



Degree-Granting Bridge Quality Indicators and Required Evidence

August 1, 2026

ACEND® Degree-Granting Bridge Quality Indicators and Required Evidence

Degree-Granting Bridge includes all ACEND graduate-level academic competencies, awards a graduate degree following all state and federal laws, and awards an *ACEND Academic Certificate* to students upon successful completion of the bridge.

ACEND's quality review of graduate programs offering a degree-granting bridge is intentionally focused on evaluating the quality of the curriculum aligned to ACEND's academic competencies. As these degrees are conferred by accredited academic institutions, ACEND will not conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the degree program. Instead, responsibility for the full institutional and programmatic review, encompassing governance, resources, and overall academic quality, appropriately resides with the institution's recognized accrediting body. This delineation ensures that ACEND's evaluation remains targeted rather than duplicating the broader oversight conducted by institutional accreditors.

Quality Indicator 1: Oversight

Degree-granting bridge must be housed in a college, university, or other academic institution. The institution must be accredited and in good standing with a U.S. institutional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Evidence

- Copy of the most recent letter or a website screenshot and active website link documenting the institution's accrediting or licensing status.

Quality Indicator 2: Course of Study and Completion

The graduate degree must be in a major course of study in human nutrition, food and nutrition, dietetics, public health, food systems management, or an equivalent field. The degree-granting bridge must award an *ACEND Academic Certificate* to students upon successful completion of the bridge, signed by the authorized representative of the academic bridge or academic institution.

Evidence

- State the degree received upon completion and describe completion requirements for awarding the degree.
- Submit a copy of the catalog or institution website listing the degree obtained and/or course requirements and prerequisites.

Quality Indicator 3: Resources

Degree-granting bridge must have adequate resources and technology to support a distance-learning environment if any portion of the bridge is offered through distance education.

Evidence

- If any portion of the bridge is offered through distance education, describe the support learners are provided, including technical support, access to faculty, technology, etc.

Quality Indicator 4: Curriculum

A degree-granting bridge curriculum must provide learning activities to attain the breadth of the required ACEND academic competencies. The bridge must identify a process for assessing and monitoring the ACEND academic competencies. If any portion of the bridge is offered through distance education, the bridge must ensure regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty.

Evidence

- Submit a copy of the syllabi that includes the 11 ACEND academic competencies. Syllabi that do not address these ACEND academic competencies do not need to be submitted.
- Complete and submit the Bridge Curriculum Map and the Bridge Competency Assessment Table templates.
- Describe how the bridge ensures timely remediation on identified competence gaps, for students to be able to earn the *ACEND Academic Certificate*.
- Describe how the bridge assures regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty in distance courses, if applicable.

Quality Indicator 5: Bridge and Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement

The program must collect and analyze aggregate data on students completing the bridge within 100% of the reported bridge length. The program must also collect and analyze aggregate data to evaluate the bridge and its curriculum.

Evidence

- Describe how the bridge will collect and analyze data separate from non-bridging students.
- Describe the curriculum review process, including the timeframe and how input from students is incorporated.

Quality Indicator 6: Faculty

The bridge must provide evidence that qualified faculty/instructors support student learning of the bridge curriculum. Bridge faculty/instructors teaching remotely must be trained in distance education pedagogy and recommended practices. Degree-granting bridges must also:

1. Have at least one faculty member who holds a doctoral degree. This faculty member may hold a part-time or full-time position.
2. Have sufficient qualified faculty/instructors who have education in a field related to the subject in which they teach (e.g., RDN or other professional credentials).
3. Show evidence of continuing competence and ongoing professional development for bridge faculty/instructors appropriate to their teaching responsibilities.

Evidence

- Complete the Faculty Roster template, listing faculty members supporting the bridge.
- Submit the CVs for all bridge faculty members
- Describe how faculty are trained on the use of distance education pedagogy, if applicable.

Quality Indicator 7: Policies for Students and the Public

Each bridge develops specific policies aligned with its mission and makes them available on its website to students and the public. Website information must also include the ACEND approval and description of the bridge. The bridge must refrain from advertising as ACEND-accredited; rather, it must indicate it is *an ACEND-approved degree-granting and/or module-based bridge*. Policies must address:

- Bridge admission procedures

- Bridge length and availability
- Cost, financial aid availability, and refund
- Whether the bridge is module-based (credit or non-credit) or degree-granting
- Prior assessed learning and transfer credit
- Complaints process
- When the degree-granting bridge also offers modules, the policy must address whether admission into the module bridge guarantees admission into the degree program or awards credit toward the degree-granting bridge.

Evidence

- Provide a link to an active website, or a draft of website information, policies, and website location
- Estimated costs for students must include tuition and institutional fees (e.g., lab, technology); required program-specific costs (e.g., course fees, lab coats, distance education, memberships); and a description of variable costs (e.g., books, transportation, housing). Programs may report an average for each individual cost item, with a disclaimer that averages are approximate and subject to change.
- A policy statement on prior assessed learning (PAL), including whether the program accepts PAL, including an ACEND PAL Report.
- A complaint policy covering the institutional complaint process and procedures for submitting written complaints related to ACEND Bridge Quality Indicators. The policy must state that complaints are submitted to ACEND only after the institutional process has been exhausted.

Nutrition and Dietetics Graduate-Level Academic Competencies and Performance Indicators

Refer to the 2027 Accreditation Standards for Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program (CP), Appendix A for a complete list of the Entry-Level Competencies for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.

Unit 1: Community, Public Health, and Population Health

1.1	Apply epidemiological concepts and evidence to evaluate the relationships between diet and disease development (S)
1.1.1	Evaluate the strength of the association, sources of bias, and confounding factors (S)
1.1.2	Use nutrition surveillance data to identify patterns of disease to determine population health and nutrition needs (S)
1.1.3	Examine how nutrition, nutrition education, and nutrition-related diseases are impacted by globalization (S)
1.1.4	Prioritize and implement health risk reduction strategies and policies (S)
1.2	Use program planning steps to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate community programs (D)
1.2.1	Conduct and interpret community and population-based needs assessments to develop a program considering all relevant factors (D)
1.2.2	Identify resources and partnerships to support the program's sustainability (D)
1.2.3	Implement a program that considers relevant data and addresses the nutrition needs of the community or population (D)
1.2.4	Implement marketing strategies to promote nutrition products, programs, or services to target audiences (D)
1.2.5	Evaluate the program using intervention outcomes (D)
1.2.6	Communicate evaluation outcomes and make recommendations to promote change and justify the program (D)

Unit 2: Nutrition Care Process and Medical Nutrition Therapy

2.1	Integrate food and nutrition sciences into the nutrition care process (D)
2.1.1	Use evidence-based information related to molecular science (for example, genes, proteins, metabolites) and microbes to inform nutrition decisions (D)
2.1.2	Apply knowledge of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, and food science to make nutrition decisions (D)
2.5	Incorporate genetic data into a personalized nutrition plan (S)
2.5.1	Examine the influence of genetic variations (for example, SNPs) on nutrient metabolism and diet response (K)
2.5.2	Analyze and interpret results from genetic and nutrigenetic tests (S)
2.5.3	Create personalized nutritional interventions for individuals with specific genetic variation (S)
2.5.4	Evaluate the benefits and limitations of precision nutrition tools (S)
2.8	Use technology to enhance practice (D)
2.8.1	Operate technology and devices to create, store, and retrieve nutrition information in a secure and ethical manner, ensuring accountability for outcomes (D)

Unit 2: Nutrition Care Process and Medical Nutrition Therapy

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| 2.8.2 | Analyze data generated by technologies and devices to make evidence-based decisions (D) |
| 2.8.3 | Assess AI-generated results for accuracy and relevance and use iterative prompt engineering to refine AI outputs (D) |

Unit 3: Clinical Skills:

3.3 Apply knowledge of pharmacology and pharmacokinetics related to nutrition-related pharmacotherapy (S)

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| 3.3.1 | Demonstrate understanding of pharmacokinetics (absorption, clearance, metabolism, latency period, accumulation, half-life) and routes of administration (S) |
| 3.3.2 | Analyze the impact of nutrition status and diet on pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics (S) |

3.5 Perform intramuscular, subcutaneous, and intravenous injections for nutrition-related pharmacotherapy (for example, vitamins or insulin) (S)

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| 3.5.1 | Apply knowledge of anatomy to landmark different injection or infusion sites and the rationale and indication for choosing the site (K) |
| 3.5.2 | Discuss with the patient/client the benefits, risks, anticipated outcomes, and alternative approaches before initiating the injection or infusion (K) |
| 3.5.3 | Demonstrate an awareness of safe administration practices, including confirming the correct patient/client, substance, dose, route, time, and awareness of contraindications (S) |
| 3.5.4 | Calculate and regulate flow rates based on patient/client factors and the substance to be infused (S) |
| 3.5.5 | Identify the correct injection site, accurately draw the substance, and administer the injection using the proper technique while adhering to aseptic and infection control practices (K) |
| 3.5.6 | Perform intradermal, intramuscular, and subcutaneous injections, ensuring patient/client safety and proper administration (S) |
| 3.5.7 | Document the administration, including the substance administered, dosage, route, site, and patient/client response (S) |

3.6 Demonstrate knowledge of the indication and risk for conducting swallowing assessments (K)

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| 3.6.1 | Demonstrate understanding of the phases of swallowing and the anatomy and physiology of the swallow (K) |
| 3.6.2 | Identify indications for the swallowing assessment based on patient/client risk factors and swallowing difficulties (K) |
| 3.6.3 | Identify etiological risk categories, including evaluating cranial nerve function and oral motor assessment (K) |

3.8 Order and interpret imaging to identify the etiology of nutrition problems and to inform nutrition decisions (K)

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| 3.8.1 | Understand the indications, limitations, and protocols for various imaging modalities (for example, DEXA, x-ray, CT, MRI) (K) |
| 3.8.2 | Select the imaging modality based on the clinical question and patient/client characteristics (for example, age, medical history, allergies) (K) |

Unit 3: Clinical Skills:

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| 3.8.3 | Analyze images (for example, enteral and parenteral placement, vascular access/line placement, contraindications to enteral nutrition, and body composition) to identify relevant findings, differentiate between normal and abnormal findings, and assess image quality (S) |
| 3.8.4 | Analyze imaging findings or written results, considering other clinical data and tests to arrive at a comprehensive nutrition diagnosis (S) |

Unit 5: Leadership and Management

5.1 Apply critical thinking to make ethical and evidence-based decisions (D)

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| 5.1.1 | Use critical thinking through a systematic process that evaluates multiple variables and leads to an informed decision (D) |
| 5.1.2 | Incorporate the thought process used in critical thinking models and frameworks (for example, decision trees, theories, system analysis, ethical decision-making frameworks) (D) |

Unit 6: Research

6.1 Conduct research using appropriate scientific design and methods (D)

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| 6.1.1 | Articulate a clear research question or problem and formulate a hypothesis (D) |
| 6.1.2 | Identify and demonstrate appropriate research methods (D) |
| 6.1.3 | Interpret and apply research ethics and responsible conduct in research (D) |
| 6.1.4 | Collect and retrieve data using a variety of methods and technologies (D) |
| 6.1.5 | Analyze research data using appropriate data analysis techniques (D) |
| 6.1.6 | Determine if data support hypothesis(es) and translate research findings into practice implications (D) |
| 6.1.7 | Translate and communicate research findings through a variety of media (D) |

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