
Making the Case for Counsellor Education Accreditation in Canada: A Cross-Jurisdictional Review of Emerging Trends in the Pre-Service Training of Counsellors and Related Mental Health Professionals

Plaidoyer en faveur de l'accréditation de la formation des conseillères et conseillers au Canada : un examen à l'échelle nationale des nouvelles tendances dans la formation avant emploi des conseillers et autres professionnels connexes de la santé mentale

William Borgen

University of British Columbia

Sharon Robertson

University of Calgary

Natasha Caverley

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

Pamela Patterson

Adler University

ABSTRACT

The Council for Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs recognizes quality assurance of master's-level counselling programs in Canada. Accreditation is important to the pre-service training of counsellors and psychotherapists who are preparing to enter into practice after graduation. This article identifies trends in counsellor education accreditation from a national perspective—ranging from changes in the regulatory landscape in Canada to the integration of social justice and diversity practices into programs of study while fostering innovative program design in times of fiscal restraint within Canadian post-secondary institutions. From an international perspective, this article highlights trends for counsellor education accreditation programs in the United States, Britain, and Australia. Overall, it is important to inform counsellor educators and personnel running counselling programs in Canada on counsellor education program development, with the goal of supporting quality standards for accrediting counselling programs in Canada while acknowledging professional mental health service regulations and public policy.

RÉSUMÉ

Le Conseil d'accréditation des programmes de formation des conseillers reconnaît l'assurance qualité des programmes de counseling de niveau maîtrise au Canada. L'accréditation est importante pour la formation avant emploi des conseillères, conseillers, et psychothérapeutes qui se préparent à exercer au terme de leurs études universitaires. Cet article précise les tendances en accréditation de la formation des conseillers dans une perspective nationale—qu'il s'agisse des changements dans le contexte réglementaire au Canada en passant par l'intégration des pratiques de justice sociale et de diversité aux programmes d'études, tout en favorisant une conception novatrice des programmes dans le contexte des contraintes fiscales qui prévalent au sein des établissements postsecondaires canadiens. Sur le plan international, l'article souligne les tendances des programmes d'accréditation de la formation des conseillers aux États-Unis, en Grande-Bretagne, et en Australie. Dans l'ensemble, il importe d'informer les formateurs de conseillers et les responsables des programmes de counseling au Canada au sujet du développement des programmes de formation des conseillers, notamment en ce qui concerne le soutien des normes de qualité servant à l'accréditation des programmes de counseling au Canada, tout en tenant compte des règlements sur les services professionnels en santé mentale et de la politique publique.

In Canada and abroad, discussions are occurring concerning professional identity, standards of practice, and the profile and credibility of the counselling and psychotherapy profession. An important dimension in these discussions is the accreditation of the pre-service training of counsellors and psychotherapists who are preparing to enter into practice after graduation.

In this article, counsellor education accreditation is explored in the context of national and international accreditation trends and practices while situating the same in the changing regulatory landscape in Canada. Accreditation is defined as a process of setting standards for the pre-service training of counsellors and psychotherapists. The authors articulate the value-added elements of accreditation for diverse stakeholders (e.g., institutions, programs, counsellor educators, students, the general public, and the profession as a whole). A historical overview of the Council for Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs (CACEP; see Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, n.d.) is then provided, highlighting the significance of counsellor education accreditation in Canada.

The CACEP rejuvenation initiative is summarized in terms of the journey to date in reviewing the existing CACEP standards while considering national and international trends that influence counsellor education programs. Trends in counsellor education accreditation in the United States (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs), Britain (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy), and Australia (Australian Counselling Association) are shared to provide a comparative analysis. The article concludes with a status update on the rejuvenation process for existing CACEP standards as well

as further reflections on accreditation for counsellor educators and master's-level counselling programs in Canada.

Background and Context

At present, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) is engaged proactively in discussions associated with accreditation, certification, and regulation in Canada. This involves discussing intersections between accreditation, certification, and regulation trends concerning the enhancement of the professional identity of counsellors and psychotherapists, standards of practice, and the profile and credibility of the profession in Canada.

For this article, the authors use the terms “counsellor education,” “counselling,” “psychotherapy,” and “counselling psychology” interchangeably. Furthermore, unless stated otherwise, these terms relate directly to the pre-service training of master's-level counselling students in Canada.

Definition and Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation is a recognition of quality assurance indicating that an educational program has met or exceeded defined standards set by a relevant professional body and has been granted approval by that body. It implies the setting of minimal standards that pre-service educational programs must reach to meet professional competency expectations in areas such as program content, teaching resources, and research (Universities Canada, n.d.). Most professions involved in the field of mental health (e.g., psychology, counselling, social work, medicine, and nursing in North America and family therapy in the United States) have established accreditation standards and procedures that ensure that educational programs are appropriately rigorous in their requirements with high-quality curriculum offerings that are up to date, integrated, and coherent (Robertson & Borgen, 2016). Typically, accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process of evaluation. In contrast with certification, registration, and licensure, all of which focus on meeting standards by individuals (micro level), accreditation focuses on the quality of programs (macro level).

Why Is Accreditation Important?

By promoting and recognizing high quality in training programs, accreditation of counsellor education programs benefits a range of stakeholders, including institutions that host programs, counsellor education programs, faculty and administrators, current and prospective students, program graduates, employers, the general public, and the profession as a whole. Regarding the institution, universities historically and currently look to indices of quality in their research

and in their program offerings. Accreditation indicates nationally recognized program quality for the institution and an inter-institutional basis for co-operative practices, including admissions and transfer credits; accredited programs are often listed on university websites.

Applying for and obtaining accreditation has several benefits for counsellor education programs. Permission to apply for accreditation must have the approval of the faculty in which the program is located, and communication from CACEP is to the president of the given university. These activities raise the profile of counsellor education programs as well as their credibility in the institution. Further, accreditation enhances the program's national reputation as it signifies external recognition by peers and a professional body. Another benefit for counsellor education programs involves the opportunity that the accreditation process provides for program faculty members, students, and other significant stakeholders to engage in self-study, program adjustments, and continuous improvement.

Prospective applicants, current students in programs, and program graduates also benefit from program accreditation. As consumers, prospective applicants are provided with information regarding programs that are recognized for their high quality according to accepted external standards established by the profession. Current students can benefit from being in a program that has clearly outlined admissions, advising, and student evaluation processes, along with engaging in a program that meets nationally recognized standards. Accreditation provides students with some degree of assurance that the education they are engaged in not only will prepare them well to be practising counsellors but also will be an asset in seeking employment and certification/registration upon completion. Program graduates may find similar benefits upon completion of their programs in terms of employment and certification/registration.

For employers, hiring graduates from an accredited program provides them with greater assurance that their employees possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities considered essential for professional counselling practice. In terms of the broader community, accreditation provides quality assurance mechanisms that ensure that graduates from these programs can provide quality counselling and psychotherapy services to the general public. This, in turn, helps to elevate the credibility of the profession in the broader community. Overall, accreditation benefits the profession in advancing the field by promoting standards of practice and advocating for rigorous training (Robertson & Borgen, n.d.-a, 2016).

CACEP: A Brief Overview

Purpose of CACEP

Following several years of discussions going back to the 1970s, among CCPA leadership and counsellor educators regarding the need to establish standards for counsellor education programs, CACEP was established in 2002. The purpose

of CACEP was to oversee and manage the CCPA accreditation program, which involves providing professional and arm's-length evaluation of master's-level counsellor education programs in Canada (Robertson & Borgen, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Structure of the Council

CACEP is composed of a minimum of a chair and three additional members, all of whom are recognized counsellor educators in Canada. Each member of CACEP is appointed for a period of up to 4 years by the CCPA national board of directors upon the recommendation of the council. Since its initiation, CACEP has had two co-chairs, Dr. William Borgen and Dr. Sharon Robertson. Previous members of the council included Dr. Karen Wright (University of Saskatchewan), Dr. Marcelle Gingras (Université de Sherbrooke), and Dr. Robert Baudouin (Université de Moncton). At present, Dr. Liette Goyer (Université Laval) and Dr. Pamela Patterson (Adler University) are the francophone and anglophone representatives on the council.

History of CACEP

The creation of CACEP was the outcome of a long history of interest in program quality assurance among counsellor educators within the CCPA, mainly arising from the substantial diversity in content and length of master's-level counsellor education programs across Canada and the increasing need for competent counsellors. As early as 1975, the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association (CGCA), as it was called then, recognized its role in promoting counselling as a profession, including high quality in the education and training of counsellors and the delivery of services to clients; as a result of that recognition, the CGCA approved a resolution to establish a set of guidelines for counsellor education. This was a significant initiative in the development of the CCPA, given that it represented the first attempt to develop national standards in Canada and to regulate the profession internally (Jevne, 1981; Peavy et al., 1982).

The CGCA followed up on this resolution by funding a study in the Canadian context "to determine the competencies of an effective counsellor and based upon these, to address the issue of what guidelines would best promote their development" (Peavy et al., 1982, p. 136). This study resulted in a set of competency areas and specific competencies considered necessary for counsellor effectiveness as well as issues relevant for counsellor education programs in several defined areas (Jevne, 1981). Following this analysis, an ad hoc committee of the CGCA counsellor education committee developed a set of guidelines for counsellor education programs in Canada that were approved by the CGCA general assembly in June 1981. These guidelines addressed standards in the following areas: program objectives, curriculum (e.g., general characteristics, core concepts and competencies, elective concepts and competencies, practica including total and direct client contact hours), students (e.g., selection, advising), qualifications of counsellor

educators, and numbers of faculty and staff members. No guidelines were set at that time regarding program credits (Peavy et al., 1982). These guidelines served as a common reference point for both existing and emerging university-based master's-level counsellor education programs in Canada for many years (Robertson & Borgen, 2016).

Subsequently, influenced by trends in the United States, in 1984, the CGCA set up an ad hoc committee on accreditation to explore the possibility of becoming an accreditation body for counsellor education programs and to examine further the accreditation issue in Canada. On surveying all universities in Canada with counsellor education programs regarding the attitudes of counsellor educators toward accreditation, the committee reported that generally, they were favourable (CGCA Ad Hoc Committee on Counsellor Education, 1985; Robertson & Borgen, 2016). With this information, the committee proceeded to produce the *CGCA/SCOC Accreditation Procedures Manual for Counsellor Education Programs in Canada* (Robertson & West, 1987) and to make recommendations for moving forward with accreditation. Unfortunately, at that point, the momentum shifted away from accreditation as the CGCA faced significant financial and other organizational challenges for some time.

In 1997, the issue of accreditation was reconsidered by the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA), as it was then called. At that time, a CCA special committee on accreditation consisting of Dr. William Borgen and Dr. Sharon Robertson was tasked with revising and updating the CCA accreditation policies, procedures, and standards for master's-level counsellor education programs in Canada (Canadian Counselling Association Special Committee on Accreditation, 2002). This resulted in a revised set of accreditation procedures and standards that was approved by the CCPA board of directors in 2002 and published in both official languages in 2003 (Robertson & Borgen, n.d.-a, n.d.-b), as well as the formation of CACEP. An extensive account of the history of CCPA accreditation was published in the *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy* (Robertson & Borgen, 2016).

Council Mandate

The mandate of the council was approved by the CCPA national board of directors in 2002 and is as follows: "To oversee and manage the CCPA accreditation program, which involves providing professional and arms-length evaluation of counsellor education programs"; "to develop policies and procedures pertaining to the operation of the Council and to make recommendations regarding these to the CCPA Board of Directors"; "to periodically review the CCPA Accreditation Procedures and Standards"; "to develop and implement a program for training site visitors; to develop documents and instruments needed to administer the accreditation program"; "to provide consultation to counsellor education programs"; "to provide information to the President of the institution applying for

accreditation, regarding the outcome of the institution's application"; "to interact through the CCPA President with other elements of the CCPA governance structure on matters related to accreditation"; "to develop marketing strategies to interest universities in the accreditation of their counsellor education programs"; and "to cooperate with provincial and federal institutions and agencies as well as other professional groups in promoting high standards of counsellor education" (Robertson & Borgen, n.d.-a, pp. 5–6).

It should be noted that any changes to council policies or procedures, including the accreditation standards and appointment of members, must be approved by the CCPA national board of directors.

CACEP Standards for Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs

The current accreditation standards for master's-level counsellor education programs in Canada reflect the aims of CACEP. They include the following sections:

1. *The institution.* This standard outlines the expectations for the institutional context in which the program is located. It is designed to help ensure that the program has a sufficient level of institutional support needed to offer a program that can meet the required curriculum standards and is sustainable.
2. *Mission, orientation, objectives, and priorities.* This standard requires the program to provide a framework regarding its aims and intentions and provides a rationale and framework for the program's curriculum.
3. *Program of study.* The primary aim in considering what is needed in the program of study for accredited counsellor education programs is to endeavour to ensure that the requirements reflect effectively the breadth and depth of preparation required for entry into the profession. These include general standards regarding the length of the program, core and elective concepts, and competencies related to supervised practice. Current standards require that programs be 48 credits in length. Required core concepts are professional orientation, ethical and legal issues, helping relationships, individual counselling and consultation, group counselling, human development and learning, diversity, lifestyle and career development, assessment processes, research methods, and program evaluation. Elective concepts and competencies provide the opportunity for programs to focus on different client groups or counselling issues. Current standards recognize school counselling, counselling in higher education, community/agency counselling, rehabilitation counselling, career counselling, and family counselling as possible areas of focus or particular interest. Regarding supervised practice, requirements across the initial and final practicum experiences are for 200 hours of supervised individual counselling with clients and 50 hours of supervised group counselling within a context of an overall requirement of 500 practicum hours.

4. *Students.* This standard pertains to students in terms of continuity and fairness, which relates to the following: the process of screening and selecting students for admission to the program, the process for advising students once they are admitted, the process for reviewing student performance, and the process for providing program information.
5. *Faculty.* This standard required for faculty members focuses on the level and relevance of their qualifications along with the number of faculty members dedicated to a program and their workloads. Current standards require a minimum of three full-time faculty members dedicated to the program.
6. *Program governance.* This standard relates to program governance, which focuses on the need for faculty from the accredited counselling program to be involved in decisions about the program. It includes the provision of release time from teaching for program coordination.
7. *Instructional support.* The focus of this standard is on the quality and availability of physical space for a program, library and technological facilities and support, and administrative support.
8. *Evaluation.* This standard requires programs to engage in a regular process of evaluating their content and delivery mechanisms.

Programs Currently Accredited

As of June 2020, the following six programs are accredited by CACEP: University of British Columbia—MA in counselling psychology; University of British Columbia—MEd in counselling psychology; Acadia University—MEd in counselling; Trinity Western University—MA in counselling psychology; University of Victoria—MA in counselling psychology with a thesis based on campus; and University of Victoria—MA in counselling psychology with a project based on campus.

CACEP Rejuvenation Initiative

The CCPA engages in quality assurance and related continuous improvement of CCPA programs and services. As such, from 2015 to present, a selection of members of the CCPA have embarked on a process of rejuvenating CACEP to support quality standards for accrediting master's-level counselling programs while adapting to professional regulation and public policy pertaining to mental health services at the regional and national levels. The purpose here is to rejuvenate and revitalize CACEP—from a strategic, operational, and financial perspective as a recognized program for the CCPA membership. This rejuvenation initiative consists of two phases.

In Phase 1, the CACEP advisory committee focused on (a) increasing the engagement of counsellor educators with regards to CACEP and (b)

understanding CACEP site visitors' needs with regards to program accreditation. During this review phase, the advisory committee sought insights from master's-level counselling programs in Canada as well as from site visitors and accredited program leads and designates who in turn provided valuable insights on accreditation of master's-level counselling programs in a current and emerging regulatory and policy landscape in Canada. Through this feedback process, the advisory committee prioritized reviewing and revising the existing standards while building capacity in terms of recruiting and training CACEP site visitors—as current and future allies in advancing the accreditation of master's-level counselling programs in Canada.

In Phase 2 of the rejuvenation initiative, CACEP's standards are being reviewed (a) to determine if any changes are required, (b) to determine the feasibility of these standards in the Canadian marketplace, and (c) to recommend updates to current CACEP standards. In further sections of this article, identified emerging trends in counsellor education accreditation are articulated, highlighting provincial/territorial, national, and international accreditation considerations that are informing the rejuvenation of CACEP standards in Canada.

Trends and Considerations in Canada Impacting Counsellor Education Programs

The context for counsellor education in Canada has changed considerably since the development of the current standards and processes for accrediting counsellor education programs. The purpose of this section of the article is to outline some of the key aspects of these changes as they influence indices of quality for master's-level counsellor education programs in Canada.

The Changing Regulatory Landscape

The regulation of professions in Canada is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments. For the last 20 years or so, the CCPA has co-operated with provincial and territorial counselling associations to enact legislation that would regulate counselling and psychotherapy in those jurisdictions. As of spring 2020, five provinces succeeded in regulating the counselling and psychotherapy profession: Alberta, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia (note that Alberta is currently in the process of creating the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta, with proclamation expected in 2021).

It is interesting to note that in each of these provinces the word *counsellor* is not used as a stand-alone title or a professional designation. In Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, the regulated title is *counselling therapist*. In Ontario, the term is *psychotherapist*, and in Québec, the protected title is *conseiller d'orientation*, which translates into English as guidance counsellor even though this term does

not equate to the role of guidance counsellor that some professionals may be familiar with in other provinces. In all regulated provinces except Québec, it is the designated title that is protected, not the scope of practice. Therefore, in these provinces, individuals may designate themselves as counsellors and are not governed under the new legislation.

The challenges with using the term *counsellor* by itself can likely be traced partially to the common English understanding of the verb “to counsel” as the act of giving professional advice. Many other professionals provide other types of advice and use the title counsellor (e.g., camp counsellors, credit counsellors, weight counsellors, counsellors at law, employment counsellors, program counsellors, and admissions counsellors). Others may not use the title “counsellor” but would see counselling as within their scope of practice (e.g., an athletic coach, a lawyer, a medical doctor, or a mentor may provide counsel, as in offering advice to others). The National Occupational Classification (NOC) system in Canada identifies 86 occupations that incorporate the word “counsellor” (Government of Canada, 2020). In considering changes to the standards for accrediting master’s-level counsellor education programs in Canada, there has been an attempt to make the standards inclusive of legislative requirements emerging across the country.

Acknowledging the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided an actionable response to the legacy of the residential schools and a direction for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Commission made wide-ranging recommendations regarding ways to begin a process of reconciliation that have significant implications for Canadian society. Regarding counsellor education programs, two complex and interrelated components need to be addressed: (a) decolonizing counsellor education curricula and (b) harmonizing Indigenous ways of knowing and helping alongside non-Indigenous ways of knowing and helping. It is recognized that this is a major undertaking that requires shifts in attitudes that challenge long-held assumptions and that require respectful and ongoing dialogue as well as the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in restructuring counsellor education curricula.

Embracing Inclusion

Counsellor education programs in Canada typically prepare students to offer remedial, preventive, and developmental services. Remedial services focus on assisting individuals and groups in addressing issues that are problematic for them. Developmental services focus on helping people prepare for developmental or life changes that they anticipate in the future, such as transitioning from high school to post-secondary education. Preventive services are those that work with environments that may contribute to people’s difficulties, such as organizational

rules or policies that discriminate against individuals or groups in our society (Borgen et al., 2016).

Within the current context, CACEP standards require program orientations and curricula that recognize and embrace diversity in assisting a wide range of client needs that are based on individual challenges as well as systemic barriers. Changes being considered for updated standards include integrating social justice, culture, and diversity approaches, principles, and practices into curricula more explicitly. In terms of the curriculum, a change being considered involves expanding the elective concepts and competencies to include addiction, creative/expressive arts, trauma, and Indigenous approaches to healing and helping.

The Delicate Balance Between Inclusivity and Exclusivity

Recognizing the need to strike an effective balance between inclusivity and exclusivity has been an ongoing discussion concerning institutional and program requirements for accreditation and approaches to program delivery. Regarding institutional requirements for post-secondary institutions applying to accredit their counsellor education programs, the current requirements are for universities to belong to Universities Canada. A change being considered is to broaden the inclusion criteria to institutions with an established administrative base in Canada. The institution housing the program would need to have received authority to grant degrees through legislation and quality assurance mechanisms established by the government in the provinces or territories in which it offers these programs. This proposed change would bring into consideration a variety of counsellor training programs that may or may not be for profit and would introduce an attendant diversity of administrative structures and training resources.

Another issue arose regarding the issue of inclusivity and exclusivity related to program standards required for accreditation. It began with queries regarding whether a 48-credit program should be required or could be reduced. As discussions unfolded regarding diversity and the need to recognize the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, it became obvious that programs would need to augment their current course offerings. The focus then switched to concern about whether or not 48 credits would be sufficient to incorporate all that may be required of programs as we move into the future.

Current standards focus on a face-to-face classroom-style delivery of programs, with the recent development of a blended delivery program (i.e., one with a combination of face-to-face and online components) being accredited. With the rapid and ongoing development of technologies to support the delivery of curricular offerings digitally in a way that resembles closely those that are offered face-to-face, support for blended-delivery programs is being considered for the revised accreditation standards.

Engaging in Ongoing Dialogue About the Relationship Between Accreditation, Certification, and Regulation

The CCPA has supported counsellor certification (e.g., Canadian Certified Counsellor [CCC] and Canadian Certified Counsellor-Supervisor [CCC-S]) and accreditation of master's-level counsellor education programs (CCPA, n.d.) for several years. Major initiatives, including the increasing number of provinces that have or are in the process of enacting legislation to regulate the profession, have underscored the importance of increased and continued discussion among those involved in accreditation, certification, and regulation endeavours to keep abreast of changes that may be occurring in one or more of them and to investigate the possibility of synergies among their requirements.

Synergies With National CCPA Initiatives

The CCPA is engaged in several other national initiatives that reflect ongoing changes in the context in which counsellor education, counselling, and psychotherapy practice are enacted. They included the research task group initiative, the clinical supervision initiative, *Guidelines for the Uses of Technology in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, and an ethics and standards of practice review. As CACEP standards and processes evolve in the future, it will be important to consider the recommendations of these and other initiatives relevant to promoting quality in Canadian master's-level counsellor education programs.

Trends in Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs: United States, Britain, and Australia

United States

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was established in 1981 through a co-operative effort of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the American Personnel and Guidance Association (now the American Counseling Association). CACREP is an independent, non-profit corporation with a mission “to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners” through “the development of preparation standards,” “the encouragement of excellence in program development,” and “the accreditation of professional preparation programs” (CACREP, n.d.-a). CACREP accredits master's and doctoral degree programs in counselling and its specialties offered by colleges and universities in the United States and throughout the world (CACREP, n.d.-c). CACREP is *the* standard for counsellor education programs in the United States with (currently) more than 780 accredited master's-level programs in counselling (CACREP, n.d.-b). The CACEP rejuvenation initiative advisory committee reviewed the 2016 CACREP standards document (CACREP, 2015). Only the most relevant

information pertaining to the revised standards is summarized here, with a summary of selected standards shown in Table 1.

The 2016 CACREP document on standards for master's- and doctoral-level counselling programs specifies standards in five areas pertaining to master's-level accreditation:

1. The learning environment (e.g., the institution, the academic unit, and program faculty and staff).
2. Professional counselling identity (e.g., foundational standards and the counselling curriculum, consisting of eight required core content areas). The eight common core areas consist of (a) professional counselling orientation and ethical practice, (b) social and cultural diversity, (c) human growth and development, (d) career development, (e) counselling and helping relationships, (f) group counselling and group work, (g) assessment and testing, and (h) research and program evaluation.
3. Professional practice (e.g., standards for entry-level practice, practicum, internship, supervisor qualifications, and practicum and internship course loads).
4. Evaluation in the program (e.g., evaluation of the program, assessment of students, and evaluation of faculty and site supervisors).
5. Entry-level specialty areas (e.g., foundations, contextual dimensions, and practice standards relevant for specialty areas offered by the program [i.e., addictions, career, clinical mental health, clinical rehabilitation, college counselling and student affairs, marriage and family, and school counselling]; CACREP, 2015).

While until recently the number of semester credit hours required for a program was 60 for some specializations and 48 for others, this number was increased to 60 for programs in all specialization areas on July 1, 2020. The minimum number of full-time core faculty members required to offer a master's level program is three, with possible supplementation by non-core faculty members. However, in any calendar year, the number of credit hours provided by core faculty members must exceed those offered by non-core faculty members. Further, core faculty members must hold a doctorate in counsellor education.

Professional practice, which includes practica and internships, provides for the application of theory and the development of counselling skills under supervision. Students complete a 100-hour counselling practicum, including a minimum of 40 direct client contact hours. Following that, they complete a 600-hour counselling internship in roles and settings with clients relevant to their specialty area and with at least 240 hours spent in direct client contact (see Table 1). During both the practicum and the internship, students must receive 1 hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision and 1.5 hours per week of group supervision. Among other qualifications, site supervisors must have (a) a minimum of a master's degree, preferably in counselling or in a related profession, (b) relevant

certifications and/or licenses, (c) a minimum of 2 years of pertinent professional experience in the specialty area in which the student is enrolled, and (d) relevant training in counselling supervision.

In 2016, some members of CACEP's rejuvenation initiative advisory committee attended the Western Association for Counsellor Education and Supervision (WACES) conference in Vancouver, BC. During that time, they had an opportunity to speak with Dr. Carol Bobby, then CACREP president and chief executive officer, and to attend a presentation by Dr. Bobby on the implementation of the recently revised accreditation standards. What follows is a summary of relevant content and trends from that discussion and the subsequent presentation.

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the number of programs seeking CACREP accreditation, and this growth is expected to continue. Program evaluation during an accreditation process has become more challenging in the face of emerging complex and unique situations (e.g., where the delivery is decentralized, where there is less transparency concerning faculty, and where regional versus state requirements need to be reconciled). Advances in technology have also influenced program designs, teaching methods, program delivery, and counselling modalities and practices.

In the 2016 revision of the CACREP standards, there is an increased emphasis on the need for program transparency by providing up-to-date information on program websites, providing evidence to support program descriptions, developing an empirically based plan for evaluation of the program, and engaging in a continuous evaluation of the program and assessment of students. Students are to be assessed concerning dispositions as well as knowledge and skills. CACREP provides a wealth of information and extensive resources regarding its accreditation policies, procedures, standards, and processes on its website, including various documents and manuals for students, programs, and site visit team members.

Britain

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is the largest professional organization for counselling and psychotherapy in the United Kingdom (BACP, n.d.-a). Accreditation of programs (called "courses") in the BACP is nested in a professional standard of accreditation. BACP itself is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care and was one of the first organizations in the UK to have its membership register accredited. The institutions, the programs, and the faculty members who provide counsellor and psychotherapy training are all required to be accredited with the BACP through separate accreditation standards and applications.

Institutions that provide professional practitioner training programs in counselling or psychotherapy must be separate legal entities and may be an educational establishment or a non-commercial university, among other possibilities, including charitable and workplace training programs (BACP, 2018). The requirements

include 400 hours of face-to-face instruction, which does not include hours of online training. A formal academic award is given to graduates by the training institution. The certificate and/or diploma contains the phrase “BACP Accredited Training Course.”

Because they are offered in a variety of institutions, the programs are specialized. Core content areas required by the BACP are organized around a clear rationale and philosophy that underpins the whole program (BACP, 2012). Core content areas required by BACP accreditation include the following: the social and historical context of counselling; social sciences as they pertain to counselling, ethics, theory, and research regarding the program’s particular rationale and philosophy; counselling theories, including models of pathology and supporting research; assessment, psychopathology, psychopharmacology, and interdisciplinary mental health practice; research, including evidence-based practice; and research methods. The reader is referred to the BACP accreditation materials for a more detailed discussion. Programs accredited by the BACP have published learning outcomes that encompass a mix of knowledge-based learning, therapeutic competencies, development of self-awareness, professional development, skills work, and practice placement.

The clinical placement training involves 100 hours of face-to-face client contact (BACP, 2019). Practicum sites offer training in the area of specialty taught by the program. On-site supervision is determined by the nature and the complexity of the client work relative to the experience of the student, rather than to the specified minimum of 1.5 hours per month or 1 hour of supervision to 8 hours of client work (BACP, 2012). It is worth noting that upon graduation, membership and accreditation with the BACP requires that counsellors and psychotherapists continue in supervision throughout their careers (BACP, n.d.-b).

Two full-time faculty members who achieved accredited membership with the BACP are required for the program (BACP, 2012). There is no indication of the full-time faculty/full-time equivalent student ratios, but the programs are required to use a cohort training model.

Australia

Similar to the systems in place in Canada, the United States, and Britain, the accreditation of counsellor education in Australia recognizes that the pre-service training of counsellors requires a combination of theories, skills, and practice. However, the focus of counsellor education accreditation standards and requirements for the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) is at the course level. Course providers are to be recognized as a post-secondary education/training provider under relevant (federal or state) legislation in Australia. Full-time program leaders coordinate accredited counselling programs in Australia. In addition to program leaders, course leaders are members of the staffing complement and hold a minimum educational qualification of a doctorate in counselling

or a related field and are eligible for Level 4 ACA membership (Level 4 ACA members graduated from an ACA-accredited counselling course, have 6 years of post-graduation supervised counselling experience including a minimum of 1,000 post-graduation client contact hours, and completed a minimum of 100 hours of post-qualification professional/clinical supervision signed by the ACA member's supervisor). The teacher–student ratio for accredited courses is 1:16. Also, core staff (i.e., program leaders and course leaders), external supervisors, and other external community members who contribute to the accredited counsellor education courses must be familiar with and adhere to the current ACA code of ethics and standards of practice (ACA, 2012, n.d.).

In Australia, counsellor education consists of at least 1,500 nominal hours of graduate-level training (which may include self-directed study). It must be delivered over a minimum of 18 months of full-time study. According to the ACA (2012), accredited counsellor education training courses need to demonstrate how they meet or exceed the “nine elements of counsellor education programs” that are outlined as follows:

1. Course structure, aims, staffing, content, assessment/evaluation requirements, appeals process, fees, and conditions of participation are to be articulated. Courses are also to subscribe to an equal opportunity policy concerning admission, course content, and delivery.
2. Self-development courses are offered that provide opportunities for students to engage in reflective practitioner work (e.g., self-awareness and self-development work) that is to be congruent with the given counsellor education course's theoretical approaches.
3. Through work placement experiences, applied practice facilitates the opportunity for students to practise with real clients as part of the counsellor education curricula. Emphasis is placed on integrating theory with practice by recording client contact hours, developing a portfolio of work, observing counselling sessions, and receiving third-party reports from supervisors. Ethical considerations are important to note throughout the work placement experiences such as disclosing to clients that their counsellors are counsellors-in-training and are supervised by qualified and experienced counsellors.
4. Professional supervision courses are offered with a focus on conflict of interest (e.g., multiple roles of supervisors and/or students). The ACA provides courses in this area by accredited counselling supervisors who are familiar with theoretical models applied by the counsellors-in-training. Supervision is to be not less than 1 hour in relation to 8 hours of client contact hours, with an overall minimum of 1.5 hours of supervision time per month. A blend of individual and group supervision is strongly recommended as part of the counsellor education accreditation standards in Australia.

5. Practical skills training is carried out on an ongoing basis, whereby there is structured experience and related opportunities for learners to engage in observation, practice, feedback (instructors and peers), discussion, and review.
6. An extensive study of counselling theories relevant to psychological and behavioural disciplines is carried out in accredited counsellor education training in Australia with a particular focus on comparisons between theories and their application to social systems in which one works and resides (e.g., diversity, culture, social justice, and ethics in counselling).
7. Students are to develop an understanding of the work of other professionals in mental health and related areas. As such, course leaders in accredited counsellor education programs familiarize students with the ACA code of ethics and standards of practice and how it relates to their own personal and professional values and attitudes. Similar to the above element, courses must provide opportunities for students to explore multicultural and diversity counselling competencies and standards and their implications to theoretical models.
8. There is an integration of theory and practice of assessment methods with theoretical approaches.
9. Course evaluations provide a framework for a continuous improvement process throughout the course, including regular staff meetings about program planning and development. Students are also allowed to evaluate their training experience and give feedback on the course to staff (e.g., program leaders and course leaders).

Comparative Table

Based on the above commentary on trends in counsellor education program accreditation, Table 1 provides a comparison of notable accreditation dimensions between Canada (CACEP), the USA (CACREP), Britain (BACP), and Australia (ACA).

Concluding Remarks

The CACEP rejuvenation initiative advisory committee is currently finalizing a suite of revised CACEP standards for submission to the CCPA national board of directors for review in the 2020–2021 fiscal year. It is important to highlight the journey to date in counsellor education accreditation nationally and internationally. As articulated in this article, accreditation is necessary and relevant to the current discussions about the counselling and psychotherapy profession in Canada—acknowledging regulatory changes in provinces and territories while recognizing cross-jurisdictional trends in counsellor education quality assurance and program development. Moving forward, dialogue on notable areas such as

Table 1
Comparison Table of Trends in Counsellor Education Program Accreditation in Canada, the USA, Britain, and Australia

Standards	CACREP (Canada)	CACREP (USA)	BACP (Britain)	ACA (Australia)
Type of institution in which program is offered	Universities	Colleges and universities	An organization or educational institution with BACP accreditation	Registered training providers, higher education providers, or universities
Level of programs eligible for accreditation	Master's degree	Master's and PhD degrees*	"BACP-accredited training course" diploma and/or certificate	Diploma, degree, and master's levels
Credit hours required	48 graduate-level semester credit hours	60 graduate-level semester credit hours	400 hours of face-to-face training	1,500 nominal hours of graduate-level training (which may include self-directed study) and must be delivered over a minimum of 18 months (full time)
Core content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional orientation • Ethical and legal issues • Helping relationships • Individual counselling and consultation • Group counselling • Human development and learning • Diversity • Lifestyle and career development • Assessment processes • Research methods • Program evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional counselling orientation and ethical practice • Counselling and helping relationships • Group counselling and group work • Human growth and development • Social and cultural diversity • Career development • Assessment and testing • Research and program evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and historical context of counselling • Interdisciplinary mental health practice • Ethical practice • Theory and research supporting the program's rationale and philosophy • Counselling theories • Social sciences as they pertain to counselling • Psychopathology • Psychopharmacology • Assessment • Research and evidence-based practice • Research methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic (e.g., counselling theories relevant to psychological and behavioural disciplines) • Personal development (e.g., self-development as reflective practitioners) • Diversity, culture, social justice, and ethics in counselling • Practical skills components • Client work (i.e., work placement/experience)

Standards	CACEP (Canada)	CACREP (USA)	BACP (Britain)	ACA (Australia)
Supervised practicum (total required hours)	500	700	Not specified	120 of practical skills training and assessment
Supervised practicum (direct client contact hours)	250	280	100	Not specified
Supervised practicum (supervision hours)	1 hour/week of individual supervision and 1.5 hours/week of group supervision	1 hour/week of individual and/or triadic supervision and 1.5 hours/week of group supervision	A minimum of 1 hour of supervision for every 8 hours of client contact, not less than 1.5 hours of supervision per month	A minimum of 1 hour of supervision for every 8 hours of client contact, not less than 1.5 hours of supervision per month; a blend of individual and group supervision is strongly recommended
Specializations are possible	An area of focus/ special interest is required	Specialization is required	Program-based	Specialized courses are offered
Number of core faculty members required	3	3	2	3
Full-time faculty/full-time equivalent student ratios	1:10**	1:12	Not specified; a cohort model is required	1:16

*Only CACREP accreditation standards for master's degree programs are reported in this table.

**One full-time student is equivalent to three part-time students.

harmonization of social justice, culture, and diversity in counsellor education, acknowledgement of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, a diversity of program delivery methods, and the management of the delicate balance between inclusivity and exclusivity of accreditation requirements is essential in promoting the high standards in entry-to-practice competency development for counsellors and psychotherapists. The insights shared in this article are intended to invite reflection for counsellor educators and counselling programs in developing innovative ways to advance the pre-service training of professional counsellors and psychotherapists during times of fiscal restraint within post-secondary institutions in Canada.

References

- Australian Counselling Association. (2012). *Accreditation of counsellor higher education courses: ACA higher education course education standards and accreditation procedures and criteria*. <https://www.theaca.net.au/documents/ACA%20Accreditation%20of%20Counsellor%20Higher%20Education%20Programs%202013.pdf>
- Australian Counselling Association. (n.d.). *Online membership application form*. <https://www.theaca.net.au/online-application.php>
- Borgen, W. A., Becker, E. S., & Butterfield, L. D. (2016). Career counselling in Canada. In N. Gazzola, M. Buchanan, O. Sutherland, & S. Nuttgens (Eds.), *Handbook of counselling and psychotherapy in Canada* (pp. 203–226). Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (2012). *Accreditation of training courses*. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/1502/bacp-course-accreditation-criteria.pdf>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (2018). *Organisational membership application pack*. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/1543/bacp-organisational-membership-application-pack.pdf>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (2019). *BACP course accreditation scheme: Eligibility guide—criteria A1 to A10*. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/1505/bacp-course-accreditation-eligibility-guide.pdf>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (n.d.-a). *British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy: Information about the association and our work*. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/home/information-about-bacp/>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (n.d.-b). *Information for BACP members: Supporting you throughout your career*. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/membership/information-for-members/>
- Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. (n.d.). *Accreditation*. <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/accreditation/>
- Canadian Counselling Association Special Committee on Accreditation. (2002). *Report of the CCA special committee on accreditation*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.
- Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Ad Hoc Committee on Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs. (1985). *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2015). *2016 CACREP Standards*. <https://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2016-Standards-with-Glossary-5.3.2018.pdf>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (n.d.-a). *A brief history*. <https://www.cacrep.org/about-cacrep/>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (n.d.-b). *Find a program*. <https://www.cacrep.org/directory/>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (n.d.-c). *Welcome to CACREP*. <https://www.cacrep.org/>
- Government of Canada (2020). *National Occupational Classification*. <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Home/Welcome/a7519e13a39f4848b80027196c40642d>
- Jevne, R. (1981). Counsellor competencies and selected issues in Canadian counsellor education. *Canadian Counsellor*, 15(2), 57–63. <https://cjc-rcc.ualgary.ca/article/view/60369>
- Peavy, V., Robertson, S., & Westwood, M. (1982). Guidelines for counsellor education in Canada. *Canadian Counsellor*, 16(3), 135–143. <https://cjc-rcc.ualgary.ca/article/view/60455>
- Robertson, S. E., & Borgen, W. (2016). CCPA accreditation of counsellor education programs in Canada: An historical perspective. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 50(3), 259–277. <https://cjc-rcc.ualgary.ca/article/view/61135>
- Robertson, S. E., & Borgen, W. A. (n.d.-a). *CCPA accreditation procedures and standards for counsellor education programs at the master's level*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/AccreditationProcedures_en.pdf
- Robertson, S. E., & Borgen, W. A. (n.d.-b). *Normes et procédures d'accréditation de l'ACCP pour les programmes de formation des conseillers au niveau de la maîtrise*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/AccreditationProcedures_fr.pdf
- Robertson, S. E., & West, L. W. (1987). *CGCA/SCOC accreditation procedures manual for counsellor education programs in Canada*. Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Universities Canada. (n.d.). *Professional programs accreditation*. <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/quality-assurance/professional-programs-accreditation/>

About the Authors

William Borgen is a professor in the counselling psychology area of the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. His main areas of interest are career/life transitions and quality assurance in counsellor education. Bill is co-chair of the Council for Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs (CACREP).

Sharon Robertson is a professor of counselling psychology in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Her main interests are in counsellor education and supervision, psychosocial/life transitions, grief and loss, social support, and counselling girls and women. Sharon is co-chair of CACREP.

Natasha Caverley is a president emerita of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. Her main interests are in organizational behaviour, career counselling and development, and multicultural counselling. Natasha is a member of the CACEP rejuvenation initiative.

Pamela Patterson is a professor in the master's of counselling psychology programs at Adler University in Vancouver. Her main areas of interest are in counselor training and interpersonal therapy. She has a private counselling practice in Vancouver. Pamela is the anglophone representative of CACEP.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to William Borgen, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education (ECPS), Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4. Email: william.borgen@ubc.ca