

GLOSSARY

Academic Competencies: Foundational or core concepts that must be covered in a university setting to ensure students are prepared to safely and effectively apply skills in real-world practice.

Accelerated Degree Program: Programs that allow students to start the program at the undergraduate level and complete with at least a graduate degree.

Accreditation: A voluntary, non-governmental system of evaluation which includes a self-study report and an on-site evaluation by peer reviewers that is used to verify the quality of service provided by academic programs and institutions and to protect the public interest.

Accreditation Action: Any decision made by ACEND affecting the accreditation status of a program. These actions are: 1) grant pre-candidacy, 2) grant candidacy, 3) grant accreditation, 4) continue accreditation, 5) continue accreditation on a reduced term, 6) place on probation, 7) withdraw accreditation, or 8) deny candidacy or accreditation. See the [ACEND Policy and Procedure Manual](#) for further details about each accreditation action.

Accreditation Term: The maximum amount of time that ACEND allows programs to remain accredited. ACEND has a 7-year accreditation term for fully accredited programs and a 4-year accreditation term for candidacy programs.

ACEND®: The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the specialized program accrediting agency for education programs in nutrition and dietetics. ACEND operates administratively autonomously from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and other Academy organizational units.

ACEND Academic Certificate: A certificate used to verify that the designated academic competencies have been met.

ACEND Board: The governing unit of ACEND that grants final accreditation actions.

Additional Evidence Needed: A rating used for evaluating compliance with ACEND Standards that indicates that one or more compliance problems with an ACEND Standard have been identified, and that the program needs to provide more explanation or documentation to demonstrate compliance.

Affiliation Agreement: A legally binding document between an education program and a person or organization, who is providing supervised practice experiences, which delineates the responsibilities of all parties and the relationships between them.

All Required Evidence Provided: A rating used for evaluating compliance with ACEND Standards that indicates there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the program meets the Standards.

Alternate Supervised Experience: A guided, participative activity that closely mimics real-life work experiences, replicating substantial aspects of the actual practice in a fully interactive manner with sufficient realism to demonstrate competence and measure learning. *Examples include high-fidelity simulation that feels authentic, real-play, and high-level case studies requiring applied clinical or professional judgment.*

Appeal: The right and process available to a program or institution for a review of an adverse action.

Bridge: Specific, targeted courses or modules that are intended to address the gaps in a student's competencies and performance indicators. These programs may offer a full graduate degree, or one or more courses or modules. **See also: Degree-Granting Bridge and Module-Based Bridge**

Code of Ethics: A formal statement of the values and ethical principles guiding a profession outlining commitments and obligations of the practitioner to patients, clients, society, self and the profession.

Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR): The credentialing agency, recognized by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, who serves the public by establishing and enforcing standards for certification/recertification for professionals in nutrition and dietetics and issuing credentials to individuals who meet these standards.

Competence: An individual's integration of knowledge, skills, and judgment to perform a particular function.

Competency: A set of defined behaviors that provide a structured guide enabling the identification, evaluation, and development of behaviors in an individual. It is the criteria to measure the required competence to perform a particular function or role.

Competency Assessment: The process of evaluating student demonstration of mastery of required competencies.

Compliance: The extent to which a program or institution conforms and adheres to accreditation standards.

Credentialing: The formal recognition of professional or technical competence through registration, certification, or licensure.

Critical Thinking: The ability to objectively analyze and evaluate information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication to form beliefs and guide action about an issue or situation.

Degree-Granting Bridge: A graduate degree program that meets all ACEND's designated academic competencies, awards a graduate degree, and an ACEND academic certificate.

Didactic Instruction: Teaching approach focused on direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student, involving structured lessons. Typically used for foundational concepts.

Distance Education: Delivery of instruction in the professional curriculum where students are physically separated from instructors and/or the program director and learning synchronously or asynchronously through live or recorded media with regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor and/or program director.

Effective Leadership: When an ACEND-accredited program is well managed, including that data are collected, students are taken care of and responded to in a timely manner, and review of program documentation is completed.

Entry-Level: The term used to specify performance expected of the nutrition and dietetics practitioner in the first three years of practice.

Evidence-Based: Using documented scientific evidence to inform professional practice.

External Constituents: Individuals not directly involved in an education program, such as employers of graduates, nutrition and dietetics practitioners, professionals from other disciplines and communities of interest, and other program directors.

Faculty: Instructors or any individuals teaching in the ACEND-accredited program.

Formative Assessment: Evaluation of student learning at particular points in time during the instructional period, such as the midpoint of the activity, paired with feedback to the student on performance. A primary focus of formative assessment is to identify areas that may need improvement and communicate that information to the student prior to completion of the instructional unit or program, so they can adjust their learning before the final evaluation.

Free-standing Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) Program: ACEND-accredited Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) programs located in hospitals, county boards of health, other health facilities, school systems, and existing ACEND-accredited business entities or publicly- or privately-held corporations. SPE programs located in colleges, universities, and medical centers or other institutions that are accredited by an institutional accreditor are not considered free-standing.

Geographically accessible site: A site for the student that must be in a location that is feasible for the student to reach. *For example, if the program is located in Georgia and the student is in New York, it is not feasible for the student to travel to Georgia for the rotation.*

Goal: A general statement of what a program must achieve to support its mission. Achievement of a goal should be defined by a series of objectives that logically relate to and support the goal. In nutrition and dietetics education, program goals are generally stated in terms of the impact of the program on graduates and their contributions to the nutrition and dietetics profession.

High-level case study: A detailed, complex scenario based on real-world circumstances that requires the participant to apply professional judgment, analysis, and decision-making skills comparable to those used in actual practice. Unlike a brief or illustrative case study, a high-level case study presents enough depth, ambiguity, and detail, such as conflicting information, multiple variables, or evolving circumstances to closely mimic the demands of a real work situation, allowing it to be used to demonstrate competence and measure learning. *For example: A case involving a hospitalized patient with newly diagnosed stage 3 chronic kidney disease, Type 2 diabetes, and recent unintentional weight loss. The student must reconcile competing dietary restrictions (carbohydrate control versus protein, phosphorus, and potassium limits) and develop a nutrition care plan that addresses all three conditions simultaneously. As the case progresses, new labs and a change in clinical status are introduced, requiring the student to revise the plan, rather than apply a single, static protocol.*

Including: A term used to introduce a list of required items. When a definition or requirement uses "including" followed by a list, all items in that list are mandatory components of the term or requirement; the list is exhaustive unless otherwise stated.

Institutional Accreditation: The evaluation and accreditation of an institution as a whole, conducted by an institutional accreditor. Note: Institutional accreditors were formally classified as "regional" or "national." This distinction was eliminated in 2020 and is no longer used in federal terminology, though the older terms may still appear in some state, licensing, or transfer-credit policies.

Institutional Accreditor: An agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education (CHEA) that evaluates and accredits institutions of higher education (e.g., colleges and universities). In the United States, the institutional accrediting agencies include, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, The Commission on Colleges and Universities, and Western Association of Schools and College.

Interim Report: A report sent by the program between accreditation reviews for the purpose of documenting ongoing compliance with the ACEND Standards and Required Elements or Policies and Procedures.

Learning Activities: Projects, assignments, case studies, group activities, etc. designed by an educator or preceptor to engage students in the learning process and demonstrate competence.

Learning Objective: Specific activities and qualitative or quantitative target measures that will be used to assess overall student achievement of knowledge and/or competencies (the expected or desired result).

Learning Resources: Tools and materials (textbooks, study guides, workbooks, computers, software, journals, etc.) that are available to help enhance student learning.

Licensure: A process by which an agency or government grants permission to an individual to engage in a given occupation upon demonstrating that the applicant has attained the minimal degree of competency necessary to ensure that the public health, safety, and welfare are reasonably well protected.

Major Program Change (see “*Substantive Program Change*”)

Mission Statement: A formal statement of an organization’s core purpose and focus that typically remains unchanged over time. Achievement of the mission should be provable by the achievement of goals which are in turn supported by specific program objectives. In nutrition and dietetics education, the mission statement typically distinguishes it from other programs in the sponsoring organization, is compatible with the mission statement or philosophy of the sponsoring organization, and states its preparation of nutrition and dietetics practitioners.

Module-Based Bridge: A short module, course, or set of courses that meet a subset of ACEND’s designated academic competencies, does not award a graduate degree or the ACEND academic certificate.

National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI): The committee that advises the U.S. Secretary of Education on issues related to accreditation including the recognition of accrediting agencies such as ACEND.

Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP): An organizational unit of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that serves the needs of members who are interested in or engaged in educating nutrition and dietetics practitioners.

Nutrition Care Process: A systematic problem-solving method consisting of four distinct steps: (a) Nutrition Assessment, (b) Nutrition Diagnosis, (c) Nutrition Intervention, and (d) Nutrition

Monitoring and Evaluation that are used for critically-thinking through decisions to address nutrition-related problems and provide safe and effective quality nutrition care.

Nutrition and Dietetics Associate Program (AP): An education program that provides nutrition and dietetics foundational associate-level coursework as pre-requisites to other nutrition and dietetics programs.

Nutrition and Dietetics Associate Program with Dietetic Technician option (AP/DT): An education program that provides the required nutrition and dietetics coursework and at least 450 hours of required supervised practice experiences to meet ACEND's competency requirements to become a nutrition and dietetics technician, registered. A verification statement is issued to individuals who successfully complete the program in order to be eligible to take the CDR credentialing examination.

Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program (CP): An education program that provides the required nutrition and dietetics coursework and at least 1000 hours of required supervised practice experiences to meet ACEND's competency requirements to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. A verification statement is issued to individuals who successfully complete the program in order to be eligible to take the CDR credentialing examination.

Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Program (DPD): An education program that provides the required nutrition and dietetics coursework to meet ACEND's core knowledge requirements to prepare graduates for a Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Practice Experience Program (SPE). A verification statement is issued to individuals who successfully complete the program as evidence of eligibility to apply for a SPE in order to be eligible to take the CDR credentialing examination.

Nutrition and Dietetics Supervised Practice Experience Programs (SPE): An education program that provides at least 1000 hours of required supervised practice experiences to meet ACEND's competency requirements to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. A verification statement is issued to individuals who successfully complete the program in order to be eligible to take the CDR credentialing examination. These programs were formerly known as Dietetic Internships (DI).

On site: The student and preceptor are in the same physical location. For example, telehealth can be considered on site if the preceptor and student are in person at the same location; however, if the student and the preceptor are virtual, this would not be considered on site.

Performance Indicator: Specific, measurable, and observable statements that describe the behaviors, skills, or outcomes a student must demonstrate to show that a competency has been achieved. Performance indicators break a broader competency down into concrete, assessable

components, allowing evaluators to determine whether a student has met the required standard.

Preceptor: A practitioner who serves as faculty for students during supervised practice by overseeing practical experiences, providing one-on-one training, and modeling professional behaviors and values.

Prior Learning Assessment: An evaluation that grants credit or hours of experience for content or skills that the student has previously mastered.

Program: A formal plan of study leading to a degree and/or verification statement that is accredited by ACEND. The five program types are: Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Programs (CP), Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs (DPD), Supervised Practice Experience Programs (SPE), and Nutrition and Dietetics Associate Programs (AP) with the Dietetic Technician option (DT), and Advanced Practice Doctorate (APD).

Program Director: The individual responsible for assuring that accreditation standards, policies, and procedures are met at an ACEND-accredited program.

Program Evaluation: The analysis and use of data by educators or administrators to make decisions about improvements in a program. This evaluation typically compares the intended results (program objectives) with the actual results (program outcomes).

Program Length: The amount of time in calendar years or months for completion of the program.

Program Objective: A statement of the expected or desired program results that includes qualitative or quantitative measures to evaluate program outcomes.

Program Outcome: The actual result of program activities as measured by the program objective.

Program Reviewers: A group of individuals appointed by ACEND with the task of reviewing program reports and/or visiting programs for the purpose of verifying information in the Self-Study Report.

Qualitative Measure: A subjective measure of quality, i.e., how well students/graduates perform, such as a rating of performance.

Quantitative Measure: An objective measure of quantity, i.e., how many students/graduates achieve an outcome, such as a percentage or number.

Readily Available: When information can be accessed by the public without disclosure of identity or contact information and can be easily located from the program's home webpage, *for example through a clearly labeled link or menu item.*

Regular and Substantive Interaction: Engaging students on a regular basis in teaching, learning and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and includes at least two of the following: providing direct instruction; assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework; providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency; facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or other instructional activities approved by ACEND. A regular and substantive interaction between the student and the program director/instructor must be reasonably frequent and consistent (at least once per week); primarily initiated by the program director/instructor, related to the dietetic program/course, and provide useful/meaningful information to the student.

Required Element: Subcomponent of the Accreditation Standards that programs must meet to demonstrate compliance with the Standard.

Research: An activity that includes all components of the scientific method, i.e., statement of the problem, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results; and decision-making based on results. Activities may include community needs assessment, food science experiments, product development/improvement, continuous-quality improvement activities, or other research projects including master theses and doctoral dissertations.

Real-Playing: A type of alternate experience activity that involves a participant to engage in a counseling or interpersonal skills exercise using a genuine, current situation from their own life, or professional experience, rather than a hypothetical or scripted scenario. Unlike role-play, where participants act out an assigned or fictional case, real-play uses authentic content, allowing the participant to practice applied skills, such as counseling or motivational interviewing, in a real context while still being observed and evaluated. *For example: During a motivational interviewing skills lab, a student is paired with a peer and asked to practice counseling on a real behavior change they are personally working on, such as increasing their own physical activity or reducing caffeine intake. The student practicing as the "client" responds genuinely rather than following a script, while the student practicing as the "counselor" applies active listening and motivational interviewing techniques to a real, unscripted conversation.*

Simulations: A type of alternate experience that imitates real situations or processes that can be used to demonstrate competence in a particular area.

Single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP): A variation at a single position in a DNA sequence among individuals, where one nucleotide (A, T, C, or G) differs from the nucleotide typically found at that same position in the population. SNPs occur naturally throughout the genome and

can influence traits such as disease susceptibility, drug response, and nutrient metabolism, making them relevant to fields such as nutrigenomics and personalized nutrition.

Site Visit: The part of an accreditation review in which individuals, appointed by ACEND, visit a program for the purpose of verifying information in the Self-Study Report.

Sponsoring Institution: The organization or entity that is responsible for a nutrition and dietetics program.

Standards: Minimum levels of quality on which ACEND evaluations and accreditation decisions are based.

Student-Identified Site: A supervised practice location that a student independently researches and proposes on their own to fulfill rotation opportunities, subject to program review and approval.

Student-Identified Supervised Practice: When students are required to find their own supervised practice sites for $\geq 10\%$ of supervised practice hours.

Substantive Program Change: Changes in an ACEND accredited program's administration, structure, or other aspects as defined in the ACEND Policy and Procedure Manual.

Such as: A term used to introduce illustrative examples. When a definition or requirement uses "such as" followed by a list, the items provided are representative examples only, not a required or exhaustive list; other items not named may also satisfy the term or requirement.

Summative Assessment: Evaluation of student learning at the end of an instructional unit or program, used to determine the student's overall level of achievement or mastery. A primary focus of summative assessment is to measure the cumulative outcome of instruction and inform final decisions, such as grades, certification, or program completion, rather than to guide ongoing adjustments to learning, as is the case with formative assessment.

Supervised Practice: Planned learning experiences (including activities in professional work settings and alternate supervised experiences) in which students perform tasks over defined periods of time to demonstrate mastery of ACEND competencies. Learning activities performed by students that are not typically performed as part of the preceptor's work responsibilities, such as writing papers, completing a study guide, or other homework, should not be counted towards fulfilling supervised-practice hours in professional work settings.

Verification Statement: A form completed by the program director, indicating that a student has successfully fulfilled the requirements for completion of an ACEND-accredited program.

Waived Point-of-Care Laboratory Testing (POCT): A test that is used in a diagnostic setting that is remote from a centralized laboratory facility. Waived testing is laboratory testing that employs

specific test methods designated under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as "waived." Waived testing is designated by CLIA as simple tests that carry a low risk for an incorrect result.