Graduate Degree Registration Eligibility Requirement
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

October 2022

Commission on Dietetic Registration
the credentialing agency for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Background

Representatives from Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), Council on Future Practice (CFP), Education Committee of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Board of Directors, and Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) Dietetic Practice Group (DPG) reached consensus at a Joint Meeting on January 17-19, 2013 and began planning how to implement the change for a graduate degree which integrates supervised practice into the curriculum and successful completion of an examination based on a practice analysis of qualified individuals to enter practice as a Registered Dietitian (RD) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN).

A joint decision was made by the ACEND, CDR, CFP, Academy BOD Education Committee, and NDEP DPG on a Consensus Agreement for the Graduate Level RD or RDN as recorded in the March 25, 2013, Final Report of the Joint Meeting of ACEND, CDR, CFP, Academy Education Committee, and NDEP DPG.

Following the January 2013 Joint Meeting, CDR was asked to consider and act on Consensus Agreement #1 and Consensus Recommendation #2 from the March 25, 2013, Final Report of Joint Consensus Meeting.

1. Consensus Agreement: Graduate Level RD or RDN
The graduate level degree will prepare individuals to enter the profession as an RD or RDN. This degree will be based on new roles, knowledge, skills, and curriculum needed to meet client and customer needs for food and nutrition services. The new graduate degree will address the diversity of the profession's practice areas and help develop leaders in advancing the profession. Academic programs preparing the RD or RDN will collaborate with other healthcare professionals and scientists to educate nutrition and dietetics professionals.

Council on Future Practice Proposed Recommendation: Elevate the educational preparation for the future entry-level RD to a minimum of a graduate degree from an ACEND-accredited program.

- Currently credentialed RDs will be able to continue practice and be recertified without obtaining a graduate degree.
- The degree requirement for entry into the profession should provide flexibility among institutions of higher learning.

The **Council on Future Practice Visioning Report** was released in Fall 2012. The full report is available at the following link: http://cdrnet.org/pub/file.cfm?item_type=xm_file&id=10369. The Visioning Report was also published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in the December 2013 edition.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why was the degree requirement for entry-level registration examination eligibility changed to a graduate degree?**
   The joint decision made by the ACEND, CDR, CFP, Academy BOD Education Committee, and NDEP DPG was based on the recommendations of the Council on Future Practice Visioning Report (2012). The recommendation was made based on the fact that almost all other health care professions had already increased entry-level educational standards beyond bachelor's degrees and that moving the entry-level RD education to a graduate level is consistent with the knowledge, skills, and research base required in the field of nutrition and dietetics.

   It was agreed that a graduate degree would better prepare individuals to enter the profession as an RD or RDN based on the roles, knowledge, skills, and curriculum required to meet client and customer needs for food and nutrition services. The graduate degree will address the diversity of the profession's practice areas and help develop leaders in advancing the profession.

2. **How did CDR determine the 2024 implementation deadline date?**
   CDR calculated a five to six-year window for those entering a DPD program in 2014 to complete the DPD program followed by two years to find and complete a supervised practice program and then two years as a cushion for any unforeseen circumstances that would interfere with submission of the registration eligibility application by January 1, 2024.

3. **Will the registration examination content change with the new graduate degree requirement?**
   Since the content of the entry-level registration examination is based on the results of a practice audit, not on the degree content or level, the graduate degree requirement will not impact examination content until there is a noted change in practice. Practice changes are captured in CDRs recurring practice audits.

4. **Will current RDs who do not have a graduate degree have to obtain a graduate degree by the deadline date?**
   No. The deadline only applies to initial applicants for registration eligibility who apply on or after January 1, 2024 to take the registration examination for dietitians.

5. **Will the change in degree requirement for the RD or RDN certification impact state licensure?**
   Requirements for licensure of dietitians is a state-based activity. Review licensure information at "Licensure Statutes and Information by State" at www.cdrnet.org/licensure. Refer questions to your individual State Licensure Board (links to each State Board are available in the list).

6. **Will former* registered dietitians, who do not have a graduate degree, have to obtain a graduate degree if they are applying to <u>reinstate</u> registered status before January 1, 2024?**
   No. Individuals who were credentialed as RDs and lost their credential are still exam eligible and therefore can apply for exam reauthorization without meeting any a additional academic, didactic, or supervised practice requirements.

*Former RDs are those individuals who were registered prior to January 1, 2024 and lost their registered status by voluntarily terminating their status, by not paying annual maintenance fees, or not completing Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) recertification requirements.

7. **Will individuals who are already registered be required by CDR to obtain a graduate degree?**
   No. Individuals who are already registered will not be required by CDR to obtain a graduate degree.

8. **Will individuals who establish eligibility with a baccalaureate degree prior to January 1, 2024, but do not pass the registration examination, have to meet the new requirement?**
   No. Provided registration eligibility is established prior to January 1, 2024, a graduate degree will not be required.

9. **What is the last day for program directors to submit applicants for eligibility to take registration examination for dietitians who have only completed a bachelor's degree?**
   Graduates of ACEND accredited supervised practice programs who want to become exam eligible with a bachelor's degree, must be submitted to CDR by the program director by 12:00 midnight, CT on December 31, 2023. CDR staff will process candidate class submissions received between December 23 and December 31, 2023, from January 2-5, 2024.

   If a final academic transcript for a December 2023 graduate is delayed until 2024, the program director should make arrangements with their university's registrar to obtain an original letter confirming the candidate's degree and 2023 conferral date. In the event that confirmation of degree completion which was achieved in 2023 cannot be obtained until 2024, program directors should email cdrexams@eatright.org requesting consideration of these circumstances and attach documentation confirming exam eligibility requirements were met in 2023. Individuals whom CDR can confirm met all eligibility requirements in 2023 will then be processed and approved in CDR's Registration Eligibility Processing System (REPS).

10. **Will DTR eligibility requirements move to a baccalaureate degree?**
    No. CDR did not change the requirements for eligibility to take the registration examination for dietetic technicians to the minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

11. **What does the statement, "all other entry-level dietitian registration eligibility requirements remain the same" mean?**
    The current DPD and supervised practice requirements (CP, DI or ISPP), remain in effect. The only change is the degree level moving from minimum baccalaureate degree to minimum graduate degree. The foreign degree equivalency requirement also remains in effect.

12. **Does the graduate degree need to be in any specific major to qualify an individual for registration eligibility?**
    Just as the current bachelor's degree requirement may be met in any area, the same holds for the graduate degree, provided it is granted by a United States Department of Education (USDE) accredited institution, or foreign equivalent.

13. **Is there data that illustrates the impact of the practice doctorate requirement on the diversity of students in either physical therapy or pharmacy?**
    Other health profession accreditors (Physical Therapy, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy) who have moved their education requirements to a graduate level, did not see a decrease in student diversity in their professions. In pharmacy, for example, under-represented minority students (Black, Hispanic, Native American) were 10.6% of the student population in 1988, prior to implementing their practice doctorate degree requirement, and 11.4% in 2012 after implementation. ACEND Standards encourage programs to foster diversity in their student selection process. ACEND currently monitors and will continue to monitor student diversity in all accredited programs.

14. **Does the graduate degree have to be completed after the supervised practice program?**
    No. The graduate degree may be completed at any time prior to applying for registration eligibility.