

# 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

### June Town Halls – 2027 Accreditation Standards

ACEND® will be hosting two town halls in June regarding the release of the 2027 Accreditation Standards. The sessions will highlight the changes from the current ACEND Accreditation Standards and provide time for Q&A. The town halls will take place on:

- Wednesday, June 3, 2026 from 11:00 AM -12:30 PM CT
- Thursday, June 4, 2026 from 11:00 AM -12:30 PM CT

The town halls will be recorded and posted on the ACEND website within 1-2 weeks of the sessions. For additional information and to register for these town halls, please click [here](#).

### Dietetics Application Process-Revised Deadline Dates

The Dietetics Application Process (DAP) Task Force and its members thank you for sharing your feedback through the DAP surveys posted on the ACEND website and at the NDEP spring meeting. We appreciate your input.

The Dietetics Application Process (DAP) Task Force met to review the comments that were received through the DAP surveys posted on the ACEND website and feedback received at the NDEP Spring Meeting and discussed possible changes to the process. To better support programs and keep the application process student-centered, the task force agreed to shorten the time between when applicants are

notified and when they must make their decision from 15 days to 10 days. The Task Force believes this change will help reduce stress for both programs and applicants, while still providing applicants with enough time to make an informed decision.

For the 2026-2027 application cycle, the revised deadline dates are as follows:

### **Fall**

- November 1, 2026 - Applicant notification date (last date to notify applicant of decision)
- November 10, 2026 - Applicant decision date (earliest date to require an applicant to make decision on offer)

### **Spring**

- March 1, 2027 - Applicant notification date (last date to notify applicant)
- March 10, 2027 - Applicant decision date (earliest date to require an applicant to make decision on offer)

The resources on the ACEND [website](#) have been updated. **Program directors should check any location where the program may have details regarding DICAS dates.** These may include:

- program websites and sub-pages
- pages on other sites (i.e. graduate school landing pages or advertisements)
- DICAS application configuration, all locations, including the branding page
- brochures and/or other print materials
- planned email communications and templated acceptance letters
- social media posts

## **The Department of Education Issues Final Rule on Graduate and Professional Student Loan Limits**

On May 1, 2026, the U.S. Department of Education issued a [final rule implementing student loan borrowing changes](#). Effective July 1, 2026, the final rule ends most new Graduate PLUS borrowing, establishes fixed annual and lifetime loan limits in place of cost of attendance financing, and revises repayment and rehabilitation rules. The rule also preserves a limited definition of “professional student,” meaning only students in designated professional degree programs, which exclude nutrition and dietetics, qualify for higher loan limits. These changes will significantly impact future federal loan eligibility for students in nutrition and dietetics programs and may have implications for student financing and program affordability.

In light of these changes, ACEND strongly encourages programs to take all reasonable steps to limit costs to students wherever possible. This includes fully utilizing Prior Assessed Learning, accepting appropriate transfer credit, offering efficient curricular pathways, and considering other evidence based strategies to reduce time to completion and student debt. Thoughtful cost containment efforts will be essential to supporting student access and success under the new federal loan

limits.

## Competency Software Discontinuation

The Competency Software was initially introduced to ACEND-accredited programs in 2023, with the intention that it would provide a standard platform for all programs to track student competency completion through rotations, courses, and assessments. After two years of implementation and evaluation, the ACEND Board voted at its March 2026 board meeting to discontinue the Competency Software. Only a small number of ACEND-accredited programs actively use the software, and based on user feedback, the software has been identified as unreliable with limited functionality and difficult to implement, navigate, and maintain. After conducting a thorough evaluation, ACEND has decided to discontinue the use of Competency Software. While we had hoped it would serve as a foundation for supporting our programs' competency tracking and assessment, it became clear that the system does not meet program needs or support the level of usability, functionality, and efficiency required.

The Competency Software will still be available for use until December 31, 2028, but it will be gradually phased out. ACEND staff will continue to support programs during this transition period and will provide guidance to programs using the system on how to download their data. For further questions, please email [education@eatright.org](mailto:education@eatright.org). Thank you for your support and understanding as we navigate this transition away from the Competency Software.

## Updated ACEND International Student Guide Now Available!

ACEND collected responses from program directors during the 2025 annual report regarding the acceptance of international students. Based on these responses, ACEND has updated the *International Student Guide: ACEND–Accredited Nutrition and Dietetics Programs Accepting International Students*. Programs that indicated they wished to share their information are included in the guide.

The guide is available for students and the public in the Students and Advancing Education section of the ACEND [website](#). It is organized by program type and state to make it easier to use. We hope this resource continues to support international students as they apply to nutrition and dietetics programs and pursue the RDN/NDTR credential in the United States.

## ACEND Communication Limited to Program Directors and Designated Administrators

This is a reminder that ACEND only communicates directly with program directors and designated administrators noted in the ACEND Portal. ACEND uses the

ACEND Update to regularly distribute important updates and information to program directors regarding accreditation-related matters. Program directors are encouraged to share any ACEND communication with relevant interested parties within their program, including faculty and preceptors, as appropriate.