



Application Guide: Distance Dietetic Internships

Is a distance dietetic internship right for you?

- **Are you self-directed and motivated?** In a distance program, you are responsible for setting up your supervised practice experiences. You need to be confident and motivated initiating contact with local registered dietitians to establish agreements with them to be your preceptors.
- **Do you have strong reading skills?** Reading is a large part of any class and especially online. The ability to read and comprehend subject matter is critical to your success.
- **Does written communication come easily for you?** Since all communication from intern to the internship director is online, you should be confident and at ease with writing to express your thoughts, share ideas, ask questions and complete assignments.
- **Are your technical skills adequate?** You will need to have good experience and knowledge of using your computer system in Web-based communications. Along with computer skills, you will also need to be comfortable with the amount of typing required.
- **Will you ask questions when you need to?** If you typically don't hesitate to seek help when you need it, you'll do fine. Without face-to-face or classroom contact, your instructor won't know you have a problem unless you ask.
- **Are you realistic about the time commitment?** Distance education is at least as time consuming as campus classes and is usually more time consuming.
- **Are you well-organized and self-disciplined?** In a distance program you are in charge of scheduling and managing your time effectively. You need to have good organizational skills and discipline to set aside adequate time for study and to complete projects and meet deadlines.
- **Will you miss the social interaction?** Interaction with the instructor and classmates is often an important part of the learning experience. Consider how important it is for you to have face-to-face and social interaction in your learning and communication style.

Successful Traits of distance dietetic Students

- Self-directed
- Motivated
- Comfortable with computers
- Likes to read and write
- Inquisitive
- Disciplined
- Independent

1. Research & Select a Distance Program



A **distance dietetic internship** allows the interns to train in the geographical region of his/her choice. Because of this, the application process requires additional components. Distance Track applicants are responsible for securing their own rotation sites and preceptors for all supervised practice experiences.

<u>University of Houston</u>	<u>Bowling Green State University</u>
<u>Oakwood College</u>	<u>Aramark Distance Dietetic Internship</u>
<u>University of Northern Colorado</u>	<u>Marywood University</u>
<u>Iowa State University</u>	<u>Utah State University</u>
<u>Sodexo</u>	<u>The Sage Colleges</u>
<u>Wellness Workdays</u>	<u>University of Delaware</u>
<u>Meredith College</u>	<u>Morrison Chartwells</u>
<u>Priority Nutrition Care</u>	<u>Solmaz Institute Lenoir Rhyne University</u>
<u>Cedar Crest College</u>	

Consider:

Length of Internship - A distance internship may range from 1200 hours to 2400 hours. The more required hours, the more preceptors and facility sites you will need to find. Keep in mind that some rotation sites prefer students that can commit to a longer period of time (6-8 weeks, compared to 1 or 2 weeks).

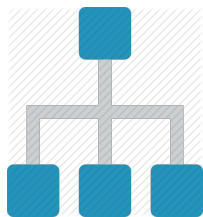
Academic vs Non-Academic Program - Academic programs (like Iowa State or University of Houston) provide student benefits; loans, grants, digital media access, and student health insurance, to distance interns. However, they also require student fees for amenities that probably won't be used (local bus pass, fitness center, etc.).

Required online hours - Most distant internships require some degree of online hours. Internships offering graduate credits will require a greater time commitment at home in addition to rotation hours and internship projects.

Rotation Site Assistance - Some distance internships (UNC, Sodexo, or Aramark) will provide assistance in identifying and securing facilities and preceptors, but most do not.

2. Determine your DI's rotation requirements

Depending on your DI's mission and goals, the **rotation requirements** will vary greatly. Read your DI's website or contact the DI Director to determine:



- The number of required rotations
- The number of hours needed in each rotation
- Recommended focus areas in each rotation
- Number of weeks to complete the required hours in each rotation
- Recommendations for elective rotations

Fill in the chart to help you visualize the breakdown of your DI rotation requirements.

Required Rotations Chart

	Rotations	Focus
Clinical ____ weeks ____ hours		
Community ____ weeks ____ hours		
Food Service Mngmt ____ weeks ____ hours		
Other ____ weeks ____ hours		

Example: 25 week / 1200 hour rotation

Clinical <u>13</u> weeks <u>650</u> hours	MNT 11 weeks 450 hours	Clinical Inpatient Obesity Diabetes Renal CVD/GI Cancer
	Staff Relief 2 weeks 100 hours	Clinical Inpatient
Community <u>5</u> weeks <u>250</u> hours	WIC 2 weeks 100 hours	WIC Clinic
	Community 3 weeks 150 hours	Public Health Long Term Care Wellness NGO
Food Service Mngmt <u>5</u> weeks <u>250</u> hours	Public School 2 weeks 100 hours	Public School
	Non-School 3 weeks 150 hours	Acute Care Long Term Care Rehab
Other <u>1</u> week <u>50</u> hours	Intern Choice	TBD

3. Determine your DI's guidelines for selecting appropriate preceptors and facility sites

A **preceptor** is an expert or specialist, such as a Registered Dietitian, who provides practical experience and training to a dietetic intern. Examples of experts or specialists include Registered Dietitians (RD), Registered Nurses (RN), and food service directors.

The **practice site/ facility** is an organization or business that provides the opportunity for the intern to complete the required supervised practice such as a hospital, a public health agency, a university dining center, or a long-term care facility.

Read through your DI's website or contact the DI Director to determine:

Preceptor



- What is the minimum number of required preceptors?
- What is the required credentialing for each preceptor?
- What is the minimum amount of time a preceptor must work in the profession?
- What is the minimum amount of time a preceptor must work at his/her facility?

Facility



- What is the minimum number of RDs needed at the clinical facility?
- What is the minimum inpatient census at the clinical facility?
- What are acceptable accreditations? (JCAHO, state, CMS)
- What is the minimum amount of time spent at each facility?
- Can one facility be used for two different rotations? (ie. Clinical and Food Service Management)
- Is there a current affiliation agreement?
- If not, can a new affiliation agreement be obtained?

4. Determine your DI's recommended rotation schedule



Most distance DIs will provide prospective interns with a recommended **rotation schedule** and a template. While some DIs request that interns follow the schedule closely, others will allow a great degree of flexibility.

Download the rotation schedule from your DI's site and copy/paste it into a word doc or spreadsheet. Complete the schedule as you receive confirmation from your preceptors.

Example Rotation Schedule - 1200 hours/ 25 weeks

Week Number	Rotation	Hours + Dates	Facility name + Type	Preceptor Name + Email
WK 1	Pre-MNT Workshop (Ames)	50 hours Jan 12-Jan 16	Iowa State University Ames, IA 50011	Jean Anderson MS, RD, LD, janderso@iastate.edu
WK 2	Facility Orientation and Nutrition Assessment practice	50 hours Jan 19-Jan 23	This should take place in the primary MNT facility.	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 3 – 7	Recommended topic areas: Cardiac, Diabetes, GI	250 hours Jan 26 –Feb 27	(intern identifies location, type of facility, address)	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 8	Community Nutrition – WIC	50 hours Mar 2- Mar 6	Find a WIC agency— work in the clinics with the RDs.	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 9-12	Community Nutrition	200 hours Mar 9- Apr 3	(intern identifies location, type of facility, address)	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 13-17	FSM and Public School Food Service System	250 hours Apr 6- May 8	Healthcare, university, corporate facility, public school, etc.	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 18–22	MNT Rotations Resume	250 hours May 11- June 12	(intern identifies location, type of facility, address)	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 23-24	Staff Relief	100 hours Staff Relief June 15-June 26	(intern identifies location, type of facility, address)	(list preceptor name and email)
WK 25	Intern option	50 hours June 29- July 3	(intern identifies location, type of facility, address)	(list preceptor name and email)

5. Research potential preceptors and facility sites



Brainstorming potential preceptors and facility sites can feel overwhelming, but a step-by-step approach can lead to a surprising number of leads. Start a word document or spreadsheet to stay organized. Create a comprehensive list of leads even if you only need to contact a few.

1. Start with **your address book**. Who do you know working in the field of dietetics? Think about the contacts you may have met at a Denver Dietetic Association meeting or guest speakers in a nutrition course. Think about places you may have worked or volunteered in the past.
2. Reach out to your **DPD Program Director**, academic advisors, and professors for suggestions or referrals. They are often very active in the dietetic community.
3. Ask **friends and family** about people they may know.
4. Search the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics [Find-a-Preceptor Database](#). This list of RDs have indicated that they are willing to be preceptors.
5. Be willing to **cold call** potential preceptors. Preparation will certainly help with this process.

Tips

- Be flexible. The Denver and Fort Collins areas are saturated with dietetic students. Consider areas like Durango, Pueblo and Grand Junction, that are less likely to receive internship requests.
- Be creative. Consider dividing the clinical hours between a few different facilities. Research nutrition professionals in private practice. Offer to switch weekday internship hours to weekend hours.
- Take a look at these links to help identify potential facility sites:

[List of Colorado Hospitals](#)
[List of Colorado Community Health Charities](#)
[List of Colorado School Districts](#)
[List of WIC Clinics by County](#)
[List of Private Practice RDs](#)

5. Contacting potential preceptors



Begin by contacting clinical facilities/preceptors first, as those spaces fill quickly and have less scheduling flexibility. Start contacting preceptors approximately **1 year** before you plan to start your internship. (For example, for the Fall 2015 match / January 2016 internship, start contacting preceptors January 2015.)

Write a phone script to prepare you for the call. Write an alternate for a voicemail.

“Hello! My name is your name. I am dietetic student at Metropolitan State University of Denver. I am in the process of setting up a distance internship through your DI. Are you accepting interns? Would you be able to accommodate me date range?”

If s/he says ‘yes’, inquire about the next steps. Does the preceptor need to see your resume or portfolio? Will you need to schedule a phone or on-site interview?

If s/he says ‘no,’ the facility cannot accommodate you, ask for a referral. Can s/he recommend another facility or preceptor that may be taking interns?

TIPS:

- ➔ Pick up the phone. Calling the potential preceptor is preferred over emailing. Resort to email if you absolutely cannot find a phone number.
- ➔ Be persistent. Call a facility at least three times before you cross it off your list. Many preceptors use the “3-call” method as a screening tool.
- ➔ Schedule a time. Find a quiet place, free of distractions, to make your calls. Give yourself a few hours to go through your list. With each call, you should feel more comfortable and confident in your phone script.
- ➔ Don’t become discouraged. You will likely have to call quite a few potential preceptors. Find a mantra to keep you motivated through this process.

5. Staying organized



Keep an organized list (in either a word doc or spreadsheet) of the potential preceptors you contact. Be sure to note when you call and what steps are needed to follow up with that lead.

Make note of individuals who agree to be your preceptors; you will need to contact them again to complete facility/preceptor forms and to sign affiliation agreements.

Example of a Leads List

Name	Contact	Location	Rotation	Status of Request
Marta Wohrley, RD	(303) 269-4000 martawohrley@centura.org	Parker Adventist Hospital	Clinical - Inpatient	3/24 - Left a v/m Follow up on 3/27
...

6. Paperwork, Paperwork, Paperwork



There is quite a bit of paperwork to complete as part of the distance DI application process. Be sure to download the required documents from the DI website and fill in information as you confirm dietetic facilities and preceptors.

Rotation Schedule	This document provides information about your weekly schedule
Preceptor Summary	This document provides information about your preceptors
Facility Summary	This document provides information about your facilities
Facility Form	To be completed by (or about) the preceptor
Preceptor Form	To be completed by (or about) the facility
Preceptor Education Form	This maybe used to supplement or replace a preceptors resume
Affiliation Agreement	This describes the terms of agreements between the DI and facility
Application Checklist	This lists all the required supplemental documents

7. Submitting your Distance DI Applicant

To complete your Distance Dietetic Internship application, there are few place you will need to enter and submit information.

Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services

This site hosts the bulk of your application. You will need to prepare the following:

1. Application and Educational Information
2. Personal Statement
3. Letters of Recommendation
4. Letter of Intent/Verification of Completion
5. Official Transcripts (by mail)
6. GRE Score (if needed)
7. DPD Course List
8. Supplemental materials (upload a PDF on the *Internship Program Designations* page)
9. Application Fee

D&D Digital

This site facilitates the online matching process. You will need to prepare the following:

1. Personal Contact Information
2. Internship Choice(s) and Ranking
3. Application Fee

Internship

Many internships require additional information sent directly to to their office. While this varies from program to program, common required materials include:

1. Paper or Online Application
2. Supplemental Materials - Rotation Summary, Preceptor/Facility Forms, etc
3. Official Transcripts
4. Additional Screening Questions
5. Application Fee

Additional Resources

[All Access Internships](#)

[The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics](#)

[Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services](#)

[D&D Digital](#)

[Dietitian Central Student Forum](#)