



GUIDE TO ACCREDITATION

RISE TO *the* HIGHER STANDARD

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The Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE, pronounced kass-key) Guide to Accreditation provides a framework for programs, institutions, and the public to understand the process of accreditation for strength and conditioning programs, as well as a detailed compilation of the policies and procedures pertaining to CASCE accreditation. This guide is divided into three sections: Introduction, Accreditation Policies/Fee Structure, and CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines.

Section 1: Introduction

The Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education, commonly referred to as CASCE, is a nonprofit accrediting agency devoted to advancing the strength and conditioning profession. We provide accreditation to collegiate-level education programs specializing in strength and conditioning. We rely on peer-reviews by academic and industry professionals to assess standards of quality, ensuring relevant curriculum and effective instruction.

In response to the demands of the profession, our members, and their constituencies, the NSCA established CASCE. CASCE is responsible for implementing an accreditation process for strength and conditioning education programs to ensure that Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialists are fully prepared to meet professional standards.

We believe strength and conditioning education should aim to produce highly prepared professionals who provide knowledgeable, evidence-based coaching and support. The directors of quality programs understand the importance their role plays in preparing future professionals to keep athletes from unnecessary injury. When students are well-equipped, the strength and conditioning industry as a whole will benefit.

Why Should Our Program Pursue CASCE Accreditation?

Accreditation adds value to a program and institution. CASCE accreditation is chosen by programs looking to be seen as a leader in strength and conditioning education. The high-level quality assurance of accreditation provides students (prospective, current, and graduates) confidence in their choice of institution. And ultimately, only graduates of CASCE accredited programs will qualify to sit for the Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) exam. This ensures that

the industry is supplied with professionals who know how to safeguard their athletes from unnecessary injury, while elevating the credibility and necessity of the profession in the eyes of the public.

CASCE accreditation provides quality assurance to students (prospective, current, and graduates), institutions, the public, and industry professionals.

For students, CASCE accreditation...

1. Provides them with confidence that the institution offering strength and conditioning programs has been evaluated and meets the rigorous standards established by strength and conditioning industry professionals.
2. Qualifies the graduate from a CASCE accredited strength and conditioning program for the Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist® (CSCS®) examination, which is the “gold standard” certification within the profession.

For institutions, CASCE accreditation....

1. Ensures accountability and proof of the overall quality of their strength and conditioning program against a set of quality standards, which boosts public trust and confidence.
2. Facilitates admission recruitment efforts and promotes program enrollment growth.

For the public, CASCE accreditation...

1. Provides a consistent and reliable indicator that programs meet standards of quality and it provides validation of credibility through a structured peer-review process.

For industry professionals CASCE accreditation...

1. Provides a consistent quality of graduates entering the field of strength and conditioning.
2. Provides the opportunity for accredited programs to lead the change necessary in the field of strength and conditioning through their education and graduates.
3. Demonstrates to state (and other) regulators that accredited programs are leaders in the field of strength and conditioning and strive to prepare a workforce equipped to contribute to the changing landscape.

Effective January 1, 2030 – to be eligible to take the CSCS Examination, US candidates must hold a bachelor’s degree from a CASCE accredited program. This requirement will not affect candidates who have earned a bachelor’s degree from outside of the US until January 2036. The current degree requirement for the CSCS exam will remain in place until December 31, 2029.

Section 2: Accreditation Procedures

STEP 1: Confirm Your Readiness

First, programs must complete the following steps to ensure your program is ready to apply:

- » [Guide to Accreditation](#): Review this document to gain an understanding of the policies, procedures, and general timelines associated with the accreditation process.

- » [Professional Standards and Guidelines](#): Examine the standards your program must meet to become accredited, helping you assess your readiness.
 - **NOTE:** *Standard III.B. The program must be at minimum a bachelor's degree with a concentration, or equivalent, with strength and conditioning stated within the title. Post-baccalaureate certificate programs may be considered for accreditation.*
- » [Program Readiness Tool](#): Use internally to grasp and track the exhibits your program will need to demonstrate compliance with CASCE standards.
- » [Get Started Quiz](#): Take the 5-minute Get Started Quiz to see where your program stands on key CASCE requirements and discover common stumbling blocks before applying. To receive [CASCE Grant](#) funds, simply affirm you completed the Get Started quiz.

CASCE Accreditation Grant

To ease your transition to accreditation and encourage early application, CASCE will fund your accreditation and annual fees through the CASCE Accreditation Grant. The grant closes to new programs on December 1, 2027, but will continue to fund annual fees for pre-approved programs through December 31, 2027. For more information on the CASCE Accreditation Grant, click [here](#).

STEP 2: Submit Your Application

Once your program is ready to apply, you may begin your [digital application](#). You can save your progress and return later, as well as share access with additional stakeholders in your program. During the process, your digital signatures will be collected, and you can submit any required supporting documents.

By submitting your application, your program agrees to be assessed against the CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines. Your program must demonstrate compliance with these Standards and use them as a resource for ongoing program improvement, growth, and achievement. Your application also helps CASCE confirm that your program has the required foundational pieces in place and intends to move forward in the accreditation process.

Applying does not indicate nor infer that your program is accredited.

Applications are accepted from October 1 through December 1 annually. To ensure quality and maintain the integrity of the accreditation process, CASCE reserves the right to limit the number of applications in an accreditation cycle.

Applications submitted prior to October 1 or after December 1 will not be accepted.

Programs that are currently recognized through the [NSCA Education Recognition Program](#) (ERP) will automatically meet the application criteria and will only need to fill out the first portion of the application. Programs that are not recognized through the ERP will need to complete the application in its entirety.

Current programs recognized through the ERP will be required to pay a non-refundable \$500

application fee. All other applicants (non-ERP programs) are required to pay a non-refundable \$1,000 application fee. Upon approval of the application, an invoice will be sent to the program, along with instructions to confirm payment.

Multiple programs at the same institution will be evaluated and accredited separately. Each program will require individual and separate applications and accreditation fees. CASCE staff will conduct a preliminary review to ensure the application conforms to the guidelines and has the required foundational pieces. Following staff review/approval, the program will receive an invoice for the application fee (sent to designated Program Director). The application fee must be received to proceed with the next steps for accreditation.

STEP 3: Complete Your Self-Study

Once your application is approved and we receive your application fee, you will receive access to the Self-Study in the CASCE Accreditation Portal. Your Self-Study is a self-reflection of your program's strengths and weaknesses and determines the extent to which the program complies with established [CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines](#) [included in Section 4 of this document].

The Self- Study Process:

- Complete the Self-Study over the course of an academic year and include faculty, administrators, the assessment office, field experience supervisors, as well as current students.
- The narrative and documentation submitted in Self-Study for compliance with the Professional Standards and Guidelines will be captured through the Accreditation Portal, an accreditation management software platform.
- Requirements include narrative responses and exhibits demonstrating documentation of compliance within each of the areas of the Standards.
- **Self-Studies are due on October 1** each year regardless of when you begin your Self-Study process.

Recommended Self-Study Procedures:

The actual Self-Study process will vary between programs, but CASCE recommends certain steps be taken to help streamline the process.

1. **Centralized Oversight:** One individual should have primary responsibility over Self-Study. Typically, this is the Program Director but does not need to be. This person's responsibility is to ensure progress is being made and that assignments are properly prepared.
2. **Comprehensive Input:** Programs may create a steering committee to assist with the process of program self-reflection. It may include faculty, administrators, students, staff, field experience supervisors, future employers, alumni or others. *Input from the assessment office or those that prepare institutional accreditation materials is strongly encouraged.*
3. **High-level Approval:** The Self-Study process will culminate in the completion of the Self-Study Report with final approval by the Chief Academic Officer of the institution. Allow adequate review time for institution leadership to help ensure your Self-Study is

submitted on time.

NOTE: If the program chooses to defer submission of the Self-Study to the next year, an additional deferral fee will be charged.

STEP 4: Receive a Peer Review Site Visit

After your Self-Study is received, CASCE will assign a three-person Peer Review team to read and assess your Self-Study. Two of the three reviewers will then complete an on-site visit to experience and evaluate the program and to validate and clarify the contents of the Self-Study Report. The visit is generally 1 ½ -2 days in length and is scheduled to occur between January 3rd and March 1st each year.

What to Expect from the Site Visit:

- The site visit stage includes on-site observation, interviews, an exit conference, and your final Site Visit Report, detailing your program's level of compliance to the Standards.
- The program will have the opportunity to provide documentation and/or narrative to clarify any standards in question within the portal prior to the site visit and during the site visit. No documentation will be accepted outside the portal or once the visit is complete.
- During the visit, the Lead Peer Reviewer will keep the Program Director informed of any non-compliant areas that are discovered. If documentation proving compliance can be produced while the team is on-site, it may be considered by the team prior to the exit conference.
- Interviews will require the time of the Program Director, faculty, program and university administration, students, field experience supervisors and other university personnel as necessary.
- At the end of the visit, the Peer Review team will provide an exit conference — an **unofficial** verbal report given to the program faculty and administrators. This verbal report is NOT the official written Site Visit Report. It is meant to share any non-compliance and to give the maximum allowable time to adjust. It is possible that there may be differences between the verbal on-site report and the official written Site Visit Report.
- Once the site visit is complete, the Peer Review team will submit an official written Site Visit Report to CASCE's Accreditation Review Committee. Once reviewed and approved, the official Site Visit Report will be sent to the program, typically about 4-6 weeks after your site visit. However, the timing may be impacted by the volume of reports in your particular accreditation cycle.
- Multiple programs within the same institution will be evaluated and accredited individually. When possible, site visits for multiple programs may be conducted concurrently during the same accreditation cycle.

Site Visit Logistics to Keep in Mind:

- The program may request a change of Peer Reviewers if there is a perceived conflict

- of interest with one or more of the proposed Peer Review team members.
- Two reviewers from your assigned Peer Review team will complete the on-site visit, with the third reviewer remaining available for those dates in case of emergency. For training purposes, CASCE may assign a third person (at no additional cost and with approval of the program).
- The CASCE Peer Review team will arrange their own transportation to and from the airport and hotel. However, your institution may be asked to accompany the team and provide transportation to the selected local field experience sites for evaluation.
- Keep in mind this is an official visit to evaluate your strength and conditioning program. Do NOT provide any gifts or entertainment to the Peer Review team.

STEP 5: Submit Your Program Response

Once your institution receives your Site Visit Report (typically within 30 days of the Site Visit), you will then have 30 business days to respond with your official Program Response. If the program is free of non-compliance, you may simply respond that the report is accepted. If there are non-compliances, the Official Site Visit Report will provide a detailed description of the reason for non-compliance for each standard and will include instructions on how to show compliance with that standard. The Program Response will include corrections/modifications and required documentation indicating compliance.

STEP 6: Receive Your Accreditation Decision

Once the Accreditation Review Committee (AR) has received and reviewed the Program Response, any non-compliant standards and response will be reported to the CASCE Board along with a recommendation regarding accreditation. The CASCE board will then make an accreditation decision. Your institution will be informed of the board's Accreditation Action (see below). You will also receive a clear statement of any non-compliance along with instructions for completion of a Progress Report (if applicable) to continue your pursuit of accreditation.

Section 3: Accreditation Policies/Fee Structure

1. Application Fee

- \$1,000 (non-refundable).
- Current ERP programs receive a reduced rate of \$500.
- To ensure quality and maintain the integrity of the accreditation process, CASCE reserves the right to limit the number of applications accepted.
- Applications submitted prior to October 1 or after December 1 will not be considered.

2. Self-Study Deferral Fee (prior to self-study submission).

- \$250
- Applies when an institution has paid the application fee but chooses to defer to the next accreditation cycle.

3. Accreditation Fee (covered by the CASCE Accreditation Grant)

- \$5,000, due at the time of Self-Study submission.
 - Fee includes site visit travel costs and honoraria for the Peer Review Team.
 - For institutions with multiple programs:
 - \$5,000 for the first program
 - \$2,500 for each additional program (site visits conducted jointly).
4. Annual Accreditation Fee (covered by the CASCE Accreditation Grant)
 - \$1,000 per accredited program to maintain accreditation.
 5. Accreditation Deferral Fee (prior to Program Response submission).
 - \$1,250
 - Applies if, after receiving the Site Visit Report, the program cannot meet the 30-business-day deadline to submit the Program Response (Rejoinder) and requests a one-year deferral.
 - If the deferral deadline is not met, the application for accreditation is automatically withdrawn.
 6. Late Fees
 - Programs with outstanding fees beyond 30 days will be placed on administrative probation and lose access to the CASCE Accreditation Portal.
 7. International Site Visit Fees
 - Non-U.S. programs may be charged for additional international travel expenses in excess of the \$5,000 U.S. program fee.

Approximate Yearly Accreditation Timeline

1. Application Submission
 - Due October 1–December 1
 - Self-Study is due one year later
2. Self-Study Submission
 - Due October 1 (of the following year)
3. Site Visit Window
 - January 3–March 1
4. Site Visit Report
 - Programs receive report ~ Approximately 30 days after the site visit
5. Program Response / Rejoinder
 - Due 30 business days after receipt of Site Visit Report
6. Review by Accreditation Review Committee (ARC)
 - ARC reviews Program Response/Rejoinder
7. Recommendation to CASCE Board
 - ARC provides recommendations to Board
8. Board Decision and Program Notification
 - Programs notified following CASCE Board decision
9. Official Accreditation Letter
 - Sent within approximately 2 weeks of Board decision

Sharing Your Accreditation Journey

Prior to accreditation, your program may indicate on your website or other public documents that you are applying for CASCE accreditation. However, you may not refer to

the accreditation in any manner that might infer your program is currently or about to be accredited, including reference to a student being eligible to sit for the CSCS examination (starting in 2030).

Once your program becomes accredited, **it must be indicated on your website and in other public documents that the program is accredited by CASCE**. Programs are encouraged to use the registered CASCE Accredited Program seal, provided by the CASCE office.

Maintaining Your Accreditation

Once you are a CASCE accredited program, you must maintain your accreditation by paying your annual fees. Programs failing to submit payment by the deadline may be placed on Administrative Probation.

If you have substantive changes to your program, CASCE must be notified in writing within 30 days of the change. Substantive changes include:

- Change of program leadership, temporary or long-term: PD, FEC
- Change in degree (including level of the degree)
- Change of institutional name
- Change in institutional accreditation status
- Relocation of program within the institution (i.e., department, school, college)
- Additional location or site for offering of the program (i.e., campus or additional educational location)
- Substantive change in the curriculum (content or delivery model exceeding 25% of the non-fieldwork courses)
- Voluntary withdrawal of accreditation
- Substantive change in program resources (i.e., personnel, budget, equipment).

Accreditation Action Guidelines

Once the CASCE Board makes an accreditation decision for a program, the institution will be formally notified of the action taken. Accreditation actions are public decisions and will be published on the CASCE website shortly after notification is sent to the program.

Accreditation Actions

Initial Accreditation

The CASCE Board may grant full initial accreditation for a period of up to five (5) years. In some cases, accreditation may be granted for a shorter period with a Progress Report required to address remaining areas of non-compliance. Upon review and acceptance of the Progress Report, and confirmation of compliance with all Standards, the Board may extend accreditation to a maximum of five (5) years.

Re-accreditation

Re-accreditation applies to programs that have previously achieved full initial accreditation status and are undergoing continuing review. The CASCE Board may grant re-accreditation for a period of up to seven (7) years. In some cases, accreditation may be granted for a shorter period with a

Progress Report required to address remaining areas of non-compliance. Upon review and acceptance of the Progress Report, and confirmation of compliance with all Standards, the Board may extend accreditation to a maximum of seven (7) years.

Progress Report

If a program remains non-compliant with one or more non-critical Standards after its Program Response, the Board may require a Progress Report. This report, submitted at a pre-determined interval, must demonstrate the program's progress toward achieving compliance.

Probation

Programs that continue to fail to meet CASCE Standards following their Program Response and Progress Reports may be placed on probation. Programs on probation must disclose this status on their website. Graduates of a program on probation remain eligible to sit for the CSCS examination.

Deferred Action

If the CASCE Board determines that insufficient information has been provided to render a decision, a deferred action may be issued, requiring the program to submit additional evidence.

- Accredited programs may maintain their accreditation status during a deferred action.
- Programs applying for initial accreditation are not considered accredited during this period.
- Failure to submit the requested information by the stated deadline may result in withdrawal.

Accreditation Deferral (Prior to Program Response/Rejoinder Submission)

Upon receipt of the Site Visit Report, a program may request a one-year deferral if it cannot meet the 30-business-day deadline to submit its Program Response (Rejoinder). Deferrals may be necessary when institutional approval timelines prevent timely changes to achieve compliance.

- Programs are billed for the deferral (see Fee Schedule).
- Programs are not considered accredited during a deferral.
- Failure to meet the deadlines will result in automatic withdrawal of the application.

Show-Cause

The program is required to provide documentation and justification demonstrating why accreditation should be maintained.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Programs may withdraw from accreditation at any time. Institutions are encouraged to consult with the CASCE office to ensure timing of withdrawal protects students' eligibility for the CSCS examination. A teach-out plan must be submitted for any currently enrolled students.

Revocation

In rare and serious circumstances, CASCE may involuntarily revoke accreditation from a program. Revocation is pursued only after all other opportunities to demonstrate compliance with the Standards have been exhausted.

Denial of Accreditation

Programs applying for initial accreditation that fail to provide sufficient evidence of compliance will be denied accreditation. Programs receive a final evaluative summary noting strengths and deficiencies. An opportunity for appeal is available in accordance with CASCE's Appeals Policy. Programs are eligible to reapply within 1 year of the decision date (within cycle) once compliance with CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines can be demonstrated. All fees for new applications apply.

Administrative Probation

Programs that fail to submit required reports or fees on time will be placed on Administrative Probation. If the required items are not submitted within 30 days, the program risks further action, including withdrawal of accreditation.

The CASCE Guide to Accreditation will be updated regularly. Questions about any aspect of this manual, suggestions and/or comments for corrections are welcomed.

Please direct inquiries to:

Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE)

1885 Bob Johnson Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

Accreditation@nsca.com

****CASCE: pronounced, kass-key****

Section 4: CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines

***TERMS INDICATED IN BOLD FONT ARE DEFINED IN THE GLOSSARY SECTION. ***

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

Revision History		
Version	Date	Description
5.0	9.23.2019	Approved version
5.1	12.23.2019	Revisions following open comment
5.2	9.12.2019	Copy edits
6.0	4.27.2022	Glossary updates
7.0	9.05.2024	Changes to Standard III.B and minor edits
8.0	2.12.2025	Changes to Standard IV. F
9.0	2.26.2025	Removal of First-Time Pass Rate
10.0	3.20.2025	Additional minor edits
11.0	07.15.2025	Minor edits

CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines

****THE TERMS INDICATED IN BOLD FONT ARE DEFINED IN THE GLOSSARY SECTION. ****

SECTION I. INSTITUTION

I.A. The institution has appropriate approvals and accreditation to offer programs in higher education including a strength and conditioning program.

I.B. The **program** must demonstrate that it has the appropriate institutional approvals to offer the program and has the **resources** to support the program.

I.C. The mission, goals, and expected **outcomes** of the program align with those of the institution.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

*Documentation of **institutional accreditation** and approvals as appropriate. A needs analysis, internal report, or explanation that the institution has the resources to support the program. The stated missions of the institution, the **academic unit** in which the program is housed, as well as how they are interrelated.*

SECTION II. FACULTY

II.A. **Program Director:** The Program Director is the person responsible for administering the academic program, institutional and program policies, and these **standards**, as well as ensuring program compliance with all applicable **state rules and regulations**.

The Program Director must:

1. Be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution.
2. Have full faculty status, rights, responsibilities, privileges, and voting rights as defined by institutional policy, consistent with similar positions at the institution necessary to provide appropriate program representation in institutional decisions.
3. Have a master's degree or higher in a **related field**.
4. Be in good standing with the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) with a current Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist® (**CSCS®**) **certification** (or recognized UK equivalent certification-see Glossary).
5. Have experience with **curriculum** and/or **program development** in a related field.
6. Be qualified commensurate with other administrative positions within similar **allied health programs** in the institution. If no such similar program exists at the institution, then it must be benchmarked against other peer institutions. If the institution does not sponsor other allied health programs, this standard must be benchmarked against other peer institutions (e.g., Education Recognition Program [ERP] or accredited strength and conditioning programs). Academic rank and tenure status are determined by the institution according to institutional policy.
7. Have programmatic administrative and supervisory responsibility consistent with other similar assignments within the institution.
8. Oversee and evaluate program-specific course content and curricular efficacy.

9. Have **administrative release/reassigned workload**. The Program Director's release time must be equivalent to similar allied health programs in the institution. If no such similar program exists at the institution, then it must be benchmarked against other peer institutions.
10. Must have responsibilities that include input to and assurance of the following program features:
 - (a) Ongoing compliance with the Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education's (CASCE) Professional Standards and Guidelines.
 - (b) Planning, development, implementation, delivery, documentation, and assessment of all components of the **curriculum**.
 - (c) Effective leadership in areas such as **field experience**, strategic planning, resources, and budget.
 - (d) Compliance with all applicable state rules and regulations.
 - (e) Compliance with institutional and program policies.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

*Documentation showing that the Program Director is a full-time faculty of the institution, curriculum vitae showing professional attainment/**scholarship**¹ and appropriate past experience to be in Program Director role, documentation outlining how the Program Director is qualified commensurate with other administrative positions within similar allied health programs at the institution, workload documentation indicating reassigned time for administrative duties, and documentation of current CSCS certification.*

- II.B. **Field Experience Coordinator:** The Field Experience Coordinator is responsible for student field experience placement, field experience site evaluation and training, and regular communication with the **Field Experience Site Supervisors**.

The Field Experience Coordinator must:

1. Be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution.
2. Have released/reassigned workload to meet the institutional responsibilities for overseeing the field experience.
3. Have experience with field experience oversight and development.
4. Be responsible for:
 - (a) Student field experience placement.
 - (b) Maintaining current affiliation agreement(s) or **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with field experience sites.
 - (c) Field Experience site evaluation.
 - (d) Field Experience Site Supervisor training.
 - (e) Field Experience Site Supervisor evaluation.
 - (f) Regular communication with the Field Experience Site Supervisors.
 - (g) Following institutional and program policies.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Documentation showing that the Field Experience Coordinator is a full-time employee of the institution. Curriculum vitae showing professional attainment, evidence of qualification (curriculum vitae and/or resume showing appropriate experience with field experience oversight and

development) to be in Field Experience Coordinator role, and workload documentation indicating reassigned time for the field experience administration according to institutional policy.

II.C. **Strength and Conditioning Faculty:** The teaching faculty of the strength and conditioning educational program shall be identified as those faculty members responsible for teaching in the required subject matter areas specified in Section III and other **didactic courses** included in the strength and conditioning curriculum as identified by the institution.

1. Members of the teaching faculty must have **formal academic appointments**.
2. All faculty assigned and responsible for the **instruction** of strength and conditioning knowledge, skills, and abilities in required courses must:
 - (a) Be qualified through professional preparation and experienced in their respective academic areas as determined by the institution.
 - (b) Be in good standing with the NSCA with a current **CSCS certification** if they teach courses with content specific to strength and conditioning as defined in Standard III.C.6-10 (or recognized UK equivalent certification-see Glossary).
 - (c) Incorporate the most current **evidence-based** strength and conditioning knowledge, skills, and abilities as they pertain to their respective training.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

A list of faculty along with course(s) taught and documentation of formal academic appointments. Documentation of current CSCS certification for those who teach content specific to III.C.6-10.

*Curriculum vitae for each faculty member documenting evidence of appropriate professional and/or academic achievement to be in faculty role, appropriate certifications, professional attainment/**scholarship**, evidence of qualification, and **narrative** explaining how the program is assured that the most current evidence-based knowledge, skills, and abilities are taught by the faculty.*

II.D. **Strength and Conditioning Faculty Number:** In addition to the Program Director, the number of strength and conditioning faculty must meet the needs of the program (based on the program's student enrollment) and be sufficient to:

1. Advise and mentor students.
2. Meet program **outcomes**.
3. Allow the institution to offer strength and conditioning courses on a regular, planned basis.
4. Maintain student-to-faculty ratios that allow for effective instruction and evaluation as consistent with other allied health programs. If no such similar program exists at the institution, then it must be benchmarked against other peer institutions.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Faculty workload data, teaching responsibilities, and other institution-required responsibilities.

II.E. **Field Experience Site Supervisor:** The Field Experience Site Supervisor is the person at the

field experience site responsible for the supervision of the field experience at the site.

The Field Experience Site Supervisor must:

1. Be **CSCS certified** (or recognized UK equivalent certification-see Glossary)..
2. Ensure that student interns are directly supervised during day-to-day activities.
3. Provide instruction, assessment, and feedback for the application of current knowledge, skills, and abilities designated in Standard III.C (in this document).
4. Demonstrate understanding of and compliance with the program's policies and procedures.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Appropriate certifications, professional attainment/scholarship, evidence of qualification to be in Field Experience Site Supervisor role, and explanation of how the Field Experience Site Supervisors are trained and informed of the programs policies and procedures.

SECTION III. CURRICULUM

- III.A. The **curriculum** is developed, implemented, assessed, and improved to reflect clear statements of expected student **outcomes** that are congruent with the program's mission and **goals** and the roles for which the program is preparing its graduates.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Documentation of the program mission and goals.

- III.B. The program must be at minimum a bachelor's degree with a **concentration**, or equivalent, with strength and conditioning stated within the title. Post-baccalaureate certificate programs may be considered for accreditation.
1. The curriculum must be of appropriate length and credit hours (as determined by the institutional policies and institutional accrediting organization) to fulfill the degree requirements.
 2. Sequencing of the curriculum must provide proper progression of student learning of required knowledge, skills, and abilities. Policies must be in place to allow for student **remediation**.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Official institutional documents showing the program is a minimum of a concentration, or equivalent, with strength and conditioning stated in the title and an example student plan or sequence of courses.

- III.C. The curriculum must include the following content:

1. Human Anatomy and Physiology
 - (a) Structure and function of body systems
 - (b) Musculoskeletal system
 - (c) Neuromuscular system

- (d) Cardiovascular system
 - (e) Respiratory system
2. Exercise Physiology
- (a) Bioenergetics of exercise and training
 - (b) Biological energy systems
 - (c) Substrate depletion and repletion
 - (d) Bioenergetic limiting factors in exercise performance
 - (e) Oxygen uptake and the aerobic and anaerobic contributions to exercise
 - (f) Metabolic specificity of training
 - (g) Endocrine responses to resistance exercise
 - (h) Synthesis, storage, and secretion of hormones
 - (i) Muscle as the target for hormone interactions
 - (j) Role of receptors in mediating hormonal changes
 - (k) Categories of hormones
 - (l) Heavy resistance exercise and hormonal increases
 - (m) Mechanisms of hormonal interactions
 - (n) Hormonal changes in peripheral blood
 - (o) Adaptations in the endocrine system
 - (p) Primary anabolic hormones
 - (q) Adrenal hormones
 - (r) Other hormonal considerations
3. Kinesiology/Biomechanics
- (a) Biomechanics of resistance exercise
 - (b) Skeletal musculature
 - (c) Anatomical planes and major body movements
 - (d) Human strength and power
 - (e) Sources of resistance to muscle contraction
 - (f) Joint biomechanics: Concerns in resistance training
4. Sports Nutrition
- (a) Basic nutrition factors in health
 - (b) Role of sport nutrition professionals
 - (c) Standard nutrition guidelines
 - (d) Macronutrients
 - (e) Vitamins
 - (f) Minerals
 - (g) Fluid and electrolytes
 - (h) Nutrition strategies for maximizing performance
 - (i) Pre-competition, during-event, and post-competition nutrition
 - (j) Nutrition strategies for altering body composition
 - (k) Feeding and eating disorders
 - (l) Performance-enhancing substances and methods
 - (m) Types of performance-enhancing substances
 - (n) Hormones
 - (o) Dietary supplements
5. Psychology of Sport and Exercise

- (a) Psychology of athletic preparation and performance
 - (b) Role of sport psychology
 - (c) Ideal performance state
 - (d) Energy management: arousal, anxiety, and stress
 - (e) Influence of arousal and anxiety on performance
 - (f) Motivation
 - (g) Attention and focus
 - (h) Psychological techniques for improved performance
 - (i) Enhancing motor skill acquisition and learning
6. Scientific Principles of Strength and Conditioning
- (a) Adaptations to anaerobic training programs
 - (b) Neural adaptations
 - (c) Muscular adaptations
 - (d) Connective tissue adaptations
 - (e) Endocrine responses and adaptations to anaerobic training
 - (f) Cardiovascular and respiratory responses to anaerobic exercise
 - (g) Compatibility of aerobic and anaerobic modes of training
 - (h) Overtraining: definition, prevalence, diagnosis, and potential markers
 - (i) Detraining
 - (j) Adaptations to aerobic endurance training
 - (k) Acute responses to aerobic exercise
 - (l) Chronic adaptations to aerobic exercise
 - (m) External and individual factors influencing adaptations to aerobic endurance training
 - (n) Age- and sex-related differences and their implications for resistance exercise
 - (o) Children
 - (p) Female athletes
 - (q) Older adults
 - (r) Types of injury
 - (s) Tissue healing
 - (t) Rehabilitation and reconditioning strategies
 - (u) Program design
 - (v) Reducing risk of injury and reinjury
7. Resistance Training and Conditioning (Practical/Laboratory)
- (a) Warm-up and flexibility training
 - (b) Types of stretching
 - (c) Static stretching techniques
 - (d) Dynamic stretching techniques
 - (e) Exercise technique for free-weight and machine training
 - (f) Fundamentals of exercise technique
 - (g) Spotting free-weight exercises
 - (h) Resistance training exercises
 - (i) Olympic style lifting techniques: progressions and regressions
 - (j) Exercise technique for alternative modes and nontraditional implement training
 - (k) Bodyweight training methods
 - (l) Core stability and balance training methods
 - (m) Variable-resistance training methods

- (n) Unilateral training
 - (o) Alternative modes and nontraditional exercises
8. Exercise Testing/Exercise Prescription with Emphasis in Anaerobic Exercise
- (a) Principles of test selection and administration
 - (b) Reasons for testing
 - (c) Testing terminology
 - (d) Evaluation of test quality
 - (e) Test selection
 - (f) Test administration
 - (g) Administration, scoring, and interpretation of selected tests
 - (h) Measuring parameters of athletic performance
 - (i) Selected test protocols and scoring data
 - (j) Statistical evaluation of test data
9. Program Design as Related to Strength and Conditioning
- (a) Program design for resistance training
 - (b) Principles of anaerobic exercise prescription
 - (i) Step 1: Needs analysis
 - (ii) Step 2: Exercise selection
 - (iii) Step 3: Training frequency
 - (iv) Step 4: Exercise order
 - (v) Step 5: Training load and repetitions
 - (vi) Step 6: Volume
 - (vii) Step 7: Rest periods
 - (c) Program design and technique for plyometric training
 - (i) Plyometric mechanics and physiology
 - (ii) Design of plyometric training programs
 - (iii) Age considerations
 - (iv) Plyometrics and other forms of exercise
 - (v) Safety considerations
 - (vi) Plyometric drills
 - (d) Program design and technique for speed and agility training
 - (i) Speed and agility mechanics
 - (ii) Neurophysiological basis for speed
 - (iii) Running speed
 - (iv) Agility performance and change-of-direction ability
 - (v) Methods of developing speed
 - (vi) Methods of developing agility
 - (vii) Program design
 - (viii) Speed development strategies
 - (ix) Agility development strategies
 - (x) Speed and agility drills
 - (e) Program design and technique for aerobic endurance training
 - (i) Factors related to aerobic endurance performance
 - (ii) Designing an aerobic endurance program

- (iii) Types of aerobic endurance training programs
 - (iv) Application of program design to training seasons
 - (v) Special issues related to aerobic endurance training
 - (vi) Aerobic endurance training exercises
 - (vii) Periodization
 - (viii) Central concepts related to periodization
 - (ix) Periodization hierarchy
 - (x) Periodization periods
 - (xi) Applying sport seasons to the periodization periods
 - (xii) Undulating versus linear periodization models
 - (xiii) Example of an annual training plan
10. Facility organization, administration, and oversight
- (a) Facility design, layout, and organization
 - (b) General aspects of new facility design
 - (c) Existing strength and conditioning facilities
 - (d) Assessing athletic program needs
 - (e) Designing the strength and conditioning facility
 - (f) Arranging equipment in the strength and conditioning facility
 - (g) Maintaining and cleaning surfaces and equipment
 - (h) Facility policies, procedures, and legal issues
 - (i) Mission statement and program goals
 - (j) Legal and ethical issues
 - (k) Staff policies and activities
 - (l) Facility administration
 - (m) Emergency planning and response

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Curriculum “map,” syllabi, and other program or course documents demonstrating inclusion of areas of instruction/content listed in Standards III.C (in this document); description of how the expected *outcomes* are met; and examples of learning experiences/objectives and documentation including course syllabi, sample exams, final exams, and *practical/lab experiences*.

III.D. Strength and Conditioning **Field Experience**

1. The field experience must provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate application of content areas of instruction listed in Standard III.C (in this document).
2. The field experience must follow a logical sequence in the curriculum, allowing the student to apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities learned through didactic and laboratory classes. Field experience should be done towards the end of the curriculum within the final year of study.
3. The field experience must provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate professional and ethical standards within the field of strength and conditioning.
4. The field experience must provide a minimum of 300 hours of contact time including:
 - a. A minimum of two substantially different experiences (not necessarily two different sites) that include two or more of the following categories: sports, genders, ages range, abilities or competitive levels, or other.
 - b. Two different supervisors (does not require experiences at two different sites).

- c. Minimum of 75 hours per site.
- d. One experience must be at least 6 weeks in length.
- e. The field experience must include the following key areas: warm- up, flexibility training, exercise technique, spotting, Olympic-style lifting, progressions/regressions, test selection and administration, program design, speed/agility/plyometric training, anaerobic and aerobic program design, and periodization.
5. There must be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or other comparable document signed by both the field experience site (by someone with signing authority) and the institution that recognizes the student's presence at the site and provides permission for the student to actively participate in the field experience.
6. Field experience must be included in the curriculum as a course or part of a course.
7. Paid field experiences are permitted provided they meet all the requirements as described in this section.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

*Narrative and curriculum "map" describing how the content areas listed in Standard III.C are integrated across the field experiences requiring students to apply this content, a log of field experience hours/experiences/client encounters for each student, a description of how the expected **outcomes** are met, examples of learning experiences/objectives and documentation including evaluations from Field Experience Site Supervisor, and a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** (or comparable) for each field experience site.*

SECTION IV. OUTCOMES

- IV.A. There is an ongoing, formal program **assessment process** that determines the extent to which the program meets its stated **outcomes**.

The assessment process minimally includes data related to:

1. Student **outcomes**
2. Program **outcomes**
3. Council on Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Education (CASCE) Standards
4. Instruction
5. Field experiences
6. Admissions criteria and prerequisites
7. Curriculum scope and sequence
8. **Graduate placement rates**
9. **Retention** and graduation rate
10. CSCS exam success for graduates of the program

- IV.B. Identifies program strengths and weaknesses.
- IV.C. Includes decisions that were considered regarding the need for change.
- IV.D. Includes steps to achieve the changes, with anticipated dates of completion.

- IV.E. The extent to which graduates of the program meet the expected student **outcomes** of the program.
- IV.F. **Pass rates** for the CSCS exam, based on a 3-year aggregate, must be at least 75%.
- IV.G. Programs must publicly display student enrollment, graduation, retention rate, CSCS pass rate, and graduate placement rate on the institution's website.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

*A copy of the **assessment plan** for both program and student **outcomes**, reports showing data collected through the assessment plan, demonstrate strengths and weaknesses and how those were or will be addressed in the curriculum, describe any changes that will occur over the next 3 – 5 years as a result of assessment, 3-year aggregate, **pass rates**, 12-month employment rates, and screenshot and URL of webpage containing information as required in Standard IV.G.*

SECTION V. RESOURCES

- V.A. Student Services – The program must demonstrate that advising, academic support, disability, and financial aid services are available to students consistent with other programs at the institution.
- V.B. Support Staff – The program has, or has access to, administrative, secretarial, and technical support to meet its program **outcomes**.
- V.C. Financial Support – The program must receive adequate, equitable, and annually available resources necessary to meet the program's size, mission, outcomes, and sustainability.
- V.D. Academic Resources – The institutional library system and/or associated learning resources are adequate to support faculty and student **scholarship** and the educational needs of the program.
- V.E. Facilities – The program has, or has access to:
 - 1. Classroom/laboratory/training space of sufficient quality and quantity to carry out program goals. The physical environment is supportive of effective teaching and learning processes.
 - 2. The program has offices and other space of sufficient quantity and quality for faculty to carry out their teaching, advisement, and service activities efficiently and effectively.
- V.F. Equipment, Technology, and Materials – The program has, or has access to, equipment, technology, and materials necessary to meet program and student **outcomes** and CASCE Professional Standards and Guidelines.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Documentation of student services listed in Standard V.A; income and expense data; adequacy of

*the budget and services to meet the needs of the program, to include supplies, equipment purchase, repair, and replacement; a description of the process used to determine short- and long-term budgetary needs that are tied to the goals and expected **outcomes** of the program; an example list or link to library/learning resources; a narrative describing facility components identified in Standard V.E and how they are adequate to meet program needs; and a narrative describing components identified in Standard V.F and how they are adequate to meet program needs.*

SECTION VI. POLICIES

- VI.A. Prospective and enrolled students are provided with relevant information about the institution and program that may affect them, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Catalogs
 - 2. Academic calendars
 - 3. Grading policies
 - 4. Financial aid
 - 5. The program's **accreditation** status
 - 6. The process to register a complaint with the accrediting agency
 - 7. Student grievances
 - 8. Program/student **outcomes** information
 - 9. Tuition cost/program fees
 - 10. Withdrawal/refund
 - 11. Remediation, retention, and other pertinent information
- VI.B. Materials related to the institution and program are accurate, comprehensive, current, and provided to students in a timely manner.
- VI.C. Program policies, procedures, and practices related to student recruitment, admission, and field experience placement are based on appropriate and equitable criteria and applicable law and ensure **nondiscrimination and equal opportunity**.
- VI.D. Policies, procedures, and practices that affect the rights, responsibilities, safety, privacy, and dignity of students are written, disseminated, and applied equitably.
- VI.E. Policies, procedures, and practices are in place to handle student complaints and grievances and are followed.
- VI.F. Policies, procedures, or practices provide for compliance with accreditation standards, including:
 - 1. **Timely submission** of required fees
 - 2. Timely submission of required documentation
 - 3. **Timely notification** of **expected or unexpected substantive change(s)** within the program and of any change in institutional accreditation status or legal authority to provide post- secondary education
- VI.G. Accreditation status (and changes in status) will be publicly available. Current students will be immediately notified of a change in accreditation status.

Documentation of Compliance (provide the following):

Explanation of how students gain acceptance into the program, including specific admission standards; explanation of how students are provided with, or can access, information relating to program policies, procedures, and practices; explanation of how complaints are handled/processed.

Description of how records of complaints are, or would be, maintained, appropriate pages of student handbook and/or institution catalog/website demonstrating components of Standard VI.A; and narrative of how students are provided with the information if not via the institution's public website.

Glossary Section

Academic unit - The component of the institution directly responsible for teaching and learning of a specific subject matter, often called a school, department, division, or center.

Accreditation - Governmental or non-governmental (peer-reviewed) approval to offer programs of higher education.

Administrative release/reassigned workload - The time a faculty member is released from normal teaching or other responsibilities (e.g., research, service, advising) to perform administrative duties for the program.

Allied health programs – Programs that lead to eligibility for credentialing of medical professionals who use scientific principles and evidence-based practice to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases and illnesses. Students/graduates of these programs often work in interprofessional healthcare teams to provide specialized support to their patients/clients.

Assessment plan/process - Document that outlines student learning outcomes and program outcomes to be assessed during the academic year. Also includes a description of the assessment methods and the intervals at which the data will be assessed and reviewed.

Concentration - A clearly defined sub-field within a strength and conditioning related major; institutions may also use example equivalents, including but not limited to; emphasis, track or minor. Must state strength and conditioning in the title affiliated with a formal degree program.

Contact time - Quantity or duration of student work as defined by the home institution, higher education accreditation agency, or federal agency.

CSCS Certified - Must be in good standing with the NSCA and have a current CSCS certification. Non-US programs will submit appropriate strength and conditioning certification from their country. Recognized International Equivalent- The UKSCA Accredited Strength and Conditioning Coach (ASCC) certification, along with at minimum a baccalaureate degree as awarded in that country, is recognized by CASCE as an equivalent certification for the NSCA CSCS in the UK and Ireland.

Curriculum - An academic course of study designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific field.

Curriculum map – A systematic map of a program of study that links student and program outcomes and objectives to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific field. CASCE program self-study involves completion of a curriculum map worksheet.

Curriculum or program development - The process of designing or developing curriculum or a program plan.

Didactic courses - Traditional classroom courses focused on the transfer and acquisition of knowledge. Differ from field experience or lab courses that are more experiential.

Evidence-based - A conscientious, problem-solving approach that integrates practical expertise, best current evidence, client values and preferences, and human performance requirements.

Expected or unexpected substantive change(s) - Changes made to the program or the university that may change the accreditation status (e.g., changes to program director, substantive changes in university funding, major changes in program curriculum, etc.).

Field experience - The practical, real-world experiences that are a required component of the curriculum. “Field experience” is a general term and the institution may wish to use a name that is consistent within the institution; may be called “practical experience,” “internship,” or other appropriate title. Must contain practical, hands-on, experiential components with athletes or clients outside of the academic setting.

Field Experience Site Supervisor - A field experience site employee, member, or volunteer, who is responsible for monitoring and supervising the students at the site. Must be **CSCS certified**.

Formal academic appointments - Position of employment at an institution of higher education, with primary academic responsibilities.

Goals - Overarching statements that operationalize the institution’s mission.

Graduate placement rates - as defined by and consistent with the institution.

Institutional accreditation – Recognition of the institution offering the program by an accredited non-governmental or governmental body, which provides authority to offer higher education programming.

Instruction - Relaying pertinent information, often through a variety of methods in a formal setting related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities in the field of strength and conditioning.

Memorandum of understanding (MOU) - A formal agreement between the institution and a field experience or field experience site. The agreement defines the roles of the institution, site, and student and specifically allows the student to be at the facility; could also be called an affiliation agreement.

Narrative - Written explanation to provide context for requested content and exhibits (per self-study/CASCE accreditation process).

Nondiscrimination and equal opportunity - Nondiscrimination against people because of their protected class. For example: race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income, or other protected class.

Outcomes - Quantitative or qualitative indications of achievement. Typically, they include *student outcomes* regarding what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. *Program outcomes* indicate how well the program is performing concerning teaching effectiveness, retention rates, graduation rates, employment rates, CSCS exam success, etc.

Pass Rate – The percentage of students from the program who take the CSCS examination. The pass rate will be calculated using a 3-year aggregate of the number of students who passed the examination, divided by the number of students from the program who attempted the exam during that 3-year period.

Practical/lab experiences - Hands-on experiences in a practical or lab setting to provide students with the opportunity to practice or apply learned skills.

Program - The specific academic strength and conditioning program (per the standards must be at least a concentration or equivalent) within an academic unit.

Related field - Can be allied health, exercise science, kinesiology, and other closely related disciplines.

Remediation- Provides students support to address and improve academic deficiencies.

Resources - Financial assets or other materials (e.g., learner materials, quality and number of faculty and staff, facilities, and equipment) to achieve the outcomes of the program.

Retention - the institution's definition of retention rate for students.

Scholarship – Contributions to the academy that are broadly defined by the Boyer model¹. Scholarship of discovery, integration, application/practice, and teaching.

References

1. Boyer, EL. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass; 1991.

Standards - The CASCE Standards for Accreditation of Strength and Conditioning Programs; referred to as "The Standards." Programs must meet the requirements of each standard to obtain accreditation.

State rules and regulations – for example: licensure, OSHA requirements, health standards, building codes, and fire safety, hiring practices, and non-discrimination practices.

Syllabi - A document that outlines course content and practices and serves as an informal learning contract between the student and the institution. May also be called course plan or course contract.

Timely notification - Notification given no more than 30 days after change occurs.

Timely submission - Required information submitted on or before the deadline