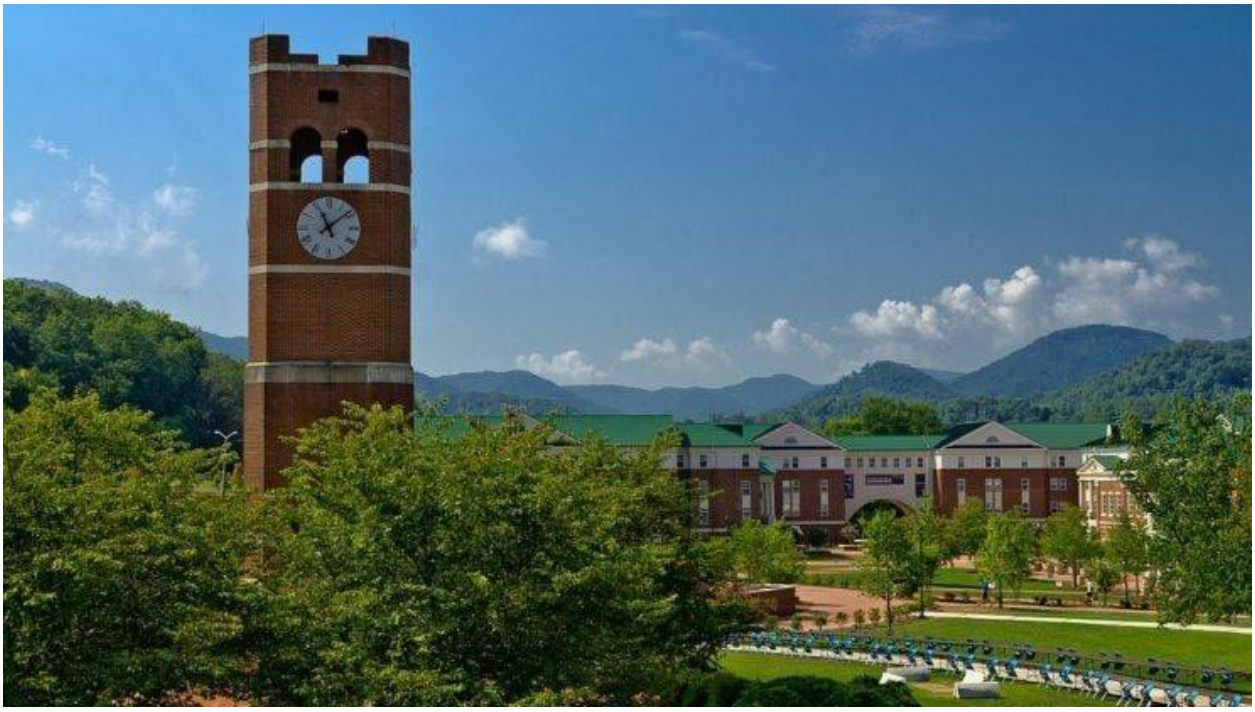

Master of Health Sciences-Nutrition Concentration (MHS-ND) Dietetic Internship Program Student Handbook

This Handbook is based on the most recent information and plan for the program. Its content is subject to revision as needed to adapt to new knowledge or unanticipated events. Updates will remain focused on achieving the program, course objectives, and ACEND guidelines.

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WCU MHS-ND/Dietetic Internship Program

WCU's Dietetic Internship (DI) Program is included in a 22-month Master of Health Sciences (MHS)- Nutrition (ND) concentration program which begins each Fall semester and is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). ACEND serves the public by establishing and enforcing eligibility requirements and accreditation standards that ensure the quality and continued improvement of nutrition and dietetics education programs. Programs meeting these standards are accredited by ACEND.

The DI is also open for students with a master's degree in a related field from a regionally accredited institution who also hold a Verification Statement from an ACEND-accredited Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), proving completion of required academic coursework.

Throughout this document the program will be referred to as the Nutrition & Dietetics – Dietetic Internship (ND-DI) Program.

Interns are required to locate their own preferred Supervised Practice (SP) sites and preceptors. The program does provide some assistance in obtaining sites and preceptors. The DI Director facilitates this process to ensure that interns are able to complete SP experiences on schedule, with the goal of ensuring timely completion of the DI program.

WCU has over 2,500 affiliation agreements in place with sites around the county, with a thoughtfully designed process for building affiliations with new potential sites. All precepting sites must have an active affiliation agreement in place with WCU prior to accepting interns.

Supervised practice rotations and didactic classes are designed to provide over a minimum of 1,088 SP hours and meet the ACEND Knowledge Competencies for the Registered Dietitian.

The WCU Dietetic Internship includes three SP rotations. These practicum courses can be completed in any sequence.

- The clinical practicum constitutes the bulk of the intern's SP at a minimum of 512 contact hours.
- The community and administrative practicums are a minimum of 288 contact hours each.
- In addition to the SP experiences and related evaluations by preceptors, there are corresponding Canvas electronic learning platforms designed for the practicum courses.

DI graduates are qualified to take the national Registration Examination for Dietitians.

ND Program Vision, Mission and Goals

ND-DI Vision: To be a model for nutrition and dietetics education through experiential learning and progressive approaches to serve the community.

ND-DI Mission Statement
The mission of the Dietetic Internship Program within the MHS-ND concentration at Western Carolina University is to provide a high-quality supervised practicum that prepares entry-level registered dietitian nutritionists, promotes life-long learning, meaningful engagement, and service to the profession of nutrition through optimizing human health.

ACEND Goals and Objectives
The goals and objectives (measurable outcomes as required and approved by ACEND) for the DI program within the MHS-ND concentration at Western Carolina University are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** *Graduates will become entry-level registered dietitian nutritionists and begin practicing in the field of nutrition and/or wellness.*
  - Objective 1.1: At least 75% of program graduates who respond to the alumni survey will indicate that they were prepared to apply the evidenced-based practice guidelines in practice.
  - Objective 1.2: At least 80% of program graduates complete program/degree requirements within 36 months (150% of the program length).
  - Objective 1.3: 80% of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion.
  - Objective 1.4: The program's one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%.
  - Objective 1.5: Of graduates who seek employment, 75% are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation.
- **Goal 2:** *Employers will report satisfaction outcomes for graduate preparation for entry-level positions within the field.*
  - Objective 2.1 Employers will report 75% satisfaction for graduate preparation for entry level positions within the field after the first 12 months of employment.

Admission Requirements

Application to WCU's ND-DI program is competitive. Applicants must meet minimum requirements and include a variety of application materials to aid in assessment of potential for success in the program.

Admission requirements for WCU's MHS Program:

- Minimum GPA of 3.0 in all upper-level undergraduate course work
- 3 letters of recommendation from instructors or employers who are able to judge aptitude for graduate study
- Personal Statement

Admission requirements for WCU's DI Program for applicants with a master's degree:

- Master's degree in a related field from a regionally accredited institution
- Verification Statement from an ACEND-accredited DPD
- 3 letters of recommendation from instructors or employers who are able to judge aptitude for graduate study
- Personal Statement

Technological competence and skills needed for this WCU distance program:

- Equipment requirements:
  - Reliable internet connection
  - Computer with video/audio capabilities and ability to install needed apps
  - Access to a phone
  - Access to a printer or scanner
- Competency in use of Office 365 software: Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint

Prospective students must apply through the Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System (DICAS).

Application requirements for the Dietetic Internship through DICAS
Please note that DICAS minimum standards exceed WCU MHS standards listed above.

- Dietetic Internship application submission via Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services (DICAS)
- Official transcript(s) for all schools attended
- Minimum DPD GPA of 3.2
- A resume
- Personal statement
- Listing and description of volunteer and/or paid experience in nutrition and dietetics
- Declaration of Intent to Complete Degree or DPD Verification Statement

Applications are reviewed by a selection committee. Qualified applicants may be invited to an in-person or video interview with a panel of selection committee members to help identify the most highly qualified and prepared applicants for the program.

Verification Statement Requirements
Verification Statement: An original, completed verification form obtained from your DPD director, which states that you have completed all ACEND®-required coursework. This is different from the form you sent in with your DI application packet. We require an original copy. Your original verification statement must be on file prior to beginning the program.

Next Steps in Applying to WCU's MHS Program:

- After students have been offered an opening in WCU's ND-DI program and accept the offer, they will need to formally put in their application to the Master of Health Science (MHS).
- This is done through the WCU Graduate School online application process through Apply Yourself. Materials used in DICAS can be used for this last formal step.

Required Documentation to Participate in Supervised Practice Experiences

Prior to starting at any clinical site, students will be required to complete and submit documentation of the following, as directed by the Clinical Education Coordinator, through the Education Management platform Exxat.

Immunization Records
Proof of the following immunization records will be needed by the end of the first Spring semester when students are enrolled in the ND-DI program

- ❒ Proof of TDaP (*tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis which may be as individual immunizations or as the TDaP vaccine*, *does not expire, however tetanus booster is required every 10 years*)
- ❒ Proof of Tetanus (TD) booster (*valid for 10 years*)
- ❒ Proof of negative TB Skin test (*within the past 6 months*) or negative chest xray (*does not expire*)
- ❒ Proof of MMR series or titer (*does not expire*)
- ❒ Proof of Varicella vaccine or titer (*history of disease is not sufficient, immunity must be verified*)
- ❒ Proof of Hepatitis B series or titer (*does not expire*)
- ❒ Proof of Influenza Vaccine (*to be administered each Fall)*

Additional requirements may be required by clinical sites.

Students are expected to complete all requirements prior to starting rotation. Delayed completion may impact a student's ability to complete a rotation, which may impact their grades. Due dates and clear instructions for all requirements will be provided by the Clinical Education Coordinator.

The lab tests and immunization records will be shared by the ND-DI program with supervised practice facility sites that require medical information through the Exxat platform. This is in accordance with university and most supervised practice site policies. Drug testing is required by most practicum facilities.

Professional Liability Insurance

Each ND-DI student must carry professional liability insurance once supervised practice (practicum courses) begins in the program. Professional liability insurance provides malpractice coverage for ND-DI students during the program rotations and didactics trainings. The ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator submits ND-DI student information annually for the university's Student Blanket Professional Liability Policy. The cost of the coverage is the responsibility of the ND-DI student and is charged through the student's university account.

Medical Insurance

Although not a requirement of WCU distance students, ND-DI students are required to carry medical insurance once supervised practice (practicum courses) begins in the program. ND-DI students may select their insurance plans and coverage, and acquiring and maintaining insurance is the responsibility of the ND-DI student. The ND-DI student must submit a copy of medical insurance coverage in Exxat by the last day of the first Spring semester. Should an ND-DI student be injured or ill at WCU or at a supervised practice facility rotation, the ND-DI student's medical coverage would take effect to cover costs.

Criminal Background Checks

All ND-DI students who plan to enroll in practicum courses are required to complete criminal background checks. Students who might be affected by this policy should discuss with their ND-DI Program Director as to whether they should commit time and resources to pursue Dietetic Internship placement. The ND-DI Program Director will inform interns of the Criminal Background Screening for Students policy. The ND-DI student is responsible for completing required paperwork and the cost of criminal background checks. This will be completed in the Exxat platform as instructed by the ND-DI Program Director.

Drug Testing

Drug tests are conducted before clinical education experiences. Students are responsible for all costs of drug testing. ND-DI students will follow the College of Health and Human Sciences Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy for Students. A student who receives a positive drug test, or a positive repeat drug test, will be subject to disciplinary action. The student will be suspended from all clinical education experiences and, per the CHHS Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy (IV.C.2),

program faculty will determine disciplinary action, up to program dismissal. Reasonable suspicion drug testing may be conducted when individualized and objective evidence exists to support the reasonable suspicion that a student (1) has engaged in the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs in violation of applicable policies, laws, and regulations; or (2) appears to be impaired. The ND-DI Program will follow the CHHS Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy for reasonable suspicion

ND-DI students must read and sign the policy statement and submit signed copy into Exxat.

Dietetic Interns as Employees

Site Preceptors are informed that ND-DI supervised practice students must not be used to replace employees. However, it is expected that students are aware that shadowing or assisting an employee in the context of a learning opportunity during supervised practice experiences is normal and expected.

Paid Compensation
The ND-DI Program does not provide compensation to students. Compensation from supervised practice facilities may occur in various forms such as complimentary meals or parking. In rare cases, facilities may offer financial compensation. Any form of compensation may vary from year to year and is not guaranteed; facility compensation is at the discretion of the supervised practice agencies and further details are worked out between the facility and the student once underway in practicum sites. As such, facility compensation is independent of the ND-DI program and it is not considered in site placement decisions. Students are responsible for any taxes due from compensation.

Identification Verification
Our goal is to provide access to diverse, state of the art technological tools to support learning, enhance instruction, and facilitate resource sharing, innovation and communication. All students are expected to respect the rights of others and the integrity of the systems and related physical resources in an ethical manner. WCU students are automatically set up with a unique username for logging into myWCU, campus email, and the learning management system (LMS). Should log in problems occur, please contact the WCU Help Desk at 828-227-7487 or complete an IT ticket at ithelp.wcu.edu. Access to the Western Carolina University's network use is denied without a user ID. User IDs and all files associated with that ID are deleted after each semester. It is the student's responsibility to back up their files.

All ND-DI program courses will utilize the university designated LMS, and students may be expected to utilize the LMS to access course announcements & information, submit and complete assessments, and participate in class discussion. The university LMS is also the platform for offering distance instruction in MHS-ND program courses. Distance offered courses may include asynchronous interaction online (e.g. discussion board, blogs, wikis, podcasts, e-portfolios) or synchronous "real time" learning.

Privacy of Student Information
ND-DI files are located on a secure online University drive or through the secure Education Management platform Exxat. All information in the student's file is kept private except for examples of student assignments or projects. Preceptors may refer to a ND-DI student's project, as requested. The ND-DI Program Director, ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator, SHS Director, and SHS Administrative Support Associate will have access to the files. University Policy 72 provides additional guidance.

Access to Student File
ND-DI students can request access to their ND-DI student file and obtain copies of documents within the files. ND-DI students should contact the ND-DI Program Director to submit a request in writing.

Liability for Safety in Travel
ND-DI students must provide their own transportation to supervised practice sites and professional meetings. ND-DI students must carry automobile liability insurance throughout the program. By the first day of dietetic internship the intern must submit proof of automobile liability insurance in Exxat. The student is responsible for maintaining continuous automobile liability insurance throughout the duration of the program. The intern is responsible for all liability and safety in travel to and from assigned facilities.

Injury or Illness Policy while in a Facility for Supervised Practice
In the event of injury or illness while at an assigned supervised practice site, the ND-DI student should contact their site supervisor immediately, and then the ND-DI Program Director or Clinical Education Coordinator as soon as practical. If an illness or injury requires the ND-DI student to leave or miss hours at a facility, it is the student's responsibility to contact the site supervisor as soon as possible and arrange a schedule to make up the missed hours. For an injury while at a supervised practice site, the student should contact the site supervisor immediately and seek appropriate medical treatment. The student should follow the policies and procedures of the facility for on-the-job injuries.

Complaints
A student enrolled in the ND-DI program that has an academic complaint or appeal concerning the program or faculty should speak with the relevant faculty member directly involved in the complaint or appeal. If a resolution is not achieved, the student can then speak with the ND-DI Program Director. If a resolution is not achieved after speaking with the ND-DI Program Director, the student can speak with the Chair of the Department of Therapeutic and Clinical Healthcare.

For appeals specific to a final assigned course grade or dismissal from the program, the student should follow the Academic Action Appeal Policy available in the WCU Graduate Catalog.

If the complaint is against the ND-DI program specifically as it relates to ACEND® accreditation standards, policies, and/or procedures, the student should discuss the complaint with the ND-DI Program Director. If the complaint directly involves the ND-DI Program Director or satisfactory resolution is unable to be sought through the ND-DI Program Director, the student should discuss the complaint with the Chair of the Department of Therapeutic and Clinical Healthcare. A written complaint should be completed for purposes of documentation. The written complaint should include:

- Student name and contact information (address, phone number, email address).
- The ACEND® standard, policies, or procedures being violated by the issue.
- The steps already taken to address the issue, including individuals involved.
- A succinct description of the complaint, including individuals involved.
- A succinct description of the outcome(s) desired in resolution.
- Signature of the complainant.

In the event that a student is unable to obtain grievance resolution through the above policies and procedures and the complaint relates to ACEND® accreditation standards, policies, or procedures, the student should submit the complaint in writing directly to ACEND®. Written complaints against the dietetics program should be submitted to ACEND® only after all other options with the program and institution for addressing the complaint have been exhausted. The procedure and related forms for filing a complaint against an accredited program may be found on ACEND®'s website at https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/public-notices-and-announcements/filing-acomplaint-with-acend.

ACEND® may be contacted at:
Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 120
South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2190
Chicago, Illinois 60606-6995
(800) 877-1600 ext. 5400
Email: acend@eatright.org
Website: https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend

Stop Out Policy

The stop out policy allows delayed admission for newly admitted ND-DI students. The intent of the policy is to allow ND-DI students time to participate in rare, unique, and extraordinary opportunities. Unfortunately, some students must delay admission due to unforeseen events, such as medical emergencies, serious health conditions, or United States military orders. A delay of admission will not be approved if a student plans to take courses at another college or university (including military academies). Financial, visa, or flight-booking complications will not be approved either. Each individual's situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The ND-DI Program Director must approve the request to delay admission. A deferral may be requested for up to one year. A longer delay of admission may be granted to a student whose United States military commitment has been extended for more than 1 year. A delay can be requested only for the same ND-DI program to which the student was admitted.

Admitted students must notify the ND-DI Program Director of a stop out request as soon as the admitted student knows that a delay of admission will be needed. The request must be made no later than 1 month prior to the beginning of the term to which the student has been admitted. Exceptions may be made in the event of an emergency.

Assessment of Student Learning

Dietetic Intern Evaluations

ND-DI students will be given verbal and written evaluation on a regular, ongoing basis throughout the program. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with all evaluation guidelines and forms including the criteria and timing for each evaluation. Evaluations are to be completed by the specified dates. Each practicum will require a mid-point and final evaluation. The lead site preceptor completes the Intern Evaluation Form and discusses the evaluation with the student. The intern, preceptor and ND-DI Program Director sign the evaluation form. The ND-DI Program Director provides the appropriate evaluation forms to the preceptor, specifies the dates for evaluation, reviews completed evaluations, and maintains all evaluations in the Intern's file. Additionally, the ND-DI student completes self-evaluations regularly throughout the program. For program feedback, ND-DI students complete an evaluation following each practicum for each supervised practice site. An exit interview in the form of a survey (e.g., Qualtrics, Survey Monkey) occurs the final week of the dietetic internship program.

Supervised Practice Documentation

ND-DI students are responsible for using the ***Supervised Practice Tracking Form*** and denoting the type of supervised practice hours (e.g. profession work settings (PWS); simulations (S); case studies (CS); role playing (RP); on it for EACH type of practicum (clinical, administrative/foodservice, community).

- As applicable, ND-DI students should denote sick, personal, or adverse weather hours on corresponding days.
- ND-DI students are expected to share their current Supervised Practice Tracking Form with the ND-DI Program Director, ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator, and their instructor during practicum courses.
- A completed Supervised Practice Tracking Form is due to the ND-DI Program Director at the conclusion of EACH practicum. These will be collected in both the LMS (Canvas) and Exxat platforms.

Roles and Responsibilities of ND-DI students, Supervised Practice Preceptors, and ND-DI Program Director

ND-DI students (dietetic intern) Roles and Responsibilities

ND-DI students will acquire the skills and knowledge to function as an entry-level dietitian or manager in all areas of dietetics. Failure to follow these rules might result in termination from the program.

- Be professional in manner and appearance at all times.
- Represent Western Carolina University in an appropriate manner and appearance when visiting affiliations, class days and field observations.
- Be punctual and available throughout the practicum rotations.
- Complete objectives, learning experiences, reading assignments, and projects by due dates.
- Be prepared for each rotation by reading required texts and articles and by completing worksheets prior to or during each rotation.
- Follow WCU, Department of Therapeutic and Clinical Healthcare, including ND and MHS, and supervised practice site policies and procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality of all information discussed within the hospital and department.
- Ask for the preceptor's approval to leave his/her area of responsibility. Communicate to the practicum instructor when attending meetings or conferences out of the building.
- Inform the preceptor of any change in his/her schedule in a timely manner. Accept any change in the preceptor's schedule that may arise.
- Maintain respect for positions of authority and follow chain of command.
- Function as a team player.
- Seek guidance when needed.
- Research and look up information, as needed.
- Accept constructive criticism.
- Completely accept responsibility for all actions.
- Maintain a positive and hard-working attitude.
- Maintain open and frequent communication with staff.
- Attend all required conferences, meetings, and classes.
- Maintain student assignments, forms, projects, etc. in appropriate files.

See additional link on WCU ND-DI website for a complete list of Core Competencies for the Registered Dietitian (CRDN). These competencies are established by ACEND for all accredited dietetic internship programs.
Achievement of the competencies is measured throughout the dietetic internship program and must be successfully met to obtain a DI verification statement.

Supervised Practice Preceptor Roles and Responsibilities

The preceptor is to teach the intern the skills and knowledge required to function as an entry-level dietitian or manager in the preceptor's area of specialty.

- Orient the intern to the facilities, objectives, learning experiences and due dates.
- Review the schedule and competencies of the rotation with the intern.
- Complete orientation to unit checklist on the first day of the rotation with the Intern.
- Inform other employees of the dates when the Intern will be in his/her area.
- Meet with the Intern as needed to discuss projects/concerns.
- Correct, return, and review written projects after receiving them from the intern.
- Complete appropriate Intern evaluation forms by the last day of the rotation. Any deviation from this rule must be pre-approved by the Internship Director.
- Provide immediate positive feedback and constructive criticism throughout the rotation to the intern.
- Give guidance throughout the rotation and especially with written projects to the intern.
- Act as a resource person when the intern has questions.
- Refer the intern to appropriate resources when needed.
- Be aware of ND-DI policies and procedures.
- Enforce policies and procedures when needed.
- Discipline the intern, as needed.
- Act as a mentor and function as a team player.
- Serve as a role model at all times.
- Empower ND-DI students to an interdependent, but autonomous, level of function.
- Review, in a timely manner, the intern's progress with the Dietetic Internship Program Director at the midpoint and end of the rotation.
- Provide constructive feedback on the Program Evaluation Form.

Dietetic Internship Program Director Roles and Responsibilities

The Dietetic Internship Program Director is responsible for planning, administration, and evaluation of Western Carolina University's Dietetic Internship Program within the MHSND program in coordination with the Clinical Education Coordinator.

- Develop and update recruitment and application information for prospective students.
- Provide program information and meet with prospective students.
- Orient ND-DI students to the program.
- Organize supervised practice site rotations and develop schedules.
- Coordinate and communicate with preceptors regarding the objectives, learning experiences, and projects in supervised practice rotations.
- Monitor and evaluate the intern's progress in each rotation throughout the year.
- Provide ongoing support and advice for ND-DI students. Communicate via telephone, email, scheduled site visits, facilitated meetings, etc.
- Maintain ACEND required student records including student complaints and resolutions, verification statements, and advising plans.

- Serve as a role model and mentor to ND-DI students.
- Act as a liaison between the preceptor and intern, as needed.
- Serve as an advocate for the intern when appropriate and justified.
- Develop and enforce policies and procedures.
- Direct the application process and selection review of ND-DI students.
- Enforce the role and responsibilities of both the intern and the preceptor.
- Recruit and orient qualified and appropriate preceptors.
- Facilitate the negotiation of contracts between the ND or MHS program and the supervised practice sites.
- Complete all official forms, submission of fees, studies, reports, RDN exam registration, etc., necessary for maintenance of accreditation.
- Conduct continuous internal and external program evaluations.
- Propose new and/or modification of current curriculum based on the ongoing achievement of student learning outcomes, expected competence of the students, program goals, and changes impacting dietetic practice.
- Assess the progress of the ND-DI students and the ND-DI program.
- Propose future goals and implementation plans.

Program Schedule

Selection and Maintenance of Practice Sites
The ND-DI Program follows a policy and procedure for selecting and maintaining supervised practice sites and affiliation agreements. Supervised practice site adequacy is based according to the following criteria.

The supervised practice site must:

1. Espouse a philosophy of supervised practice education that is compatible with ND-DI Program.
2. Adhere to legal and ethical guidelines for nutrition and dietetics practice.
3. Value supervised practice education of the ND-DI students.
4. Provide resources and learning opportunities that allow the ND-DI students to achieve specific supervised practice learning objectives.
5. Demonstrate a willingness to support timely evaluation of ND-DI students.
6. Facility preceptors must be licensed, as appropriate, to meet state and federal regulations, or credentialed, as needed, for the area in which they are supervising.
7. Facility preceptors must show evidence of continued competence and currency appropriate to their precepting duties through professional work, graduate education, professional development education, scholarship/ research, or other activities leading to professional growth in the advancement of their profession.
8. Facility preceptors must complete ND-DI Program Preceptor Orientation.

The ND-DI Program adheres to the following procedure for securing and maintaining affiliation agreements with supervised practice sites:

Before a ND-DI student can be placed in a supervised practice site, a written affiliation agreement that formally states the agreed-upon responsibilities of WCU and the respective site must be signed by appropriate individuals with institutionally-assigned signatory authority. Affiliation agreements clarify issues of liability and communication for all parties.

This process begins with the ND-DI Program Director or Clinical Education Coordinator submitting an Educational Affiliation Agreement Request Form to an Administrative Assistant within the Dean's office. The College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) has a standard affiliation agreement that adheres to the laws of North Carolina and the requirements of WCU legal counsel. Upon receipt of the request to establish a new supervised practice site, an affiliation agreement is drafted and sent to the identified site to obtain appropriate signatures. If a supervised practice site agrees to the standard affiliation agreement, the official representative of the practice site and the Dean of CHHS sign the affiliation agreement. Periodic review of the affiliation agreement occurs as specified in the agreement.

When a supervised practice site amends the affiliation agreement or substitutes its own contract, the amended or new agreement is submitted to the Administrative Assistant of the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences for review and approval. Then the agreement is forwarded to WCU legal counsel and those with signatory authority for approval. If either party determines that changes are necessary, a negotiation process occurs. When agreement is reached, official representatives of both parties sign the affiliation agreement.

Once the agreement has been signed, the Administrative Assistant in the Dean's Office notifies the ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator and/or ND-DI Program Director that a new contract is secured for supervised practice site placement. All affiliation agreements are securely stored and managed in an all-in-one Education Management Platform, EXXAT. The system is college – facility interactive.

Prior to placing students at supervised practice sites, the ND-DI Program Director or Clinical Education Coordinator verifies that there is a signed, current affiliation agreement on record by reviewing the contract spreadsheet or through communication with an Administrative Assistant in the Dean's Office.

Following each supervised practice site placement, ND-DI students complete a preceptor and site rotation evaluation. This data, along with information gathered during site visits, is utilized by the ND-DI Program Director to evaluate adequacy and appropriateness of supervised practice facilities.

All programs in WCU's College of Health and Human Sciences are required to have an affiliation agreement on file prior to placing students at sites; students are not placed in sites without affiliation agreements.

Program Costs and Fees

MHS-ND Program Expenses
Tuition rates are reviewed and set annually by the North Carolina legislature. The University reserves the right to alter any charges without prior notice. Graduate distance learning tuition and fees per credit hour for in-state and out-of-state rates can be found on the Tuition & Fees website.

The below table lists some examples of costs to expect during the ND-DI program. The below table includes estimations and may change without prior notice.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Student Membership (note: this is a significant discount compared to the professional rate)	$58.00
Textbooks and Supplies	$400.00 per year approximately
Exxat	$136.00
Professional Liability Insurance (paid as student fee)	$25.00
Criminal Background Check	$40.00-60.00
Drug Screen	varies
Health Insurance	varies
Immunizations	(max if not covered by Ins.) varies
Rent, Food, and Gas	Varies per site, preference and commute
In-State Tuition	Fall 2025-Spring 2026 In-State Graduate Tuition & Fees is $5,362.04.*
Out of State Tuition	Fall 2025-Spring 2026 Out-of-State Tuition & Fees is $10,721.54. *

**Proposed rates are subject to change until they are approved by the UNC Board of Governors, reviewed and authorized by the state legislature, and signed into the state budget as law by the Governor.*

Graduation and Program Completion Requirements

MHS-Nutrition concentration students complete degree requirements in twenty-two months (or 2 academic years). Supervised practice practicum courses provide 6 hours of graduate credit toward the MHS degree. Graduation degree requirements for WCU can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

To successfully obtain a signed DI completion Verification Statement, ND-DI students must meet or exceed all of the following criteria:

a. Successfully complete each course with a grade of B or higher. A graduate student can receive a maximum of two Cs during the program. A graduate student who accumulates three grades of C or any grade of F will be dismissed from the Graduate School per the Graduate School's Academic Dismissal Policy.
b. Have a 3.0 or better GPA in order to graduate.
c. Complete all Competencies for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (CRDN).
d. Complete all assignments/learning outcomes.
e. Turn in all evaluation forms.
f. Complete the required supervised practice hours.
g. Demonstrate satisfactory performance and competence throughout the program rotations as evaluated by site preceptors and ND-DI Program Director.
h. Complete all program and self-assessments.
i. Uphold code of conduct, academic or non-academic, and perform ethically in accordance with the values of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and Code of Ethics of the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

The intern will receive a Dietetic Internship Verification Statement via email following successful completion of the MHS- Nutrition concentration and conferral of degree.

Retention and Remediation Procedures

Program Retention

To remain in the ND-DI program a student must maintain at least a 3.0 overall GPA, and cannot have a course grade below a "C" once in the MHS-ND cohort. A graduate student who accumulates three grades of C or any grade of F will be dismissed from the Graduate School per the Graduate School's Academic Dismissal Policy. A student can request readmission after dismissal from the Graduate School.

Remediation Procedures for Competencies

The ND-DI Program Director, Clinical Education Coordinator, or Preceptor may identify the need for the ND-DI student remediation at any point during the program. Practicum evaluation forms align with competencies for the registered dietitian nutritionist (CRDN). When a Preceptor identifies that a dietetic intern is not demonstrating entry level skills on the practicum evaluation form a remediation plan is employed. As

described on the practicum evaluation form, *remediation plans must be completed prior to granting a recommendation of pass. Plans should identify the specific application of rotation knowledge, professional behavior, ethics, or skills that are deficient and the corresponding activities and assignments that must be completed at a proficient level.*

ND-DI remediation process will be developed in collaboration with the ND-DI Program Director and/or Preceptor based upon the deficiency demonstrated by the ND-DI student. The remediation plan will be documented by the ND-DI Program Director or Clinical Education Coordinator and distributed to the ND-DI student and to the Preceptor, if needed. Progress to fulfill the remediation plan will be monitored and documented by ND-DI Program Director and Preceptor, if needed. All documentation is maintained by the ND-DI Program Director in the ND-DI student record file.

Program Dismissal Procedures

Dismissal for Improper Conduct
The ND-DI Program Director has an academic, legal, and ethical responsibility to protect members of the public and of the health care community from unsafe or unprofessional conduct. It is within this context that students can be academically sanctioned or dismissed from the ND-DI program. ND-DI students are subject to counseling by any preceptor at any time during the program when the intern does not abide by the Western Carolina University policies, procedures, or code of conduct.

Improper Conduct is Defined as:
1. An act or behavior that violates the Commission on Dietetic Registration Code of Ethics. Please see the Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession.
2. An act or behavior which threatens, or has the potential to threaten, the physical, emotional, mental, or environmental safety of the patient/client, family member, another student, faculty member, preceptor, other health care provider, or any other person.
3. An act or behavior which constitutes a practice a student is not prepared or authorized to perform on any other person at the time of the incident.

Dietetic interns must adhere to the Western Carolina University Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct, and WCU and CHHS policies on use of illegal drugs.
Academic Integrity Policy
University Policy 38 Illegal Drugs and Illegal Use or Abuse of Alcohol
College of Health and Human Sciences Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy
WCU Graduate Catalog

The specific action in response to improper conduct is based upon which rule of conduct was violated and whether or not previous warnings were given for same behavior as well as other relevant information.

ND-DI students may be immediately terminated from the program for unprofessional or unsafe behavior including, but not limited to:

- Inability to successfully complete required courses
- Repeated poor performance
- Consistent lack of preparation for supervised practice
- Not following instructions as requested
- Habitual absenteeism or tardiness
- Unsafe practice
- Clinical error or poor clinical judgment affecting patient safety
- Inability to cooperate with preceptors, peers, or hospital staff
- Unprofessional or unethical conduct or violating the policies of the internship as set forth in the student handbook
- Two rotation failures
- Failure to pass drug screen or background check or evidence of drug or alcohol abuse
- Performing as an RDN outside the confines of the ND-DI Program
- Falsification of records

The process for review of improper conduct is as follows:

1. The site preceptor discusses the misconduct with the intern within two scheduled working days. The preceptor documents each discussion and provides a copy to the ND-DI Program Director.
2. After an Improper Conduct is submitted, the ND-DI Program Director meets with the intern to discuss the problem(s) and develop an action plan of corrective action within specific timeframes. The plan of action is documented and filed with the NDDI Program Director; a copy is provided to the dietetic intern.
3. Failure to comply with the plan of action OR additional offenses within the original plan of action timeframe OR after three separate actions, will result in the ND-DI student being dismissed from the program. The ND-DI Program Director will notify the Chair of the Department of Therapeutic and Clinical Healthcare, Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences, and the Dean of the Graduate School in writing of the termination decision. All documentation is kept in the ND-DI student's file with the ND-DI Program Director.

Withdrawal and Refund Policies

MHS-ND students may withdraw from the program following term and university policy and deadlines outlined in the university catalog. It is advisable for students to provide written information to the ND-DI Program Director describing the reason for withdrawal and to have a discussion with the ND-DI Program Director to discuss the situation before requesting formal withdrawal from the university and program. If withdrawal of all courses takes place, students no longer will be enrolled in the MHS-ND program or Dietetic Internship. The ND-DI student cannot return to the current ND-DI cohort after withdrawal. Students interested in applying to future ND-DI cohorts are subject to all admission requirements and program requirements in effect for the semester to which

they are re-applying. Students who withdraw will *not* be able to request that their original offers be reinstated.

Western Carolina University's Withdrawal/Drop Refund Policy are followed when students withdraw from MHS-Nutrition courses, the DI program, and the university. Western Carolina University's Withdrawal Policy is available through the Student Accounts Office, Campus Operations and Finance. Students should take note of withdrawal dates and related reduction of tuition and fee changes on the posted schedules.

Vacation and Sick Leave

Absence Due to Illness or Injury

ND-DI students are allowed excused absences due to illness or injury during supervised practice practicum rotations. An absence of more than one day due to illness or injury may require a note from the physician. At the discretion of the preceptor, and ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator, supervised practice hours lost to illness or injury may need to be made up. If the ND-DI student is out due to illness or injury, he/she should notify the site preceptor and ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator for each day of absence. The illness or injury is documented and placed in the ND-DI student's file. The ND-DI student records their absence on the Dietetic Internship Weekly Competency Log. If illness or injury interrupts a rotation for a definite period of time, the ND-DI Program Director will negotiate an appropriate leave for the intern. The leave must not extend the interns program completion date past 150% of the program length.

Absence for Bereavement

The intern is excused for supervised practice days when there is a death of their immediate family (partner, child, brother, sister, mother, father, grandparent, grandchild, stepchild, or partner's parent). The ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator reserves the right to request valid proof of death and relationship of immediate family member. Any request for additional days of absence is approved by the ND-DI Program Director as Absences for Personal Reasons. The ND-DI student is to immediately contact the site preceptor and ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator when there is a death of an immediate family member. Supervised practice hours missed for bereavement must be made up if the intern will drop below the required hours of supervised practice.

Absence for Personal Reasons

ND-DI students can request an absence to be excused due to personal reasons. Approval is left to the discretion of the ND-DI Clinical Education Coordinator and ND-DI Program Director. The intern is required to make up the lost internship time due to personal reasons.

Vacation and Holiday

ND-DI students are allowed to observe the holidays observed by the university while in non-practicum courses, and holidays observed by the supervised practice site while in practicum courses; ND-DI students may choose to take vacation during these times. ND-DI students may be expected to complete supervised practice hours during WCU

breaks. At the beginning of the program, the ND-DI Program Director informs ND-DI students of the scheduled weeks of vacation and holidays.

Inclement Weather
ND-DI students are expected to attend supervised practice rotations at facilities as scheduled. In the event of inclement weather (e.g. snow or ice) during practicum placement, ND-DI students should communicate with their preceptors regarding facility or programming closure that could prevent normal activity. In supervised practice settings, each ND-DI student is considered a non- essential employee and should attend the rotation facility if it is "open for business" for non-essential employees unless the primary site preceptor advises the ND-DI student differently. ND-DI students are expected to make up any lost time due to inclement weather.

Student Support and Tutorial Services

WCU's Office of Distance Learning has a comprehensive webpage that outlines the campus services that are available to distance students.

Financial Assistance
Various financial sources, such as grants and loans are available to qualified graduate students in the Dietetic Internship Program. To become eligible, an application for financial assistance can be obtained by contacting WCU Financial Aid Office in Room 230 of the Robinson Administration Building, telephone 828-227-7290. Additional information is located found on the Office of Financial Aid. Financial aid recipients are expected to comply with the guidelines established by each specific granting or loaning agency.

Learning Management System (LMS) Support
The learning management system support can be found at: tc.wcu.edu, (828) 227-7487, visiting ithelp.wcu.edu, or visiting the Technology Commons located on the ground floor of the Hunter Library.

Hunter Library/Online Library Services
Hunter Library provides students with access to group and individual study spaces and to thousands of information resources: print and electronic books, newspapers, and scholarly journal articles. These resources can be searched online through the Hunter Library or can be searched and located in the library building. Students in need of research or library support can get help from library staff and subject specialists skilled in their specific disciplines and find resources specific to their disciplines and assignments via the library's research guides.

Research and Instruction Librarian / Liaison to the Health Professions
https://researchguides.wcu.edu/srch.php?q=nutrition
Sarah Steiner
ksteiner@wcu.edu

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. Students who require accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and/or medical condition and provide current diagnostic documentation to the Office of Accessibility Resources. Please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources, 135 Killian Annex (next to One Stop), (828) 227-3886 or by email at accessibility@wcu.edu**.**

Counseling and Psychological Services
Western Carolina University Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) provides consultations and short-term goal oriented psychological counseling to enrolled students at no cost. Clinicians at CAPS are dedicated to serving WCU students and assisting them in participating fully in their academic, social, and cultural endeavors at WCU. More information can be found here on the CAPS website or by calling 828.227.7469.

WCU Center for Career and Professional Development
Career planning and job searching help is available at the Center for Career and Professional Development. The Center is located in 150 Reid. f you are graduating this year and need assistance with job search documents, a career search or major career decision making, the Center is there to assist you. All services are available to students and alumnus, most at no cost. Full time jobs and internships for students are alumni are posted at JobCat 2.0.

IT Services Help Desk
All login and technical problems should be reported to IT Services Help Desk: 828227-7487, Toll Free: 866-928-7487, or visiting ithelp.wcu.edu.

Additional Policies and Standards

Equal Opportunity
Western Carolina University is an equal opportunity institution with respect to both education and employment. In accordance with WCU Policy 10 "Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity," WCU does not discriminate, or treat people differently on the basis of race; color; religion; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; national origin; age; disability; genetic information; political affiliation; and National Guard or veteran status as required by federal (Title VI, Title IX, Section 504) and state laws and regulations.

Fair Labor Standards
The training given to ND-DI students is for the benefit of the student. The ND-DI student does not displace regular employees. ND-DI students work under the close supervision of the site preceptor during supervised practice rotations ND-DI students are aware that they are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training nor guaranteed a job at the conclusion of the program.

Academic Honesty Policy
Western Carolina University, as a community of scholarship, is also a community of honor. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students work together to achieve the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at WCU because it threatens the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on knowledge and integrity.

Honesty and integrity are fundamental values for the dietetics profession and the University. Students will not lie, steal, or cheat in their academic endeavors, nor will the student tolerate the actions of those who do. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the consequences of violating academic honesty policies and the impact such violations can have on their standing in the MHS-ND Program, the University, and in their careers.

MHS-ND students (dietetic interns) are held to the University's Academic Integrity Policy. To maintain the public's trust in dietitians, dishonesty will not be tolerated. Course instructors have the right to determine appropriate academic sanctions for violations of the Academic Integrity Policy within their courses, up to an including a final grade of "F" in the course in which the violation occurs

Examples of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication: intentional falsification or invention of information or citation in any academic exercise.
- Plagiarism*: representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise.

- Self-plagiarism- reusing work that you have already published or submitted for a class. It can involve re-submitting an entire paper, copying, paraphrasing passages from your previous work, or recycling old data.
- Facilitation of academic dishonesty: helping or attempting to help someone to commit a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy in any academic exercise (e.g. allowing another person to copy information during an examination)

*Specific guidelines about avoiding plagiarism are available at can be found through the Writing and Learning Commons Plagiarism Resources.