
Background on the 2017 Standards Development

All accrediting bodies, including the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®), periodically review and revise their standards. The US Department of Education requires that this review/revision occur at least every five years. The 2017 Standards reflect the review and revision of the 2012 Standards. All programs accredited under the 2012 Standards will need to come into compliance with the 2017 Standards to maintain their accreditation. Please note that the 2017 standards are different from the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree standards that will be released for public comment later this year.

ACEND considered many factors in its revision of the 2012 standards. These factors included:

- The experience gained by ACEND in its accreditation reviews since the adoption of the 2012 Standards
- Feedback from ACEND's stakeholders regarding improvements needed in the standards, policies and procedures
- Results of the environmental scan of future nutrition and dietetics practice from the *Rationale Document*
- Results of the 2015 Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) Dietetics Practice Audit
- Requirements from the United States Department of Education
- Best practices in the field of specialized and professional accreditation.

The standards revision process was formally announced in October 2014 at the ACEND Forum at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition (FNCE®). Comments on the 2012 Standards were accepted via an online, anonymous survey that remained open from January 15 through May 15, 2015; email; and person-to-person communication. Stakeholder input was requested at the four Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) regional meetings in 2015.

Changes in the 2017 Standards

The 2017 Standards were designed to reduce redundancy in the 2012 Standards, make the standards clearer, and ensure that students were prepared for entry-level practice. Copies of the draft standards, crosswalk documents with information linking the 2012 and 2017 Standards and a webinar describing the standards revision process and changes made in the 2017 Standards can be found at: www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards. Specific changes in the 2017 Standards include the following:

- **Guidance Material:** The standards are published separately from the guidance material.
- **Number of Standards:** The total number of standards was reduced from 23 standards in 2012 to 10 standards in 2017 to combine related standards, reduce redundancy and request data only once. Examples include:
 - Budget and resource information all in Standard 1 (formerly Standards 1, 8, 18)
 - Program director expectations all in Standard 1 (formerly Standards 1, 15)
 - Program length all in Standard 1 (formerly Standards 1, 12)
 - Title IV compliance included in Standard 1
 - Mission, goals and objectives all in Standard 3 (formerly Standards 4, 5, 6)
 - Curriculum requirements all in Standard 5 (formerly Standards 9, 10, 11, Appendix A)
 - Faculty and preceptor expectations all in Standard 7 (formerly Standards 16, 17)
 - Required policies all in Standard 10 (formerly Standards 6, 21, 22, 23)

- **New Expectations:** Several new expectations were included in the 2017 Standards including:
 - Year round coverage of director responsibilities
 - Increased flexibility for use of simulation, case studies and role playing for supervised practice
 - Identification of additional benchmarks for program objectives
 - Required knowledge clarified; additional competency requirements include professionalism, mentoring, interprofessional practice, nutrition focused physical assessment and cultural competence
 - Facility agreements for Didactic Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics experiential learning placements

Provide Comments on the 2017 Standards

ACEND invites comments on the draft 2017 Standards for Didactic Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition and Dietetics Internship Programs, Coordinated Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition and Dietetics Technician Programs, Foreign Dietitian Education Programs and International Dietitian Education Programs. 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: When will the 2017 Draft Standards and the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree standards be released?

ACEND Response: The 2017 draft standards are being released in February 2016. Copies will be available on the ACEND Standards website: www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards. The future education model standards and competencies are still being developed. ACEND hopes to have a draft of the future education model standards ready for release in fall 2016.

Question: Will nutrition focused physical assessment be included in the 2017 Standards? If so, who will be required to teach it?

ACEND Response: Consistent with the 2012 Standards, the 2017 Standards will include expectations that graduates are prepared to perform the Nutrition Care Process (NCP). The important first step in the NCP is the assessment of the patient. Graduates will need to be prepared with the knowledge and practice skills to effectively perform the NCP. A new competency in the 2017 Standards for graduates of coordinated programs in nutrition and dietetics and of nutrition and dietetics internships is: "Conduct nutrition focused physical assessment."

Question: Are the number of competencies being increased in the 2017 Standards?

ACEND Response: A total of 42 competencies are included in the 2017 Standards, a slight increase from the 2012 Standards. The new competencies focus on areas such as interprofessional practice, culture competence, professionalism, mentoring and nutrition focused physical assessment.

Question: When will programs be expected to come into compliance with the 2017 Standards?

ACEND Response: The exact date for compliance with the 2017 Standards has not yet been determined. The draft 2017 Standards are currently available for public comment until May 13, 2016. Those comments will be reviewed and revisions made as needed before the standards are finalized. ACEND anticipates having the final 2017 Standards released later summer 2016 and at that time will release the date for compliance. ACEND expected that programs will be given at least six months or more to come into compliance with the new standards.

Question: Will the abbreviations DP, IP, DE and TE be used for the 2017 Standards?

ACEND Response: When the 2012 Standards were developed, they were designed to each have a two letter identifier: DP for the didactic programs in nutrition and dietetics, IP for nutrition and dietetics internship programs, DE for dietitian education programs more commonly called coordinated programs, and TE for the dietetic technician education program standards. These two letter identifiers will not be used with the 2017 Standards. Instead the 2017 Standards will use the following abbreviations: DPD for the didactic programs in nutrition and dietetics, DI for nutrition and dietetics internship programs, CP for coordinated programs in nutrition and dietetics, and DT for the nutrition and dietetics technician programs

Question: What was the outcome of the first-line review of the future education model competencies?

ACEND Response: In fall 2015 ACEND invited 196 educators and practitioners to participate in one of 10 focus groups conducted by consultant, Leanne Worsfold, to review the draft competencies and performance indicators that had been developed by a group of 15 subject matter experts for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs; 100 participated. Their input is being used to revise the draft competencies. Later this spring ACEND will do a validation study of these new competencies.

Question: What does the validation study entail and who will be included?

ACEND Response: The validation study will be conducted by ACEND's consultant, Leanne Worsfold. The study will use an online survey to confirm that the draft competencies and the performance indicators for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees are viewed as important to future nutrition and dietetic practice and are important to the public, to ensure they have access to safe, competent and ethical nutrition and dietetics services. The survey will be distributed to a random sample of nutrition and dietetics practitioners, educators and employers and to those who have requested to participate. Professionals who work with nutrition and dietetics practitioners also will be surveyed. In addition, anyone who requested to be included in the validation study will be sent the link for the survey. Data collected in the validation study will be used to help finalize the competencies and performance indicators that will be included in the future education model standards.

Question: What procedures should a currently accredited program follow if they are planning a program that incorporates graduate education?

ACEND Response: ACEND's policy and procedure manual, found on the ACEND webpage www.eatright.org/acend, includes a section on procedures to follow when reorganizing or changing an existing program. Program directors planning future changes to their programs should contact ACEND at acend@eatright.org and work with a program manager on the appropriate steps to follow.

Question: How many hours of integrated experience are envisioned for each academic degree level in the future education model programs?

ACEND Response: ACEND is still developing the competencies for each degree level, which will influence the amount of time needed for competency achievement. This information is expected to be available for public comment in fall 2016.

Question: What does it mean when ACEND says that the future education model programs will be competency based?

ACEND Response: The future education model standards for associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs will delineate the competence expected of program graduates and provide performance indicators that help define the level of expected performance. Knowledge domain statements will not be included in the future education model standards. Programs will decide what knowledge base is needed by students to help prepare them to be able to demonstrate the required competence.

Question: The recommended model indicates that knowledge and experiential learning will be integrated in master's level programs preparing dietitian nutritionists; does that mean my free-standing Dietetic Internship (DI) will need to close?

ACEND Response: Although ACEND is recommending that future master's degree programs will integrate the knowledge and experience components in one program, DI programs are not being discontinued at this time. In 2016, ACEND will release the 2017 Standards for Nutrition and Dietetics Internship Programs; existing DI programs will continue to be accredited under those ACEND standards. ACEND also plans to release standards for the future education model master's program in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Data about program organization and operations and outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes a decision about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. If a decision is made to discontinue accreditation of DI programs in the future, existing DI programs would need to determine at that time whether to collaborate with an academic program to provide the integrated experience component for the new bachelor's or master's degree program standards or to close the program. ACEND will be evaluating pilot programs for innovative ways of integrating the knowledge and experiential components and sharing those models with educators.

Question: Will Dietetic Internship (DI) programs and Didactic Programs in Dietetics (DPD) need to combine to do the proposed future master's degree program or will DPDs or DIs go away?

ACEND Response: ACEND believes there may be many ways that future education model bachelor's and master's degree programs might be organized. The key difference from the current DPD/DI model is that the future model bachelor's and master's degree programs will incorporate the experiential learning with the didactic preparation. Students will apply once for a program that includes both components. One of the goals of the pilot programs is to identify creative ways that university-based and operations-based programs collaborate to prepare students under the future model. The future education model bachelor's degree program and master's degree program are viewed as two separate programs. At this point, ACEND does not anticipate that the standards for these programs will specify that one is a requirement for the other. Individual master's degree programs, for example, will determine the prerequisites for students to enter their programs; master's degree programs could choose to require completion of the ACEND accredited bachelor's degree program as a prerequisite. At this time, ACEND will continue to accredit DPD and DI programs for preparing dietitian nutritionists while data are collected from the pilot programs. Once ACEND has reviewed the data, it will make decisions about which types of programs will be accredited going forward.

Question: Will students who already have a master's degree be allowed to complete the future education model master's degree program to gain the needed experiential components?

ACEND Response: ACEND anticipates that programs would be allowed to set admission criteria and to evaluate and give credit for prior learning of students admitted to the program. Graduates of the program would be expected to demonstrate the required competencies and may need additional coursework depending on the area of focus of their previous master's degree; this decision would be made by the program director.

Question: Will the DICAS system be used to match applicants to future education model programs or will graduates apply directly to the program?

ACEND Response: The DICAS system is a program application system that could be used for future education model programs but discussion on this topic has not yet occurred. ACEND will work with educators to further explore this topic.

ACEND ensures the quality of dietetics education to advance the practice of the profession.