIE is responsible for both establishing standards in audiology and verifying their compliance.

Approximately every eight to 10 years an educational accrediting body reviews its entire set of standards in depth. The standards are also looked at regularly (sometimes on an annual basis) during the in-between years. If a substantive

change needs to be made, it can occur as long as timely notice is provided to constituents, that is, the program directors/faculty in the academic curricula of a specific profession or area. If smaller or moderate changes are suggested, they are frequently logged under safekeeping until the next large review.

This wait is important, because programs need the time to concentrate on one set of standards over a period of years. An accreditation body cannot change its “gospel” every few years. If this happened, it would cause unnecessary confusion, and academic programs as well as clinical

stakeholders would not know which standards were current at any given time. Therefore, standards purposely remain in place for almost a decade. As a review process comes to a conclusion, it is also important for an accrediting agency to provide a clear timeline and guidelines to educators about when new standards will go into effect. After they go into effect, an accrediting agency also will give consideration to academic programs already involved in a re-accreditation process but using the older standards.

At ACAIE, we approved our first set of standards in March 2005. In 2012, we established a Standards



Review Committee (SRC), made up of educators and practitioners to begin looking at the process. The committee consisted of Ian Windmill, PhD, a former chair and member of the ACAE Board of Directors, and the following audiologists: Cynthia Compton-Conley, PhD; Jackson Roush, PhD; Barry Freeman, PhD; and Elaine Mormer, PhD—a strong group representing the diverse aspects of audiology.

The committee met over a two-year period and invested a significant amount of time in the process. This time was spent reviewing the current standards and considering changes in outcomes-based education as well as current trends in the profession—all of which were felt to be significant. Looking carefully at the current standards, the committee concluded they were solid and strong. But over time, as the educational and health-care needs noted above changed, there was

straightforward evidence of the need to revise and update the standards for the education and training of audiologists.

To assist the committee in reviewing what was important for the new audiology standards, the ACAE Board of Directors developed a stakeholder survey in 2012–2013. Here, too, consideration was given to current health-care trends in evidence-based practice and outcomes-based reimbursement, the Affordable Care Act, Internet delivery of health care, telemedicine, and Web-based reviews of health-care professionals. All of these trends demanded greater transparency, accountability, and exchange of information. This meant that audiologists must be more prepared than ever in order to survive and thrive under greater scrutiny and higher expectations by the public and regulators.

Thus, revised and new standards based on this contemporary thinking were incorporated. This was an opportunity to define standards more clearly using defined outcomes, so that they were more easily understood by the reader.

During the spring and early summer of 2014, ACAE will distribute its proposed standards to all relevant stakeholders both internally and externally, for example, educators, practitioners, students, university administrators, and relevant accreditation and professional organizations. This will be an opportunity to review what the ACAE Board of Directors, its Standards Review Committee, and many of the respondents from the stakeholder survey stated as being “very important” for ACAE’s new standards over the next decade. Afterward stakeholders will be able to make comments and submit them to ACAE.

The result is that we are:

- f* Including contemporary standards that will stand the test of time in audiology over the next decade.
- f* Including numerous competencies cited as important from the stakeholder survey.
- f* Demonstrating more inclusiveness in many standards.
- f* Emphasizing clear and precise outcomes-based language in the standards.

ACAE would like you to rally around our cause. We invite you to read and comment on the draft standards when they are sent for widespread peer review in mid-2014. ⁶⁷

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