

BECOMING A REGISTERED DIETITIAN (RD)

**Human Nutrition and Food Science
Didactic Program in Dietetic
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
New Mexico State University**

Steps in Becoming a Registered Dietitian (RD)

To become an RD, the following steps must be completed:

1. Obtain the minimum of a Bachelors degree
2. Successfully meet the course work requirements for a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD)
 - a. At NMSU, this is the course work outlined in the Dietetics option program of study. This option is part of the Human Nutrition and Food Sciences major in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences listed in the New Mexico State University Undergraduate Catalog which can be located at http://www.nmsu.edu/Academic_Progs/Undergraduate_Catalog/ - Be sure that you are looking at the version of the Undergraduate Catalog under which you will be graduating. Remember that you must graduate under a program of study published in an Undergraduate Catalog that is less than or equal to 6 years old. Students who are not continuously enrolled will need to complete requirements published in the catalog under which they reenter if the Dietetics option program of study requirements have changed.
3. Successfully complete a Supervised Practice Program such as a dietetic internship accredited by Commission on Accreditation of Dietetics Education which is the American Dietetic Association (ADA) accrediting agency.
4. Successfully complete the Commission on Dietetic Registration National Exam

Getting into a Supervised Practice Program

What do you need to know and what do you need to do to get an internship? Here are some steps that will help you along the way.

1. **Start Now!** Everyone should be thinking about the process even if you are a freshman. Get involved in your student organization and other campus activities, especially those that are related to your field and those which are good ways for you to display leadership. Also, get some work experience related to the dietetics field even if it is only on a volunteer basis. Remember it is important to maintain a good GPA, especially in your science and human nutrition and food science classes. You will gain many other valuable insights related to supervised practice programs such as internships in HNFS 201 Seminar I and HNFS 409 Seminar II.
2. During the Fall semester prior to your graduation in May or Summer I, go through the Accredited or Approved Education programs listed at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/CADE_401_ENU_HTML.htm. Click on Internships or Coordinated Programs to find the list of programs in each

state. Most of the programs will list a website where you can download and/or print information about the program. The DPD Program Director and Dr Eastman both maintain copies of the *DEP (Dietetic Educators of Practitioners) Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice*. The Applicant Guide is a summarized version of what can be located on the website of programs of interest. Note: Students can purchase their own copy of the Applicant Guide.

3. Students going through the Applicant Guide at this point should be looking at meeting the filing deadline which is in February each year. Note: A few programs have a Fall appointment period with start times in January. Students interested in these programs need to be looking into the directories and other files during the Spring and Summer. The filing deadline for these programs is in September.
4. Now download and/or request your application packages from the various programs you researched or contacted. You may apply to as many programs as you choose. However, you typically narrow the field down to 3 to 5 programs to which you are going to apply. Note: It is advisable for the student to select programs in various parts of the country. Although the choice is yours related to where you apply, selection of only those programs which are directly around New Mexico is not recommended. Remember, programs typically only select one student from a given didactic program. Therefore, if you only select those programs directly around New Mexico, it likely that others from our program will have also selected the same supervised practice route. Choose programs of various size and avoid applying to only those programs which offer a stipend, because they will be among those with the largest numbers of applicants.
5. While you are waiting on the packages that you requested, you need to do the following:
 - a. Contact 3 or more people to serve as references for you. Note: Generally, you must have a reference from the Program Director and at least one faculty member with whom you have had a class. However, it is important that you check carefully for the categories of references required by each supervised practice program.
 - b. Obtain the number of official transcripts you will need from the various colleges that you have attended. It is recommended that you obtain one additional set in the event they are needed for an unforeseen application. **Remember: Do not open the sealed envelopes in which they arrive.**
 - c. Update your resume Note: If you have second language capabilities, be sure that such information is reflected in your resume. Also be sure that any food and nutrition related work experience and any participation in organizations such as HNFSA (Human Nutrition and Food Science Association) are listed. In addition, you should make certain that offices held in such organizations are included.

6. Once the application packages arrive, start the process of completing the packages **IMMEDIATELY**. A lot of information is required and you will have to do some categorizing of courses and figuring your GPA for the various categories. Get the reference forms to the various persons who agreed to write letters for you **AT ONCE**.
7. Remember, that these people usually have multiple people for whom they are writing references. Unless the persons who are serving as your references ask you to an electronic version of the reference form, all you need to do is take them a blank copy of the reference form for each supervised practice program to which you will be applying. Include a cover sheet indicating the name of the program to which the application is going. Also be sure to provide a signed Waiver of Confidentiality page (Page 1 of ADA Recommendation Form) for each of the letters that you are asking the reference to write. Typically your reference will put the completed reference form in their letterhead envelope, seal it, sign it across the flap and return it to you for inclusion in the package of materials that you are sending to a given supervised practice program.
8. Most programs will ask you to write an application letter which is to be included in the application package. **IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**
 - a. Did they ask you to type it or is it to be hand written? Note: Input indicates that program evaluation committees have stopped reading applications because instructions were not followed;
 - b. What information do they want you to cover in the letter? Note: You are advised to write out the letter and let someone like the Program Director or other Human Nutrition and Food Science faculty read it and give you feedback. If the letter is to be handwritten, it is advisable to put the good quality paper (e.g. resume paper) on top of lined paper so that you will have a nice, neat letter. Also remember that this is a professional letter, so professional language should be used. In addition, be sure that you leave a margin on all edges of the paper.
9. Obtain the Declaration of Intent or Verification Statement and the D&D Digital Computer Match Card from the Program Director.
10. Once you have completed a package, double check that you have followed the instructions and have NOT left anything blank. Get a copy of the contents of a given package, except the reference letters and transcripts which cannot be opened. Check each item off as you put it in the mailing envelope. Each package should be sent Certified or Registered with Return Receipt Requested so that you have proof of mailing and a receipt. **BE SURE THAT THE PACKAGE IS POSTMARKED BY THE DATE SPECIFIED BY THE SUPERVISED PRACTICE PROGRAM TO WHICH YOU ARE MAKING APPLICATION.**

11. Complete the computer match card as instructed. Be sure to complete the front and back of the card. Remember that you must list the supervised practice programs in order of preference (i.e. your first choice listed first; second choice listed second etc). The card must be postmarked by the specified date. Be sure to include all of the information requested and the fee. **REMEMBER ONCE THE CARD IS MAILED YOUR SELECTIONS AND ORDER OF PREFERENCE CANNOT BE CHANGED.**

12. NOW THE WAIT BEGINS! During the wait time, some supervised practice programs will contact you for a telephone interview. Some may even require that you come for an interview in person. (Note: Such interviews are typically paid for by the student, so make sure you are aware of this before you apply to such a program).

13. About 60 days after the postmark date, you will receive an Email informing you if a match was made. If a match was made, then you will be asked to confirm that you are accepting the internship appointment. Typically you will be asked to call within a specified period of time and then you are expected to write a formal acceptance letter which must be sent by a certain date. Note: Failure to comply with the instructions will generally result in the loss of the supervised practice position which is being offered to you.

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