

**2022 ACEND Accreditation Standards-Dietetic Internships**  
**Options for Ensuring Compliance with Standard 1, Required Element 1.4**

**Introduction**

There are multiple options for programs to ensure they are complying with the requirements of Standard 1, Required Element 1.4. Dietetic Internships (DI) that are not combined with a graduate degree (also known as non-degree DIs) need solutions for interns to be able to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe from completing the Dietetic Internship. A **reasonable timeframe** is defined by ACEND as one year from the end of the program. ACEND has provided the following options that may be of interest to programs. There may be other options to ensure students/interns complete a graduate degree; contact your ACEND manager to discuss other ideas.

# Graduate Degree Options

## **Transition to a graduate degree/DI (e.g., MS/DI)**

- Admit those with a DPD or an FDE Verification Statement **AND** have contracted with specific graduate degree(s) granting institution(s) that students must be accepted to prior to starting the DI program.
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of **both** DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement) and graduate degree.

(Complete Sections 1 and/or 2 of the [RE 1.4 Program Completion Req. Template](#).)

## **Graduate degree upon admission**

- Admit those with a DPD or an FDE Verification Statement **AND** completed graduate degree.
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement).

(No substantive change required. Report admission change in Annual Report.)

## **Student-identified graduate degree**

- Admit those who are in the process of completing a graduate degree or have enrolled in a graduate degree before starting the DI
- Issue DI Verification Statement after completion of **both** DI (competency and supervised practice hours requirement) and graduate degree.

(Complete Section 1 of the [RE 1.4 Program Completion Req. Template](#).)

There is a possibility for combining these options. See explanation in *NOTE* below.

***NOTE:***

*Programs are able to combine more than one option; however, logistics for program management may be challenging.*

- *If the program wishes to accept applicants who have completed a graduate degree prior to starting the DI in addition to other options, the program is encouraged to review its program length and prior learning assessment policies to be sure interns are not required to complete a second graduate degree. The program may need two program completion objectives for 1) interns who already have the graduate degree and who are completing only the supervised practice hours and 2) interns completing the graduate degree and supervised practice rotations.*

## Identified Options

### Transition to a graduate degree/DI (e.g., MS/DI)

The Dietetic Internship establishes a contract/agreement with one or more institution(s) to provide a concurrent graduate degree. A university-based Dietetic Internship may partner or align itself with a graduate program offered within the university. The graduate degree may be completed before, during, or after supervised practice, and allows applicants to be accepted into the graduate program within the same time frame they are accepted to the DI program. This allows the internship director to have some coordination with the graduate degree program, accommodate supervised practice around course schedules, and have an established relationship with the degree program to verify the intern's completion of the graduate degree. The student/intern must complete the graduate degree within a reasonable timeframe, as defined above. This option requires a substantive program change with ACEND using the "Change or Add Degree Requirements" change requirements. Complete Sections 1 and/or 2 of the [Compliance with Required Element 1.4 Program Completion Requirements Template](#).

### Graduate degree upon admission

The Dietetic Internship would require an applicant to have completed a graduate degree prior to starting the program in addition to having a DPD or FDE verification statement. **The applicant may be admitted to the program prior to completing a degree if they are accepted in the final semester of their graduate degree program and plan to finish the degree before the start of the DI.** There are no changes to the existing program except to the admission requirements. ACEND does NOT require a substantive change to report for this option and programs can report this change in the Annual Report.

### Student-identified graduate degree

An intern would find and apply for a graduate degree separately from the DI and be responsible for **self-managing** the completion of both the DI and graduate degree. There are no changes to the existing program except to the admission and completion requirements. This option requires programs to report this change to ACEND by completing only Section 1 of the [Compliance with Required Element 1.4 Program Completion Requirements Template](#).

If programs are considering this option, please take into consideration the following questions:

- Is it realistic for the intern to complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe, based on how much of the graduate degree the intern has completed?
- What are the specific/tangible steps the program will take to ensure interns complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe?
- Does the program have sufficient administrative, clerical, or other staff resources to implement the program's process to ensure interns complete the graduate degree by the end of the program or within a reasonable timeframe? Depending on where a student/intern is in their graduate program, there is variable risk for the student/intern not completing their graduate degree and/or DI in a reasonable timeframe:

Student-Identified Graduate Degree: Levels of Risk for Failing to Complete the Graduate Degree and/or DI		
LOW RISK	MEDIUM RISK	HIGH RISK
Completed most of the graduate degree <u>before</u> entering the DI and finish the degree during or soon after DI	Completing most of the graduate degree <u>at the same time</u> as the DI, and finish the degree soon after DI	Completing most of the graduate degree <u>during or after</u> completing the DI
1-2 courses left; thesis or research project, if applicable, finished	Mid-way through the graduate program; thesis or research project, if applicable, not complete	Has not started graduate degree program prior to starting DI or starting graduate degree and DI at same time

There are several reasons ACEND cautions programs when using the student identified graduate degree option:

- Workload for Student/Intern: The workload for completing a graduate degree and full-time Dietetic Internship concurrently without coordination between the two programs puts a heavy burden on the student/intern. This may affect student/intern performance in both the internship and the graduate program and is not in the best interest of the student/intern.
- Lack of Coordination with Degree Program: Without a formal relationship with a degree program, the DI director has little control over when/or if the student/intern completes the graduate degree and is able to obtain a verification statement upon program completion. This puts the DI program at risk of being out of compliance with several of the ACEND 2022 Accreditation Standards if students/interns are not able to complete the program within 150% of the program length nor are eligible to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe of completing the program. The program must consider its admission criteria and program completion objective when investigating this option for their interns/students.
- Student/Intern Timeline: DI programs that accept students/interns already enrolled in a graduate degree program of their choosing risk having the student/intern delay completing the graduate degree, which prevents them from being eligible to sit for the CDR exam within a reasonable timeframe of completing the DI.
- Delay in submitting students/interns in REPS system: DI directors are responsible for inputting students/interns only after they have completed ALL exam eligibility requirements which include completion of the graduate degree. It may be challenging for the DI program director to keep track of a student/intern until they complete the graduate degree. For more information about the REPs system visit these resources: <https://www.cdrnet.org/program-director>; [REPS Program Director Guide](#); [REPS Frequently Asked Questions](#)