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**ACEND® Standards Update**  
**January, 2016**  
**Criteria for Pilot Programs for Future**  
**Education Model**



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Best wishes from ACEND for a productive and rewarding year in 2016. ACEND has been gathering information from stakeholders about criteria that could be used to select programs to pilot the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs. Below is the input received to date. ACEND is still collecting input on what criteria could be used; please send your thoughts to [acend@eatright.org](mailto:acend@eatright.org).

• **FNCE® Round Table Discussion**

Thank you to the 200+ participants who provided input on the question, "What recommendations would you make to ACEND for criteria that should be considered for nutrition and dietetics programs who request to volunteer to serve as pilot programs for the new future model programs?" The following input was received:

- Establish criteria based on the pass rate
  - No programs with level four or five pass rates.
  - Five-year first-time pass rate should be at least 85%-90%; one-year pass rate should be 90% or above
- Do not include candidacy programs
- Do not include programs on probation
- Include varied types of programs and varied locations
  - Different regions of country
  - Rural and metro-major medical affiliations
  - Medical-center and other non-university based organizations
  - Variety of DPD, DI, consortiums and specializations
  - Various sizes of programs
  - Varied types of coursework and focus areas (food service, clinical, community)
  - Diversity in approaches/alternative program models
  - Programs that already provide graduate level education and those who are proposing to go from undergraduate to graduate model
- Institution should have an existing accredited nutrition and dietetics program
- Must have financial support, administrative support, capacity and resources (faculty and ability to train students at MS level) and a concrete plan showing they will be able to make the changes. Proposal with support from administrators should be provided to ACEND.
- Pilot programs for graduate degree should provide a comprehensive list of pre-requisite courses so undergraduate programs can build the pre-requisites into their curriculum and prepare students to apply to the graduate degree programs.
- Pilot should be open to anyone who is willing to pilot the new standards.

• **ACEND Virtual Town Hall**

Thank you to the 40+ individuals who participated and provided input on criteria for pilot programs that included:

- Representation of all different types of institutions that will be delivering programs such as small, large, private and public institutions
- Adequate sample size for evaluation
- Allow sufficient time for pilot (at least four years) for programs to transition to new program.

- **For additional information**

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

## **Questions That Have Come to ACEND**

**Question: Our dietetics program would like to be a pilot program for the future education model master's degree standards, what do we need to do to be put on the list?**

**ACEND Response:** The standards for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs are expected to be available in 2017 for adoption by pilot programs. Program criteria, the application process, and documentation needed to become a pilot program are still being finalized by ACEND and are expected to be available in late fall 2016. Once the information is released, programs will be able to apply to become a pilot program.

**Question: In ACEND's December Standards Update, the point was made that all currently accredited programs will need to come into compliance with the 2017 Standards; what exactly does that mean?**

**ACEND Response:** The 2017 Standards will detail the expectation of programs similar to expectations in the 2012 Standards. As there have been each time the Standards have been reviewed, there likely will be some new expectations for programs in the 2017 Standards including new knowledge and competencies that program graduates will be expected to achieve. When ACEND releases the final version of the 2017 Standards in 2016, a date will be given by which all programs will be expected to come into compliance with the new standards. This means that if new knowledge and competencies are included in the 2017 Standards that were not in the 2012 Standards, programs will be expected to adjust their classroom and supervised practice experiences to include the new knowledge and competency requirements by the implementation date.

**Question: What is the potential intersection of the proposed degree level requirements with existing and future state licensure laws and regulations? Will institutions hire master's degrees even though they may not be required to do that according to regulations or licensure laws? How is ACEND working with the academy units and state licensure groups?**

**ACEND Response:** Ultimately, employers in the marketplace will determine hiring practices. In the surveying ACEND did last fall, approximately one third of employers indicated they currently require and plan to require in the future a master's degree for entry level positions in their organizations; another third indicated they may require a master's degree in the future. ACEND has focused on identifying skills needed for future practice in nutrition and dietetics and designing education programs to meet these needs. ACEND routinely provides updates and information to all Academy units, boards, committees, practice groups and state affiliates. This information is posted on ACEND's website ([www.eatright.org/acend](http://www.eatright.org/acend)) for all stakeholders to access. An ACEND board member serves as an ex-officio member of the Academy's Consumer Protection and Licensure Subcommittee (CPLS), shares information about ACEND's work with the committee and brings back questions and concerns from the CPLS to ACEND.

**Question: To what depth and level will the new standards and competencies address infant feeding requirements?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND is still working on the competencies for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs. The importance of students being able to provide nutrition care to a variety of clients including infants is indicated in the current 2012 Standards that stipulate: "Learning activities must prepare students/interns to implement the nutrition care process with various populations and diverse cultures, including infants, children, adolescents, adults, pregnant/lactating females and the elderly."

**Question: Will there be significant changes in the competencies for the future education model programs?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND is still working on the competencies for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs. The competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) are being developed to align with input from educators, employers and practitioners. Stakeholders indicated the need for a generalist dietitian nutritionist who has a more complex and deeper breadth of knowledge, stronger critical thinking ability and additional clinical skills to address an expanding scope of practice. Areas of the curriculum such as research, management and leadership, patient assessment, prescriptive authority, interprofessional work, counseling, critical thinking and behavior change likely will be strengthened in the future education model master's degree programs as compared to current bachelor's degree programs. The competencies expected of future master's degree prepared graduates will be at a higher level of practice than those currently expected of bachelor's prepared graduates. The competencies for the future bachelor's degree programs are expected to prepare graduates for emerging roles in community nutrition and health, wellness, business and industry and management. The bachelor's degree graduates are expected to work under the supervision of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) when providing direct patient/client nutrition and work independently providing general nutrition education to healthy populations, managing foodservice operations and working with foodservice, business and industry.

**Question: Will there be significant changes in the competencies for the 2017 Standards?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND is still finalizing the draft 2017 Standards and expects to have them available for stakeholder comment in February 2016. There likely will be some changes in the competencies to better prepare students for practice in areas such as interprofessional team work, physical assessment, critical thinking, cultural competence and nutrition informatics.

**Question: Will there be changes in the required number of supervised practice hours in the future education model program standards? Has ACEND considered using competence assessment rather than supervised practice hours?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND is discussing the expectations for the experiential learning that will be required of programs in the future education model, including the inclusion of alternate practice options such as simulation, role playing and case studies. These requirements will be detailed in the draft future education model standards that are expected to be released for comment in fall 2016. Programs currently have the option of using assessment of prior learning and experiences to grant credit or practice hours to meet the program requirements; this practice likely will continue under the future education model standards.

**Question: Finding hospital sites can be difficult, can public health focused programs provide supervised practice placements in public health settings?**

**ACEND Response:** The 2012 Accreditation Standards do not specify practice locations that need to be used for supervised practice; that decision is left to individual programs. Non hospital settings can and are used by many programs for supervised practice placements in which students demonstrate the required competencies.

**Question: Why is the term “worker” being used for the associate’s degree prepared practitioner rather than assistant or some other term?**

**ACEND Response:** Information in the environmental scan and data collected through interviews and focus groups suggested that in addition to the RDN and NDTR there will be a growing need in community settings for a support practitioner who focuses on nutrition and health promotion; assists in monitoring plans of care; works with RDNs and other health professionals; demonstrates food preparation skills; provides support for the elderly, older adult, child and maternal health groups; assists with diabetes education programs and school-based education; helps build relationships in the community and collects basic assessment data (blood hemoglobin levels, blood pressure, blood glucose levels, weight). This position originally was termed a Community Nutrition and Health Assistant but was changed to a Nutrition Health Worker to be more consistent with the titles used for many community-based practitioners such as community support workers, community health workers and social workers.

**Question: What is being done to make the education model more seamless between the DPD and DI?**

**ACEND Response:** The future education model standards will move away from the current two-step model of doing didactic preparation in one program and supervised practice in another. The future education model associate’s, bachelor’s and master’s degree programs will combine both the didactic and experiential learning in one program.

**Question: I participated in the December virtual town hall and wondered why my chat questions and hand raising were not acknowledged?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND experienced some technical difficulties with the WebEx connection for the December virtual town hall. If you had questions but your chat or raised hand did not come through to the host so they could be acknowledged on the call, please send your question to [ACEND@eatright.org](mailto:ACEND@eatright.org). ACEND will answer your question and include your question in a future edition of the Standards Update newsletter.