



ACGC

Accreditation Council
for Genetic Counseling

Fostering excellence in education for the future of genetic counseling

PETITION FOR VARIANCE POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this Variance Policy is to establish guidelines for the consideration and approval of variances from established accreditation standards published by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC). A variance is defined as a conditional deviation from a specific accreditation standard granted under exceptional circumstances. This is distinct from other program request forms including the Program Leadership Change Form, Interpretive Guidance Form, or Substantive Changes Forms.

Definition of Variance

A variance refers to a deviation from an accreditation standard or requirement that is deemed necessary due to unique and justifiable circumstances. Variances are alternate methods of achieving the intent of a standard. Variances are granted on a case-by-case basis and are subject to specific conditions and timeframes.

Conditions for Variance Consideration

1. Variances will only be considered under exceptional circumstances where strict adherence to a specific standard may pose undue hardship or hinder the achievement of the overarching goals of the accredited program, or in cases where state or local law prohibits adherence to a specific standard. Additionally, variances should not pose a hardship to students or other constituents of the program.
2. Granted variances will apply only to the edition of Standards for which they are approved.

Process for Variance Request

1. The institution seeking a variance must submit a written request to the ACGC detailing the specific standard for which the variance is requested, the rationale and justification for the variance, the proposed alternative measures to ensure program quality, and the requested variance time period. Supporting documentation necessary for the ACGC to render a decision should be included. The program must demonstrate that the request for variance meets the above 'Conditions for Variance Approval'.
2. If a particular circumstance (e.g. state or local law restrictions) impacts adherence to more than one Standard, these multiple variances will be submitted and reviewed together.
3. Variance requests are reviewed by the Board. The Board will consider the request and related evidence in order to render a decision.
4. A variance request denial is not subject to appeal.

Criteria for Granting a Variance and Continuing a Variance

1. The Board will assess the request based on the circumstances and the appropriateness of proposed alternative measures.
2. Variances will only be granted if it is determined that the proposed deviation maintains the fundamental integrity of the accreditation process and does not compromise the overall goals of program quality and student outcomes.
3. Variances will be subject to specific conditions and timeframes outlined in the approval. A conditional requirement may include regularly reporting on progress toward meeting the

standard in question during the variance period. Variances will be approved with a maximum length of time that corresponds with the program's next reaccreditation review (self-study submission).

4. The ACGC reserves the right to, at any time, review initial submissions and related documents, request additional documentation, or require an update from an institution to determine the appropriateness of a variance. The ACGC can rescind an approved variance at any time should information become available that suggests the variance is no longer appropriate.

Variance Renewal

1. A variance renewal may be requested if there have been no changes made to the originally approved variance and only a time extension is requested.
 - a. The request for renewal must be submitted to ACGC at least thirty (30) calendar days before its expiration date.
 - b. Variances related to situations where state or local law prohibits adherence to a specific standard are required to be renewed on an annual basis.
2. A new variance submission will be required if there are significant changes to an existing variance.
3. A previously denied variance that is being resubmitted will be considered a new variance submission no earlier than three (3) months after the initial submission.
4. Variance approval and documentation shall be furnished during the annual self-study process.

Variance Fees

1. Fees apply for the initial petition of variance and renewal of variance.
2. The fee for a new variance review is \$1,000 USD.
3. The fee for a variance renewal is \$500 USD.
4. Renewals for variances related to state or local laws will be renewed annually and incur a \$200 USD fee.

Periodic Review

This Variance Policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in maintaining the integrity of the accreditation process