

ACEND Accreditation Standards

For Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs (DPD)

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**Accreditation Council
for Education in
Nutrition and Dietetics**

the accrediting agency for the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics



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Standard 1: Program Characteristics and Resources

All programs applying for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) must meet requirements including quality-assurance or oversight by other agencies, organizational structure, financial stability, sufficient resources, the awarding of degrees and/or verification statements, program length and program management.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 1.1** The program must be housed in a college or university or offered in a consortium with a college or university. The college or university must be located in the U.S. or its territories and accredited in good standing by a U.S. institutional accrediting body for higher education recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE).
 - a. A consortium is defined as two or more independent institutions working together under a formal written agreement to sponsor a single program. The consortium must consider itself a single education program.
- 1.2** The program must be integrated within the administrative structure of the sponsoring organization, show this structure, such as in an organizational chart, and indicate where the program will be housed. In a consortium, an organizational chart must clearly show the relationship of each member of the consortium to the program and where the program will be housed.
- 1.3** The program must demonstrate that it has the administrative, clerical or other staff, technical and financial support and the learning resources, physical facilities and support services needed to accomplish its mission and goals. If any portion of the program is offered through distance education, the program must demonstrate that technology and resources are adequate to support a distance-learning environment. Programs offering an Individualized Supervised Practice Pathway (ISPP) must document the financial support and learning resources provided to the ISPP.
 - a. The program must demonstrate that administrative support and resources are adequate to support continued development and training for program faculty and staff.
 - b. The program must provide a description of the budgeting process for the program that demonstrates financial resources are sufficient to produce the desired short- and long-term program goals and student outcomes.
 1. Programs offered in a consortium must clearly define financial and other resource contributions of each member to the total program.
 - c. The program must establish and report its maximum enrollment to ensure quality, viability and appropriate use of resources.
- 1.4** The program must award at least a baccalaureate degree and verification statement upon completing program requirements to individuals who enter the program with an associate degree or less.
 - a. If the program admits individuals with a baccalaureate degree or higher, the program must award at least a verification statement to individuals who complete program requirements.

- b. If the program awards a graduate degree, the nutrition and dietetics-specific knowledge must be achieved through prerequisite or graduate courses required for completion of the graduate degree.

1.5 The program must have one designated program director who has primary responsibility for the program and communication with ACEND. The program director must have the authority, responsibility and sufficient time allocated to manage the program, and provide effective leadership for the program, the program faculty, and the students. The program director may have other responsibilities that do not compromise the ability to manage the program. Responsibilities and time allocation for program management are reflected in a formal position description for the program director and approved by an administrator.

- a. For programs offered in a consortium:
 - 1. One individual must serve as the consortium program director and have primary responsibility for the program and communications with ACEND.
 - 2. Each member organization in the consortium must designate a coordinator (who may be the program director) for the program within that organization who is employed by the organization.
- b. Institutional policies related to faculty roles and workload are applied to the program in a manner that recognizes and supports the academic and practice aspects of the nutrition and dietetics program, including allocating time and/or reducing teaching load for administrative functions provided by the director.
- c. The program director must:
 - 1. Have earned at least a master's degree.
 - 2. Be credentialed as a registered dietitian nutritionist by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.
 - 3. Have a minimum of three years professional experience post credentialing.
 - 4. Be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution as defined by the institution, or a full-time employee of another organization that has been contracted by the sponsoring institution.
 - 5. Not direct another ACEND-accredited nutrition and dietetics education program.
- d. The program director responsibilities must include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Provision or delegation of responsibilities to assure year-round coverage of director responsibilities in the absence of the director or in cases where the director's full-time appointment does not cover all 12 months. In programs where the program director assigns some responsibilities to other individuals, the director must ensure that all program director responsibilities are accomplished throughout the year.
 - 2. Development of policies and procedures for effectively managing all components of the program and to ensure fair and considerate treatment of prospective and enrolled students (such as program admission, retention and completion policies).
 - 3. Student recruitment, advisement, evaluation and counseling.
 - 4. Maintenance of program accreditation, including:
 - a. Timely submission of fees, reports and requests for major program changes;
 - b. Maintenance of the program's student records, including student advising plans and verification statements;
 - c. Maintenance of complaints about the program received from students or others, including disposition of the complaint;
 - d. On-going review of program's curriculum to meet the accreditation standards;
 - e. Communication and coordination with program faculty, preceptors and others involved with the program and its students;
 - f. Facilitation of processes for continuous program evaluation, and

- g. Timely submission of required documentation supporting the graduate's eligibility for a Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) credentialing exam.
- 1.6 The program must establish its length and provide the rationale for the program length based on knowledge and learning activities that students must accomplish and mandates from the program's administration and state legislation.

Standard 2: Program Mission, Goals, Objectives and Program Evaluation and Improvement

The program must have a clearly formulated and publicly stated mission with supporting goals and objectives by which it intends to prepare students for careers in nutrition and dietetics. The program must have a program evaluation plan to continuously evaluate the achievement of its mission, goals and objectives, use the plan to collect data, improve the program based on findings and update the plan accordingly.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 2.1** A program evaluation plan must be documented, reviewed annually, updated as needed with changes noted and must include the following components:
- a. The program mission. The program mission must be specific to the program, distinguishes it from other programs in the sponsoring organization, and be compatible with the mission statement or philosophy of the sponsoring organization.
 - b. The program goals. The program must have at least two goals focused on program outcomes for graduates that are consistent with the program's mission.
 - c. The program objectives. The Program objectives must measure the full intent of the goals and are used to evaluate achievement of each program goal.
 1. The program must align the following ACEND-required objectives, with their program goals and demonstrate that the program is operating in the interest of students and the public. The program must set reasonable target measures when the targets are not specified. Required objectives must be evaluated annually using an average of data from the previous three years:
 - a. Program Completion: "At least 80% of students complete program requirements within ____ (150% of planned program length)".
 - b. Graduate Application and Acceptance into Supervised Practice:
 1. "At least ____ percent of program graduates apply for admission to a supervised practice program prior to or within 12 months of graduation".
 2. "Of program graduates who apply to a supervised practice program, at least ____ percent are admitted within 12 months of graduation".
 - c. Graduate Performance on Registration Exam: "The program's one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%".
 - d. Satisfaction with Graduate Performance: The program must develop an objective for evaluation of graduate's performance in supervised practice, graduate program or employment within 12 months of graduation.
 - d. Qualitative and/or quantitative data needed to determine whether goals and objectives have been achieved.
 - e. Groups from which data will be obtained; both internal and external stakeholders must be represented (such as graduates, administrators, faculty, preceptors, employers, practitioners, nutrition and dietetics education program directors, faculty from other disciplines and advisory committees).
 - f. Evaluation methods that will be used to collect the data.

- g. Individuals responsible for ensuring that data are collected.
- h. Timeline for collecting the necessary data.

2.2 The program must evaluate the achievement of its goals and objectives based on its program evaluation plan and provide evidence that:

- a. Program outcomes data are collected according to the program evaluation plan, summarized and analyzed by comparing actual achievements with objectives. ISPP data, if applicable, are collected, summarized and analyzed separately.
- b. Data analysis is used to evaluate the extent to which goals and objectives are being achieved.
- c. The targets set for ACEND-required objectives are met.
- d. Program changes have been made to improve outcomes for unmet objective(s).
- e. Programmatic planning and outcomes evaluation are integrated with institutional planning and assessment, as appropriate.

2.3 Results of the program evaluation process must be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement relative to components of the program (such as policies, procedures, curriculum, teaching methods, faculty, preceptors, resources). Short- and long-term strategies must be developed and actions must be taken to maintain program strengths and address areas for improvement identified through the evaluation process.

Standard 3: Curriculum and Learning Activities

The Core Knowledge must be the basis on which the program curriculum and learning activities are built within the context of the mission and goals of the program.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 3.1** The program's curriculum must be designed to ensure the breadth and depth of requisite knowledge needed for entry to supervised practice to become a registered dietitian nutritionist.
- a. The program's curriculum must include the following required components, including prerequisites:
 - 1. Research methodology, interpretation of research literature and integration of research principles into evidence-based practice
 - 2. Communication and documentation skills sufficient for entry into professional practice
 - 3. Principles and techniques of effective education, counseling and behavior change theories and techniques
 - 4. Governance of nutrition and dietetics practice, such as the Scope of Practice for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Nutrition and Dietetics; and interprofessional relationships in various practice settings
 - 5. Principles of medical nutrition therapy, the Nutrition Care Process and clinical workflow elements
 - 6. Role of environment, food, nutrition and lifestyle choices in health promotion and disease prevention
 - 7. Management theories and business principles required to deliver programs and services
 - 8. Continuous quality management of food and nutrition services
 - 9. Fundamentals of public policy, including the legislative and regulatory basis of nutrition and dietetics practice
 - 10. Licensure and certification in the practice of nutrition and dietetics
 - 11. Individual National Provider Identifier (NPI)
 - 12. Health care delivery systems (such as accountable care organizations, managed care, medical homes, local health care agencies)
 - 13. Coding and billing of nutrition and dietetics services to obtain reimbursement for services from public or private payers, fee-for-service and value-based payment systems
 - 14. Food science and food systems, food safety and sanitation, environmental sustainability, global nutrition, principles and techniques of food preparation, and development, modification and evaluation of recipes, menus and food products acceptable to diverse populations
 - 15. Organic chemistry, biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, genetics, microbiology, pharmacology, statistics, logic, nutrient metabolism, integrative and functional nutrition and nutrition across the lifespan
 - 16. Reflective practice
 - 17. Human behavior, psychology, sociology or anthropology
 - b. The program's curriculum must prepare students with the following core knowledge:

1. Domain 1. Scientific and Evidence Base of Practice: Integration of scientific information and translation of research into practice.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 1.1 Demonstrate how to locate, interpret, evaluate and use professional literature to make ethical, evidence-based practice decisions.
- KRDN 1.2 Select and use appropriate current information technologies to locate and apply evidence-based guidelines and protocols.
- KRDN 1.3 Apply critical thinking skills.

2. Domain 2. Professional Practice Expectations: Beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors for the nutrition and dietetics practitioner level of practice.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 2.1 Demonstrate effective and professional oral and written communication and documentation.
- KRDN 2.2 Describe the governance of nutrition and dietetics practice, such as the Scope of Practice for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- KRDN 2.3 Assess the impact of a public policy position on the nutrition and dietetics profession.
- KRDN 2.4 Discuss the impact of health care policy and different health care delivery systems on food and nutrition services.
- KRDN 2.5 Identify and describe the work of interprofessional teams and the roles of others with whom the registered dietitian nutritionist collaborates.
- KRDN 2.7 Describe contributing factors to health inequity in nutrition and dietetics.
- KRDN 2.8 Participate in a nutrition and dietetics professional organization and explain the significant role of the organization.
- KRDN 2.9 Defend a position on issues impacting the nutrition and dietetics profession.

3. Domain 3. Clinical and Client Services: Development and delivery of information, products and services to individuals, groups and populations.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 3.1 Use the Nutrition Care Process and clinical workflow elements to assess nutritional parameters, diagnose nutrition related problems, determine appropriate nutrition interventions and develop plans to monitor the effectiveness of these interventions.
- KRDN 3.2 Develop an educational session or program/educational strategy for a target population.
- KRDN 3.3 Demonstrate counseling and education methods to facilitate behavior change and enhance wellness for individuals and groups.
- KRDN 3.4 Practice routine health screening assessments, including measuring blood pressure and conducting waived point-of-care laboratory testing (such as blood glucose or cholesterol).
- KRDN 3.5 Describe concepts of nutritional genomics and how they relate to medical nutrition therapy, health and disease.

KRDN 3.6 Develop nutritionally sound meals, menus and meal plans that promote health and disease management and meet client's/patient's needs.

4. Domain 4. Practice Management and Use of Resources: Strategic application of principles of management and systems in the provision of services to individuals and organizations.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

KRDN 4.1 Apply management theories to the development of programs or services.

KRDN 4.2 Evaluate a budget/financial management plan and interpret financial data.

KRDN 4.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the regulation system related to billing and coding, what services are reimbursable by third party payers, and how reimbursement may be obtained.

KRDN 4.4 Apply the principles of human resource management to different situations.

KRDN 4.5 Apply safety and sanitation principles related to food, personnel and consumers.

KRDN 4.6 Explain the processes involved in delivering quality food and nutrition services.

KRDN 4.7 Evaluate data to be used in decision-making for continuous quality improvement.

5. Domain 5. Leadership and Career Management: Skills, strengths, knowledge and experience relevant to leadership potential and professional growth for the nutrition and dietetics practitioner.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

KRDN 5.1 Perform self-assessment that includes awareness in terms of learning and leadership styles and develop goals for self-improvement.

KRDN 5.2 Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals.

KRDN 5.3 Practice how to self-advocate for opportunities in a variety of settings (such as asking for needed support, presenting an elevator pitch).

KRDN 5.4 Practice resolving differences or dealing with conflict.

KRDN 5.5 Promote team involvement and recognize the skills of each member.

KRDN 5.6 Demonstrate an understanding of the importance and expectations of a professional in mentoring and precepting others.

3.2 A curriculum map must be developed that:

- a. Identifies didactic courses which occur in various settings or practice areas that students will complete to meet the required curriculum components and core knowledge.
- b. Sequentially and logically organizes the progression of didactic courses from introductory to more advanced learning activities and builds on previous knowledge or experience to achieve the expected depth and breadth of knowledge by completion of the program.

3.3 The program's curriculum must provide learning activities to attain the breadth and depth of the required curriculum components and core knowledge. Syllabi for courses taught within the academic unit must include the KRDNs that will be assessed in the course or rotation and the learning activities that facilitate achievement of the KRDNs.

- a. Learning activities must prepare students for professional practice with patients/clients with various conditions, including, but not limited to overweight and obesity; endocrine disorders; cancer; malnutrition and cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and renal diseases.

- b. Learning activities must prepare students to implement the Nutrition Care Process with various populations and cultures.
- c. Learning activities must incorporate a variety of educational approaches necessary for delivery of curriculum content to meet learner needs and to facilitate learning objectives.
 - 1. If any portion of the program is offered through distance education, the program assures regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty.

Standard 4: Student Learning Assessment and Curriculum Improvement

The program must continuously assess student achievement of required core knowledge. The program must collect and analyze aggregate data on student core knowledge attainment. The results of the assessment plan must be used to evaluate and improve the curriculum to enhance the quality of education provided.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 4.1** The program must have a plan for on-going assessment of student's attainment of core knowledge. The plan must identify summative assessment methods used, as well as courses and learning activities in which assessment will occur and the process for tracking individual students' demonstration of core knowledge.
- 4.2** The program must document that data on student core knowledge attainment are collected, summarized and analyzed for use in curricular review and improvement.
- 4.3** Formal curriculum review must routinely occur and:
 - a. Use results of program evaluation and data on student core knowledge attainment to determine strengths and areas for improvement.
 - b. Include input from students and other stakeholders as appropriate.
 - c. Include assessment of comparability of educational experiences and consistency of learning outcomes when different courses, delivery methods (such as distance education) are used to accomplish the same educational objectives.
 - d. Result in actions to maintain or improve student learning.

Standard 5: Faculty and Preceptors

The program must have qualified faculty in sufficient numbers to provide the depth and breadth of learning activities required in the curriculum and exposure to the diversity of practice. Program faculty, including the program director, must show evidence of continuing competence appropriate to teaching responsibilities, through professional work experience, graduate education, continuing education, research or other activities leading to professional growth and the advancement of their profession.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 5.1** The program must provide evidence that qualified and appropriately credentialed faculty are sufficient to ensure implementation of the program's curriculum and the achievement of the program goals and objectives.
- 5.2** The requirements for program faculty (faculty within the academic unit) must include:
- a. Program faculty, including the program director, must meet the sponsoring organization's criteria for appointment 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.
 - b. Program faculty, including the program director, must show evidence of continuing competence and ongoing professional development appropriate to their teaching responsibilities.
 - c. Program faculty and instructors must be provided orientation to the mission, goals and objectives of the nutrition and dietetics program, the ACEND Standards and core knowledge requirements. Program faculty must be trained in the use of distance education pedagogy and recommended practices.
- 5.3** The requirements for program preceptors must include: (Not applicable to DPD)
- a. The education and experience needed to provide appropriate guidance for supervised practice experiences. Preceptors must be licensed, as appropriate, to meet state and federal regulations, or credentialed, as needed, in the area in which they are supervising students and must be qualified to serve as educators and professional role models.
 - b. Orientation to the mission, goals and objectives of the nutrition and dietetics program, the ACEND Standards and required knowledge and competencies.
- 5.4** Formal evaluation of program faculty must routinely occur:
- a. The program must have a process for the periodic review, including input from students, of the effectiveness of faculty.
 - b. Program faculty and instructors must receive feedback, and training as needed, based on program evaluation and feedback from students.

Standard 6: Supervised Practice Sites (Not Applicable to DPD)

The program must have policies and procedures to maintain written agreements with institutions, organizations and/or agencies providing supervised practice experiences to meet the competencies. The policies and procedures must address the selection and periodic evaluation of the adequacy and appropriateness of facilities to ensure that sites are able to provide supervised practice learning experiences compatible with the competencies that students are expected to achieve.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

6.1 Supervised practice site requirements (Not applicable to DPD):

- a. The institution/organization must establish policies that outline the issuance and maintenance of written affiliation agreements and the selection criteria, evaluation process and timeline for evaluation of the adequacy and appropriateness of supervised practice facilities.
- b. Agreements must delineate the rights and responsibilities of both the sponsoring organization and affiliating institutions, organizations and/or agencies.
- c. Agreements must be signed by individuals with appropriate institutionally-assigned authority in advance of placing students.

Standard 7: Information to Prospective Students and the Public

The program must provide clear, consistent and accurate information about all program requirements to prospective students and the public at large.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 7.1** Program policies, procedures, practices, and materials related to student recruitment and admission must comply with state and federal laws and regulations. Recruitment and admission practices must be applied fairly and consistently.
- 7.2** All information to prospective students and the public must be current, accurate and consistent. Each information source must provide a reference to where complete program information can be found.
- 7.3** Information about the program must be readily available to prospective students and the public via a website and must include at least the following:
 - a. Accreditation status, including the full name, address, phone number and website of ACEND must appear on the program's website homepage.
 - b. Description of the program, including program's mission, goals and objectives.
 - c. A statement that program outcomes data are available upon request.
 - d. Information about the requirements and process to become a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN), including education, computer matching information, if applicable, supervised practice, the CDR credentialing exam, state licensure/certification, states for which the program meets State requirements for licensure/certification, and how the program fits into the process.
 - e. Estimated cost to students, including tuition and fees, necessary books and supplies, transportation, typical charges for room and board or housing, and any other program-specific costs.
 - f. Application and admission requirements.
 - g. Academic and program calendar or schedule.
 - h. Graduation and program completion requirements.
 - i. Availability of financial aid and loan deferments (federal or private), scholarships, stipends and other monetary support, if applicable.
 - j. Guidance about distance education components, such as technology requirements, if applicable.
 - k. If students are required to locate their own supervised practice sites and/or preceptors, requirements for this must be described, including the program's role and responsibility to assist students to ensure timely completion of the program. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - l. A description of the criteria and policies and procedures used to evaluate and award credit for prior learning experiences, such as coursework and the types and sources from which credit will not be accepted.

Standard 8: Policies and Procedures for Enrolled Students

The program must have written policies and procedures that protect the rights of students and are consistent with current institutional practice.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 8.1** Programs are required to have policies and procedures for program operations including:
- a. Student Performance Monitoring: The program's system of monitoring student performance must provide for the early detection of academic difficulty and must take into consideration professional and ethical behavior and academic integrity of the student.
 - b. Student Remediation and Retention: Concerns about a student's performance in meeting program requirements are addressed promptly and adequately to facilitate student's progression in the program.
 - c. Supervised Practice Documentation: (Not applicable to DPD)
- 8.2** The following policies and procedures specific to nutrition and dietetics programs must be provided to students in a single comprehensive document, such as in a program handbook or on a program website.
- a. Insurance requirements, including those for professional liability. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - b. Liability for safety in travel to or from assigned areas. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - c. Injury or illness while in a facility for supervised practice. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - d. Drug testing and criminal background checks, if required by the supervised practice sites. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - e. Requirement that students doing supervised practice must not be used to replace employees. (Not applicable to DPD)
 - f. When students are paid compensation as part of the program, policies must be in place to define the compensation practices.
 - g. The process for filing and handling complaints about the program from students and that includes recourse to an administrator other than the program director and prevents retaliation. The program must maintain a record of student complaints for a period of seven years, including the resolution of complaints.
 - h. Process for submission of written complaints to ACEND related to program noncompliance with ACEND accreditation standards after all other options with the program and institution have been exhausted.
 - i. If the program grants credit for students' prior learning, it must define procedures for evaluating equivalence of prior education or experience. Otherwise, the program must indicate that it has no policy for assessing prior learning or competence.
 - j. Process for assessment of student learning and regular reports of performance and progress.
 - k. Program retention and remediation procedures; students must have access to remedial instruction such as tutorial support.
 - l. Disciplinary/termination procedures.
 - m. Graduation and/or program completion requirements for the program including maximum amount of time allowed for completing program requirements applicable at the time student enrolls.

- n. Verification statement requirements and procedures ensuring that all students completing requirements established by the program receive verification statements.
- o. Programs using distance instruction and/or online testing must employ strategies to verify the identity of a student.
- p. Withdrawal and refund of tuition and fees.
- q. Program schedule, vacations, holidays and leaves of absence.
- r. Protection of privacy of student information, including information used for identifying students in distance learning.
- s. Student access to their own student file.
- t. Access to student support services, including health services, counseling, tutoring and testing and financial aid resources.