

ACEND Accreditation Standards

For Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs (DPD)

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**Accreditation Council
for Education in
Nutrition and Dietetics**

the accrediting agency for the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics



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Updates:

1/26/2018: Combined REs 3.3 and 3.4, Revised RE 4.2, Reversed order of RE 5.1 and 5.2

Standard 1: Program Characteristics and Resources

All programs applying for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) must meet requirements including quality-assurance or oversight by other agencies, organizational structure, financial stability, sufficient resources, the awarding of degrees and/or verification statements, program length and program management.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 1.1** The program must be housed in a college or university located in the U.S. or its territories and accredited in good standing by a U.S. regional institutional accrediting body for higher education.
- 1.2** The program must be integrated within the administrative structure of the sponsoring organization, as evidenced by an organization chart showing the relationship of the dietitian nutritionist education program to other programs/services.
- 1.3** The program must demonstrate that it has the administrative, technical and financial support and the learning resources, physical facilities and support services needed to accomplish its goals. Programs offering pathways (such as Individualized Supervised Practice Pathway) or tracks (such as distance, part-time/full-time, undergraduate/graduate) must document the financial support and learning resources provided to each pathway or track.
 - a. The program must provide a description of the budgeting process for the program that demonstrates financial resources are sufficient to produce the desired short- and long-term program and student outcomes.
 - b. The program must report its maximum enrollment to ensure quality, viability and appropriate use of resources.
- 1.4** The program must award at least a baccalaureate degree and verification statement upon completing program requirements to individuals who enter program with an associate's degree or less.
 - a. If the program admits individuals with a baccalaureate degree or higher, the program must award at least a verification statement to individuals who complete program requirements.
 - b. If the program awards a graduate degree, the nutrition and dietetics-specific knowledge must be achieved through prerequisite or graduate courses required for completion of the graduate degree.
- 1.5** The program director must have the authority, responsibility and sufficient time allocated to manage the program. The program director may have other responsibilities that do not compromise the ability to manage the program. Responsibilities and time allocation for program management are reflected in a formal position description for the program director and approved by an administrator.
 - a. Institutional policies related to faculty roles and workload are applied to the program in a manner that recognizes and supports the academic and practice aspects of the nutrition and dietetics program, including allocating time and/or reducing teaching load for administrative functions provided by the director.
 - b. The program director must:
 1. Have earned at least a master's degree.
 2. Be credentialed as a registered dietitian nutritionist by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.
 3. Have a minimum of three years professional experience post credentialing.

Standard 1: cont.

4. Be a full-time employee of the sponsoring institution as defined by the institution, or a full-time employee of another organization that has been contracted by the sponsoring institution.
 5. Not direct another ACEND-accredited nutrition and dietetics education program.
- c. The program director responsibilities must include, but are not limited to:
1. Provision or delegation of responsibilities to assure year-round coverage of director responsibilities in the absence of the director or in cases where the director's full-time appointment does not cover all 12 months. In programs where the program director assigns some responsibilities to other individuals, the director must ensure that all program director responsibilities are accomplished throughout the year.
 2. Development of policies and procedures for effectively managing all components of the program and to ensure fair, equitable and considerate treatment of prospective and enrolled students (such as program admission, retention and completion policies).
 3. Student recruitment, advisement, evaluation and counseling.
 4. Maintenance of program accreditation, including:
 - a. Timely submission of fees, reports and requests for major program changes;
 - b. Maintenance of the program's student records, including student advising plans and verification statements;
 - c. Maintenance of complaints about the program received from students or others, including disposition of the complaint;
 - d. On-going review of program's curriculum to meet the accreditation standards;
 - e. Communication and coordination with program faculty, preceptors and others involved with the program;
 - f. Facilitation of processes for continuous program evaluation and student learning outcomes assessment and
 - g. Timely submission of required documentation supporting the graduate's eligibility for a Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) credentialing exam.
- 1.6 The program must determine its length (in years) after taking into consideration knowledge and learning activities that students must accomplish and mandates from the program's administration or state legislation. Programs offering pathways or tracks must document any differences that exist in program length among the pathways or tracks.

Standard 2: Consortia

Two or more independent institutions or organizations combining to sponsor a single program are termed a program consortium and must meet additional organizational structure criteria.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 2.1** The consortium must consider itself a single education program.
- 2.2** A formal agreement must exist between the two or more organizations that jointly sponsor the program. The formal agreement among members of the consortium must clearly define financial and other resource contributions of each member to the total program.
- 2.3** One individual must serve as the consortium program director and have primary responsibility for the program and communications with ACEND.
- 2.4** Each member organization in the consortium must designate a coordinator (who may be the program director) for the program within that organization who is employed by the organization.
- 2.5** An organization chart must clearly show the relationship of each member of the consortium to the total program.

Standard 3: Program Mission, Goals and Objectives

The program must have a clearly formulated and publicly stated mission with supporting goals and objectives by which it intends to prepare students for supervised practice to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. The mission, goals and objectives must be congruent and support the program.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 3.1** The program must have a mission that distinguishes it from other programs in the sponsoring organization, is compatible with the mission statement or philosophy of the sponsoring organization and states its preparation of students for supervised practice leading to eligibility for the CDR credentialing exam to become a registered dietitian nutritionist.
- 3.2** The program must have at least two goals focused on program outcomes that are consistent with the program's mission.
- 3.3** The program must set the following program objectives, align them with their program goals and demonstrate that the program is operating in the interest of students and the public:
 - a. Program Specific: The program must establish one or more program specific objectives for each of the program's goals.
 - b. ACEND Required: The program must include the following objectives under one or more of their program's goals. ACEND required objectives must be evaluated annually using an average of data from the previous three years.
 1. Program Completion: The program must develop an objective that states "At least 80% of program students complete program/degree requirements within ___ years (150% of the program length)".
 2. Graduate Application and Acceptance into Supervised Practice:
 1. The program must develop an objective that states "___ percent of program graduates apply for admission to a supervised practice program prior to or within 12 months of graduation".
 2. The program must develop an objective that states "___ percent of program graduates are admitted to a supervised practice program within 12 months of graduation".
 3. Graduate Performance on Registration Exam:
 - a. The program must develop an objective that states "The program's one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%".
 4. Supervised Practice Program Director Satisfaction: The program must develop an objective for supervised practice program director's satisfaction with graduate's preparation for supervised practice.

Standard 4: Program Evaluation and Improvement

The program must continuously evaluate the achievement of its mission, goals and objectives. The program must have an evaluation plan, use the plan to collect data, improve the program based on the findings and update the plan accordingly.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 4.1** An ongoing program evaluation plan must be written, reviewed at least annually, updated as needed with changes documented and must include the following components:
- Each program goal.
 - Objective(s) that will be used to evaluate achievement of each program goal.
 - Qualitative and/or quantitative data needed to determine whether goals and objectives have been achieved.
 - Groups from which data will be obtained; both internal and external stakeholders must be represented (such as graduates, administrators, faculty, preceptors, employers, practitioners, nutrition and dietetics education program directors, faculty from other disciplines and advisory committees).
 - Evaluation methods that will be used to collect the data.
 - Individuals responsible for ensuring that data are collected.
 - Timeline for collecting the necessary data. Data on ACEND-required objectives are to be collected annually.
- 4.2** The program must evaluate itself based on its program evaluation plan and provide evidence that:
- Data on actual program outcomes for each pathway or track are collected separately according to the program evaluation plan, summarized and analyzed by comparing actual achievements with objectives.
 - Data analysis is used to evaluate the extent to which goals and objectives are being achieved.
 - The targets set for program-specified and ACEND-required objectives are met.
 - Program changes have been made to improve outcomes for any objective(s) not meeting the program-specified or ACEND-required target.
 - Programmatic planning and outcomes evaluation are integrated with institutional planning and assessment, as appropriate.
- 4.3** Results of the program evaluation process must be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement relative to components of the program (policies, procedures, curriculum, teaching methods, program length, faculty, preceptors, resources). Short- and long-term strategies must be developed and actions must be taken to maintain program strengths and address areas for improvement identified through the evaluation process.

Standard 5: Curriculum and Learning Activities

The Core Knowledge must be the basis on which the program curriculum and learning activities are built within the context of the mission and goals of the program.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 5.1** The program's curriculum must be designed to ensure the breadth and depth of requisite knowledge needed for entry to supervised practice to become a registered dietitian nutritionist.
- a. The program's curriculum must include the following required components, including prerequisites:
 1. Research methodology, interpretation of research literature and integration of research principles into evidence-based practice
 2. Communication skills sufficient for entry into professional practice
 3. Principles and techniques of effective education, counseling and behavior change theories and techniques
 4. Governance of nutrition and dietetics practice, such as the Scope of Nutrition and Dietetics Practice and the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Nutrition and Dietetics; and interprofessional relationships in various practice settings
 5. Principles of medical nutrition therapy and the Nutrition Care Process
 6. Role of environment, food, nutrition and lifestyle choices in health promotion and disease prevention
 7. Management theories and business principles required to deliver programs and services
 8. Continuous quality management of food and nutrition services
 9. Fundamentals of public policy, including the legislative and regulatory basis of nutrition and dietetics practice
 10. Health care delivery systems (such as accountable care organizations, managed care, medical homes)
 11. Coding and billing of nutrition and dietetics services to obtain reimbursement for services from public or private payers, fee-for-service and value-based payment systems
 12. Food science and food systems, environmental sustainability, techniques of food preparation and development and modification and evaluation of recipes, menus and food products acceptable to diverse populations
 13. Organic chemistry, biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, genetics, microbiology, pharmacology, statistics, logic, nutrient metabolism, integrative and functional nutrition and nutrition across the lifespan
 14. Cultural competence and human diversity; human behavior, psychology, sociology or anthropology

Standard 5: cont.

b. The program's curriculum must prepare students with the following core knowledge:

1. Domain 1. Scientific and Evidence Base of Practice: Integration of scientific information and translation of research into practice.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 1.1 Demonstrate how to locate, interpret, evaluate and use professional literature to make ethical, evidence-based practice decisions.
- KRDN 1.2 Use current information technologies to locate and apply evidence-based guidelines and protocols.
- KRDN 1.3 Apply critical thinking skills.

2. Domain 2. Professional Practice Expectations: Beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors for the professional dietitian nutritionist level of practice.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 2.1 Demonstrate effective and professional oral and written communication and documentation.
- KRDN 2.2 Describe the governance of nutrition and dietetics practice, such as the Scope of Nutrition and Dietetics Practice and the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Nutrition and Dietetics; and describe interprofessional relationships in various practice settings.
- KRDN 2.3 Assess the impact of a public policy position on nutrition and dietetics practice.
- KRDN 2.4 Discuss the impact of health care policy and different health care delivery systems on food and nutrition services.
- KRDN 2.5 Identify and describe the work of interprofessional teams and the roles of others with whom the registered dietitian nutritionist collaborates in the delivery of food and nutrition services.
- KRDN 2.6 Demonstrate an understanding of cultural competence/sensitivity.
- KRDN 2.7 Demonstrate identification with the nutrition and dietetics profession through activities such as participation in professional organizations and defending a position on issues impacting the nutrition and dietetics profession.
- KRDN 2.8 Demonstrate an understanding of the importance and expectations of a professional in mentoring and precepting others.

3. Domain 3. Clinical and Customer Services: Development and delivery of information, products and services to individuals, groups and populations.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 3.1 Use the Nutrition Care Process to make decisions, identify nutrition-related problems and determine and evaluate nutrition interventions.
- KRDN 3.2 Develop an educational session or program/educational strategy for a target population.
- KRDN 3.3 Demonstrate counseling and education methods to facilitate behavior change and enhance wellness for diverse individuals and groups.
- KRDN 3.4 Explain the processes involved in delivering quality food and nutrition services.
- KRDN 3.5 Describe basic concepts of nutritional genomics.

Standard 5: cont.

4. Domain 4. Practice Management and Use of Resources: Strategic application of principles of management and systems in the provision of services to individuals and organizations.

Knowledge

Upon completion of the program, graduates are able to:

- KRDN 4.1 Apply management theories to the development of programs or services.
- KRDN 4.2 Evaluate a budget and interpret financial data.
- KRDN 4.3 Describe the regulation system related to billing and coding, what services are reimbursable by third party payers, and how reimbursement may be obtained.
- KRDN 4.4 Apply the principles of human resource management to different situations.
- KRDN 4.5 Describe safety principles related to food, personnel and consumers.
- KRDN 4.6 Analyze data for assessment and evaluate data to be used in decision-making for continuous quality improvement.

5.2 A curriculum map must be developed that:

- a. Identifies didactic courses and experiential learning experiences, if used, which occur in various settings or practice areas that students will complete to meet the required curriculum components and core knowledge and
- b. Sequentially and logically organizes the progression of didactic courses from introductory to more advanced learning activities and builds on previous knowledge or experience to achieve the expected depth and breadth of knowledge by completion of the program.

5.3 The program's curriculum must provide learning activities to attain the breadth and depth of the required curriculum components and core knowledge. Syllabi for courses taught within the academic unit must include these learning activities with the associated KRDNs.

- a. Learning activities must prepare students for professional practice with patients/clients with various conditions, including, but not limited to overweight and obesity; endocrine disorders; cancer; malnutrition and cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and renal diseases.
- b. Learning activities must prepare students to implement the Nutrition Care Process with various populations and diverse cultures, including infants, children, adolescents, adults, pregnant/lactating females and older adults.
- c. Learning activities must use a variety of educational approaches necessary for delivery of curriculum content, to meet learner needs and to facilitate learning objectives.

Standard 6: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Curriculum Improvement

The program must continuously assess achievement of student learning outcomes (SLO). The program must have a written SLO assessment plan, use the plan to collect and analyze data, improve the program based on the findings and update the plan accordingly. The results of the SLO assessment must be used to evaluate and improve the curriculum to enhance the quality of education provided.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 6.1** An SLO assessment plan must be written, reviewed at least annually, updated as needed and include the following components:
- a. Core knowledge statements.
 - b. Learning objectives that state specific activities and qualitative or quantitative target measures that will be used to assess overall student achievement of core knowledge.
 - c. Didactic courses and/or experiential learning experiences in which assessment will occur.
 - d. Individuals responsible for ensuring that assessment occurs.
 - e. Timeline for collecting formative and summative assessment data. Programs are expected to assess at least one SLO from each domain annually. Within the accreditation cycle, all SLOs must be assessed at least once. SLOs that are not met must be assessed annually until resolved.
- 6.2** The program must document that data on achievement of learning outcomes are collected, summarized and analyzed according to the program's SLO assessment plan.
- 6.3** Formal curriculum review must routinely occur and:
- a. Use results of program evaluation and student learning assessment to determine strengths and areas for improvement.
 - b. Include input from students and other stakeholders as appropriate.
 - c. Include assessment of comparability of educational experiences and consistency of learning outcomes when different courses, delivery methods (such as distance education), pathways or tracks or supervised practice sites are used to accomplish the same educational objectives.
 - d. Result in actions to maintain or improve student learning.

Standard 7: Faculty and Preceptors

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, including the program director and practitioners providing experiential learning, if used, must show evidence of continued competency appropriate to teaching responsibilities, through professional work experience, graduate education, continuing education, research or other activities leading to professional growth and the advancement of their profession.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 7.1** The program must provide evidence that qualified and appropriately credentialed faculty are sufficient to ensure implementation of the program's curriculum and the achievement of the program objectives and student learning outcomes.
- 7.2** The requirements for program faculty and practitioners, if used, must include:
- a. Program faculty, including the program director, must meet the sponsoring organization's criteria for appointment and have sufficient education in a field related to the subject in which they teach or must meet the institution's policy for education and/or equivalent experience.
 - b. Practitioners, if used, must be licensed, as appropriate to meet state and federal regulations, or credentialed, as needed, for the area in which they are supervising students.
 - c. Program faculty, including the program director, and practitioners if used, must show evidence of continued competence appropriate to their teaching or experiential learning responsibilities through professional work, graduate education, continuing education, scholarship/research or other activities leading to professional growth in the advancement of their profession.
 - d. The program must have a process for the periodic review, including input from students, of the effectiveness of faculty and practitioners, if used.
- 7.3** The orientation and training requirements for program faculty must include:
- a. New program faculty members, instructors, teaching assistants and practitioners, if used, must be provided orientation to the mission, goals, objectives and educational philosophy of the nutrition and dietetics program.
 - b. Program faculty members, instructors, teaching assistants and practitioners, if used, must receive feedback, and training as needed, based on program evaluation and feedback from students.
 - c. Program faculty members, instructors, teaching assistants and practitioners, if used, must receive training on the ACEND Standards and core knowledge requirements.

Standard 8: Supervised Practice/Experiential Learning Sites

Experiential learning is not required in Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs. However, if students are required by the program to complete experiential learning activities at facilities outside the sponsoring institution, the program must have policies and procedures to maintain written agreements with the institutions, organizations and/or agencies providing those experiential learning activities. The policies and procedures must address the selection and periodic evaluation of adequacy and appropriateness of facilities, to ensure that sites are able to provide learning experiences compatible with the learning that students are expected to achieve.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 8.1** If students are required by the program to complete experiential learning activities at facilities outside the sponsoring institution:
- a. The institution/organization must establish policies that outline the issuance and maintenance of written affiliation agreements and the selection criteria, evaluation process and timeline for evaluation of adequacy and appropriateness of experiential learning sites.
 - b. Agreements must delineate the rights and responsibilities of both the sponsoring organization and affiliating institutions, organizations and/or agencies.
 - c. Agreements must be signed by individuals with appropriate institutionally-assigned authority in advance of placing students.
 - d. The institution/organization must clarify in its policies any situation where affiliation agreements are not required (such as a site being part of the program's organization).

Standard 9: Information to Prospective Students and the Public

The program must provide clear, consistent and accurate information about all program requirements to prospective students and the public at large.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 9.1** Program policies, procedures, practices, and materials related to student recruitment and admission must comply with state and federal laws and regulations.
- 9.2** All sources of information for prospective students and the public must provide current and consistent information and each information source must provide a reference to where complete program information can be found.
- 9.3** Information about the program must be readily available to prospective students and the public via a website and must include at least the following:
 - a. Accreditation status, including the full name, address, phone number and website of ACEND must appear on the program's website homepage.
 - b. Description of the program, including program's mission, goals and objectives.
 - c. A statement that program outcomes data are available upon request.
 - d. Information about the requirements and process to become a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN), including education, supervised practice, passage on the CDR credentialing exam and state certification/licensure, if applicable; and how the program fits into the process.
 - e. Cost to student, such as estimated expenses for travel, housing, books, liability insurance, medical exams, drug testing, background checks, verification of student identity (such as for distance learning), uniforms and other program-specific costs, in addition to any institutional fees and tuition.
 - f. Application and admission requirements for all pathways and tracks for which the program is accredited.
 - g. Academic and program calendar or schedule.
 - h. Graduation and program completion requirements for all pathways and tracks for which the program is accredited.
 - i. Availability of financial aid and loan deferments (federal or private), scholarships, stipends and other monetary support, if applicable.
 - j. Computer matching information, if applicable.
 - k. Guidance about distance education components, if applicable.
 - l. If students are required to locate their own experiential learning sites and/or practitioners with whom to do experiential learning activities, requirements for this must be described

Standard 10: Policies and Procedures

The program must have written policies and procedures that protect the rights of students and are consistent with current institutional practice.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- 10.1** Programs are required to have policies and procedures for program operations including:
- a. Admission Requirements: Programs must establish criteria to determine student potential for success in the program.
 - b. Student Performance Monitoring: The program's system of monitoring student performance must provide for the early detection of academic difficulty and must take into consideration professional and ethical behavior and academic integrity of the student.
 - c. Student Retention: Students with a minimal chance of success in the program must be counseled into career paths that are appropriate to their ability.
- 10.2** The following policies and procedures specific to nutrition and dietetics programs must be provided to students, such as in a program handbook or on a program website. Programs offering pathways or tracks must document policies that differ between each pathway or track:
- a. Insurance requirements, including those for professional liability.
 - b. Liability for safety in travel to or from assigned areas.
 - c. Injury or illness while in a facility for experiential learning.
 - d. Drug testing and criminal background checks, if required by the experiential learning sites.
 - e. Requirement that students doing experiential learning, if required, must not be used to replace employees.
 - f. When students are paid compensation as part of the program, policies must be in place to define the compensation practices.
 - g. The process for filing and handling complaints about the program from students and practitioners providing experiential learning, if used, that includes recourse to an administrator other than the program director and prevents retaliation. The program must maintain a record of student complaints for a period of seven years, including the resolution of complaints.
 - h. Process for submission of written complaints to ACEND related to program noncompliance with ACEND accreditation standards after all other options with the program and institution have been exhausted.
 - i. If the program grants credit, experiential learning hours or direct assessment for students' prior learning, it must define procedures for evaluating equivalence of prior education or experience. Otherwise, the program must indicate that it has no policy for assessing prior learning or competence.

Standard 10: cont.

- j. Formal assessment of student learning and regular reports of performance and progress.
- k. Program retention and remediation procedures; students must have access to remedial instruction such as tutorial support.
- l. Disciplinary/termination procedures.
- m. Graduation and/or program completion requirements for all pathways and tracks including maximum amount of time allowed for completing program requirements applicable at the time student enrolls.
- n. Verification statement requirements and procedures ensuring that all students completing requirements established by the program receive verification statements.
- o. Programs using distance instruction and/or online testing must employ strategies to verify the identity of a student.
- p. Withdrawal and refund of tuition and fees, if applicable.
- q. Program schedule, vacations, holidays and leaves of absence.
- r. Protection of privacy of student information, including information used for identifying students in distance learning.
- s. Student access to their own student file.
- t. Access to student support services, including health services, counseling and testing and financial aid resources.