

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED!

ACEND has extended the public comment period until DECEMBER 30, 2016 for comments on the draft proposed *Future Education Model Accreditation Standards for Associate, Bachelor and Master Degree Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics* on the online survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FEMComments>). The survey allows respondents to select sections they would like to respond to and skip questions, if desired. Respondents can also stop and re-enter the questionnaire from the same computer as many times as needed until the responses are submitted.

Clarifying Recent Concerns

At the FNCE 2016 conference, several educators asked for clarification on conflicting information they have heard. The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) would like to address these concerns.

FACT: ACEND is not closing Coordinated Programs (CP), Didactic Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics (DPD), Nutrition and Dietetics Internship Programs (DI) or Nutrition and Dietetics Technician programs (DT): ACEND recently released the *2017 Accreditation Standards*. All currently accredited CP, DPD, DI and DT programs will be accredited under those standards effective June 1, 2017. New programs seeking candidacy for accreditation will be accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards*. As required by the US Department of Education, ACEND must review/revise its standards at least every five years. ACEND will review/revise the *2017 Accreditation Standards* and release the *2022 Accreditation Standards*: CP, DPD, DI and DT programs will continue to be accredited under the *2022 Accreditation Standards*. This review/revision process will occur again in 2027. No decision has been made to discontinue accreditation of CP, DPD, DI or DT programs.

FACT: CP, DPD, DI and DT program directors do not need a doctoral degree: The academic degree requirement for CP, DPD, DI and DT program directors in the *2017 Accreditation Standards* remains the same as the requirement in the *2012 Accreditation Standards*, specifically, the program director must have a minimum of a master's degree. ACEND will review/revise the *2017 Accreditation Standards* and release the *2022 Accreditation Standards*: No discussion has occurred or any decision made to require the doctoral degree for CP, DPD, DI or DT program directors now or in the future.

FACT: CP, DPD, and DI programs are not required by ACEND or CDR to offer a graduate degree by 2024. The *2017 Accreditation Standards*, which will go into effect for CP, DPD and DI programs on June 1, 2017, specify that CP and DPD programs must offer a minimum of a bachelor degree and DI programs must be post baccalaureate programs. The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) requires that individuals who take the registration exam to become a registered dietitian nutritionist after January 1, 2024 will need a master degree but does not specify that the graduate degree needs to be from an ACEND-accredited program. The CDR website (www.cdrnet.org) contains information for students describing the many ways this degree requirement can be met.

FACT: No decision has been made to implement the draft *Future Education Model Standards*. The draft *Future Education Model Standards* are being explored as a possible model for future education in nutrition and dietetics. Before making any decisions on these proposed standards, ACEND will gather data from demonstration programs on program operations and graduate outcomes (which likely will take at least 10 years).

FACT: The total number of competencies required in the draft *Future Education Model Standards* are 20 (associate degree), 38 (bachelor degree), and 41 (master degree): The total number of required competencies in the draft future education model standards are similar to the number of required competencies in the *2017 Accreditation Standards*, which are 31 (Nutrition and Dietetics Technician programs) and 41 (Dietitian Nutritionist programs). What may be creating confusion for program directors is that the *Future Education Model Standards* includes additional information, termed performance indicators, to help directors know types of behaviors that indicate that the competencies are being developed. Multiple performance indicators are included for each competency. The draft *Future Education Model Standards* would require program directors to assess the competencies only in their assessment plan, not the performance indicators. Program directors will show the performance indicators in their curriculum map, just as they currently show the multiple learning activities that occur in various courses to meet the current knowledge and competency requirements.

For Additional Information

- Review back issues of the monthly ACEND Standards Updates that are posted on the ACEND Standards Committee Website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.
- 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.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.
- Review FAQ for the *Future Education Model Standards* posted on the ACEND Standards Committee website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards
- 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, at FNCE, on phone calls or through emails and ACEND's response to each.

Question: *Under the Future Education Model Standards for Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics can the hours that are in the associate degree for supervised practice count towards the bachelor degree?*

ACEND Response: ACEND views the associate and bachelor degree programs as two separate programs, each with its own requirements. A future education model associate degree program would need to provide 300 hours of supervised practice for students and a bachelor degree program would need to provide 450 hours. If both programs were at the same institution, that institution would be providing a total of 750 hours of supervised practice experiences for students in the two programs. A student completing both the future education model associate and bachelor degree programs likely would have completed a total of 750 hours of supervised practice. However, the bachelor degree program director could make a determination, using the program's policies/procedures for recognition of prior learning, about whether any of the coursework or supervised practice hours from the associate degree would meet the expectations for prior learning for the bachelor degree program.

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: *Is a verification statement of completion of a Didactic Program in Nutrition and Dietetics (DPD) or the future education model bachelor degree program required to enter the future education model master degree program?*

ACEND Response: Each of the future education model degree programs is intended to stand alone. ACEND did not set prerequisite requirements for any of the degree programs. Rather, individual programs would set their own admission requirements. A future education model master degree program could for example, choose to require verification of completion of a DPD or the future education model bachelor degree program as a prerequisite, could require specific courses or supervised experiences as prerequisites or could choose not to require any prerequisites.

Question: *Can required prerequisite courses be utilized to achieve competencies in the future education model programs?*

ACEND Response: The draft *Future Education Model Standards for Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics* do allow programs to establish required prerequisite courses or competencies needed to be admitted to the program. The draft *Future Education Model Standards* indicate that if a program grants credit, supervised learning experience hours or direct assessment for student's prior learning, it must define procedures for evaluating equivalence of prior education or experience.

Question: If future education model programs have different prerequisite requirements, will the quality of the graduates vary?

ACEND Response: The draft *Future Education Model Standards for Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics* specify the competencies that will be expected of each graduate and the performance indicators that help demonstrate each competency. All graduates of future education model programs will be expected to have achieved the same competencies. Program length may vary depending on the program's designed curriculum and the amount of time it takes to assure graduates meet all of the required competencies.

Question: Do the hours in a 'professional work setting' need to be supervised by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) or a Nutrition and Dietetics Technician, Registered (NDTR)?

ACEND Response: The *2017 Accreditation Standards* and the draft *Future Education Model Standards for Bachelor and Master Degree Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics* do not specify the credentials needed for preceptors. Both sets of Standards state that preceptors must have the education and experience needed to provide appropriate guidance for the supervised practice or experiential learning and preceptors must be licensed, as appropriate to meet state and federal regulations, or credentialed, as needed, for the area in which they are supervising students. The program director makes the decision as to the appropriateness of specific individuals to serve as preceptors.

Question: Is the Individualized Supervised Practice Pathway (ISPP) being eliminated?

ACEND Response: The ISPP was created as a temporary option for providing additional supervised practice opportunities for DPD graduates. ACEND reviews data from ISPPs each year and determines whether to continue the pathway. The pathway has increased the number of supervised practice options and graduates of the pathway are performing well on the credentialing exam to become a registered dietitian nutritionist, so ACEND is continuing the pathway at this time.

Question: The recommended future education model indicates that knowledge and experiential learning will be integrated in master level programs preparing dietitian nutritionists; does that mean free-standing Dietetic Internships (DI) will need to close or merge with a university program?

ACEND Response: Although ACEND is recommending that future master degree programs will integrate the knowledge and experience components in one program, DI programs are not being discontinued at this time and there has been no decision that would require DI programs to merge with other programs. DI programs will continue to be accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards* and beyond. ACEND believes there may be many ways that future education model bachelor and master degree programs might be organized. The key difference from the current DPD/DI model is that the future model bachelor and master 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 demonstration programs, that trial the future education model standards, is to identify creative ways that university-based and operations-based programs collaborate to prepare students under the future education model. ACEND will test the *Future Education Model Standards* with demonstration programs who voluntarily request accreditation under those standards. Outcomes data will be collected on the demonstration programs and their graduates. ACEND will be reviewing demonstration programs for innovative ways of integrating the knowledge and experiential components and sharing those models. Data collected will be analyzed before ACEND makes decisions about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs.

Question: If a free-standing DI program enters into a partnership with a university, can you explain how governance of such a program would work? Would an individual who directs the experiential portion of the program need to have a doctoral degree, if they are providing experiences for a master level program?

ACEND Response: ACEND believes there are many different ways that future education master degree programs might be organized and will use the demonstration programs to help identify some of these governance structures. Key to all of the governance structures is that it must appear to students as one program that they apply to, and if are accepted, know that they will be able to get the academic and experiential learning components needed to be eligible to take the credentialing exam to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. As currently proposed in the draft *Future Education Model Standards for Master Degree Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics*, if the individual who directs the experiential component of the program is identified as the program director, that individual would be expected to have a doctoral degree or be in process of earning one within the next five years. If the individual who directs the experiential component is not the program director, but rather holds a leadership role that reports to the program director, that individual would need to meet the faculty requirements for a master degree program, which state faculty must hold a doctoral degree and have sufficient education in a field related to the subject in which they teach or must meet the institution's policy for education and/or equivalent experience. This would allow for individuals with a master degree to direct the experiential portion, if they met the institution's policy for equivalent experience.

Question: Has the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) set a timeframe for when the bachelor's degree will be required to take the credentialing exam to become a NDTR?

ACEND Response: The CDR sets the criteria for eligibility to take the credentialing exam to become a NDTR. At this time, those requirements include the minimum of an associate's degree. CDR has not made any changes to the eligibility requirements to take the credentialing exam to become a NDTR. Complete information about eligibility requirements can be found on CDR's website www.cdrnet.org

Question: What impact will the recommended future education model have on job availability and salaries of nutrition and dietetics practitioners?

ACEND Response: ACEND's recommendations for future education of nutrition and dietetics practitioners were based on data collected by ACEND that revealed need for more complex knowledge and skills. The ACEND recommendations were not based on estimations of future salaries, but rather the needs of the marketplace to better, and more safely, serve the public. Practitioner salaries, in general, are influenced by numerous factors, such as, the value they bring to the healthcare or business system, their importance to society, payment rates for services they provide and their expertise and experience.

Question: What impact will the proposed future education model have on student diversity in nutrition and dietetics programs?

ACEND Response: Ethnic diversity in student enrollment in ACEND accredited programs has increased over the past 10 years. Most notably, the number of Hispanic students has nearly doubled. ACEND talked with other health profession accreditors (Physical Therapy, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy) who have moved their education requirements to a graduate level and learned that this change did not decrease student diversity in those professions. In pharmacy, for example, under-represented minority students (Black, Hispanic, Native American) were 10.6% of the student population in 1988, prior to implementing their practice doctorate degree requirement, and 11.4% in 2012 after implementation. Diversity of students currently enrolled in dietetic internships combined with a graduate degree (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 9%) and in coordinated programs at the graduate level (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 11%) is similar to the diversity of students in dietetic internship programs that do not offer a graduate degree (males = 8%; under-represented minorities = 9%). The future education model includes preparation for careers in nutrition and dietetics at associate, bachelor and master degree levels allowing students many options for entry into future nutrition and dietetics careers and facilitating professional growth and development through subsequent degree levels. ACEND Standards encourage programs to foster diversity in their student selection process. ACEND currently monitors and will continue to monitor student diversity in all accredited programs.

Question: What impact will the recommended future education model have on the resources needed by institutions providing education for future nutrition and dietetics students?

ACEND Response: ACEND will gather information from the demonstration programs on the resources needed, steps involved in transitioning to the future education model standards and the innovative ways resources were used to develop student competencies.

Question: Will associate degree NDTR and bachelor degree DPD programs still exist in 2024 and will ACEND still be accrediting them?

ACEND Response: ACEND has not made any decisions to discontinue any of the current ACEND-accredited programs (CP, DPD, DI, DT, FDE, IDE). These programs will continue to be accredited under the *2017 Accreditation Standards*. ACEND has not finalized the timeline for the demonstration program trialing of the *Future Education Model Standards* and the time period for data collection from these programs and their graduates. At this time, ACEND anticipates that the *2017 Accreditation Standards* for CP, DPD, DI, DT, FDE, IDE programs will be revised and released as the *2022 Accreditation Standards* for CP, DPD, DI, DT, FDE, IDE programs for implementation in 2022 (as required every 5 years by the US Department of Education) and that all current existing programs will continue to be accredited under these standards.

Question: Could you create one Frequently Asked Question document that includes all of the questions from the monthly ACEND Standards Update newsletter?

ACEND Response: ACEND has created a comprehensive FAQ for the *Future Education Model Standards* based on questions included in all of the previous newsletters and have posted it on the ACEND Standards Committee website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards. ACEND will continue to add the monthly questions to this comprehensive FAQ.