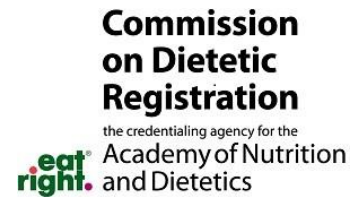


Graduate Degree Registration Eligibility Requirement Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

October 2021



Background

The FAQ document provides answers to questions regarding the CDR decision to change the degree requirement for RD exam eligibility from a baccalaureate degree to a graduate degree, effective January 1, 2024.

At its April 2013 business meeting, CDR took the following action:

“Move to change the entry-level registration eligibility education requirements for dietitians, beginning in 2024, from a baccalaureate degree to a minimum of a graduate degree. A graduate degree includes a master’s degree, practice doctorate, doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.Dor, D.Sc.). All other entry-level dietitian registration eligibility requirements remain the same.”

The action was based on the recommendations of the **Council on Future Practice Visioning Report** 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. For more information, see Appendix I.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why did CDR change the degree requirement for entry-level registration eligibility to a graduate degree?

CDR’s motion to change the entry-level registration eligibility education requirements for dietitians, beginning in 2024, from a baccalaureate degree to a minimum of a graduate degree was in response to Recommendation # 1 in the Council on Future Practice Visioning Report. In 2011, participants in a joint meeting of CFP, ACEND, and CDR agreed that increasing degree requirements for entry into the profession to a graduate degree—either a master’s degree or practice doctorate—along with developing a new credential for DPD program baccalaureate graduates, would elevate practice at all levels of the profession (10). See Appendix II for a summary of report rationales.

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 former* registered dietitians, who do not have a graduate degree, have to obtain a graduate degree if they are applying to reinstate 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 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.

6. 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.

7. 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).

8. Will DTR eligibility requirements move to a baccalaureate degree?

No. CDR does not plan to change the requirements for eligibility to take the registration examination for dietetic technicians to the minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

9. 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.

10. **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 USDE accredited institution, or foreign equivalent.
11. **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.
12. **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.

Appendix

- I. Several of the recommendations from the *Council on Future Practice Visioning Report*, released in Fall 2012, directly relate to CDR's role as the credentialing agency for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Recommendations 1 and 2 specifically address the requirements for eligibility to take the entry-level registration examination for dietitians.

Recommendation #1

Elevate the educational preparation for the future entry-level RD to a minimum of a graduate degree from an ACEND-accredited program.

Recommendation #2

Recommend that ACEND require an ACEND-accredited graduate degree program and/or consortium that integrates both the academic coursework and supervised practice components into a seamless (1-step) program as a requirement to obtain the future entry-level RD credential.

As the credentialing agency for the Academy, CDR is charged in the *Academy Bylaws* with the establishment of registration eligibility requirements for its certifications. *Excerpt from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Bylaws, January 7, 2012, Article VII Section 2.*

Section 2. Commission on Dietetic Registration ("CDR").

Purpose Statement: CDR has sole and independent authority in all matters pertaining to certification...establish and evaluate requirements, standards, policies, and procedures for certification programs, including eligibility, reinstatement, examination and recertification for all levels of dietetics practice (e.g., entry, specialty and advanced level practice).

- II. The Visioning Report provides the following rationales for this recommendation.

- The need to elevate 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 and is necessary to protect the public, remain competitive, and increase recognition and respect.
- Almost all other health care professions have increased entry-level educational standards based on expansion of knowledge and need for deeper and wider expertise; further, level of education is a factor that influences respect as a valued member of the healthcare team (5).
- The CFP educator survey indicated that dietetics educators support a graduate degree for entry into the profession (14). It has been observed that health care professionals with advanced degrees tend to have higher self-esteem and attain a higher profile within the profession as writers, researchers, and leaders (1).
- “Healthcare will continue to grow fastest and provide some of the best paying jobs in the nation—but the people in these jobs will increasingly require higher levels of education to enter the field and continuous certification once they are in” (23, page 15).
- Updated information from the original report: The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that many dietitians have advanced education degrees, and that employment of dietitians is expected to increase 11% from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations (20).