

Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics

The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) is the accrediting agency for education programs preparing students for careers as registered dietitian nutritionists or nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered.

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News and Updates

ACEND Policy and Procedure Manual and Substantive Change Guidelines Revised July 1, 2026

[The ACEND Policy and Procedure Manual](#) has been updated and posted to the ACEND website. The recent changes to ACEND policies are designed to ensure clarity to ACEND's accreditation procedures and practices. Any changes related to the substantive change policies were also updated in the [ACEND Substantive Change Guidelines](#). To ensure accessibility, the formatting of the Substantive Change Document was updated.

These recent updates include:

- Updates to Qualifications of Program Reviewers to state that program reviewers for associate degree programs must hold a minimum of an associate degree. Program reviewers for all other ACEND-accredited programs must hold a minimum of a master's degree (Policy 1.1E).
- Updates to the Application for Candidacy Accreditation to clarify that ACEND will retain a program's eligibility application for one year from the date eligibility is confirmed. If the site visit for candidacy accreditation is not scheduled within that period, the application may be terminated, and the institution will have to submit a new application (Policy 2.1.B.4).
- Updates to Substantive Change Section:
 - Programs in candidacy accreditation applying for full accreditation can include substantive changes within their self-study report (Policy 4.3.A and Substantive Change Guidelines, page 3).
 - A change in ownership of the sponsoring institution will not be accepted from an existing ACEND-accredited free-standing dietetic internship (DI) program

housed in a business entity (Policy 4.3.2(b) and Substantive Change Guidelines, page 33).

- Free-Standing DI programs must notify ACEND prior to implementation of a new branch campus and must submit a business plan for the branch campus (Policy 4.3.A.3.f and Substantive Change Guidelines, page 10).
- ACEND may conduct site visits, at intervals not to exceed five years, to a representative sample of additional locations when the free-standing DI program operates more than three additional locations (Policy 4.3.A.3.f).

Updated 2026-2029 ACEND Fee Schedule Posted

On June 1, ACEND posted updated [2026-2029 fee schedules](#), effective June 1, 2026 - May 31, 2029. Changes from the previously posted 2026-2029 fee schedules include:

- New “Domestic AP and DT Accreditation Fee Schedule”. The domestic AP and DT program fee schedule was separated from the domestic RDN program fee schedule*
- Separate international program fee schedule
- Domestic RDN and international fee schedules now include fees for ACEND-approved bridges

*At the January 2026 ACEND board meeting, the ACEND Board voted to reduce fees for Associate level ACEND-accredited programs for five years, starting June 1, 2027, as an incentive to start and maintain these programs. The “Domestic AP and DT Accreditation Fee Schedule” reflects these reduced fees.

RISE Rule Update: Court Halts Key Parts of RISE Rule, But Uncertainty Continues

On June 24, 2026, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia significantly narrowed the Department of Education’s RISE rule by blocking key restrictions in its revised definition of a “professional degree,” including requirements that programs be doctoral-level, meet certain duration thresholds, and lead to independent, unsupervised practice. This decision restores the broader, longstanding definition of a professional degree and reopens the possibility that programs in nutrition and dietetics, nursing, physician assistant studies, and other health professions may qualify for professional degree status if they meet the statutory criteria. However, the court did not require the Department to classify any specific programs as professional degrees, leaving those determinations to be made on a program-by-program basis. At the same time, the Senate rejected a Congressional Review Act resolution that would have overturned the RISE rule, meaning the broader student loan reforms remain in effect.

While the ruling is a significant victory for higher education advocates and weakens the Department's restrictive framework, important questions remain unresolved. Statutory graduate loan caps and the elimination of Grad PLUS loans are unchanged, and the Department of Education must now determine which programs qualify under the restored definition as it implements the new loan structure. The litigation will continue, creating ongoing uncertainty but also an important opportunity for advocacy. ACEND and the Academy will continue to advocate for the inclusion of nutrition and dietetics graduate degrees within the federal definition of a professional degree, and we will keep programs informed as additional guidance becomes available.