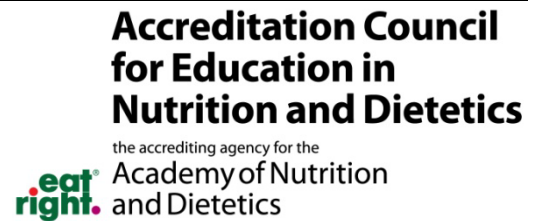

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Proposed Advanced Nutrition and Dietetics Practice
Standards for Doctoral Education Programs
September 2023



The ACEND® Standards Committee has been developing standards and competencies for new doctoral standards and competencies for education in nutrition and dietetics. This document is a compilation of relevant questions about the proposed *Advanced Nutrition and Dietetics Practice Standards for Doctoral Education Programs* and ACEND responses related to these proposed standards.

Question: Is there a need for advanced level dietetic practitioners?

ACEND Response: Yes. There is a shortage of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists who have terminal degrees, limiting professional opportunities within education, research, leadership, and evidence-based practice. Additional information on this topic can be found in the April 2023 Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, *The Shortage of Registered Dietitians or Nutritionists with a Terminal Degree: A Call to Action for the Profession* by Davis et al.

Question: Is an advanced practice doctorate the same as a PhD?

ACEND Response: No. While both are terminal degrees, a practice doctorate is a professional degree to advance practice through the application of existing information, while the PhD advances practice through theoretical and original research.

Question: Do you have to be a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RD/RDN) to enroll in the proposed program?

ACEND Response: Yes. The proposed standards are not entry-level. Individuals entering the program must hold the RD/RDN credential.

Question: Can an entry-level RD/RDN enroll in the proposed program?

ACEND Response: No. The program is designed for individuals who have a bachelor's degree with a minimum of five years full-time post-credentialing work experience or equivalent or a master's degree with a minimum of three years full-time post-credentialing work experience or equivalent.

Question: Is the proposed program only for those interested in clinical practice?

ACEND Response: No. The curriculum will include many areas within nutrition and dietetics. The proposed standards include the collaborative development of a clearly defined area of interest that is based upon the program specific core competencies. These may or may not be related to clinical practice.

Question: Is there a research component to this proposed program?

ACEND Response: Yes. The program is designed as a practice doctorate with competencies specific to practical research and other scholarly activities.

Question: Does the proposed program require some form of supervised practice?

ACEND Response: The programs will include residency activities that are overseen by qualified faculty and appropriately credentialed mentors to ensure implementation of the program's advanced level curriculum and the achievement of program goals and objectives.

Question: What is the length of the proposed program?

ACEND Response: The program length varies based upon the didactic learning, research, and residency requirements for students to demonstrate the required competencies and state and institutional mandates.

Question: What are the qualifications for the program director of the proposed program?

ACEND Response: The program director must have a doctoral degree, be a credentialed RD/RDN, have a minimum of five years full-time professional experience post-credentialing or equivalent, be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution and not direct another ACEND-accredited nutrition and dietetics education program.

Question: Can the program director be the only faculty member who is an RD/RDN?

ACEND Response: At least one additional full-time, or equivalent, faculty member must be credentialed as an RD/RDN.

Question: What are the qualifications for program mentors?

ACEND Response: Program mentors must have the education and experience needed to provide appropriate guidance for the residency. The proposed programs would be required to demonstrate that mentors are qualified to serve as advanced level coaches, advocates, and role models.

Question: What are some areas of practice for graduates of the proposed program?

ACEND Response: Graduates could work in many areas including but not limited to leadership and strategic development, communication, advocacy and policy, government and public health, program evaluation and quality improvement, advanced research, and education and curriculum design.

Question: Where can I learn more about these proposed standards?

ACEND Response: ACEND is offering an informational session at FNCE, titled “Beyond Entry Level: New Advanced Practice Doctoral Standards for the RDN” on Monday, October 9, 2023 from 1:30-3:00pm. A recording of the session will be posted as soon as it is made available. The proposed draft of the standards can be found [here](#).

Question: Can I provide feedback on the proposed standards?

ACEND Response: Yes. The ACEND Board has released the proposed draft for the Advanced Nutrition and Dietetics Practice Standards for Doctoral Education Programs for public comment and encourages all interested parties to provide input by completing the survey. The [survey](#) will remain open through November 5, 2023.