

Draft 2027 Standards

December 2025

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



FAQs: QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE STANDARDS IN GENERAL

What are the ACEND standards?

The ACEND standards are statements regarding basic requirements for nutrition and dietetics education programs to ensure educational quality, and for the awarding of degrees and credentials in nutrition and dietetics, including for the Nutrition and Dietetic Technician, Registered (DTR/NDTR) and the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RD/RDN) credentials. The [Proposed 2027 Standards](#) are published on the ACEND website.

What is the purpose of the ACEND standards?

The ACEND Standards aim to maintain high educational quality, protect students and the public, and ensure graduates are prepared for current and future demands in nutrition and dietetics practice.

Do the standards force all schools to operate in the same way?

No. The standards focus on functions to be served, not methods for implementation. Thus, the standards are met in as many different ways as there are institutions. The standards do establish basic competencies expected of those who hold specific degrees and credentials, and fundamental requirements for the operation of nutrition and dietetics programs. They maintain a common set of expectations that provide the basis for program operations.

Do the standards preclude innovation?

Because the standards provide a framework, not a blueprint, they facilitate innovation. ACEND encourages innovation, experimentation, and the development of new approaches to curricula and program operations. The standards now contain many sections based on innovations by member institutions that eventually became common practice.

How many standards ACEND is proposing?

ACEND is proposing a set of four (4) standards for the Associate Programs with Dietetic Technician (DT) Option, the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), the Dietetic Internship/Supervised Practice (DI), and the Coordinated Program (CP). The 2027 CP standards now incorporate include the Graduate Demonstration Programs (GP) under the Future Education Model Standards.

Where are ACEND's international standards housed?

ACEND's international standards are housed within the standards for each degree type: Associate, Bachelor (DPD), and Graduate (CP). If requirements vary for international programs, they are detailed in Appendix B of each standard type under "Accreditation Supplement for International Programs".

How does the proposed curriculum encourage educational laddering?

The curriculum under the 2027 standards is structured to build on each year and each previous degree type. The Associate degree (years 1&2) provides the prerequisites for the DPD (years 3&4) and the DPD meets the prerequisites for the CP (years 5&6).

How do I provide feedback on the standards?

Note that there are four surveys: one (1) for the 2027 Standards and Required Elements and three (3) related to the Competencies and Performance Indicators for Coordinated Programs (CP)/Dietetic Internships (DI), Didactic Programs in Dietetics (DPD), and Associate Programs with the Dietetic Technician Option (DT). The Standards survey may take 40 to 60 minutes to complete, while the review of the Competencies and Performance Indicators may take up to two hours to complete. You can stop the questionnaire and re-enter at a later time to finish your responses. Surveys and draft documents of the Standards may be viewed at [Proposed 2027 Standards](#).

FAQs: QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE STANDARDS REVIEW PROCESS

When do the ACEND standards change?

Per ACEND Policy and Procedures, ACEND revises its standards every five (5) years.

What leads to changes in the ACEND standards?

Part of ACEND's recognition by the Department of Education (DE) requires that ACEND reviews and revises its standards at least every five (5) years. The ACEND Expanded Standards Committee has spent the past two years on the process of revising and updating the 2022 Accreditation Standards. ACEND gathered input in a variety of ways:

1. Comments and recommendations have been collected from constituents including program directors, administrators, preceptors, practitioners and program reviewers since the 2022 standards were published.
2. ACEND requested input from constituents regarding the 2022 Standards and the Future Education Model (FEM) Standards through an online survey in Spring 2024.

3. The results of the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) practice audit (also known as job task analysis) that collected input from newly credentialed practitioners, and the new DE regulations that were published July of 2020 were examined.
4. discussions with ACEND's legal counsel and various Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics groups to ensure that the 2027 Standards meet licensure requirements and protect students and the public.
5. Evolving conditions, new technologies, constant attention to textual clarity, and experiences in the accreditation process all contribute to change in the standards. Changes are made only after a 60-day comment period.

What types of comments should be avoided?

- Comments that seek to impose the particular unique approach of an institution or individual as a national requirement.
- Comments that seek to dictate specific content by prescribing exact material instead of aiming to evaluate quality.
- Comments that are off-topic and not connected to the standards review process.
- Statements that the competencies are "out of the dietetics scope of practice." While scope of practice is needed in healthcare for safety and accountability, applying the same model to education would limit academic freedom, reduce interdisciplinary learning, and hinder innovation. Education is the means by which scope expands.

What types of comments are helpful?

- Comments that seek to improve clarity of the standards and requirements.
- Comments that make suggestions for improvement.
- Comments that share specific examples to demonstrate why a proposed requirement may not be feasible. In such cases, suggestions for revisions to enhance feasibility are encouraged.

Will I receive a response to my suggestions?

ACEND is grateful for all comments and will give careful review and consideration to each one. However, due to the volume of responses, those who submit comments will only be contacted if questions regarding a submission arise.

Will there be handouts provided?

Slides from the 2027 Standards Townhall are posted on the [ACEND 2027 Standards webpage](#) in a pdf file format as full slides.

When does my program need to come into compliance with the 2027 Standards?

The proposed 2027 Standards will be revised based on public comments. They will be released for voluntary adoption in Summer/Fall 2026. Mandatory adoption of the Standards is set for June 1, 2027. Nevertheless, the ACEND Board will be holding discussions to determine a waterfall method for delayed adoption of certain requirements within the standards, such as moving the curriculum to Competency-Based Education, adopting the new clinical skills for the (CP and DI), and meeting the release time requirement for the program director (CP, DI and DPD). ACEND will keep its programs informed of any new decisions.

FAQs: QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CONTENT OF THE STANDARDS

What is the link to the specific Department of Education (DE) regulation regarding some of the proposed changes?

- Following are the new USDE regulations of most interest to education programs;
<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=1e2be67cd260002f29cebdfc3438381b&mc=true&n=sp34.3.602.b&r=SUBPART&ty=HTML>
- Distance Education regulations are found here:
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-09-02/pdf/2020-18636.pdf>
- New Geographically Accessible sites regulation found here [§668.16(r)]
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/31/2023-22785/financial-responsibility-administrative-capability-certification-procedures-ability-to-benefit-atb>

What additional information can I use when reviewing the proposed 2027 Standards?

In addition to this FAQ document, ACEND has several published recordings and documents that may support the review of the 2027 Accreditation Standards.

- Recording of the December 2027 Standards town hall be found on the [Proposed 2027 Standards](#) webpage.
- Recording and minutes of the September 24, 2025 town hall that explains the Dietetic Internships under the 2027 Standards as well as ACEND's proposal to support DIs under the graduate standards. This recording is posted on the [Town Hall webpage](#).
- Recording and minutes of the September 16, 2025 town hall that discusses the rationale for the requirements within the 2027 Standards. This recording is posted on the [Town Hall webpage](#).

Is a DPD verification Statement still required for admission into a DI program?

Yes. To enter a DI program, students must hold a DPD verification statement.

Can the DI accept students with a graduate degree?

DI programs can accept students with a graduate degree and a DPD verification statement. DI programs can also partner with a graduate program that has been approved by ACEND to deliver the ACEND academic competencies and performance indicators. DIs also have a third option to accept students who have been verified by ACEND once the Prior Assessment for Learning (PAL) service is established.

Does a student who has already completed a non-related graduate degree need to pursue a second degree in an area specified by the 2027 Accreditation Standards?

No, students who have already completed a graduate degree are not required to pursue a second degree under the 2027 Accreditation Standards. The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) eligibility requirement to accept a general graduate degree remains unchanged. ACEND strongly encourages programs to avoid requiring students to repeat academic work or credentials they have already earned. Programs should focus on meeting competency requirements without unnecessary duplication of prior education which cost students time and money.

How do the 2027 Accreditation Standards impact stand-alone DI programs and those that are not affiliated with a graduate degree?

Under the 2027 Accreditation Standards, stand-alone DI programs must either only accept students with a graduate degree that has been verified by ACEND, students who opted to use ACEND Prior Assessment Learning (PAL) service and is being verified by ACEND, or students from an ACEND CP or an ACEND graduate-level DPD. Again, all students entering a DI program must hold the DPD verification statement. Access the [September 24, 2025 town hall recording and meeting minutes](#) for more information on ACEND's proposed PAL service and Bridge programs.

What would be an option for students who already have an MS or even a PhD but need supervised practice and a verification statement to sit for the RD exam?

Through a prior learning assessment policy, a CP can accept students with a graduate degree to complete the supervised practice portion of the program. A master's degree program that has been reviewed and approved by ACEND to provide the academic graduate-level competencies and is affiliated with a DI can also use their PAL policy to accept these students. A third option is for the students to use ACEND's PAL service to be verified for entry into the DI program.

How will PhD ISPPs be addressed in the 2027 Standards?

The doctoral ISPPs have been incorporated into the 2027 Standards and will no longer need to be a separate pathway. Under the 2027 Accreditation Standards:

- CPs, through a PAL policy, can accept individuals with a doctoral degree to complete the supervised practice portion of the program.
- For DI programs, individuals with a doctoral degree must have either a DPD verification statement or demonstrate the achievement of competencies in years 1 through 4 as verified by

ACEND; and a verification by ACEND or by an ACEND-accredited graduate program for the designated academic competencies and performance indicators.

Can you confirm the need for students to complete a DPD program and obtain a DPD Verification Statement as a prerequisite for entering an MS-DI program?

This requirement has not changed. A DI program must admit only individuals who have a verification statement from a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD). DPD verification statement is the only means to verify that a student has completed all the required academic content from years 3 & 4 required by ACEND.

Can students earn the DPD at the graduate level while completing the DI?

A DI program must admit only individuals who have completed all Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) requirements and received the DPD verification statement. The student must obtain the DPD verification statement before entering the DI. Nevertheless, using their PAL policy, the DI can grant the student supervised practice hours for supervised practice experiences completed in the DPD, if applicable.

How are the competencies and performance indicators structured under the 2027 Standards to achieve the stackable education?

The intent of the 2027 standards is to support a more flexible and efficient learning pathway by stacking credentials, making it easier for students to move forward in their education. The competencies and performance indicators within each degree build on the degree before it. If a student already took certain classes or gained experience in a previous program, they do not have to start from the beginning and repeat what they learned.

- The associate degree meets the prerequisites (years 1 and 2) for the DPD (years 3 & 4)
- The DPD (years 3 & 4) meets the prerequisites for the CP (years 5 & 6)

Faculty are encouraged to use prior assessed learning (PAL) to recognize the education and experience completed previously.

What if the list of Competencies and Performance Indicators for the DPD is missing a number of foundational concepts?

The competencies and performance indicators progress from year 1 all through year 6 to achieve the knowledge and skills needed for entry-level practice as an RDN. ACEND has made every effort not to repeat the competencies and performance indicators from degree to the next. Therefore, if you find that missing content in the DPD list of competencies and performance indicators, check the Associate's degree list of competencies and performance indicators.

Can the nutrition program where the DPD is housed cover the associate degree competencies (i.e., the competencies and performance indicators for years 1 & 2)?

Yes. The nutrition program where a DPD or CP is housed are able to cover any or all the prerequisites for their corresponding program. The program is expected to show ACEND how the program is meeting these prerequisites.

Release time for the program director is set based on maximum enrollment for the program. Our program's maximum enrollment is extremely large and does not mirror the number of students typically enrolled in the program. Will ACEND give programs an opportunity to adjust (decrease) their maximum enrollment numbers?

Yes. ACEND is working on a process to allow programs to decrease their maximum enrollment numbers. Once the 2027 Standards are released, ACEND staff will reach out to programs to submit their adjusted maximum enrollments. Programs will only be allowed to decrease their maximum enrollment using this simplified process. Programs who wish to increase their enrollment continue to be expected to submit a substantive change request as is currently required.

I am a program director of a DI program and have been recruited to direct a CP. Will I be expected to complete the ACEND training on the accreditation standards within one year of being hired?

No. Completing an ACEND required training within one year of hire is a requirement for first-time program directors who have never previously served as program directors. Existing program directors who switch positions are expected to complete the ACEND required training only once every five years.

To whom does the doctoral degree requirement for the program director apply?

The doctoral degree requirement is only for CP and GP program directors.

- As of August 2025, it impacts 55 program directors of CPs and GPs who currently hold a master's degree. If you are one of the 55 program directors, ACEND would like to hear from you. Please be sure to leave a comment about this requirement as you provide your feedback with rationale for your comments.
- It does **NOT** apply to Associate, DT, DPD, DI, or DI program directors where the DI is affiliated with a graduate degree. Currently, ACEND has no plans to require the program director of the supervised practice DI programs to hold a terminal degree. Note, however, that the administrator or coordinator of the graduate programs affiliated with DI programs to meet the Designated Academic Competencies and Performance Indicators will be required to hold the doctoral degree.
- The doctoral degree may be in any field and can be a PhD or a professional doctorate.
- Existing program directors have until June 1, 2037 to obtain the doctoral degree.
- ACEND is collaborating with the Academy on possible opportunities and scholarships to support these program directors to pursue a doctoral degree.

For ACEND's new requirement for the CP and DPD that at least one full-time faculty member, in addition to the program director, must hold the RDN credential, is a program able to fulfill this requirement with two faculty with part-time appointments?

Depends on the program type. DPD programs are able to fulfill this requirement with multiple part-time faculty or adjunct faculty to equal one FTE. CP programs, on the other hand, must have one individual, in addition to the program director, who is full-time and holds the RDN credential.

What resources and guidance will ACEND provide to assist programs in transitioning to competency-based education (CBE)?

- Crosswalks by degree level between the current 2022 standards knowledge and competencies to the 2027 standards competencies and performance indicators.
- Free workshop on CBE available to all program directors. Workshops will be provided by ACEND free of charge for one year after the release of the standards.
- Townhall webinars are being planned to review the competencies and performance indicators curriculum for each program type. These will be recorded.
- Short recordings will be available on CBE free of charge to be shared with faculty, students, and preceptors.

As information becomes available it will be shared with programs in the ACEND UPdate and on the ACEND website.

What resources and guidance will ACEND provide to assist programs in incorporating the new clinical skills?

ACEND is currently working on curating a set of trainings and educational materials to support programs in addressing the clinical skills. This information will be posted on the ACEND website and shared with our programs in an ACEND UPdate.