
ACEND Virtual Town Hall Meeting

Questions

April 14, 2020, 11:00 a.m. Central Time

Hosts: Miriam Troutner, MS, RDN, LD, CNSC
Practitioner Representative, ACEND Board
Long Wang, MD, PhD, RD, FAND
DPD Representative, ACEND Board
Rayane AbuSabha, PhD, RD
ACEND Executive Director



Webinar Recording Link

<https://vimeo.com/736187896>

Introduction/Announcements: Miriam Troutner welcomed all in attendance.

Miriam began with updates from ACEND about the COVID-19 situation. The ACEND Board acknowledges the efforts of nutrition and dietetics educators as they adjust their curriculum to avoid disruptions to your programs. The Board is keeping abreast of this fluid situation and we will continue to send program directors updates as new decisions are made.

As a reminder, ACEND has made several temporary changes to our requirements to assist programs and students/interns during this emergency which include:

1. Approval to offer distance education during the COVID-19 situation without submitting a substantive change and going through the regular ACEND approval process.
2. Reduction in the number of supervised practice hours in professional settings to a minimum of 600 hours for RDN programs and 225 for NDTR programs.
3. Ability to allow students/interns a one to two-week break to give the program director the time to plan and arrange alternate experiences without seeking ACEND approval.
4. Approval to temporarily use a different activity to measure a student's/intern's achievement of the competency or knowledge requirement.

For Supervised Practice/Experiential Learning Hours:

- The minimum number of hours was reduced from 1200 to 1000 hours for programs accredited under the 2017 Standards leading to the RDN credential and international programs and a minimum of 900 hours for FG programs.
- Of the 1000 hours, a minimum of 600 hours must be in professional practice. For example, a program that chooses to offer only 1000 hours of supervised practice, may choose to offer the minimum 600 hours in authentic professional experiences and the other 400 hours in alternate practice.
- Note that professional practice does not have to be in person. We heard that some interns are completing portions of their professional practice experience using online technologies such as telehealth, online presentations and other activities.
- For DT programs, the minimum hours were reduced from 450 hours to 375 hours in supervised practice and of those a minimum of 225 hours must be activities conducted in authentic, real world settings with remaining hours in alternate practice.
- This decision applies to all programs that currently have an active cohort of students or interns, even if the program started in a previous year. *It applies to all programs accredited under the 2017 Standards that have cohorts of students/interns completing program requirements through June 30, 2022.*

All Programs, graduate and undergraduate, are able to use Pass/Fail, Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or any other qualitative method of grading.

- Grading is an institutional and program decision and not an ACEND requirement. This is not a temporary ACEND decision; instead this is a clarification that ACEND does not dictate to programs how they go about evaluating their students or interns.
- These types of qualitative grading scales may be used for course grades and as well as evaluation of the core knowledge and competencies.
- *ACEND received confirmation from DICAS that students have the option to use the binary Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory response for DPD courses in DICAS. These courses will then not count toward the overall professional course GPA. For example, in DICAS, a student can enter a DPD Science course with a "pass-fail" grade. Entering this course via pass/fail into the system will not show up within the GPA Calculation section.*

Miriam reminded participants to access the ACEND COVID-19 webpage, which will be updated on a regular basis, that is linked from the COVID-19 Alert at the top of the ACEND homepage. On the ACEND COVID19 webpage, the message to students and interns that was sent to program directors, updates on ACEND's latest decisions and links to available resources for program directors can be found. The frequently asked questions (FAQs) document that answers all questions that have come to ACEND during this situation are also found here. The slides, questions asked/responses and link to the ACEND webinar on alternate supervised experiences are also posted.

Miriam reminded participants that the 2017 Standards are currently under revision. Stakeholder feedback to evaluate these standards was gathered between September and November 2019. The Standards Committee is using the feedback as they work to draft the 2022 Standards. The first draft of the 2022 Standards is expected to be completed Spring/summer 2020. ACEND hopes to release the draft standards for public comment in late summer or early fall of 2020.

Miriam shared that the demonstration program process for the Future Education Model accreditation standards is moving along well; 19 demonstration programs have already been accredited from Cohorts 1, 2 and 3. Sixteen (16) are Future Graduate programs and three (3) are Future Bachelor's programs. These programs are listed on the ACEND website. Another 66 programs in Cohorts 1, 2, 3 and 4 are in the process of completing reorganization reports or self-study reports. The Cohort 4 program directors will be attending competency-based education (CBE) trainings this summer.

Effective January 1, 2021, ACEND has slightly modified the demonstration program benefits for attending the CBE workshop:

- ACEND covers travel, room and board and workshop fee for the first program director
- For any subsequent program director who attends afterwards, ACEND will cover workshop fees. The program will cover travel, room and board.
- For all program faculty and administrators, there will be a discounted workshop fee of \$250. The program will cover travel, room and board.

Miriam thanked all those in attendance who serve as program reviewers and encouraged them to consider applying to become reviewers for the FEM programs. She then provided the dates of the upcoming 2020 program director workshops under both the 2017 and FEM Standards. The August 13-14 FEM program director workshop, which was scheduled to be held in Chicago, will most likely be moved to a virtual workshop. The next program director workshop based on the 2017 Accreditation Standards is scheduled for October 16-17, 2020 pre-FNCE in Indianapolis.

Miriam discussed how ACEND will continue to provide updates on the development of the Standards, announced July 14th as the date of the next Town Hall and reminded participants to reach out to ACEND staff for assistance or with questions. Miriam noted that participants can receive 1 CPEU for attending this Town Hall by emailing ndep@eatright.org to request the certificate.

Dr. Long Wang was then introduced as the second Town Hall presenter. The learning objectives for his presentation include:

- Describe the benefits identified by program directors of the early adopter FEM demonstration programs
- Explore the challenges and potential solutions recommended by program directors

Long gave an update on the demonstration programs from the first four cohorts. Cohort 5 applications are due Wednesday, December 2, 2020.

Long presented attributes of accredited FG programs from the first three cohorts, including degrees offered, program length, maximum/actual enrollment and pre-requisites. Of the 14 programs surveyed, 12 were FG and 2 FB. Number of credit hours, planned supervised experiential learning hours and alternate experience, and CBE training were reviewed. Long discussed benefits to the profession, to the program and institution, and to the students.

Challenges identified by the programs surveyed included:

- Understanding, promotion, implementation of CBE and the FEM standards
- Curriculum revision
- Confusion among students and faculty
- Finding doctorally-trained dietitians to teach at graduate level
- Preceptor availability and training
- Having students in both FEM and traditional programs at the same time
- Moving targets with ACEND standards/processes/PI map
- CBE versus time-based grade reporting at university

Suggestions for overcoming challenges included:

- Communication: ask questions, network, clear messages
- Continued education
- “Utilize all ACEND educational materials!”
- Strategic curriculum planning
- Teamwork
 - “... used a participatory approach to empower and create ownership for preceptors”
 - Strategizing, scheduling, designing workable solutions as a team
 - Hire a clinical coordinator
- Separate competencies from grades...

Selected recommendations included:

- Ensure adequate resources: staffing, admin support, course release
Push hard to have a course reduction
- Be prepared
- Have a specific plan for implementation
- “... start the process sooner than later. The student feedback has been very positive especially the integration of didactic with SEL.”

- Fully engage faculty and preceptors
- Communication
- Think beyond the self-study. What will the implementation and tracking actually look like.
- Be open-minded about the strategy and embrace an "out of the box" thinking approach

Rayane then opened the Town Hall to questions.

Questions/Comments:

- NB: Responses are from Rayane unless otherwise noted.

Verification Statements

Is ACEND (and CDR) now accepting verification statements with electronic signatures? What do you mean by verified electronic signatures? Is a scanned DPD verification statement acceptable for DIs?

- **Response: From Mridul Datta: CDR is accepting an electronic signature. They sent an email out on April 8 stating that.**
- **Response: From FAQs on ACEND COVID-19 website page: Program directors can electronically sign a verification statement using a digital signature that can be authenticated. Digital signatures can be obtained using Adobe Acrobat Pro's digital signature feature for PDF documents or other sites for Word documents.**
- **Response: From Rayane: The information regarding verified electronic signatures will be added to the guidance information document for reference. The guidance information currently includes information about scanned verification statements. (Appendix C of 2017 Standards Guidance Information and Appendix F of the FEM Standards Guidance Information)**

Yes, but CDR asked for a signature requiring a special license for Adobe that many organizations don't have, therefore, it would be helpful if ACEND provided a fillable document. In addition, it would ensure that students/interns are receiving uniform documents. Could ACEND provide a template to enter electronic signatures so directors are providing uniform documents? In addition, it would help directors without access to special Adobe programs.

- **Response: The verification statement accessed in REPS is a fillable PDF form. There is only one form that can be used as the verification statement. The most recently revised form has a revision date of 9/5/2018.**

Is the electronic signature for Verification Statement only be allowed for this year and we need to go back to hand signing in the future?

- **Response: No, hand signing will not be required in the future, yet it remains an option to an electronic signature.**

DICAS

Is DICAS going to be upgraded to reflect changes for the FEM? The student would be applying to the grad school that hosts the FEM.

Response: NDEP has its DICAS task force looking into this.

FEM Associate Degree (FA) Program

Have there been any applications for the FEM Associate degree? If not, what is the plan for this option?

- **Response: We have unfortunately not had applicants that have progressed through the entire process so far. We have heard from administrators (deans and provosts) that starting a program these days that does not lead to licensure or certification is difficult to get approved from the university. ACEND has attempted to find ways to provide a certificate for graduates from FA programs so that we can respond to our university administrators. We are getting close to some great things for FA programs so stay tuned.**

Miscellaneous 2017/FEM Topics

One of the limitations for creating a FEM demonstration program is the need for a separate program director. Has there been any talk about allowing current directors to also direct a FEM program?

As a Program Director for a DT program, one of the limitations for applying for an FA Program is that there must be a separate person directing the program. There is certainly a need for the 2-year Associate degree professional.

- **Response: As you apply for an FA program and slowly phase-out the DT program, ACEND has allowed one single program director to direct both programs as long as the program intends to phase out the DT program within a reasonable time. If the program plans to keep both programs active, then two program directors would be needed.**

I've heard that the FEM will be difficult if not impossible to implement in less urban areas. What are your thoughts?

- **Response: The intent of the FEM data collection is to look into all the challenges and opportunities of this new model. As of yet, we have programs that applied from all areas of the country including rural and we have not heard that this has been an issue. The experiences of demonstration programs thus far do not support this conjecture.**

Could you talk more about one of the benefits to the institution ("increased resource by partnership with major hospitals")? Our current MS-DI has maxed out partnerships with hospitals in our immediate vicinity and we would like to enroll more students. Could you tell us more about what this benefit means?

- **Response from a participant: One way to get Preceptor buy in and longevity is to offer preceptors to apply and be granted a university teaching appointment as clinical instructor thereby granting access to specific university services such as the library and others.**

Are any recruitment strategies mentioned by FEM-G programs different than those used by MS-DI programs?

- **Response from Long: Based on information from the FEM Program Director survey, recruitment is similar to current supervised practice programs, but the training sessions were different regarding CBE.**
- **Response from Rayane: We can add that topic to one of our monthly discussions with the FEM programs and then report back in a future Town Hall.**

I'm glad someone brought up the recruitment. That brings up a critical issue: some FG programs require a DPD, others don't, and that creates confusion. It also makes recruitment different between FG programs.

- **Response from Long: Yes, some require a DPD Verification Statement, others require the FB; this is a decision made by the programs, not by ACEND.**
- **Response from Rayane: This is no different from current programs under the 2017 Standards that use various recruitment strategies and admission requirements.**

Being able to recruit students who don't have verification statements, a lot of non-traditional and second career students are interested

- **Response from a participant: We plan on leveraging recruits from non-DPD verified BS students. I think this will open up a pool of candidates that were previously not qualified. We are Cohort 4.**
- **Response from a participant: The handful of second career interns I had were among the best I have ever had. They were committed, self-motivated, and high performers.**
- **Response from a participant: As a Master's + OG and former DI director, I am fascinated at the discussion today. Has there been discussion on commensurate salaries for the requisite additional education? I know for other allied health professions and social workers, I see that in Federal service, but wonder about overall future practice.**

When does ACEND expect to have data that can shed light on the performance of graduates from FG programs in the RD Exam compared to Programs under 2017 Standards?

- **Response from Long: ACEND will share the information when it becomes available - once CDR exam results for one-year pass rate are obtained for FG and FB graduates.**

Course Grades/Decreased Hours of Supervised Practice

In the FEM, do the supervised practice evaluations need to be incorporated into a class grade or can they be separate?

- **Response: FEM programs are designed to be flexible. This is a decision the program makes and is not an ACEND requirement.**

If we are not able to meet the 600 hours of professional workplace experience, our hope is to stop in June, July and August which is longer than the two weeks. What do I need to submit to ACEND?

- **Response: Email your ACEND manager if you need to stop longer than two weeks. You will be asked to fill out the Suspension of Program Activities Request Form in order to maintain the program's accreditation status per ACEND's Emergencies and Disasters**

Policy. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Substantive Program Change fee of \$250 will be waived.

However, if a program is unable to meet the 600 hours in professional work settings, that has to come for a review by ACEND.

Has CDR been involved in conversations about how the 2020 cohort will need additional post-credentialing skill development? If not, can ACEND start this conversation? Our interns are meeting the minimum requirements (hours and CRDNs), but they aren't getting the same experience and are fearful of what this will mean for their careers.

- **Response from Miriam: As one who hires RDNs for our facilities, we realize that the entry-level RDs may need a bit more onboarding when hired. In their alternate activities before they enter the clinical supervised practice, try to get them accustomed to a medical record and how to chart. This will save time during supervised practice, especially if the length of time that they are able to spend in their on-site clinical rotation has been shortened.**

Pearson VUE Testing

Pearson VUE test sites are closed, and it will have an impact on one-year pass rates for a program. I have an intern whose test date was cancelled and has been scheduled into July which will exceed her one-year test-taking window. Will the duration of time to report pass rate changes to our program websites change due to this?

- **Response: ACEND is currently exploring this issue and we will share information as soon as it is available.**

Competency Based Education (CBE)

Are program directors and faculty from non-FEM demonstration programs able to attend the CBE workshops this summer/fall?

- **Response: Pre-COVID-19, ACEND planned to open up the pre-FNCE October CBE Workshop in Indianapolis, IN to non-FEM programs due to the interest in attending. Since COVID-19 ACEND will need to open up the workshop virtually to Cohort 4 program directors along with the on-site, in-person training pre-FNCE. This might not leave room for other non-FEM programs to attend the CBE training in October. Eventually ACEND will make look into holding a future session to make this training available to all.**

Site Visits

Will the fall site visits be delayed?

- **Response: The Board met yesterday and several of the programs will be receiving a letter from the Board on Friday, April 24 discussing the status of their site visits.**

For current and aspiring ACEND program reviewers, will they be able to conduct virtual reviews?

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- **Response from Long: As of the end of March, ACEND just conducted the first virtual site visit.**
- **Response from Rayane: ACEND provided options to programs that were scheduled for spring site visits and one included a virtual site visit. Future virtual site visits will need to be followed up with an on-site site visit. Programs will be given the choice during COVID-19 but will need the follow up visit mentioned**
- **Response from Long: This on-site visit component to the virtual site visit is part of USDE requirements.**

Will the reviewers doing the virtual site visit be the ones doing the onsite visit?

- **Response: It all depends on what the Board decides and how it modifies ACEND policies. The onsite visit following a virtual visit can be conducted by ACEND staff, a Board member or a reviewer and can be shorter than that of a full on-site visit. This is what USDE allows.**
- **Response from Long: Depending on how soon the follow-up onsite visit occurs, it may not be the same reviewer due to their availability.**

The next town hall is on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 11 am Central Time.

Miriam, Long and Rayane thanked everyone for their discussion on the town hall. The call ended at 12:30 pm CT.