

Options for Accredited Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics

ACEND would like to thank everyone for the many comments and questions it received during the recent Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) meetings and during monthly town hall meetings. A theme in some of the questions is the future of existing accredited programs given ACEND's future education model and the Commission on Dietetic Registration's (CDR) change (effective January 1, 2024) in eligibility requirements for the dietitian registration examination.

Programs have several options that are described below. ACEND staff are available to talk one-on-one with directors who would like to discuss options for their program.

Option 1. Make no changes to current program.

All currently ACEND-accredited program types [Coordinated Programs (CP), Didactic Programs in Dietetics (DPD), Dietetic Internship Programs (DI) and Dietetic Technician Programs (DT)] will continue to be accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards*. The *2017 Accreditation Standards* indicate that DT programs must award at least an associate degree, CP and DPD programs must award at least a bachelor degree and DI programs are post-bachelor degree programs and do not need to offer a degree. CP, DPD, DI, or DT programs can choose to make no change in degree level of their current programs and continue to be accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards*, which will be revised in 2022 with no change in degree level expected. The CDR change in dietitian registration eligibility requirements applies to students not programs (see [Student Options](#) on CDR's website). CP, DPD, and DI programs are not required to offer a master degree.

Option 2. Request a Substantive Program Change

CP, DPD, and DI programs accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards* that do not currently offer a graduate degree but that are planning to do so in the future, are planning to require a graduate degree for future program admission or are planning to require concurrent completion of a graduate degree for verification of program completion in the future can submit a substantive change request under the 2017 Standards to ACEND. Information about the substantive change process and the forms needed for submitting the change request are available on the [ACEND Portal](#). Programs should contact their ACEND manager for assistance and to answer any questions about the process.

Option 3. Apply to be a Demonstration Program for the Future Education Model

ACEND is developing *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* and will be issuing a call for demonstration programs to implement the Standards. Demonstration programs will be accredited under the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* and will assist ACEND in collecting data about the program and the graduate outcomes. Programs interested in becoming demonstration programs can contact ACEND for more information (ACEND@eatright.org or 312-899-4872).

For Additional Information

- Review back issues of the monthly ACEND Standards Updates that are posted on the ACEND website www.eatrightpro.org/acend.
- Participate in a monthly ACEND virtual town hall on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 2:00 pm CT; information on how to connect to the town hall is available at www.eatrightpro.org/FutureModel.
- Contact ACEND (acend@eatright.org; 312-899-4872).

Questions That Have Come to ACEND

This section includes questions that have been raised on town hall meetings, on phone calls or through emails and ACEND's response to each.

2017 Accreditation Standards Questions

Question: *The 2017 Standards require supervised practice hours for CP, DI, and DT programs, will the number of hours be changing?*

ACEND Response: ACEND has made no decision to change the requirement for a minimum number of required hours of supervised practice for programs accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards* that offer supervised practice (CP, DI, DT, FDE, IDE). Required Element 1.6 of the *2017 Accreditation Standards* specifies the minimum hours of supervised practice experience. All programs accredited under the 2017 Standards will need to provide the minimum specified number of supervised practice hours.

Future Education Model Questions

Question: *Can the Future Education Model master degree program be in any area?*

ACEND Response: The draft *Future Education Model Standards for Master Degree Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics* do not specify the title of the degree (MS, MA, MBA, MPH etc.) or the focus area of the degree (nutrition, dietetics, public health, etc.). Programs are allowed to determine the title and focus of the master degree program. What the draft *Future Education Model Standards* do specify are the required minimum competencies that must be achieved by graduates of the program. ACEND expects that the master degree programs are structured to include the knowledge and experiential learning needed to develop the required competencies regardless of the title or focus area.

Question: *Will graduates of the Future Education Model Bachelor Degree Programs be eligible to take credentialing exams in addition to the Nutrition and Dietetics Technician, Registered exam?*

ACEND Response: Future Education Model Bachelor degree programs could be designed to assure that students meet the eligibility requirements for other credentialing exams such as the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), Certified Nutrition and Wellness Educator (CNWE), Foodservice Management Professional (FMP) or Certification in Hospitality, Nutrition and Food Science (CFCS-HNFS).

Question: *Can hours of experiential learning and competency demonstration from one degree level in the Future Education Model be used to meet experiential learning requirements and competencies in a program at a higher degree level?*

ACEND Response: Future Education Model degree programs will establish their own policies and procedures regarding how program graduates are expected to demonstrate these competencies. These policies may include reviewing and recognizing prior experiential learning and competency.

Question: *Can you clarify the expectations for supervised experiential learning in the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards? Is supervised learning required? Is there a minimum number of hours?*

ACEND Response: The competencies included in the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* are the basis on which the program's curriculum should be built. Demonstration of competence through didactic learning supported with experiential learning must be integrated into the curriculum throughout the program. Supervised experiential learning is required in all future education model programs but programs have flexibility in determining the numbers of hours of supervised experiential learning needed for students to demonstrate the competencies. Data will be collected from demonstration programs on how curricula are structured to develop student competence. ACEND will review these data and input from demonstration programs to determine whether changes in this standard are needed.

Question: Do other education program accreditors for health-care related professions specify the minimum number of hours of clinical experience?

ACEND Response: Many of the health-care program accreditors (i.e. audiology, medicine, nursing, physician assistant) do not specify a minimum number of hours of clinical experience in their program accreditation standards, rather outcome competencies are identified and programs determine the hours of clinical experience needed for students to demonstrate these competencies. ACEND is modeling this approach in the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards*.

Question: The Future Education Model Standards indicate that each competency must be assessed annually. This differs from the requirements in the 2017 Standards that indicate only some of the competencies need to be addressed each year; why the difference?

ACEND Response: Competency assessment is a critical component of the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* that base the program's curriculum on demonstration of the competencies. Because of this movement towards a stronger competency-based approach, ACEND will have programs collect data on all competencies annually. Review of these data will be part of the demonstration program outcome data assessment that ACEND will conduct each year. Demonstration programs will provide input to ACEND on whether changes in this standard are needed.

Demonstration Program Questions

Question: When will programs be able to apply to become a demonstration program for the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards?

ACEND Response: ACEND is reviewing public comments received about the revised draft of the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards*. Changes will be made, if needed, based on the comments received. When finalized, the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* will be released and a call for demonstration program applications will be issued. All current program directors will receive the application process information and it will be posted on the ACEND website (www.eatrightpro.org/acend). ACEND anticipates finalizing the standards and issuing the demonstration program application materials within the next few months.

Question: Can an institution that is not currently sponsoring an ACEND-accredited program apply to sponsor a demonstration program?

ACEND Response: Institutions do not need to have an ACEND-accredited program to apply to sponsor a demonstration program.

Question: When will demonstration programs know if they are accepted and when can they begin admitting students?

ACEND Response: The tentative timeline is that ACEND plans to notify the first cohort of programs by December 1, 2017 of their acceptance. These approved demonstration programs can begin admitting students in fall, 2018 and must admit their first class by fall, 2020. ACEND anticipates having multiple cohorts of demonstration programs.

Question: What are the criteria for becoming a demonstration program and how many will ACEND select?

ACEND Response: ACEND is still finalizing the criteria for demonstration programs. A draft of the proposed criteria and application expectations were released for comment in the April Standards Update newsletter (see www.eatrightpro.org/FutureModel). The ACEND Board plans to select up to 60 programs total to be in the first cohort of demonstration programs and is seeking a representative sample of programs in terms of geographic location, program size, and proposed program structure for the demonstration programs. Programs desiring to be a demonstration program must complete the demonstration program application, in which it will describe how the program will be in compliance with the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards*, must be willing to attend required ACEND training and work with ACEND to gather program and graduate outcomes data. ACEND will release the final criteria and the application process when it releases the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards*.

Question: What data will be collected from demonstration programs and for how long will programs need to continue to collect data?

ACEND Response: ACEND is planning to collect various pieces of data about programs and graduate outcomes. Programs who apply and are accepted as demonstration programs will be expected to commit to being involved in the data collection process. Program data to be collected will include, but are not limited to:

- program organization
- admission requirements
- cost
- program length
- time allocated for program director responsibilities
- new learning, faculty, support or financial resources needed to offer program
- hours of supervised experiential learning in professional work settings and alternate experiences
- data including: program evaluation data, number and demographic information for enrolled students, annual student competency assessment data, records of amount of experiential learning time required by students to meet competencies
- challenges with implementing the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards*

Graduate outcomes data to be collected include, but are not limited to:

- number and percent of graduates who complete the program within 150% of program length
- number and percent of graduates who take the CDR credentialing exam (NDTR/RDN) within 12 months of program completion
- number and percent of graduates who pass the CDR credentialing exam on the first attempt and within one-year
- number and percent of graduates who are employed within six months and one year of graduation

Data to be obtained from graduates who complete the program include, but are not limited to:

- evaluation of the program
- description of current position and geographic location
- academic degree and credentialing required for position
- perception of preparedness for position

Employers will be asked to share their satisfaction with graduate preparedness for the position and graduate job performance. ACEND expects that programs will assist ACEND in collecting data for multiple classes of graduates until a decision about implementation of the *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards* is made for all programs.