

2022 ACEND Accreditation Standards-Dietetic Internships
Options for Ensuring Compliance with Standard 1, Required Element 1.4

Introduction

There are multiple options for programs to ensure they are complying with the requirements of Standard 1, Required Element 1.4. Dietetic Internships that are not combined with a graduate degree (also known as non-degree DIs) need solutions for interns to be able to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe from completing the Dietetic Internship. A **reasonable timeframe** is defined by ACEND as one year from the end of the program or 150% of program length, whichever is shorter. Option 1 describes the process to become a combined graduate degree, dietetic internship program. ACEND is providing Options 2 and 3 as potential solutions for non-degree DIs to facilitate finding the options with their students'/interns' best interest in mind. Option 4 describes a solution where students/interns enroll separately in a degree program and enter the DI at some point prior to degree completion. There may be other options to ensure students/interns complete a graduate degree; contact your ACEND manager to discuss other ideas.

Identified Options

Option 1: Submit substantive change to transition to a graduate degree/DI (e.g., MS/DI)

- Admit those with a DPD or an FDE Verification Statement **AND** have contracted with specific graduate degree(s) granting institution(s) that students must be accepted to prior to starting the DI program
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of **both** DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement) and graduate degree

(Complete Sections 1 and/or 2 of the [RE 1.4 Program Completion Req. Template.](#))

Option 2: Preselect students from specific graduate program(s)

- Preselect those who are enrolled in a specific graduate program contracted with DI **AND** have a DPD or an FDE Verification Statement
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of **both** DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement) and graduate degree

(Refer to pages 26-27 from the [ACEND 2022 Standards Substantive Change Guidelines.](#))

Option 3: Change to graduate degree admission requirement

- Admit those with a DPD or an FDE Verification Statement **AND** completed graduate degree
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement)

(No substantive change required. Report admission change in Annual Report/ Compliance Audit.)

Option 4: Student-identified graduate degree

- Admit those who are in the process of completing a graduate degree or have enrolled in a graduate degree before starting the DI
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of **both** DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement) and graduate degree

(Complete Section 1 of the [RE 1.4 Program Completion Req. Template.](#))

There is a possibility for combining these options. See explanation in *NOTE* below

NOTE: Combining Options

Programs are able to combine more than one option; however, logistics for program management may be challenging.

- Under Options 1, 2 and 4, if the program wishes also to accept applicants who have completed a graduate degree prior to starting the DI (Option 3), the program is encouraged to review its program length and prior learning assessment policies to be sure interns are not required to complete a second graduate degree. The program may need two program completion objectives for interns who already have the graduate degree who are completing only the supervised practice rotations and those completing the graduate degree and supervised practice rotations.*
- Under options 1, 2 and 3, programs may choose to also accept students/interns who have identified their own Graduate program (Option 4).*

Identified Options

Option 1: Submit substantive change to transition to a graduate degree/DI (e.g., MS/DI)

The Dietetic Internship establishes a contract/agreement with one or more institutions to provide a concurrent graduate degree. A university-based Dietetic Internship may partner or align itself with a graduate program offered within the university. The graduate degree may be completed before, during or after supervised practice, and allows applicants to be accepted into the graduate program within the same time frame they are accepted to the DI program. This allows the internship director to have some coordination with the graduate degree program, accommodate supervised practice around course schedules, and have an established relationship with the degree program to verify the intern's completion of the graduate degree. The student/intern must complete the graduate degree within a reasonable timeframe, as defined above. This option requires a substantive program change with ACEND using the "Change or Add Degree Requirements" change requirements. Complete Sections 1 and/or 2 of the [Compliance with Required Element 1.4 Program Completion Requirements Template](#).

Option 2: Pre-select students from specific graduate program(s)

The Dietetic Internship establishes a contract/agreement with one or more institutions with a graduate degree to preselect students/interns already enrolled in that specific graduate degree program **and** have a DPD or FDE verification statement to participate in the Dietetic Internship. This requires the program to address the "Adding a Pre-select Option" change (preselect criteria 1.a and 1.b) on pages 29-30 from the [ACEND 2022 Standards Substantive Change Guidelines](#).

Option 3: Change to graduate degree admission requirement

The Dietetic Internship would require an applicant to have completed a graduate degree prior to starting the program in addition to having a DPD or FDE verification statement. **The applicant may be admitted to the program prior to completing a degree if they are matched in the final semester of their graduate degree program and plan to finish the degree before the start of the DI.** There are no changes to the existing program except to the admission requirements. ACEND does NOT require a substantive change to report for this option and programs can report this change in the Annual Report and/or during the 2022 Standards Compliance Audit.

Option 4: Student-identified graduate degree

An intern would find and apply for a graduate degree separately from the DI and be responsible for **self-managing** the completion of both the DI and graduate degree. There are no changes to the existing program except to the admission and completion requirements. This option requires programs to report this change to ACEND by completing only Section 1 of the [Compliance with Required Element 1.4 Program Completion Requirements Template](#).

If you are considering this option, please consider the following questions:

- Is it realistic for the intern to complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe, based on how much of the graduate degree the intern has completed?
- What are the specific/tangible steps the program will take to ensure interns complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe?
- Does the program have sufficient administrative, clerical, or other staff resources to implement the program's process to ensure interns complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe? Depending on where a student/intern is in their graduate program, there is variable risk for the student/intern not completing their graduate degree and/or DI in a reasonable timeframe:

Student-Identified Graduate Degree: Levels of Risk for Failing to Complete the Graduate Degree and/or DI		
LOW RISK	MEDIUM RISK	HIGH RISK
Completed most of the graduate degree <u>before</u> entering the DI and finish the degree during or soon after DI	Completing most of the graduate degree <u>at the same time</u> as the DI, and finish the degree soon after DI	Completing most of the graduate degree <u>during or after</u> completing the DI
1-2 courses left; thesis or research project, if applicable, finished	Mid-way through the graduate program; thesis or research project, if applicable, not complete	Has not started graduate degree program prior to starting DI or starting graduate degree and DI at same time

There are several reasons ACEND cautions programs when utilizing this option:

- **Workload for Student/Intern:** The workload for completing a graduate degree and full-time Dietetic Internship concurrently without coordination between the two programs puts a heavy burden on the student/intern. This may affect student/intern performance in both the internship and the graduate degree and is not in the best interest of the student/intern.
- **Lack of Coordination with Degree Program:** Ultimately, the DI program will be at risk of being out of compliance with the ACEND 2022 Accreditation Standards if students/interns are not eligible to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe of completing the DI (Standard 1, Required Element 1.4 and Standard 2, Required Element 2.1.a). Without a formal relationship with a degree program, the DI director has little control over when/or if the student/intern completes the graduate degree.

- Student/Intern Timeline: DI programs that accept students/interns already enrolled in a graduate degree program of their choosing risk having the student/intern delay completing the graduate degree, which prevents them from being eligible to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe of completing the DI.
- Delay in submitting students/interns in REPS system: DI directors will be responsible for inputting students/interns when they have completed all eligibility requirements which include completion of the graduate degree. It may be challenging for the DI program director to keep track of a student/intern until they complete the graduate degree. The following description of the process has been provided by CDR:

“Post-2024, DI Program Directors cannot enter the student/intern who has graduated from the DI Program into the CDR Registration Eligibility Process System (REPS) until the student/intern has **met all exam eligibility requirements** (graduate degree, didactic, and supervised practice). CDR will not keep track of a student/intern in REPS until the student/intern has obtained the graduate degree. If a student/intern completes a DI, and does not have a graduate degree, the student/intern must reengage with and inform the Program Director when the graduate of the DI program has completed the graduate degree requirement and provide documentation of the conferred graduate degree to the Program Director.”

Program Directors are informed in CDR materials that a student/intern cannot be submitted into REPS without having completed all eligibility requirements. See <https://www.cdrnet.org/program-director>; [REPS Program Director Guide](#); [REPS Frequently Asked Questions](#)”