
The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) serves the public by establishing and enforcing standards for the educational preparation of nutrition and dietetics practitioners and by recognizing nutrition and dietetics education programs that meet these standards. ACEND operates independently of the governing bodies of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. ACEND has chosen to be recognized as an accrediting body by the United States Department of Education (USDE), which recognizes the quality and effectiveness of ACEND as the accrediting body for nutrition and dietetics education programs.

ACEND Mission

ACEND ensures the quality of nutrition and dietetics education to advance the practice of the profession.

ACEND Vision

ACEND is valued for advancing excellence in nutrition and dietetics education across the globe.

ACEND Values

ACEND volunteers and staff exhibit the following values in their accreditation activities and interpersonal interaction:

Collaboration—ACEND board members, program reviewers and staff acknowledge the power of working together in both the program review and the decision-making process to support nutrition and dietetics students' success.

Accountability—ACEND board members, program reviewers and staff accept responsibility for assuring that ACEND®- accredited programs provide education and experiences that meet all accreditation standards.

Respect—ACEND board members, program reviewers and staff treat all people with consideration, courtesy, and dignity.

Ethics—ACEND board members, program reviewers and staff conduct objective, fair, and unbiased program evaluations and demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in all actions, behaviors, and interactions.

Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process that recognizes the quality of an institution or program and assists in its improvement. As such, it provides value to educational institutions and programs while protecting students and the public interest. Specialized accreditation complements institutional accreditation by giving reasonable assurance of the quality and content of the education necessary for a particular profession or field. Specialized accreditation brings together practitioners, regulators, educators and students to improve professional preparation and practice, ultimately benefiting the profession and the public that it serves.

ACEND Board

The ACEND board is the governing unit of ACEND which grants final accreditation awards. As a decision-making body of a federally-recognized accrediting agency, the board must include at least one educator, practitioner, and public member. In addition, at least one educator or practitioner member must have administrative experience as a program director in nutrition and dietetics. The ACEND board includes: Chair; Vice Chair; Past Chair; at least one representative for each program type (Dietetic Technician, Didactic, Coordinated, and Dietetic Internship); at least one practitioner representative for each credential offered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (Dietetic Technician Registered and Registered Dietitian Nutritionist); at least one program administrator or representative of other stakeholders; one dietetics student; and one representative of the public. To view the current ACEND Board members, visit the ACEND website.

ACEND Quality Management Processes

ACEND accredits undergraduate and graduate Didactic and Coordinated Programs in Dietetics, post-bachelor's Dietetic Internships, associate degree Dietetic Technician Programs and Foreign Dietitian Programs. The ACEND® Standards Committee has been developing standards and competencies for a new model for education in nutrition and dietetics with the purpose of advancing the profession and protecting the public. ACEND also accredited programs under the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards for Associate and Graduate Degree Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics.

- Candidacy for Accreditation is for both U.S. based and international newly developed programs. It includes an eligibility application, self-study application and an on-site visit by a peer review team. Candidacy is granted, by the ACEND Board, if the program is progressing toward compliance with the Accreditation Standards and has the institutional resources to implement the program. Students enrolled after the date candidacy is granted will be considered graduates of an accredited program upon completion.
- Initial or Continued Accreditation includes an eligibility application and a self-study report, which examine how the program meets the Accreditation Standards; an on-site visit by a team of peers who provide expert evaluation and consultation; and a subsequent review and decision by the ACEND board.

Application and Maintenance of Accreditation

- **Eligibility Application:** The application process begins with the program documenting that it meets certain basic requirements and is housed in an organization that meets the sponsoring institution's (or organization's) eligibility requirements.
- **Self-Study Application:** The self-study report documents a comprehensive analysis of all program components, including program outcomes. This report is evaluated by a team of reviewers to determine if the Accreditation Standards have been met by the program.
- **Site Visit:** A site visit occurs within four years for candidacy accreditation and every seven years for continued accreditation. A team of peer reviewers, experienced in dietetics education and practice, visit the program site and document findings in a site visit report. The site visit report combined with the program's self-study report provides the ACEND board with the information necessary to make the accreditation decision.

Standards

ACEND has established standards, policies and procedures for application, review and maintenance for candidacy and full accreditation of nutrition and dietetics education programs. The ACEND Board released the 2022 Accreditation Standards for Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Programs (CP), Didactic Programs (DPD), Internship Programs (DI), Technician Programs (DT) and Foreign (FDE) Dietitian Programs. These 2022 Standards are the result of a planned five-year review cycle of the 2017 Accreditation Standards to ensure compliance with USDE regulations.

Faculty and Preceptors as part of the Accreditation Process

The program must have a sufficient number of qualified faculty and practitioners, if used, to provide the depth and breadth of learning activities required in the curriculum and exposure to the diversity of practice. Program faculty, preceptors and practitioners providing supervised practice, if used, 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. Preceptors and faculty must be oriented to the mission, goals and objectives of the nutrition and dietetics program, the ACEND Standards and required knowledge and competencies. They must also be trained on strategies to recognize and monitor biases in self and others and reduce instances of microaggressions and discrimination.

The Collection and Use of Knowledge and Competency Data

Programs must assure that all students are able to achieve ACEND's Core Knowledge and Competencies in order to be eligible to sit for the registration exam, by using them as the basis for developing learning and assessment activities. Faculty and preceptors in the program must ensure that students complete planned learning activities to achieve the Core Knowledge or Competencies and evaluate the students' achievement of core knowledge and/or competencies based on the activities.

- **Knowledge:** The recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. Identified as KRDNs (Knowledge for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists) or KNDT (Knowledge for Nutrition and Dietetics Technicians).
- **Competency:** Specific knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors required for effective performance as a practitioner. Identified as CRDNs (Competency for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists) or KNDT (Competency for Nutrition and Dietetics Technicians). A listing of the KRDNs, CRDNs, KNDTs and CNDTs is available in the ACEND Standards.

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