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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Recommended Model for Future Education in Nutrition and Dietetics

July, 2015

## Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics

the accrediting agency for the  
 Academy of Nutrition  
and Dietetics

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In February 2015, ACEND® released the *Rationale Document*, which included recommendations for the future education of nutrition and dietetics practitioners. Data collected by ACEND revealed an emergence of non-traditional practice settings for the field of nutrition and dietetics, an expanding scope of practice including an increased focus on disease prevention, integrative healthcare, interprofessional practice and the need for more complex knowledge and skills. To address these future practice needs, ACEND is identifying the competencies that graduates of the new degree programs will need to demonstrate and is developing accreditation standards for programs at the associate's, bachelor's and master's levels. The goal is to create standards that will allow programs the flexibility and innovation to determine how new programs are structured, how the standards are met and how the competencies are demonstrated. ACEND's recommendations focus on future practice and the education required to prepare students for this future practice. ACEND plans to release standards for the future model associate's, bachelor's and master's level programs in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes decisions about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs.

ACEND collected opinions from stakeholders about the recommended future model for education through an online survey, reviewed survey results collected by other educators and received educator feedback at area meetings of the Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors. This FAQ was compiled to answer questions and address concerns that have been raised about the recommended model. The *Rationale Document* is a living document that will be updated as new information becomes available. It will be updated to include the summary of the comments received.

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## Future Model

### What exactly is ACEND's recommended model for future education in nutrition and dietetics?

ACEND is recommending a new model for future education of nutrition and dietetics practitioners that includes moving the educational preparation of entry-level dietitian nutritionists to the master's level (who will have master's level preparation in skill sets that include professional research and practice skills; teamwork and communication skills; clinical client care skills; community and population health skills; leadership, management and organization skills; and food and foodservice systems), moving the educational preparation of entry-level nutrition and dietetics technicians to the bachelor's level and creating a new program preparing nutrition health workers at the associate's degree level. These changes in educational preparation are recommended to best prepare practitioners for the more complex and diverse practice expectations of the future. Complete details about the recommended model and the data supporting the recommendations can be found in the *Rationale Document* at [www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards](http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards)

## **Future Model (cont.)**

### **What data support this recommended model?**

The *Rationale Document*, published by ACEND, provides the environmental scan information and summarizes data collected from a wide array of stakeholders that supports the recommended model. The environmental scan included review of more than 100 relevant articles detailing research data, industry trends and the changing health care and business environments. In addition, four different data collection projects (focus groups, structured interviews, and two online surveys) were completed to gather information from stakeholder groups about future practice in nutrition in dietetics. More than 10,000 responses from practitioners, employers, educators, students, administrators and professionals working with nutrition and dietetics practitioners were evaluated throughout the process by a university-based statistician. A competency gap analysis was completed to determine gaps between the current competencies and expected practice of nutrition and dietetics in the future. These gaps provided justification for the new education model that will be based on competencies to be demonstrated by future nutrition and dietetics practitioners. The *Rationale Document*, which provides details on these results, can be viewed at [www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards](http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards).

### **What does it mean when it says that the new model will be competency based?**

ACEND will develop competencies expected of graduates of each degree program. The program will decide how students will demonstrate achievement of these competencies.

### **The new model includes integrated experience at each academic degree level, what does that mean?**

ACEND intends that the experience components will be integrated with the coursework to prepare students to demonstrate the competencies for each of the academic degree level programs (associate's, bachelor's, master's). ACEND will encourage innovation in how this experiential learning and its integration are done and will use the pilot programs to help define options for how this integration might be accomplished. Types of integrated experiences that may be used will be included in the draft standards to be released in 2016. Although the coursework and experience will be integrated, there are likely to be many models of how such integration might occur.

### **How many hours of integrated experience are envisioned for each academic degree level?**

ACEND is still developing the competencies for each degree level, which will influence the amount of time needed for competency achievement. This information is expected to be available for public comment in 2016.

### **Integrated experience is indicated for each recommended program, will this require more preceptors?**

ACEND will define options for integrated experience in the draft standards to be released in 2016. Projections on the numbers of preceptors that will be needed in the future will be determined by programs as they plan their integrated experiences to develop the needed graduate competencies; the exact numbers of preceptors needed for the future is unknown at this time. Many professionals understand the importance and professional obligation to help prepare future practitioners and have joined the Find-A-Preceptor database at [www.eatrightpro.org/preceptors](http://www.eatrightpro.org/preceptors). ACEND will continue to work with Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in finding ways to promote the importance of nutrition and dietetics professionals assuming their roles as preceptors.

### **Can you clarify ACEND's vision for educational preparation to work in community nutrition practice in the future?**

The environmental scan and the stakeholder data suggest there will be growth in the types and numbers of positions needed to work with individuals in community settings in the future to better address nutrition-related management of chronic disease, expand efforts towards disease prevention, and support efforts to reduce health disparities. The ACEND model for future education in nutrition and dietetics includes preparation for work in community nutrition at all degree levels; it did not indicate that only an associate's degree is necessary for those desiring a career in community nutrition. Because of confusion raised by the title, community health and nutrition assistant, ACEND has changed the title to nutrition health worker. Additional data collected through literature review, focus groups and structured interviews about this type of a community-based worker have been collected and will be added to the *Rationale Document*. This associate's degree prepared nutrition health worker is envisioned as a community-based position that would assist the master's trained RDN and bachelor's prepared NDTR working in the community to address consumer nutrition needs.

## **Future Model (cont.)**

### **Will ACEND require the director of a master's degree program to hold a doctoral degree in order to be accredited? Will preceptors need to hold the MS degree?**

ACEND is reviewing these concerns as it develops the standards for director, faculty and preceptor credentials for future nutrition and dietetics programs. Currently almost half (42%) of dietetics education program directors hold a doctoral degree; with university-based DPD programs being more likely (57%) than internships (28%) to have a program director with a doctoral degree. The master's degree program standards, which ACEND anticipates releasing in 2017, will specify requirements for program directors, faculty members and preceptors but institutions may have their own requirements that need to be met in addition to the ACEND standards. ACEND will work with programs to determine ways to best demonstrate competence needed to serve as program directors, faculty and preceptors.

### **What do the data suggest for future practice of the registered dietitian nutritionist?**

The data (environmental scan, focus groups, structured interviews and two online surveys) collected by ACEND revealed an emergence of non-traditional practice settings for the field of nutrition and dietetics, such as telenutrition, and an expanding scope of practice for those working in the profession including an increased focus on disease prevention and integrative healthcare and the need for more knowledge in emerging areas such as genomics, telehealth, behavioral counseling, prescribing diets and informatics. This work requires that health care professionals work more interprofessionally. Practitioners need to be able to read and apply scientific knowledge and interpret this knowledge for the public. Many of the stakeholders identified gaps in current competencies in areas of research, leadership/management skills, cultural care, basic food and culinary preparation and sustainability. Employers indicated the need for improved communication skills in nutrition and dietetics practitioners and an improved ability to understand the patient's community and cultural ecosystem. Employers also expressed a desire for stronger organizational leadership, project management, communication, patient assessment and practice skills and indicated that more time might be needed in the preparation of future nutrition and dietetics practitioners to assure application of knowledge and demonstration of skills needed for effective practice. After thorough review of these data, ACEND recommended that a minimum of a master's degree will be needed to adequately prepare graduates with the complexity, depth and breadth of knowledge and skill needed for future practice as a registered dietitian nutritionist.

### **Graduate degrees often focus on a specific area rather than a general area, why is ACEND recommending a generalist preparation at the master's level?**

ACEND has recommended preparation at the master's level to allow sufficient time to prepare graduates with the complex set of skills, more in-depth level of understanding and higher levels of critical thinking expected of practitioners in the future. Because stakeholders expressed the need for future nutrition and dietetics practitioners to be prepared with a broad spectrum of skills (professional research and practice skills; teamwork and communication skills; clinical client care skills; community and population health skills; leadership, management and organization skills; and food and foodservice systems), ACEND used the term "generalist" to describe it. ACEND is still working on the standards and competencies for these new degrees and expects to have them ready for public comment in 2016. ACEND currently does not specify the focus of the degree; the standards identify the knowledge and competencies expected of graduates. Although the standards for the master's level program have not yet been identified, ACEND does not anticipate specifying a focus for the master's degree. This would mean that programs could have a special focus for their master's degree program and the degree could be in any field, as long as, graduates demonstrate the competencies required. Further, professions, like nutrition and dietetics, have distinct bodies of knowledge that the public can associate with the individual professional that differentiates them from other professions, vocations and trades. Pre-professional specialization could produce confusion among the public and other health care providers.

### **The *Rationale Document* provided recommendations for future degree levels for nutrition and dietetics practitioners, but it did not differentiate the roles at those degree levels. When will we know more about what competencies are expected of graduates of at each degree level?**

ACEND is currently working with a group of subject matter experts from education and diverse areas of practice in nutrition and dietetics to help develop proposed competencies for each degree level. These competencies will be reviewed by first-line reviewers and will go through a validation process before they are released in 2016 for public comment by all stakeholders.

## **Future Model (cont.)**

### **Does a student need to complete one degree level before entering the program at the next highest degree level?**

The ACEND recommended future model for education visions each degree level as independent programs, which would allow students to enter at any degree level, providing they met the program's admission requirements. Programs would establish their prerequisite requirements and the processes to be used for evaluation of prior learning.

### **What impact will the new model have on student diversity in nutrition and dietetics programs?**

Ethnic diversity in student enrollment in ACEND accredited programs has increased over the past 10 years. Most notably, the number of Hispanic students has nearly doubled. ACEND talked with other health profession accreditors (Physical Therapy, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy) who have moved their education requirements to a graduate level and learned that this change did not decrease student diversity in those 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. Diversity of students currently enrolled in dietetic internships combined with a graduate degree (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 9%) and in coordinated programs at the graduate level (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 11%) is similar to the diversity of students in dietetic internship programs that do not offer a graduate degree (males = 8%; under-represented minorities = 9%). The recommended future model of education includes preparation for careers in nutrition and dietetics at associate, bachelor and graduate degree levels allowing students many options for entry into future nutrition and dietetics careers and facilitating professional growth and development through subsequent degree levels. 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.

## **Program Impact**

### **The idea of building on degrees is mentioned; however the advanced degree doesn't need to be in nutrition.**

#### **How does building occur?**

ACEND will identify competencies for each degree level. ACEND currently does not specify what the degree must be in, only that programs need to be able to demonstrate how their students are meeting the required competencies. Although it is expected that each degree level in the recommended model will build to some extent on competencies of the previous level, it is not anticipated that students will need to have graduated from an ACEND accredited program at the previous degree level. Each program will set the prerequisite requirements for entry into the program and will be responsible for ensuring that its graduates achieve the competencies specified for that degree level program

### **The recommended model has preparation of dietitians occurring at the graduate level in the future; does that mean that my Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) will need to close?**

Although ACEND is recommending that future dietitian nutritionist programs be master's degree programs with integrated experience, DPD programs are not being discontinued at this time. In 2017, ACEND will release revisions to the 2012 Standards for Didactic Programs, which will continue at the bachelor's degree level. ACEND also plans to release standards for the future model bachelor's degree level nutrition and dietetic technician program and master's level dietitian nutritionist program in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes decisions about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. If a decision is made to discontinue accreditation of DPD programs in the future, existing DPD programs would need to determine at that time whether to convert to the new bachelor's or master's degree standards or to close.

## **Program Impact (cont.)**

### **I currently have a master's degree program with a dietetic internship (DI); are there any changes I will need to make?**

ACEND has not yet completed the standards and competencies that will be expected from those completing a future model master's degree. ACEND plans to release standards for the future model master's dietitian nutritionist program in 2017. Directors of existing master's degree DI programs will be able to evaluate the content of their programs against the new standards and competencies. The new graduate degree level standards, which will include knowledge and experiential learning requirements, will be released for pilot programs to voluntarily adopt. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes a decision about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. Existing master's DI programs may become a pilot program and voluntarily adopt the new master's level standards or can continue as a master's DI program under the current standards unless or until changes are made in future accreditation standards.

### **The recommended model indicates that knowledge and experiential learning will be integrated in master's level programs preparing generalist dietitian nutritionists; does that mean my free-standing Dietetic Internship (DI) will need to close?**

Although ACEND is recommending that future dietitian nutritionist programs be master's degree programs with integrated experience, DI programs are not being discontinued at this time. In 2017, ACEND will release revisions to the 2012 Standards for Internship Programs; existing DI programs will continue to be accredited under those ACEND standards. ACEND also plans to release standards for the future model master's dietitian nutritionist program in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes a decision about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. If a decision is made to discontinue accreditation of DI programs in the future, existing DI programs would need to determine at that time whether to collaborate with an academic program to provide the integrated experience component for the new bachelor's or master's degree program standards or to close the program. ACEND will be evaluating pilot programs for innovative ways of integrating the knowledge and experiential components and sharing those models with educators.

### **The recommended model does not include the dietetic technician program at the associate's level; does that mean that my associate's degree Dietetic Technician (DT) program will need to close?**

Although ACEND is recommending that future nutrition and dietetic technicians be prepared at the bachelor's degree level, associate level DT programs are not being discontinued at this time. In 2017, ACEND will release revisions to the 2012 Standards for Technician Education programs, which will continue at the associate's degree level. ACEND also plans to release standards for the future model associate's and bachelor's degree programs in 2017 for programs to voluntarily adopt as pilot programs. Outcomes data on graduates of the pilot programs will be collected and analyzed before ACEND makes a decision about implementation of the recommended future model for all programs. If a decision is made to discontinue accreditation of associate degree DT programs in the future, existing associate level DT programs would need to determine at that time whether to elevate their DT program to the bachelor's degree level to meet the new bachelor's level standards, change their existing associate's degree program to meet the new associate's degree nutrition health worker program standards, or close.

### **How does the new baccalaureate degree differ from the existing DPD and DTR programs?**

The competencies and standards for the new baccalaureate degree have not yet been finalized, so all of the differences are not yet apparent; however, it is expected that the knowledge and skills needed for future practice exceed those of current practice. One difference that is known is the expectation that the recommended future baccalaureate degree program will include experiential learning as does the 2012 Technician Education Standards requirements and will prepare the baccalaureate graduate for positions requiring this knowledge and skill. The proposed competency statements for the new baccalaureate degree program will be released for public comment in 2016 and will clarify the differences in the expected skills of the two practitioners.

## **Program Impact (cont.)**

### **How will the education of the dietitian nutritionist at the master's level differ from that of the current baccalaureate dietitian nutritionist?**

While the specific competencies at the master's level have not been determined, the graduate program curriculum will be developed to align with stakeholder feedback. Stakeholders have indicated the need for a generalist dietitian nutritionist who has a more complex and deeper breadth of knowledge, stronger critical thinking ability, and additional skills to address the expanding scope of practice. Areas of the curriculum such as research, management and leadership, patient assessment, prescriptive authority, interprofessional work, counseling, critical thinking and behavior change will likely be strengthened.

### **Will the standards for the future model programs specify specific courses and procedures that programs need to follow?**

ACEND has not yet completed the standards and competencies that will be expected from those offering future education programs. ACEND is planning to identify the competencies that graduates of the new degree programs will need to achieve, but will allow programs the flexibility and innovation to determine how those programs are structured, how the standards are met and how the competencies are demonstrated.

## **Timeline**

### **Will my program need to come into compliance with these new degree-based standards by the next review by ACEND?**

Existing programs will continue to be reviewed and accredited under the current program standards that will be revised and released in 2017. When ACEND releases the standards and competencies for the future education model programs (also planned for 2017), programs may volunteer to serve as pilot programs to adopt these new standards. Those programs selected for the piloting phase will be evaluated based on the future education model program standards.

### **Can you provide a timeline for the development and release of the standards and competencies for the recommended future model of education?**

ACEND envisions the following timeline for the continued development and release of the recommended standards and competencies for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs.

- Summer/Fall, 2015 - Subject matter experts develop draft competencies for graduates of the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs.
- Fall 2015 – First line reviewers provide feedback on draft competencies.
- Spring 2016 – Consultant conducts validation study of draft competencies.
- Spring 2016 –ACEND develops proposed standards for future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs.
- Summer/Fall 2016 – ACEND releases proposed standards and competencies for future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs for public comment.
- FNCE 2016 – ACEND discusses and gathers input on proposed standards and competencies for future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs.
- Fall 2016 - ACEND revises proposed standards and competencies for future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs and releases them for a second round of public comment.
- Spring 2017 - ACEND revises standards and competencies for future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs and releases them for voluntary adoption.

## **Timeline (cont.)**

### **It sounds like there will be multiple sets of standards released in 2017, how does a program know which one they should follow?**

ACEND expects to release two different sets of standards in 2017. The first will be the 2017 ACEND Accreditation Standards for Didactic Programs (DP), Internship Programs (IP), Dietetic Education (DE) and Technician Education (TE) programs. The U.S. Department of Education, which recognizes ACEND as a specialized program accreditor, requires that ACEND standards are reviewed and revised as needed every five years, thus a revision of the 2012 ACEND Accreditation Standards will be released in 2017. Compliance with these standards will be required of all existing programs. The second set of standards to be released in 2017 will be the standards for the new associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs in the recommended future education model. Currently accredited programs will not be required to adhere to these new standards, rather programs will be allowed to voluntarily adopt these new degree standards as pilot programs. Only these pilot programs would be evaluated under the new future education model standards; all other programs would continue with their accreditation under the 2017 ACEND Accreditation Standards. ACEND will collect outcomes data from these pilot programs and their graduates in order to inform future accreditation standard requirements.

### **The *Rationale Document* only includes the recommended levels of degrees; when will there be standards and competencies for these degrees?**

The ACEND Standards Committee is working on developing the standards and competencies for the associate, bachelor and master's level degrees. Subject matter experts began meeting in June, 2015 to develop the draft competencies. These draft competencies will be assessed by first line reviewers and then undergo a validation study. Program standards also will be developed and all will be released for public comment in 2016.

### **The current recommendations also include high school and doctoral levels; will standards and competencies for those programs also be developed and released for comment in 2016?**

Although the recommended model includes high school and doctoral levels, standards and competencies for those programs will not be developed at this time. Further exploration is needed to determine the viability of accrediting programs at the high school and doctorate levels.

## **Credentialing**

### **Will a credential be available for each degree level?**

The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) ultimately has responsibility for credentialing decisions. CDR initiates new certifications based on surveys (practice audits) of nutrition and dietetics practice roles. The results of the practice audits are used to develop the certification examination content specifications.

### **I am a registered dietitian who does not have a graduate degree, will I need to get my master's degree?**

CDR makes decisions on the criteria for the earning and maintaining the RDN credential. The CDR FAQ on Graduate Degree Registration Eligibility Requirements, available on the CDR website [www.cdrnet.org](http://www.cdrnet.org), indicates that current RDNs, who do not have a graduate degree, will not have to obtain a graduate degree. The January 1, 2024 deadline for having a graduate degree only applies to initial applicants for registration eligibility.

### **How will the verification statement process work with the new CDR requirement? How will it work under the future education standards?**

The verification process under the future education model is expected to remain similar to the current practice. CDR will require verification of completion of ACEND accredited programs for eligibility to sit for the NDTR and RDN registration exams.

## Credentialing (cont.)

**ACEND has recommended a new model for education, but has not mandated a date for program adoption; CDR has mandated that anyone taking the registration examination for dietitian nutritionists after January 1, 2024 will need to have a master's degree. Why are ACEND and CDR not using the same implementation date?**

To maintain their recognition as specialized accrediting and credentialing agencies, ACEND and CDR are required to function as autonomous agencies when making their decisions on education program accreditation and credentialing requirements. ACEND's role is to determine the competencies required of nutrition and dietetics practitioners and to articulate these competencies and the standards that programs, preparing practitioners with these competencies, need to meet. The ACEND recommendations for future education in nutrition and dietetics and the CDR graduate degree dietitian nutritionist registration eligibility requirement do not conflict; both support that future practice as an RDN will require preparation at the master's degree level. However, because of decisions made independently by the respective boards of the two groups, the process and timeline for implementation differ.

## Additional Topics

**How will stakeholders be kept informed through the remainder of the development of the future model standards and competencies?**

ACEND is involving stakeholders (practitioners, educators, employers, administrators, students) at each step of the process and seeks input on recommendations on each step in attempt to be very transparent about the process. Information is stored on the ACEND Standards Committee webpage ([www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards](http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards)). The *Rationale Document* is a living document that is updated with information at each stage of the process. For example, results from the qualitative analysis of public comments received will be added to the *Rationale Document*. ACEND will begin sending out monthly updates to stakeholders as well. Any questions or comments about the recommended future model and the process being followed can be emailed to [acend@eatright.org](mailto:acend@eatright.org).

**What impact will the recommended future education model have on job availability and salaries of nutrition and dietetics practitioners?**

ACEND's recommendations for future education of nutrition and dietetics practitioners were based on data collected by ACEND that revealed an emergence of non-traditional practice settings for the field of nutrition and dietetics, an expanding scope of practice including an increased focus on disease prevention, integrative healthcare, interprofessional practice and the need for more complex knowledge and skills. Many employers who participated in the ACEND survey indicated they currently require and will require in the future, a master's degree for entry-level dietitian nutritionist positions in their organizations. The ACEND recommendations were not based on estimations of future salaries, but rather the needs of the marketplace to better, and more safely, serve the public. Practitioner salaries, in general, are influenced by numerous factors, such as, the value they bring to the healthcare or business system, their importance to society, payment rates for services they provide and their expertise and experience.

**What impact will the recommended future education model have on the cost of education for future nutrition and dietetics students?**

Currently most students spend at least five years to prepare to become an RDN. Approximately 40% of students completing coordinated programs and 20% of students completing dietetic internships currently are paying tuition to complete a concurrent master's degree program, another 25% of internship students are paying tuition to earn some graduate credit with the internship and many go on to complete their graduate degree. Less than 10% of students do not pay at least some tuition/fees to attend their internships. The exact cost of future education is not yet known as pilot programs have not yet been identified, but the cost of requiring a master's degree for entry-level practice may not exceed what students are currently paying to complete a master degree in a coordinated program or dietetic internship.

## **Additional Topics (cont.)**

### **What impact will the recommended future education model have on the resources needed by institutions providing education for future nutrition and dietetics students?**

ACEND will work with programs to help them identify the resources needed and how to most efficiently transition existing programs to the future education model programs. The 224 universities currently offering DPD programs may have some of the resources needed to offer the future bachelor's degree nutrition and dietetics technician program. Currently, nearly half of the students completing dietetic internships or coordinated programs are earning a master's degree or completing some master's degree coursework and 75% of universities with a DPD program also offer a master's degree in a dietetics-related area (nutrition, dietetics, public health/community nutrition). These universities may have some of the resources needed to offer the future education model master's degree program. ACEND will gather information from the pilot programs who implement the new standards on the resources they needed for program implementation and the innovative ways they used their resources to develop student competencies.

### **How will employers know about the expected skill set of graduates of the future education model programs?**

ACEND has started the competency development process with a group of subject matter experts and will validate these draft competencies before releasing them to the public for comment. Once the competencies are finalized, ACEND will widely distribute information about the competencies of graduates of the future associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs to assist employers and other stakeholders understand the skill set of the graduates.