
Development of Competencies for Future Education Model programs

ACEND has been working with consultant Leanne Worsfold (<http://icomconsulting.com/>) to help develop the competencies (knowledge, skills, judgement and attitudes) and practice indicators (identifiable components of expected performance) for graduates of the associate, bachelor and master degree programs in the future education model. Ms. Worsfold is considered an expert in competency development and has worked with many health professions in the US and Canada helping them develop competencies.

The first step in the competency development process occurred in Summer/Fall 2015 with a group of 15 individuals termed **subject matter experts** that included RDNS and NDTRs from across the US who work or have worked as educators or practitioners in a broad spectrum of practice areas (inpatient and outpatient clinical nutrition, foodservice management, school foodservice, business, communication, community, private practice, public health, college teaching, research, quality management and healthcare administration). This group worked for three months developing the first draft of the competencies and performance indicators.

The second step of the process was a **first line review** by a group of 87 educators and practitioners. These individuals participated in one of 10 online focus groups conducted by consultant Worsfold to review the draft competencies and performance indicators and offer suggested changes. Several modifications were made to the draft documents based on first line reviewer input.

The third step in the process, the **validation study**, will begin in April 2016. Random samples of 5,000+ nutrition and dietetics practitioners, educators and employers (separate samples for each degree level program) will be asked to rate the competencies and the performance indicators on their importance to future nutrition and dietetic practice and their importance to the public to ensure access to safe, competent and ethical nutrition and dietetics services. ACEND will make changes to the draft competency and performance indicator statements as needed based on the input received. ACEND encourages your participation, if you are one of the individuals who receives a request to participate in the online validation study.

Provide Comments on the 2017 Standards

In February, ACEND released the draft 2017 Standards for CP, DI, DPD, DT, FDE and IDE programs. ACEND invites comments on these draft 2017 Standards. Comments can be provided until May 13, 2016 at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017Std2>.

For Additional Information

- Review information on the ACEND Standards Committee Website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.
- Participate in a monthly ACEND virtual town hall on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 11:30 CT; information on how to connect to the town hall is available at www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.
- Contact ACEND (acend@eatright.org; 312-899-4872).

Questions That Have Come to ACEND

Question: What role will Didactic Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics (DPD) programs have in developing students for interprofessional practice, nutrition focused physical assessment and nutrition informatics?

ACEND Response: The term “interprofessional” does not actually appear in the KRDNs in the draft 2017 Standards but KRDN 2.5 “Identify and describe the roles of others with whom the registered dietitian nutritionist collaborates in the delivery of food and nutrition services” was designed to prepare DPD students with the background knowledge for CRDN 2.4 “Function as a member of interprofessional teams”, which students will do in their supervised practice.

Nutrition focused physical assessment is considered part of the nutrition assessment step in the Nutrition Care Process, which is covered in KRDN 3.1 “Use the Nutrition Care Process to make decisions, identify nutrition-related problems and determine and evaluate nutrition interventions.” This will prepare the DPD students with the background knowledge for CRDN 3.2 “Conduct nutrition focused physical assessment”, which students will do in their supervised practice.

The term “nutrition informatics” does not actually appear in the KRDNs but KRDN 1.2 “Use current information technologies to locate and apply evidence-based guidelines and protocols” was designed to prepare DPD students with the background knowledge for CRDN 4.4 “Apply current nutrition informatics to develop, store, retrieve and disseminate information and data”, which students will do in their supervised practice.

Question: Can you clarify the expectations of DPD programs to have affiliation agreements as stated in Standard 8?

ACEND Response: Standard 8 of the draft 2017 Standards for DPD programs states “If students are placed by the program in facilities for experiential learning, the program must have policies and procedures to maintain written agreements with institutions, organizations and/or agencies providing program planned experiential learning activities.” This standard, which is new for DPD programs, focuses only on situations where a DPD program routinely places their students at a particular location for specified experiential learning. Such a routine placement would require an affiliation agreement between the program and that facility. For example, if a DPD program makes arrangements with Hospital A and requires that students spend a designated amount of time with registered dietitian nutritionists at Hospital A to learn how they perform the nutrition care process that DPD program would need to have an affiliation agreement with Hospital A. However, DPD programs would not be required under this proposed standard to have an affiliation agreement with a facility when the student is the one finding the facility to gain experience, unless the facility required such an agreement. For example, DPD programs would not be required to have an affiliation agreement (unless the facility required it) when the program required that students gain experiences but students were allowed to find their own sites in which to shadow or do volunteer work to gain that experience.

Question: Does the term ‘coordinated program’ mean the same as term ‘degree-based’ that is used in the future education model program descriptions?

ACEND Response: The term coordinated program is used in the 2012 and 2017 standards for an education program that provides the required dietetic coursework and supervised practice hours to meet ACEND’s knowledge and competency requirements in a single program. To help differentiate the programs under the current standards from those being proposed under the future education model, ACEND is using different terminology for the future education programs. The future education model programs often have been referred to as ‘degree-based’ because ACEND is developing standards for associate, bachelor and master degree programs. These programs will be competency-based and the standards will include a required set of competencies (knowledge, skill, judgement and attitude) that students will be expected to demonstrate before completing the program. Experiential learning will be expected in all three degree-level programs and this experiential learning is expected to be integrated with the didactic learning in the program.

Question: Can you share more about the differences expected between the roles of associate, bachelor and master prepared practitioners under the future education model?

ACEND Response: ACEND is still finalizing the specific competencies to be expected of graduates of the future education model associate, bachelor and master degree programs. The guiding vision that has been used in the development of these competencies follows:

Associate Degree Prepared Practitioners in Nutrition and Dietetics

- Support NDTRs and RDNs in community settings
- Focus on nutrition and health promotion
- Assist in monitoring plans of care
- Demonstrate food preparation and food label reading skills
- Provide support for the elderly, older adult, child and maternal health groups
- Assist with diabetes education programs and school-based education
- Help build relationships in the community
- Collect basic assessment data

Bachelor Degree Prepared Practitioners in Nutrition and Dietetics

- Prepared for emerging roles in community nutrition and health, wellness, business and industry and management
- Work under the supervision of the RDN when providing direct patient/client nutrition
- Work independently providing general nutrition education to healthy populations
- Work independently managing foodservice operations and working in business and industry
- Credential: Nutrition and Dietetics Technician, Registered (NDTR)

Master Degree Prepared Practitioner in Nutrition and Dietetics

- Prescribe medical nutrition therapy, nutrition-related drug therapies, nutrition supplements, and nutrition integrative and functional therapies
- Address population and global health issues
- Integrate evidence-based practice, research, and critical thinking into practice
- Provide medical nutrition therapy counseling resulting in behavior modification
- Conduct research
- Demonstrate leadership to guide practice
- Credential: Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)