
Strategies to Improve Registration Exam Pass Rate

This “Tips Sheet” was developed to provide program directors of ACEND-accredited programs guidance on strategies to improve a program’s registration exam pass rate. These strategies were compiled from pass rate improvement plans that received positive feedback. Please note, these suggested strategies may not be applicable to all programs or program types.

Admission Requirements:

- Implement admissions process and criteria that incorporates more competitive admissions criteria; for example, setting minimum GPA requirements, ACT or SAT score requirements
- Implement formal application process that includes interviews to further evaluate applicants
- Add a requirement of specified service-learning hours prior to admission
- Implement a more rigorous early detection process for those students who are not successful in the program.

Program Curriculum:

- Increase frequency of curriculum review
- Add additional field, practicum or volunteer experiences throughout the program
- Increase courses or time devoted to sections/topics that students appear to struggle with on the registration exam
- Add more opportunities to incorporate multiple choice exam questions across all upper division courses
- Incorporate registration exam practice questions into appropriate course exams
- Add a library assignment designed to increase students’ research and critical literacy skills
- Add an interactive, online, student learning program to increase students’ comfort with taking online, multiple choice exams
- Have graduates complete self-assessment on preparedness for each student-learning assessment domain to determine areas of strength and areas for improvement in the curriculum
- Incorporate case studies with multiple choice answer options in courses to simulate practice exam scenarios and questions used on the registration exam.

Teaching & Learning Methods:

- Update testing format of all professional course exams to model the CDR-style of multiple choice questions that include two good answers, but one best answer
- Implement the “no backtracking” function in online quizzes that will eliminate the ability to go back once the question has been answered; which is similar to the process used on the registration exam
- Implement a mandatory policy where students develop review materials for each exam that students compile as they take each course. Upon graduation, students then have a compilation of review materials from every nutrition course to help prepare them for the registration examination
- Incorporate active learning classrooms or “flipping the classroom” experiences to actively engage students in discussions about course content

- Require students to develop and maintain an online nutrition portfolio that includes an updated resume, professional hours log and examples of selected materials from coursework to better prepare them for applying to supervised practice.

Faculty and Preceptors:

- Incorporate online evaluations instead of paper evaluations to increase response rate
- Add additional faculty training on developing student writing skills, increasing understanding of technology/software available, writing strong multiple choice questions and/or funding to attend conferences and webinars
- Develop in-depth preceptor handbook with specified activities to achieve the ACEND competencies.

Academic/Student Support Services Counseling:

- Offer Counseling Services, Health Services and Career Services
- Add additional progress reports throughout the program as “check points” for students
- Establish peer tutors that can help students with all nutrition and dietetics classes
- Add mandatory (quarterly, semester) one-on-one meetings with instructors and program director
- Adopt a technologically advanced Early Alert system to notify the program director of students who need additional assistance
- Guide students who are challenged by taking multiple choice tests to appropriate student support services.

Educational Resources:

- Develop or purchase online registration exam preparation course and/or materials
- Encourage institution’s library to purchase subscription to the Nutrition Care Manual
- Host a workshop on “How to take a multiple choice tests” or “How to take an online exam”
- Invite past graduates of the program who have passed the registration exam to speak to students in the program about preparing for and taking the registration exam and provide study tips.