


Exploring the Master's Degree Mandate

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Objectives

1. Explain the new upcoming education requirement for registered dietitians.
2. Discuss the rationale for the change.
3. Address questions, myths, and misconceptions about the change.
4. Survey dietitians' perspectives regarding the education change.

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The Backstory

- Same education requirements since 1927
- Updating education requirements recommended since 1972
- Commitment made in 2011 to raise minimum education requirements
- Dietitians lack the three R's
 - Respect
 - Recognition
 - Rewards/Remuneration

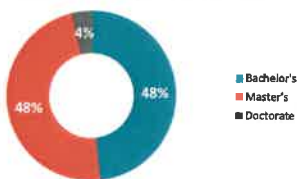
"Missed opportunities and passive stance are holding back professional progress."

-AND House of Delegates Member, 2012

Dietitian Statistics

- Biennial survey completed by Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
 - All AND members + domestic nonmembers
- N=30,958
 - 6,385 usable responses
- Median 19 years of experience

Dietitians' Highest Degrees Achieved in 2015



Survey Question

What is your highest level of education achieved?

1. Student/Intern
2. Bachelor's degree
3. Master's degree
4. Doctoral degree

Survey Question

Do you have any plans to seek an advanced degree in the future?

- 1. Yes, a Master's degree.
- 2. Yes, a Doctorate (PhD).
- 3. No.

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What is Actually Changing?

- Minimum education requirement for prospective dietitians upgraded to a graduate degree
 - Master's
 - Doctorate
- Who is not affected?
 - Dietetic technicians, registered
 - Existing credentialed dietitians
 - Prospective dietitians already "exam eligible"
- Other eligibility requirements stay the same



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New Requirements to Become an RD

As of January 1, 2024:

- 1. Completion of DPD program
- 2. Graduate degree
- 3. Supervised practice
- 4. Certification exam



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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2022

Graduate Degree Specifics

- Come from an accredited college/university program
- Any field of study acceptable (for now)
- Existing graduate degrees from second-career dietitians
- Hopeful for “seamless” programs
 - DPD + graduate degree + supervised practice
 - Include a concentration area: clinical, management, or community/public health

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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Rationale for the Education Change

- Match education requirements for other healthcare professions
- Promote advancement
- Allow for higher compensation



“RDs need to enter practice with evidence-based skills and with research competency to be able to demonstrate and document outcomes and effectiveness.”

-M. Garner, Chair of Coding and Coverage Committee, 2011

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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Education Requirements for Other Healthcare Professionals



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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Promoting Advancement

- Perception that dietitians lack skills to lead in dietetics field
 - Financial management
 - Strategic planning
 - Marketing
 - Application of evidence-based guidelines

"Too often, RDs at any level are seen as assisting in, rather than leading, the nutrition care process, a perception that may affect career advancement."

-Dietetics Education Task Force report, 2005

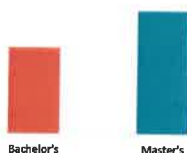


Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Higher Compensation

- Earn 40-45% less than other non-physician professionals
- Master's degree dietitians earn \$4,000 to \$6,000 more per year
- Compensation increases with years of experience
- Specialty certifications add value

Annual Dietitian Compensation Based on Terminal Degree (2015)



Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Other Anticipated Benefits

- Higher self-esteem
- Achieve higher profile in field of dietetics
 - Leaders in research
 - Developing practice standards
- Influence healthcare policy to elevate nutrition



"Credentials make a difference for our voice to be heard among organizations such as Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), American Medical Association (AMA), and others with a predominant 'doctor' culture."

-M. Gosney, Chair of Coding and Coverage Committee, 2011



Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2012

Advanced Practice Credential

- Introduced in 2015
- Distinguishes experienced clinicians from entry-level
- Requirements
 - 4 years of experience
 - 8000 hours of clinical work
 - MS or other qualifications
 - Certification exam
- Awaiting data on compensation, satisfaction, advancement



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Role of Specialty Certifications



- Increase autonomy
- Garner more respect and influence
- Do not require advanced education
- May increase compensation by \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year

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The Unknown

- Will the Master's degree mandate reduce the value of existing dietitians?
- Result in fewer newly-credentialed dietitians?
- Will compensation keep pace with education costs?
- Push more dietitians towards specialty certifications and Advanced Practice credential?
- Advance initiatives like order-writing privileges and billing?
- Realize respect and recognition dietitians seek?

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Considering an Advanced Degree?

- Review the facts
- Consult your peers
- Consider your professional goals
- Employer-sponsored tuition reimbursement
- Programs for non-traditional students
- Do what's right for YOU



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Survey Question

Do you support the new Master's degree mandate?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Undecided

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Q & A Session



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