

AASP Explains Accreditation

What is accreditation?

Educational accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of higher education institutions or schools/programs within those institutions are evaluated by an external body (accrediting agency) to determine if applicable standards are met. As such, there are two primary types of educational accreditation; institutional and programmatic. Most people are familiar with institutional accreditation in two- and four- year educational institutions as a means of assuring quality education within the college or university as a whole.

Programmatic accreditation (also known as “specialized accreditation” or “professional accreditation”) focuses on an individual program within a given university or college. The programmatic accreditation process validates that a college or university program meets all of the necessary requirements to qualify graduates for their respective profession. More specifically, programs must demonstrate that they are providing the general knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for graduates to be successful in a strength and conditioning profession. The two types of accreditation often work synergistically, as most programmatic accrediting agencies will only accredit programs from universities that have secured institutional accreditation.

Programmatic accreditation is common in many professions including many of the allied health professions. This is the traditional model in healthcare education. Graduation from an accredited program is often a requirement for credentialing within these professions. For example, medical doctors, licensed mental health providers, and athletic trainers are all examples of professions that require universities to hold specialty program accreditation for their respective degree programs. Each of these professions have an accrediting body that reviews and validates that colleges and universities are following the professional guidelines that ensure graduates are prepared to enter the workforce and eligible to sit for their credentialing exams.

How is Certification Accreditation different from Programmatic Accreditation?

Certification is the credentialing of the individual and will continue to be independently administered by the AASP Certification Council. Certification accreditation is the review process to help ensure impartial, third-party validation of a professional credentialing program (i.e. AASP Certification Council) has met recognized national and international industry standards for development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. It is important to note that the AASP CMPC certification program is accredited by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) that created the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), which accredits credentialing organizations.

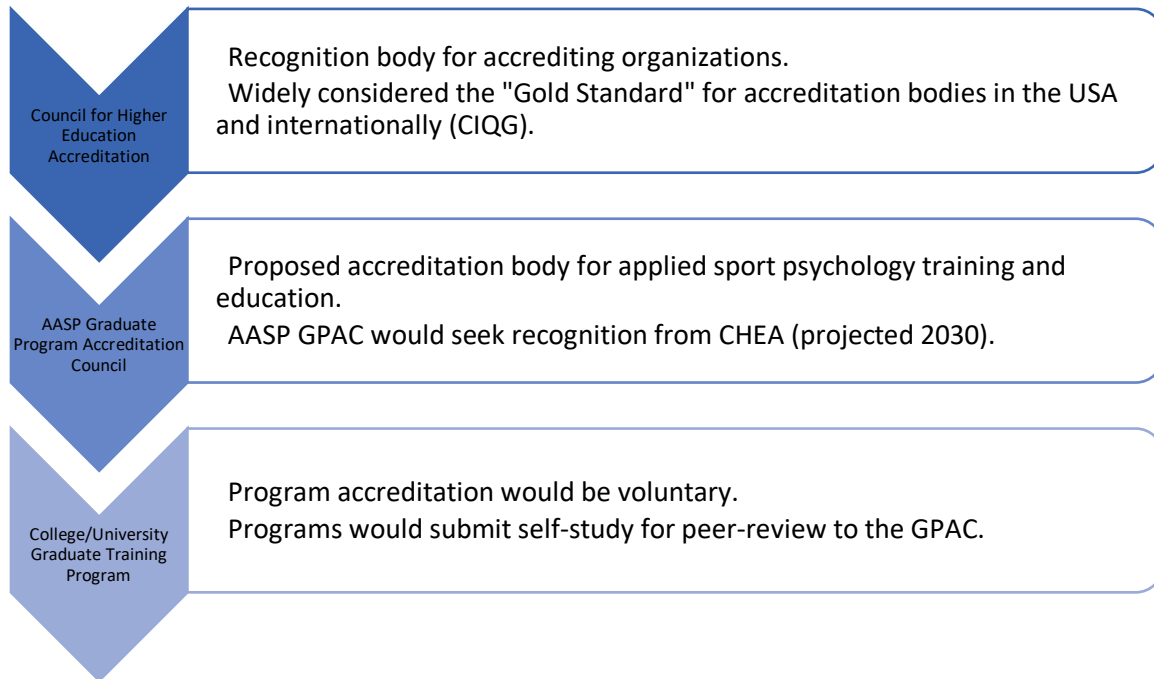
Programmatic accreditation is the peer-review process to help assure the quality of education and training experiences within a college or university program. AASP will support the creation of an independent programmatic accrediting council, which will be responsible for developing the curricular and programmatic standards and guidelines that schools must meet to apply for initial accreditation.

The council will also be responsible for periodically evaluating each program to determine whether those programs continue to meet these standards for accreditation.

Certification Accreditation



Programmatic Accreditation (AASP GPAC Proposal)



How is recognition different from accreditation?

Recognition is the term for distinction of accrediting organizations following successful completion of an external review of their qualifications and accrediting activities to determine whether they meet the standards set by agencies such as Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the US Department of Education (USDE).

Accreditation is a process of external quality review used by higher education to examine colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. Accrediting bodies are typically private, nongovernmental entities created for the specific purpose of reviewing higher education institutions and programs for quality. Accreditation is not intended to be prescriptive in nature but to encourage experimentation, innovation, and growth to meet the needs of students, the profession, and the communities served.

Why did AASP make this transition?

This educational accreditation process will help to ensure that all applied sport psychology professionals are entering the field with similar baseline levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities, or in other words, have met the professional standards. Several professional and collegiate associations/leagues (Major League Baseball - MLB, The National Basketball Association – NBA, and The National Collegiate Athletic Association – NCAA, to name a few) have continued to call for higher level recommendations for the health and safety of their collegiate and professional athletes. This includes the recommendation for increased requirements for certified professionals. Educational accreditation will allow AASP to continue to be the global leader for the profession.

Currently, there is a disparity in the preparation of applied sport psychology professionals compared with peer allied health professions. The current requirement for individuals wishing to earn the CMPC certification is that they hold a graduate degree (in any discipline), complete specific coursework, accrue supervised clinical experience, and pass a certification exam. Therefore, the AASP Graduate Program Committee and the AASP Executive Board believe that the organized and systematic evolution of graduate training specific to the professional practice is critical to advancement of the field. This, in turn, will create a higher standard for sport psychology practitioners that are competently prepared to enter the field and will elevate the level of confidence employers have in the CMPC certification.

What will the accreditation process be?

For those not familiar with the educational accreditation process, the steps typically involve an application, self-study, site evaluation, program review before a determination of accreditation is rendered along with recommendations for quality improvement when applicable. It is important to note that accreditation is a peer-review process.

The following will outline each of step in this process of accreditation individually:

Application/Enrollment

The first step of the educational accreditation process is the application. This allows a college/university to learn more about the accreditation process and let the GPAC know they are interested in accreditation by filing an application.

Self-study

The second step is for the college/university to complete a self-study. The self-study is typically a year-long program assessment involving program faculty, administrators, students, and sport community partners. Each program will need to show that they fulfill the applicable standards by providing documentation of successful achievement of each standard. The self-study materials are sent to the AASP GPAC and dispersed to peer reviewers who will conduct a review of the materials and site assessment. Any missing information will be solicited from the program prior to any scheduled site assessment.

Site Assessment (peer-review)

The third step includes a virtual site assessment for the program. This will be conducted by group of trained assessors who will interview faculty, students, administrators, etc. to ensure they are in alignment with the standards and validate the self-study.