A Survey of Program Directors of Graduate Programs following the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards

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Demonstration programs that have adopted the Future Education Model (FEM) Accreditation Standards use competency-based education (CBE) in an integrated approach to prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed for the nutrition and dietetics professions. Directors of 20 newly accredited graduate demonstration programs (FG programs) were surveyed in Fall 2020. Half of the FG programs (10/20, 50%) were planning to enroll their first cohort of students in 2021. The other 10 FG programs had a total of 130 students actively enrolled, of whom more than 40% (56/130, 43.1%) did not hold a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) verification statement prior to enrollment. Consistent with survey data collected in 2019, the PDs identified CBE as the most significant benefit for implementing the FEM Standards for reasons including being a leader in the field, advancing dietetic education with the “advanced competencies”, streamlining the curriculum, meeting the profession’s needs with more opportunities for experiential learning, and removing the barrier of the dietetic internship match. The significant time invested to develop an FG program was identified as the biggest challenge, followed by lack of understanding of CBE and of FEM among DPD students and FG program preceptors.

Topic
Research, Evidence-Informed Practice and Quality Improvement

Purpose
To describe the most significant benefit and challenges in developing graduate demonstration programs following the Future Education Model Accreditation Standards identified by program directors.

Background
• Competency-based education (CBE) breaks away from the time-based traditional education and provides a significant shift in evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs.
• Previous studies indicate that CBE is promising in improving the outcomes of education and training of health professionals with the aim to improve global health (Gruppen et al., 2012, Frank et al., 2010).
• The Miller’s Pyramid (Miller 1990, Figure 1.) describes the different levels of educational goals and provides a key foundation of CBE. For early learners, the outcomes are at the level of “knows” and “knows how”; whereas for more advanced learners, the outcomes are at the higher levels of “shows” and “does.”
• Since the release of the “Future Education Model” (FEM) for education in nutrition and dietetics by ACEND in 2017, newly accredited demonstration programs have been surveyed annually.

Methods
• Program directors (PDs) of the 20 accredited future education model graduate programs (FG) were surveyed by an online questionnaire in Fall 2020.
• FG programs that were surveyed in 2019 was not included in the study.

Results
• At the time of survey, half of the newly accredited FG programs (10/20, 50%) did not have active students at the time and were planning to enroll their first cohort of students in 2021.
• A total 130 were enrolled in the other 10 FG programs.
• More than 40% (56/130, 43.1%) did not hold a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) verification statement prior to enrollment.
• Consistent with the survey in 2019, the PDs identified CBE as the most significant benefit for implementing FEM standards for reasons including being a leader in the field, advancing dietetic education with the “advanced competencies”, streamlining the curriculum, meeting the profession’s needs with more opportunities for experiential learning, and removing the barrier of the dietetic internship match.
• The significant time invested to develop an FG program was identified as the biggest challenges, followed by lack of understanding of FEM and CBE among DPD students and preceptors.

Conclusion
1. Results show that majority of students admitted to the newly accredited FG programs in 2020 had DPD verification statement, although not required by the FG standards.
2. The results suggest the need for increased communication and training of CBE and FEM among undergraduate nutrition students and potential preceptors.

References

Figure 1. Miller’s Pyramid (Miller 1990)