

West Chester University of PA

Dietetic Internship

Application Guide



Department of Nutrition

College of Health Sciences

West Chester University of PA

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Introduction

This guide provides the nutrition and dietetics student with all the information needed to select and apply for dietetic internships. Please read the entire document to be best prepared for the dietetic internship application process.

Students planning to become Registered Dietitians (RD) need to complete an Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) accredited dietetic internship after graduation from WCU and prior to taking the Registration Examination for Dietitians.

Increasing the chances of being a successful applicant to a dietetic internship begins in the first year of college by working to obtain and maintain the best possible Grade Point Average (GPA), acquiring extensive volunteer or paid work experience, being active in student organizations and working closely with dietetics faculty.

In addition to being a step in the registration, the dietetic internship is an opportunity to gain a wide range of experiences while integrating academic skills and gaining new ones during supervised practice. The dietetic internship will also help you prepare for the registration exam and expose you to many experiences which will assist you in setting future career and practice goals. When you have completed the dietetic internship, you will be able to confidently obtain and perform an entry-level clinical dietetic position.

Registration is an avenue to obtain licensure in the majority of states in the U.S. including Pennsylvania after obtaining a bachelor's degree in Nutrition & Dietetics. In most cases when you are registered you automatically qualify for state licensure. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, forty-seven states regulate dietitians or nutritionist with laws concerning licensure, statutory certification, or registration. Thirty-five of these states require licensure. With licensure, the scope of practice is explicitly defined and only those with licensure may practice in the defined scope of practice. More information on what specific states require can be found on the Commission on Dietetic Registration website at <http://www.cdrnet.org/certifications/licensure/index.cfm>. The Pennsylvania law concerning Dietitian-Nutritionists can be found at <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter21/subchapGtoc.html>.

Dietetic internships are at least 1200 hours of supervised practice usually in a period ranging from 6 to 24 months. There are approximately 2200 DI openings offered by 250 Dietetic Internship programs. Internships are very competitive with only around 50% receiving appointments in April 2011 and 2012.

Preparation to Apply

Preparation for the internship actually begins from the time you begin your Bachelor's degree, long before you fill out the application. Since acquisition of an internship is so competitive, grades, work and volunteer experience, and leadership roles are vital to being a great internship candidate. Specifically, a GPA greater than 3.2, more than one year of paid or volunteer work experience especially in the field of nutrition (clinical or hospital experience is ranked highest), and strong recommendations from employers and faculty are all associated with having a good chance to obtain an internship. Involvement or leadership in a dietetics-related student professional organization such as the Student Dietetic Association at WCU also improves your chances.

Joining a professional organization such as the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics offers advantages to future internship applicants. By joining the Academy at the national level, the applicant is also a member at the state level. There are also local dietetic associations that an applicant can join as well. Certain internships will emphasize the importance of these memberships more than others. However, the professional organizations offer valuable networking and scholarship opportunities for future dietetic interns.

A GPA of 3.5 or higher without any nutrition related work experience or leadership roles will not guarantee you an internship. A GPA of 3.2 to 3.5 with great work or volunteer experience gives a candidate a stronger application than a high GPA alone. If you are reading this and do not have any nutrition or clinical experience and want to make your application stronger, it is not too late. Even a few months of experience are better than none. Use your winter and summer breaks wisely. Do not be afraid to make a cold call to a hospital or skilled nursing facility to inquire about opportunities. Keep in mind that some facilities will not be able to allow you to come without background checks or a PPD or Tuberculosis test due to policies. Do not give up looking. The appendix lists some places to consider contacting.

Classes in which higher grades are especially important include your science and dietetics classes. These grades tell the internship that you are ready to implement the Nutrition Care Process in a variety of settings. Unfortunately, students with a GPA below 3.2 are very rarely matched. If this describes you, then you can begin to gain leadership and work experience as well as consider graduate classes to make you a better candidate for the next year.

Sometimes, in an effort to cope with the pressure and stress of college life, students turn to drugs, alcohol or disordered eating patterns. Not only will these choices decrease the time left for studying, and working, but could also result in a criminal record. Dietetic internships do background checks on all of their interns. Therefore, students with a criminal record may not be able to complete a dietetic internship. If you are struggling with any of these behaviors, seek

help from resources on campus. Your journey to deal with these negative behaviors will make you a stronger candidate to help people if you can address the behaviors now.

Deciding Where to Apply

One of the first steps in deciding where to apply is to determine your short- and long-term goals and what you would like to experience in your internship. Many factors differentiate each internship program from the other. Consider what you can realistically afford to do and choose from programs that will match your interests and experiences.

Resources to Help You Choose

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Website

The Academy has several resources for students on their website <http://www.eatright.org> that may assist you in finding and applying for an internship regardless if you are a member or not. These resources include *Suggestions to Improve Your Chances at Getting a Dietetic-Internship Position* at <http://www.eatright.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=4294967916>. The Academy also lists this document in a PDF file along with others on an internship page located at <http://www.eatright.org/BecomeanRDorDTR/content.aspx?id=8147#.UGI5JPXuHCA> which also includes a video on the Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System (DICAS) and *Availability of Dietetic Internship Positions*.

Most importantly, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website provides the most up-to-date information about internship programs. You can access <http://www.eatright.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=10760> for a listing of each program along with information on cost, length of internship, internship director, number of openings, and area of specialization. The Academy website also has a direct link to individual program websites which provide detailed information about the programs.

Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice

Each Fall the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Practitioners practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics disseminates a document with very detailed information about all the current ACEND accredited internships including number of internship openings, number of applicants, program length and types of rotations, costs, and admission qualifications. This guide is more detailed than what is provided at The Academy dietetic internship website. This is a great resource for viewing the various internships available. The WCU Nutrition and Dietetic Program director can make this available to you.

Pennsylvania Dietetic Association

The Pennsylvania Dietetic Association's website is found at <http://www.eatrightpa.org/about/pada.htm>. This organization offers great networking opportunities along with scholarships for students, even ones participating in an internship.

Program Websites & Open Houses

Most internship programs have websites which list important information including the Dietetic Internship Director information, current costs and open house dates. Open Houses are also listed on a University of Indiana website at <http://www.indiana.edu/~nutrvmg/Dlopenhouses.htm>.

Open Houses provide the applicant the opportunity to meet the Dietetic Internship Director as well as ask any questions the applicant may have. During the Open House, the director will share further internship details. With the level of technology today, some internships conduct virtual Open Houses that can be accessed remotely.

Contact the programs directly to schedule visits and register for open houses. All contact with the program should be professional including dress and communications. Choose your words and tone carefully. Be prepared with well-thought-out questions making sure not to ask questions that are answered on the program website! Programs often regard open house attendees as "very interested" in their internship. It is highly recommended that you attend the open house if this program is one of your top choices. Some internships will add points to your score for attending an open house. At minimum, it puts your name and face in front of them several more times. If you cannot attend the Open House the next best thing is to e-mail the director of the internship to make personal contact and introduce yourself.

All Access Internships

This dietetic specific website exists to assist the dietetic applicant in the internship application process. It offers reviews, videos, rankings and tips to help the applicant obtain an internship and is located at www.allaccessinternships.com. For a fee, they will provide personal dietetic internship guidance.

Examining Types of Programs

There are several factors you should consider when researching programs and deciding where to apply.

Program Emphasis

All dietetic internships provide experience in clinical nutrition, community nutrition and foodservice systems management. If you are unsure of the area you would like to specialize in, a program with a general emphasis might be best for you. These programs give you exposure to many different areas in the field. When researching programs, you should review the specific rotations available, how much time is spent in clinical versus community versus management, staff relief experiences, and non-traditional and specialty practice experiences.

If you have specific professional interests, consider looking for a program that will offer you more exposure in these areas. Be sure to review the length and comprehensiveness of the experiences provided. Program emphasis is currently offered in the following areas: Medical Nutrition Therapy, Diabetes Emphasis, Foodservice systems Management, Community Nutrition and Public Health, Nutrition Education and Wellness, Health Promotion and Education, Business and Communication, Nutritional diagnostics, Nutrition Education and Counseling, Critical Care Nutrition, Leadership, Eating Disorders, Community Education, Communication and Information Technology Management, Pediatrics, Research, Sports Nutrition, School Foodservice and Child Nutrition Programs, and many more.

All internships are required to have a minimum amount of hours in the specific areas of dietetics including clinical nutrition, community nutrition, and foodservice systems management. So, you won't be missing out if you choose a specific emphasis. In this environment of high competition for DIs, it is important to just get one.

Combined Internships: Certificate and Coordinated Programs

Think about whether you would be interested in a combined internship with graduate school or just the internship. A combined program will allow you to obtain your Master's degree while simultaneously completing the dietetic Internship program. These programs are usually longer than a dietetic internship program by itself (usually around 24 months), but you leave with a Master's degree. A combined program is a good option to consider for advancing your education while completing the DI.

If you are considering a combined program, take a close look at the graduate degree that is offered. Does it correspond well with the type of practice you are interested in after completion? For example, if you are interested in Public Health and Community Nutrition, you probably don't want your graduate degree in clinical nutrition. If you are interested in clinical nutrition, you probably would not want a Master's in Public Health, etc. A graduate program tends to lead to a particular area of practice, so be sure that is where your interests are. If you really don't know what area of dietetics is for you, it may be better to complete a general dietetic internship program in order to decide. Then, apply for a graduate program later.

Certificate Programs

These programs allow you to take graduate classes while completing your internship. The option to complete the degree is then available after you complete the supervised practice experience, but it is not a requirement. These programs usually participate in the DICAS and Computer Matching Process and usually require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and a separate application to the Graduate School program in addition to the DICAS application. The Immaculata University internship is an example of this type of program ([http://www.immaculata.edu/academics/departments/nutrition_and_dietetics/Dietetic Internship](http://www.immaculata.edu/academics/departments/nutrition_and_dietetics/Dietetic_Internship)).

Coordinated Programs

These programs require the completion of the Master program and the internship since they are coordinated together. However, some schools offer a coordinated Bachelor of Science (BS) program to which students can apply and transfer their WCU classes. Students would essentially complete a 5th year of undergrad.

The application process is separate from the DICAS and Computer Matching process and requires a completely separate application and deadline usually in early December. Most coordinated Master programs require the GRE so plan to take this exam if you are applying to this type of program. LaSalle University is an example of a BS coordinated program (<http://www.lasalle.edu/schools/snhs/nutrition/coordinated/index.php?page=admiss>). Pittsburg University is an example of a Master coordinated dietetic program with Sports Medicine (<http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/cmd/>).

Distance Education:

Distance education dietetic internship programs are also available. Most require a lot of work on the part of the student to set up, find affiliations, complete contracts, etc. This is the responsibility of the student. Most distance programs require that the applicant has already set up at least one rotation before applying. Some require that most rotations be planned. This requires that the student start early in the application process.

Before embarking on this type of internship research the requirements and read about the process of applying for a distance education DI. The University of Delaware is an example of a distance education DI program (<http://www.udel.edu/bhan/dietetic/>). Three major advantages of distance education DI's are: 1. You can arrange your placements near home and can save money by living at home; 2. You can be adventurous and arrange placements in a variety of interesting places; 3. They are easier to earn since there are generally less applicants per internship spot.

Distance programs will still require transportation and you must be self-motivated and able to learn via an online format. There will be less opportunity to be with your “peers” (other interns), but there are advantages in networking with potential employers at local sites.

Two exceptions to the typical Distance Education programs are the Aramark and Sodexo Distance Internships which find the sites for you at Aramark/Sodexo locations. Aramark’s entire program has been combined into this type of program, and the internship will ask for location preferences. For Aramark, the more you are willing to go to less competitive locations or even relocate, the higher your chances of obtaining the internship. For Sodexo, it is a bit different. Sodexo offers a specific distance program along with traditional programs. If you live around a main metropolitan area where they offer traditional internships that utilize the Sodexo locations already, you may have to drive a bit farther.

Geographic Location

Geographic location is often the most important deciding factor, especially if you need to stay near your family, are already employed in the area, or have obligations that might not allow you to move to a new city. Students without geographical barriers can be more successful at obtaining a dietetic internship appointment. So if you are able to be a bit more adventurous, it may be worth it. Keep in mind that programs on the West coast, East coast, warmer climates and in Colorado tend to be more competitive. Dietetic Internships programs in college/university towns also tend to be more competitive, especially if there is a DPD program nearby.

Length of Program

Consider the amount of time you can and are willing to dedicate to the program. Currently, all programs must offer a minimum of 1200 hours. Full-time and part-time options are available. The majority of Dietetic Internships require 9 to 12 months to finish. Combined internship programs can last up to 2 years.

Financial Costs

Make sure that you know all of the expenses that are incurred in each program. Program costs can range as low as \$4000 to as high as \$30,000. Some programs may have stipends, but they may also have tuition that is more than the stipend. Educational institutions that charge tuition can offer financial aid such as student loans that company-sponsored internships cannot. Other considerations include: transportation (e.g., car vs. public transportation and if you need transportation to different sites for rotations), food (some programs may provide meals), ability to hold an outside job, and incidentals (e.g. lab coats or textbooks). Location will also influence cost. For example, the cost of living is higher in certain cities such as Boston, New York, San

Francisco and Seattle. Living costs associated with the location may end up canceling out the stipend in the end, unless you have family members in an area with whom you can stay. Be sure to find out if your undergraduate loans can be deferred while you are completing the internship.

In the end, you have to decide what you can and cannot afford to pay for a dietetic internship. Keep in mind, however, that programs offering stipends tend to be more competitive than those that charge tuition. Look for financial aid opportunities provided by the program, including government loans/grants, graduate assistantships, scholarship opportunities, etc. A program may sound very expensive, but the tuition might be offset by a graduate assistantship.

Other Factors

Some other factors to consider include the amount of applicants per spot, the number of locations, the setting of experiences such as facility size, rural or urban surroundings, patient population, disease state exposure, and rotation electives available. It is also good to examine the flexibility of the program and the internship director and how problems or concerns might be handled. Changing location sites can provide a change of environment from one site to another and help you see how different facilities run, but consider how well you adjust to new environments.

The Applicant Guide for Supervised Practice (available from the WCU Nutrition and Dietetic Program director) has detailed information about each DI. In deciding about internships, check the Guide for the number of openings and the number of applicants. You are more likely to acquire an internship at programs that have fewer applicants and more slots. It will be very difficult to get a DI that has 250 applicants and 4 slots than one that has 70 applicants and 15 slots. Please look at this data as you consider applying.

Deciding How Many Internships to Choose

This is an individual decision that should be based on a number of factors that such as the competitiveness of the programs. Many successful applicants generally apply to 4-6 programs. It is wise to include an internship on the list that is less competitive. Do not list internships that you would not do. In addition to a fee charged per internship by DICAS, each internship may have an application fee between \$25 and \$50. So, you must decide what your application budget is. If the number to which you apply is too low, you may risk not getting matched. On the other hand, you don't want to apply to so many that the quality of your application is compromised.

Application Process

Step 1: Complete the Application

The first step in the application process is to register for a DICAS (Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services) account and complete the on-line application by the February deadline generally around February 15th. The next section discusses this application in full. Although most applications are now through DICAS, there may be a few internships that still do not utilize this program. In that case, you will need to follow the instructions of that internship to apply. The DICAS website is located at <https://portal.dicas.org>.

Step 2: Register for a D & D Digital Account

Dietetic internships select applicants through computer matching, a computerized matching process that facilitates matching the applicant with an internship. It is required by all internships unless they only directly enroll employees of the internship sponsoring institution. It eliminates unfair pressures and premature decisions on and by programs to accept or reject applicants, and it eliminates unfair pressures on applicants to accept or reject entry into a Dietetic Internship. Computer Matching Policies and Procedures can be found from ACEND at <http://www.eatright.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=186>.

Applicants must pay the \$50 fee (non-refundable) with a credit card using a U.S. billing address at <http://www.dnndigital.com> by clicking "Register Online." Once payment is complete, a username and password are provided. Applicants should enter contact information and dietetic internship application choices. Enter the dietetic information carefully. If entered wrong, a match cannot be made even if an application was submitted. Once entered, you will rank the internships by preference; however, they can be reordered after interviewing. Applicants must complete this process by the DICAS deadline date at 11:59 p.m. Central Time.

Step 3: Interviews

Some directors encourage or require an in-person or telephone interview(s) of finalists. Interviews are completed after the DICAS application is submitted but before April mainly in March. Your message associated with your phone contact information should be professional.

Interviews vary in style. Some interviews may ask more nutrition-related questions to make sure the candidate really knows their MNT knowledge. These interviews may include case study questions, have applicants utilize MNT equations, or even want candidates to know the calorie information of serving sizes of foods. Other interviews focus more on assessing the personality of the candidate through personal questions and whether they are a good fit for the

program. Some internships have narrowed down a short list of very qualified candidates, most of which they will rank, and use the in-person interviews to make sure the candidate does not have any glaring personality issues that did not come through in their application. After the interview, the final list is ranked for matching.

The best way to prepare for the interview is to practice answering interview questions. Sample interview questions are listed in the appendix that may appear in typical dietetic interview. Prepare answers to these common interview questions. Prepare questions to ask during the interview that are not answered by the Open House or website already. WCU's Twardowski Career Center offers interviewing practice services to students. Avail yourself of this resource. They will conduct practice and simulated interviews with students.

If possible, try to obtain as much information about the interview as possible. Most internships are willing to share the format of the interview. It will be helpful to know if you will be asked personal questions, nutrition questions, and/or to provide a writing sample. Ask who will be conducting the interview.

On interview day, if the interview is in person then dress appropriately and be timely. Make sure you leave plenty of time in case you get lost. Use a firm handshake, and make sure to make eye contact during the interview. In addition, you may want to bring a portfolio which includes examples of your writing, case studies, PowerPoint presentations, program plans and your resume. Several websites offer the ability to make electronic portfolios as well including www.linkedin.com and www.weebly.com.

If it is a telephone interview, make sure you have a quiet, comfortable place to sit during the interview. Do whatever you can to ensure that there will be no distractions. You may have more confidence if you still dress for an interview despite its being on the phone.

During the interview, be positive and enthusiastic. Do not be critical or complain. Listen attentively. Many weaknesses can be positives if framed in the right way. Consider this when choosing weaknesses you may share about yourself. Research the organization and know what their core values are before the interview. Make sure you thoroughly review the internship program information. Be able to apply your work and school experiences to the dietetic internship. Give specific examples to illustrate your successes. Remember, you are selling yourself as the best candidate for their internship program. If you must discuss a negative incident, share what you learned from the experience. Thank the interviewer for his/her time. It is very important to follow-up quickly with a handwritten thank-you letter within 24 hours of the interview.

Step 4: Finalize Rank of All Programs

After completing interviews, the applicant must log-in to D & D Digital at the end of March prior to April and rank all the internships in which they applied in order of preference. Internship directors cannot see your list or how you have ranked their program. If after interviewing, you are no longer interested in an internship then you do not need to rank them. Refusing a match is inconsiderate of the program and of other students who wanted that internship. It is also considered unethical to decline a match in order to pursue appointment to another program. So, only rank programs at which you are willing to accept an internship position. Additionally, do not share your ranking with DI programs, unless a specific program is your top choice. After the deadline at 11:59 p.m. Central Time, the preference ranks cannot be changed. This date and time is also the deadline to completely withdraw from the match.

No new internships can be listed at this point in the process. After ranking your internships, you should also allow your name to be released if you do not receive a match. This will enable a program with openings to contact you after the appointment date if you do not receive a match.

Each dietetic internship reviews its own applications and, like students, submits a priority listing of applicants to D & D Digital Systems, along with the number of positions they have to be filled. This information is confidential and not shared with the applicants. The dietetic internship will not know your ranking order. So do not be afraid of this process.

Computer matching does not change the applicant's or program's selection process, so you will not be matched to a program whose name does not appear on your priority listing. Before matching begins, the applicant priority lists and the Dietetic Internships lists are "cleaned." If a program does not rank an applicant, that program will be removed from the applicant's list. If an applicant does not rank a program, the applicant is removed from the program's list. Then, the matching process takes place using the applicant's prioritized list and the programs' prioritized lists until all possible matches are complete. As a result, applicants receive one position with their highest ranked program that offers the applicant a position. The process is explained in detail in the "Instructions to Applicants" booklet provided by D & D Digital Systems to directors of dietetics programs.

For further information on computer matching see the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at <http://www.eatright.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=6596> for "Top FAQ: Top 10 Questions about Computer Matching for Dietetic Internships (DIs)."

Step 5: Match Day

On match day, D & D Digital Systems provides notification of placement or lack of placement to each applicant at 6:00 p.m. Central Time when the student logs into their account on <http://www.dnndigital.com>. It also provides each program director with a list of applicants matched to its program.

If matching results are not available to you via the website by this date and time, contact D & D Digital Systems directly by phone (515-292-0490).

Step 6: Appointment Day

Applicants who receive a match are required to notify the program to which they have been matched as to whether they accept or reject the match the day after notification on Appointment Day by 5:00 p.m. in the location time zone of their matched internship program. Contact information is provided on D & D Digital along with the match assignment. After this time period, the program is not under obligation to hold the opening any longer.

After Match

Only about 50% of applicants receive a match. It is recognized that, although a fair system, the matching process is not perfect. Very well qualified and capable students may not receive a match with their first application.

If an applicant is not matched, D & D Digital Systems sends a listing of unmatched applicants who have agreed to release their names to each program following the matching. Programs may contact unmatched applicants or return to their applicant pool to fill positions after the Appointment Day deadline has passed. Applicants who receive no match will be given instructions on how to apply to programs with openings. Programs with openings who have given permission to release their name will be listed on D & D Digital the day after Appointment Day. You will be able to apply to these programs electronically through DICAS. There will be a \$20 fee for each application.

If still unmatched after this process, an applicant can reapply for the next appointment date or instead apply to a coordinated program which communicates their strong desire to become a Registered Dietitian.

The Application

Although most programs participate in the Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services (DICAS), application requirements vary from program to program, and overlooking a small detail can lead to disappointment on match day. Specific application information for each Dietetic Internship may be found on their program website. Read the application instructions for each program very carefully. Determine the specific materials required for each program and keep a table of requirements or comprehensive list. In addition to the DICAS application, programs may request “supplemental” materials and these can vary widely between programs.

Do not start the application in the month it is due since the application process can be long and complicated. You will want plenty of time to do a thorough job. See the WCU Nutrition and Dietetic Program director for a specific calendar and timeline for the current year.

The Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services (DICAS)

DICAS was implemented for all DI programs for the spring 2011 match. This system allows applicants to upload and submit the majority of the application materials electronically. Keep in mind that you may still have to submit certain items via regular mail (see program websites for specific information) such as a separate deposit. The DICAS Application is completed via the internet and sent electronically to the internship sites that you select by entering their code.

The DICAS online application consists of the following sections:

- Applicant Information:
 - Contact Information
 - Personal Information
 - Background Information
- Educational Information:
 - Colleges Attended
 - Session and Coursework
 - Tests
 - DPD Contact Information
- Awards, Work Experience and Volunteer Activities
- Personal Statement
- Resume
- References
- Application Certification
- Program Designations
- Supplemental Materials

Setting up Your DICAS Account

The DICAS application is not available until early August for the fall match, and early December for the spring match. DICAS may be accessed at: <https://portal.dicas.org>. Click on *Create New Account*. You will be asked to create a user name and a password, and will answer a security question. Once you have created an account, you may access the application site. Instructions are provided through a video titled *Instructional Video for the Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System*. This video is located at the following Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website: <http://www.eatright.org/students/education/internships.aspx>. General instructions for the application are included on the DICAS website (<https://portal.dicas.org>). In addition to these instructions, each section of the DICAS Online has its own specific instructions. These instructions are found by clicking on the specific section, then clicking on the box *Instructions for This Section*.

Application Components

Applicant Information

The Applicant Information section asks for contact information, personal information, and background information.

Contact Information:

This section contains information that is required in order to e-submit your application. Please note that you may edit the information in this section both before and after the e-submission of your application. If any of the information on this page changes during the application cycle, please be sure to return to this page in order to provide your updated information.

Personal Information:

Your citizenship status is indicated here. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen, you will need to report your visa information here. You will also be asked to provide your preferred name or nickname, other names (maiden, for ex.), and languages (other than English) in which you are fluent enough to conduct nutrition therapy.

Background Information:

This section involves answering 7 questions regarding disciplinary actions, complaints, civil suits, and probation(s)/suspension(s)/conviction(s). It will also ask you whether you have ever reneged on a DICAS internship match. If you answer “Yes” to any item, you will need to elaborate in the space provided. Your response can be up to 3,000 characters in length.

Educational Information

The educational information section consists of the following areas: Colleges Attended, Session and Coursework, and Tests.

Colleges Attended:

You will need to list ALL undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, and professional institutions you have attended even if the courses transferred to another institution. This includes non-degree programs and foreign institutions. This section will require you to enter dates of attendance, as well. Once you are finished, you will print out a “Transcript Request Form” for each school. This form helps DICAS properly match your official transcripts to your application. The form should be submitted following each institution’s policies for requesting a transcript. Some charge a small fee. The transcripts must be received directly from the institution in a sealed envelope to DICAS Transcript Department, PO Box 9118, Watertown, Massachusetts 02472.

Once your transcripts are received by DICAS, it will be indicated on your DICAS account. Allow plenty of time for this process, at least eight weeks. Request your current institution to send the transcript after your semester grades have posted the semester prior to the application due date. If transcripts do not arrive in time, your application will not be considered for Match Day. Once accepted to a program, the internship director is also required to have a copy of your final official transcripts as well for your internship file.

Session and Coursework:

You must first complete the Colleges Attended section of the application before you can enter your course history. DICAS requires that you list all of your DPD required coursework. The DPD courses for WCU are provided to students by the WCU Nutrition and Dietetic Program director and are also listed in the appendix. You can access credit hours and grades from MyWCU or request an official transcript for yourself in order to enter all the information required. Enter all courses from a single institution before you begin to enter courses from the next transcript. Coursework must be reported under the school (and in some cases – campus) at which the course was taken. You should not list transferred classes. DICAS allows you to report grades of A, B, C, D, F, as well as AB and BC. Follow the instructions on DICAS carefully and enter the appropriate grades from the letter grade drop down menu. Refer to instructions if needed. DICAS will calculate your GPA automatically once the fees are paid.

Tests:

In this section you will indicate the GRE or TOFEL test that you have taken if necessary for an application. After you have selected the appropriate test, enter in the appropriate information and click on *Submit*. You may need to send the official records to the dietetic internship programs or scan them as “supplemental materials” in DICAS. Check the specific application instructions posted on the program website.

DPD Contact Information:

Currently enrolled undergraduate students applying for Dietetic Internships must obtain an *Intent to Complete Form* which indicates the courses they will need to complete before graduating. Students who already have graduated need to obtain a completed *Verification Statement* which indicates the completion of at least a Bachelor’s degree and of a DPD program. DICAS will ask you to request one of these statements when you complete the section titled *DPD Contact Information*. You will enter in your DPD director information. At WCU this is the Nutrition and Dietetic Program director, currently Dr. Jeffrey Harris. DICAS will contact the director through e-mail and he will complete the required statement for you.

Awards, Work Experience and Volunteer Activities

In this section you will indicate any of your Honors and Awards, Sports and Extracurricular Activities, Certifications, Work Experience, and Volunteer Experience. Follow the directions carefully. You will be able to come back to this section before you e-submit your application. Once you have e-submitted your application, this section will not be able to be edited.

DICAS does not state that this section is required; however, internships are looking for information in this section even if you also submit a resume with your application. Sometimes DI admission committees may not review the resume, but instead are looking for this type of information in this section. Leaving this section blank implies that you don’t have any relevant awards, experiences, or volunteer activities, which is not the impression you want to give.

Personal Statement

The personal statement should address the following four questions plus anything the specific internship might request in 1000 words (8000 characters) or less:

1. Why do you want to enter the dietetics profession?
2. Discuss experiences that have helped prepare you for your career.
3. What are your short-term and long-term goals?
4. What are your strengths or weaknesses or areas needing improvement?

The personal statement can be personalized for each internship application. It is best to pre-type this statement in a word processing program that checks grammar and spelling and then paste it into the space after clicking *Add New Entry*. You will also want several people to read and edit your statement. Take advantage of the free resources and help located at WCU on campus which is available from the Twardowski Career Development Center (www.wcupa.edu/cdc, CDC@wcupa.edu) or Writing Center which helps with each step of the process (<http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/writingcenter/>). At minimum, this extra help will give you added feedback and an extra set of eyes. In order to have sufficient time to fine tune this statement, you will want to write it early. You need to answer the questions and market yourself and still only have around 1000 words. So, you must be clear and concise, choosing your words wisely.

You may want to research the institution or company offering the internship in order to fully understand their core values, characteristics and what they may look for in an employee so that you can emphasize these values and characteristics in your statement. Highlight any achievements or leadership roles. Explain any personal growth. Discuss career goals and career interests versus personal goals. Make sure you emphasize why you want to be in their internship program and even what you hope to gain. Inspect for grammar, spelling, and typos. Remember that spell check and grammar check may not catch everything.

Resume

You will need to develop a professional resume that markets you well. Your resume is a special way to market your skills, work experience, and accomplishments. The resume may be developed in a word processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word) and then uploaded directly to the DICAS Online. The size limit for the file upload is 250KB.

The content of a typical resume includes:

- Identifying/Contact information
- Objective Statement
- Education/Training
- Work Experience
- Volunteer Activities/Experiences (including Leadership)
- Awards/Honors/Scholarships
- Publications (if any)
- Presentations
- Professional memberships/affiliations
- Skills (e.g., computer, etc.)
- References

One of the biggest mistakes students make on their resume is understating or dismissing items of value. Start by making a list of anything you have done big or small. Fine tune the descriptions of these items by making them specific while utilizing power action verbs like: directed, managed, supervised, budgeted, established, or improved. Make sure you highlight any kind of supervisory or leadership roles. Organize your resume with your most relevant skills and experience at the top. List your work history in reverse chronological order. Have your resume reviewed by different people to get feedback and fine tune it. Make it look neat and professional. Edit for spelling and grammar mistakes. Remember that the spelling and grammar check may miss something.

The Twardowski Career Development Center at WCU can be contacted at CDC@wcupa.edu or on their website at www.wcupa.edu/CDC. A guide for writing resumes and cover letters is available at <http://www.wcupa.edu/services/stu.car/students/RESUME2.asp> and <http://www.wcupa.edu/services/stu.car/students/documents/resumes.pdf>. Other resources include <http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/index.php>, a one-stop job information site featuring sample resumes, and resume tips; <http://www.resumedoctor.com/ResourceCenter.htm>, which provides tips for what to do and what NOT to do with your resume based on survey results from headhunters, recruiters, and hiring managers; and <http://www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes>, which provides basic principles of resume writing excerpted from the bestselling book, *"The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success"*.

References

You must choose three people (faculty, supervisors, advisors, and employers) to complete a form from DICAS for a recommendation. Programs want references from people who know you professionally or academically. Personal letters from friends, a religious figure, or an employer related to things such as babysitting are not appropriate. Choose people that really know the quality of your work, your character, work ethic, and potential as a nutrition professional, and can write you a strong letter! Review the "Sample Recommendation Form from DICAS" (included in the Appendix) and find references that would be able to judge these particular qualities. A reference where the writer frequently checks "unable to Evaluate" is not a good reference.

Some internships have specific preferences so read the internship program requirements carefully. However, you must use the same references for all your applications. Programs may request additional references as "supplemental materials."

Be sure you ask the person if they would be willing to complete this form for you. Communicate fully and personally with those you ask to write a recommendation for you and

find out what they may need from you. Be sure to provide them with a resume since it will be very helpful for writing the recommendation. Remember to thank those who have been kind enough to assist you in this process with a thank you card.

Once you have chosen your three references, you will enter their name and email information onto your DICAS application. DICAS will email these references with instructions to complete the necessary form. All references MUST have access to the internet and email. You will receive confirmation when the reference has been contacted and when the reference is complete and received. If your reference is late, you will still be able to submit your completed application before the deadline. However, if you see that the reference is incomplete as the deadline approaches, it is wise to follow-up with them to make sure that it gets completed. Please note that entering a reference in DICAS immediately generates an e-mail request to that individual. Therefore, before entering an individual's name and contact information in this section, be sure this person has agreed to write a letter of recommendation for you.

When completing the DICAS reference information, you will be asked to choose whether you want to have access to the reference or whether you want it to be confidential. Students who waive their right to see references demonstrate self-confidence. It also shows the internship that you believe you are a strong candidate and will receive a positive recommendation; some DI admission committees may give greater weight to recommendations for which students have waived their right to see them.

There is a video for persons completing reference forms for DICAS titled *Instructional Video for Submitting Reference Letters to Centralized Dietetic Internship Application System*. Please provide your references with the website address to access this video:

<http://www.eatright.org/students/education/internships.aspx>.

Application Certification

In this section, you must electronically sign the application and certify to the accuracy of the information you have provided. Please ensure that the name you provided when you created your DICAS account exactly matches your electronic signature in this section. An electronic signature substitutes for your actual legal signature.

Program Designations

In this section, you will designate the programs to which you are applying. The DICAS service may only be used for sites that have registered with D&D Digital for participation in the DICAS Match.

You may pay the Dietetic Internship Application fees through DICAS in this section as well. The fee total will be calculated based on the number of programs designated (\$40 for the first designation and \$20 for each additional) and is separate from D&D Digital. Click on the *PAY NOW* button and carefully follow the instructions provided. The application fee is not refundable.

Supplemental Materials

Some internships require additional materials such as an additional application, a physical examination, an academic record form, a scan of test results, or an additional resume. Some internships may need additional materials sent through the mail such as additional fees or a graduate application. Review the program's instructions very carefully. If a program to which you are applying requires the submission of any materials that are not a part of the regular DICAS application, it is your responsibility to obtain this information, convert it to an electronic document, and to upload/attach it to the proper application. For example, if your testing reports are required by a program, you will need to have the paper copy scanned and converted into an electronic document.

All supplemental materials must be combined into a SINGLE document. Thus, if a program requires multiple supplemental items, it is your responsibility to combine them into a single electronic document. To upload supplemental materials for an application, click on the button in the "Supplemental" column in your list of designated programs.

Appendix



DPD Program Requirements

(Credits in parentheses)

Professional Courses

NTD 200 Nutrition and Culture (3)
NTD 205 Principles of Food Selection and Preparation (3)
NTL 205 Principles of Food Selection and Preparation Laboratory (2)
NTD 303 Introductory Principles of Human Nutrition (3)
NTD 309 Nutrition through the Lifecycle (3)
NTD 310 Nutrition Research
NTD 312 Food Science (3)
NTD 320 Dietetic Education Strategies (3)
NTD 409 Professional Skills in Dietetics (3)
NTD 410 Quantity Food Production (3)
NTD 411 Advanced Human Nutrition I (3)
NTD 412 Advanced Human Nutrition II (3)
NTD 413 Medical Nutrition Therapy I (3)
NTD 414 Medical Nutrition Therapy II (3)
NTD 415 Community Nutrition (3)
NTD 416 Foodservice and Nutrition Management I (3)
NTD 417 Foodservice and Nutrition Management II (3)

Physical, Biological Sciences, Mathematics

BIO 100 Basic Biological Science (3)
BIO 204 Introduction to Microbiology (4)
BIO 259 Anatomy and Physiology I (4)
BIO 269 Anatomy and Physiology II (4)
CHE 107 General Chemistry for the Health Sciences (4)
CRL 107 General Chemistry for the Health Sciences Laboratory (1)
CHE 230 Organic Chemistry (3)
CHE 310 Introduction to Biochemistry (3)
MAT 121 Statistics (3)

Behavioral and Social Sciences

PSY 100 Introduction to Psychology (3)
SOC 200 Introduction to Sociology (3)

Communication Courses

Basic COM or SPK course (3)
Basic Composition Courses (ENG or WRT, eg., ENG 120 and 121) (usually 6 credits)

Practice Interview Questions

1. Why do you want to become a dietitian? / What brought you to the field of dietetics?
2. What is the future of the dietetic profession?
3. Why did you apply to this program? / Why does this one in particular interest you?
4. What do you know about this program/hospital/city?
5. What do you expect of your internship?
6. Why are you interested in this internship program? What does it offer you?
7. What would you like to be doing five years from now?
8. What are your short-term (1 year) and long-term (5 year) career goals?
9. How did you prepare financially for the internship?
10. How will you add value to our institution as an intern?
11. Is there some unique quality or skill you will bring to us?
12. Summarize yourself in 3 words, with one word describing strength, weakness, and the third, up to you. / Describe yourself using 3 words.
13. What is the quality you find least attractive in a person?
14. What quality about yourself are you working to improve, and how have you done so?
15. Walk us through your academic performance?
16. Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of and why?
17. What do you perceive is the role of a dietitian?
18. What skills must a good dietitian possess / What do you think is the most important quality a registered dietitian should have?
19. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done or your greatest challenge in your life? What/how did you overcome it and tell us what you learned from it?
20. If you had the opportunity to choose any topic and conduct research on it, what would you choose and why?
21. If you could go to any workshop seminar to improve your skills, what would it be?
22. What was the last book you read and why?
23. What is important to you in a job? / Describe your ideal job setting.
24. What motivates you in your work?
25. Tell about a time when you tried something but failed.
26. How do you respond to the statement: "the dietitian an intern is working with is not responsible for the intern's learning?"
27. What are some features of excellent customer service? Give an example of a business that demonstrates excellent customer service.
28. What does dressing professionally mean to you?
29. What would you do if the dietitian you were working with did not meet these professional dress standards?
30. What would you do if the dietitian you were working with started talking/gossiping about other dietitians personal lives?
31. Where do you see Health Care going in the next 5-10 years? Where do you see business going over the same time frame? How are they related?
32. In a group, what role do you play?
33. Give an example of your critical thinking skills. / When have you shown sound judgment?
34. When have you shown emotional stability and maturity?

35. When have you shown empathy for others?
36. When have you shown physical and mental stamina?
37. Talk about your ability to learn and function in a variety of settings.
38. What does it mean to be self-directed?
39. What makes a good intern?
40. What makes a good mentor? What would you expect from your mentor?
41. Tell me something funny about yourself?
42. How do you deal with having a lot to do at the same time (time management)?
43. What is your greatest accomplishment?
44. How would you describe your leadership style?
45. How would your peers describe your work ethic/style?
46. Give an example of when you used your problem solving skills?
47. Tell us about a time you worked effectively in a group.
48. Tell us about a time you were criticized by a supervisor.
49. Tell us about a time you got criticism that you felt was not justified. What did you do?
50. Name a time you were criticized and what you did to deal with it.
51. Tell us about a time you had to work with someone with whose opinion you didn't agree.
52. Tell us about the work experience you are most proud of and why?
53. Describe a problem and how you solved it.
54. Describe a difficult situation and what skills you used to get through it.
55. Describe a time when you were required to reprimand someone whom you supervised.
56. What is your definition of professionalism?
57. Describe a time you had to work on a team with someone who didn't pull their weight. How did you deal with this? What might you have done differently?
58. What makes you a good team member? / What are the characteristics of a successful team?
59. Describe a time when you received feedback with which you didn't agree?
60. What was your most challenging course and why?
61. Give an example of your interpersonal skills.
62. Give examples of your leadership ability
63. Tell me about yourself.
64. What are your greatest strengths?
65. In what areas do you need improvement. / What are your weaknesses? How have you tried to improve on these?
66. What would your references say about you?
67. How would your friends and family describe you?
68. What was your favorite/least favorite course?
69. What course did you struggle with the most?
70. Tell me about a positive group experience.
71. Describe a time you had a conflict with a customer.
72. Describe a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker.
73. How do you handle conflict? Provide an example. / How do you deal with conflict as a team member?
74. Describe one goal that you recently set for yourself and achieved. What steps did you take to reach it?

75. What would you do if the dietitian you were on rotation with gave misinformation to a patient/client?
76. Have you ever had to stand up to a supervisor because you thought they were wrong?
77. Who is your mentor? Who inspires you?
78. What qualities should a successful manager possess? / What are the characteristic of a good manager?
79. What is your management style? / How would you deal with an unhappy or frustrated employee?
80. Explain a situation where you had to be self-directed, flexible, and responsible.
81. How have you prepared for this interview?
82. Do you like being challenged?
83. Have you ever worked in an ethnically diverse setting? If so, please tell us what that experience was like for you.
84. Describe a moving/touching experience you have had with a child.
85. How would you assess patient satisfaction with food services?
86. Please describe a patient or client contact you have had in a nutrition related setting. Please describe the setting and tell us, what was the most enjoyable aspect? What was the least enjoyable or most challenging aspect?
87. Tell us about a time when you had to deal with an extremely difficult or unhappy customer, patient, or co-worker. How did you deal with the situation and what was the outcome? Would you do anything differently next time?
88. You receive a consult for diet education for a client. The client arrives and is not interested in making any dietary changes. How would you handle this situation?
89. If an overweight teenage boy came to you to discuss his eating habits and his mother was controlling the conversation, how would you handle the situation?
90. What three topics would you discuss with a newly diagnosed diabetic?
91. If you were asked to give a presentation at a health fair on three current trends in nutrition, what would they be?
92. What do you think of the idea of implementing BMI measurements in schools K-12?
93. A man comes to see you for a consultation and he brings a new supplement that he bought at a natural foods store. The supplement claims to lower cholesterol, but you have never heard of the supplement before. How would you handle the situation?
94. Name two current trends in the field of dietetics.
95. What would you do if you were in charge of a kitchen during the food rotation and only half of your staff showed and there was only an hour before breakfast?
96. What would you do if you found out someone completely disregarded your recommendation?
97. What nutritional assessment would you do on a homeless man who is admitted for pneumonia?
98. A patient is on a fluid restricted diet but they keep drinking the pop and other beverages their family members bring in. What do you do?
99. A parent approaches you, asking for advice on the use of naturopathic supplements. What do you say?
100. During your clinical relief rotation you witness a doctor prescribing a formula to a child that you feel is inappropriate and potentially harmful. What do you do?

DIETETIC INTERNSHIP APPLICATION CHECKLIST

DATE COMPLETED	ACTIVITIES
	1. Review current directory of Dietetic Internships available online at www.eatright.org under Students tab.
	2. Obtain current application materials from chosen internship programs AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Review and follow ALL instructions carefully.
	3. Register for and take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for admission at http://www.ets.org/gre/ . The GRE exam should be taken as soon as possible because it takes some time to get your scores which must be included on your application.
	4. Register with DICAS at www.eatright.org/CADE . Select Computer Matching, and then programs participating in DICAS. Internship priorities should be selected carefully. No changes will be accepted after you click submit. There is a \$40 fee for the first school and a \$20 fee for each additional school.
	5. If you apply to a program that does not participate in DICAS, you still must register with DICAS in case you do not get accepted and wish to apply to another program in the clearing house (formerly called “second round”) that does participate in DICAS.
	6. Register with D&D Digital at www.dnddigital.com . This requires a \$50 fee.
	7. Request OFFICIAL transcripts from ALL colleges/universities you have attended to be sent to the program(s) for which you are applying. With DICAS, the transcripts are sent to DICAS.
	8. After selection and acceptance of an internship position, the intern will request original transcripts be sent to that institution.
	9. A MINIMUM OF 3.2 GPA IS REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION INTO MOST POST-GRADUATE DIETETIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS. Check the requirements of each DI to which you wish to apply.
	10. Request the “Declaration of Intent to Complete” form or the “Verification Statement” from your DPD Director at least 1 month prior to the deadline for your match (see above dates).
	11. Request references from advisor/faculty/employers at least 1 month prior to the deadline for your match (see above dates).
	12. References will be completed online through DICAS, but you must ask the person ahead of time and obtain the email address they wish to use to complete the reference.
	13. You may only select three references and these three will be the references for ALL your applications . The applicant will not see the references after completed but will be able to check the application to see if the references have been submitted.
	14. Provide your updated resume for each person you ask to complete your references. Include information concerning your GPA, work experience, school activities, honors received, etc.
	15. Additionally, provide for faculty the name of each class you took with them and what year/semester.

Local Volunteer Possibilities

Hospital:

Chester County Hospital

701 East Marshall Street

(610) 431-5000

Volunteer Website: <http://www.cchosp.com/cchpage.asp?p=413&m=189>

Nutrition Services Located in the North Hills Medical Office Building

795 East Marshall Street, Suite 201

610.738.2835

LifeCare Hospitals of Chester County

400 East Marshall Street

West Chester, PA 19380-3314

(484) 826-0400

Contact: Amy Messick, RD, LDN,

Long Term Skilled Nursing Facilities: