

UHDI Distance Program Handbook

1. Introduction to the Program

The University of Houston Dietetic Internship program is a post-baccalaureate, supervised practice program that qualifies graduates to take the examination to become Registered Dietitians. Dietetic Interns (from now on referred to as "interns") enroll in a full-time program requiring a minimum of 45 to 50 hours of participation per week for 26 weeks. The program goals reflect the major points of our philosophy: quality instruction with broad-based training concurrent with ongoing supervision, feedback, and evaluation.

The UH internship program has continued accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) 120 Riverside Plaza Suite 2190, Chicago, IL 60606-6995, www.eatright.org/ACEND, 1-800-877-1600. The program is comprised of a one week orientation, 12 weeks of clinical nutrition, 5 weeks of foodservice management, 5 weeks of community nutrition and a four week elective rotation. Each rotation contains a series of competencies, objectives, activities, and assignments that must be completed in order to receive credit for the hours completed. Formal evaluations will be received by each intern at the end of each rotation, and will indicate whether or not the intern has successfully completed the competencies and objectives for that particular rotation. All interns will complete at least 1200 supervised practice hours during the 26 week period. Interns must submit weekly summaries of their activities and competencies completed. Intern progress will be evaluated by the program director following each rotation and any issues or deficiencies are discussed at that time. At the successful completion of all program requirements, interns are eligible for a verification statement and allowed to sit for the Registration examination for dietitians.

2. Measurable Goals of the Program

The primary goals of the University of Houston Dietetic Internship are twofold: to provide the intern with meaningful rotational experiences that will allow for successful completion of the registration examination for dietitians, and to provide the opportunity to develop the skills needed to obtain employment as an entry-level dietitian.

The mission of the UH Dietetic Internship is to provide an intensive, high quality supervised practice experience for a diverse population of interns with emphasis on providing a quality educational experience and mentored training necessary to become competent, independent and well-rounded entry-level Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist. UHDI will train practitioners in teaching, management, counseling, administration and applied practice throughout the field of dietetics.

The program goals and objectives are as follows:

GOAL #1 - The program will attract and graduate highly competent practitioners for entry-level practice through high-quality educational offerings

Outcome measures:

- Of graduates who seek employment 80 percent are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation.
- 90% of employers will rate UH graduates as 8 or better as compared to other RD's of similar experience.
- 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%
- 90% percent of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion
- At least 80% of program interns complete program/degree requirements within 7 months (150% of the program length)
- 80% of program graduates will rate themselves as well prepared for entry-level practice

GOAL #2: The program will promote diversity in the field of dietetics

Outcome measures:

- 20% of UHDI graduates will be non-traditional ethnic or male
- 80% of diverse intern will pass the RD exam within one year of program completion

3. Statement of Equal Opportunity

"The University of Houston is fully committed to the principle of providing equality of treatment and opportunity to all persons in an environment which appreciates and respects the diversity of the community it serves. University policy prohibits discrimination in educational services based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation, except where such a distinction is required by law."

4. Protection of Privacy of Information

Interns are accorded privacy regarding anything of a personal nature, either written or stated, by faculty, staff, and site preceptors. Intern files are accessible only by the intern, in addition to university personnel associated with the program. Interns are required to show a picture ID during orientation to verify identity. A copy is maintained in the intern file.

5. Access to Student Support Services

UHDI is a non-academic program and as such, interns are not eligible for university sponsored student support services.

6. Professional Membership and activities

Interns are encouraged to apply for membership in the AND (which automatically confers membership in the respective state dietetics association) or other professional organizations that align to their career goals.

7. Program-Associated Costs

Tuition fees are \$8000.00 and payment is required prior to the beginning of the orientation. The dates for the fee schedule are listed in the intern contract. The internship director must approve any variance in the payment schedule.

Interns are responsible for their own transportation to the University of Houston for orientation/pre-rotation and internship facilities in their home site. Interns are required to travel to Houston for a one-week orientation session.

Interns are required to have reliable transportation for the duration of the internship. The University of Houston is not liable for any intern travel resulting in accidents, injury, or mortality. For this reason we require that interns provide proof of car insurance and medical insurance before starting at their respective sites. Transportation and parking costs are dependent upon the sites selected by the intern.

Some sites provide meals as part of the rotation experience; others do not. Lab coats can generally be obtained for \$20 or less. It is recommended that each intern have at least two lab coats to ensure availability at all times.

A Food-Drug interaction book is required for the internship as well as the AND manual for nutrition focused physical exams. Other reference books will be recommended but are optional for purchase.

Interns are required to have daily access to a computer and printer for timely completion of assignments and projects and must maintain an active email account.

8. Withdrawal and Refund of Tuition and Fees

Tuition payment is due in full prior to the start of orientation. Tuition is non-refundable regardless of the reason for non-completion of the program.

9. Scheduling and Program Calendar

Regular attendance and punctuality at each site and for weekly on-line internship meetings are mandatory. Being tardy during a rotation may result in failing the rotation. All failed rotations

must be repeated in order to receive credit for supervised practice hours. Reassignment for failed rotations is at the discretion of the Internship Director and sponsoring preceptor. To pass a rotation, you must have received an evaluation of “3” or higher on all of that rotation’s competencies and a grade of “pass” for the overall evaluation by the preceptor. Interns may fail a rotation due to unethical or unprofessional behavior regardless of successful completion of required competencies. Failure of two (2.0) rotations during the 26-week program constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program. Life crises such as death, bereavement, illness, accidents, and other emergencies may result in the intern having to take an approved leave of absence from the program. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT INTERNS CALL THEIR SITES AND CALL THE INTERNSHIP DIRECTOR WHEN THEY WILL BE LATE OR ABSENT FOR ANY REASON.

Personal leave for other than medical, bereavement, or emergency reasons is NOT ALLOWED. If you know you are going to need time off for any reason, please let the Internship Director know as soon as possible.

There is no vacation allowance during the University of Houston Internship. Interns will be required to make up hours missed due to absences. Interns will observe holiday schedules of the practice sites. Schedule changes for religious reasons can be made if discussed in advance with the Internship Director. IT IS THE INTERN’S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE DIRECTOR OF ANY TIME AWAY FROM FACILITIES. FAILURE TO NOTIFY THE DIRECTOR IN A TIMELY FASHION MAY RESULT IN TERMINATION.

10. Performance monitoring

Interns must submit weekly summaries of their activities and competencies completed, hours accrued, and evaluations at the end of each rotation. The internship coordinator will review and provide feedback regarding intern progress. In the event that the intern is not progressing at an appropriate level and speed, a conference between the intern, coordinator and preceptor will be initiated. Appropriate remedial steps will be taken including extending the time in the rotation if deemed necessary to achieve the level of competency at an entry-level. If the preceptor is unable or unwilling to continue with remedial learning, it is the responsibility of the intern to find additional sites to successfully complete the rotation. The program is committed

to retaining interns within the program and additional time will be granted for remediation. Failure of two rotations may result in termination from the program.

Interns are responsible for completion of all paperwork regarding evaluations, written assignments, and documentation of hours. All work assigned by the Internship Director or the Site Preceptors must be completed in the given time frame. Interns are required to submit all evaluation material within one week of the completion of each rotation. Originals are to be uploaded as part of the professional portfolio.

The Site Preceptors will have been instructed to complete the paperwork in timely fashion so as to provide timely feedback on intern performance in the facilities.

All interns are required to pass a final exam with a score of 80% or better in order to successfully complete the program. Maximum of two attempts. Failure to meet this threshold will result in denial of a verification statement.

11. Minimum Wage Ruling

The minimum wage ruling is in effect at all times during the internship meaning that interns are not employees of the sites and are not entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship or an individual rotation. Interns may not be compensated for hours accrued toward supervised practice. Interns may not be used in the place of regular employees.

12. Insurance

Interns are required to have professional liability insurance as well as health insurance and automobile insurance. Professional liability insurance is provided by UH and is included in tuition fees. Interns will receive written documentation of individual liability insurance coverage. Interns must show proof of health insurance and automobile insurance during the orientation period.

13. Injury or Illness while in a Facility for Supervised Practice

In most cases, interns will have access to on-site health care in the event of injury or other emergency. Cost of such treatment may vary from facility to facility. However, due to the nature of our affiliation agreements, interns do not qualify for worker's compensation due to injuries received on facility premises. If you have an emergency need for transportation or other problem while at the site, please contact the Distance Internship Coordinator (713-743-4112), the Departmental Office Manager (713-743-9840), or the Department Chair (713-743-9868).

14. Immunizations

Several immunizations are required, including hepatitis B, MMR (mumps, measles, rubella), and diphtheria/tetanus, depending on the hospitals or sites to which you are assigned. TB skin tests are likely to be required as well, especially at the hospitals. **INTERNS ARE FULLY SUBJECT TO THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AT EACH PARTICULAR SITE.** You may avoid some or all of the immunizations by bringing the appropriate immunization records with you to your sites. All interns are advised to take the Hepatitis B vaccine if they have not done so already. It is suggested that interns obtain copies of any documentation describing immunizations or TB skin tests received at various facilities in order to eliminate the need for additional immunizations/tests at subsequent sites. Any costs incurred as a result of needing TB tests or immunizations are the responsibility of the dietetic intern, although most hospitals will only charge a nominal fee for each immunization required.

15. Drug screens and background checks

Interns will be required to submit to drug screens and background checks as required by the individual sites. **FAILURE OF A DRUG SCREEN OR BACKGROUND CHECK WILL RESULT IN AUTOMATIC TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM.** All interns will be given background checks prior to orientation, cost paid for by UHDI. Drug screens may be required in some locations and the cost will be paid by UHDI in approved locations or in some cases, the intern may be responsible for the cost of the testing.

16. Personal Appearance

A professional appearance must be projected by interns at all times through their dress and grooming. The personal appearance of University of Houston Dietetic Interns contributes greatly to the program's image and success. Professional attire is required.

- Clothing is to be neat, clean, in good condition, and properly fitted. Women may wear a dress, business suit, a (dress) pants suit, or a blouse and skirt or slacks, with or without a jacket.

Hosiery should also be worn at all times with non-open-toed business shoes. Men may wear a suit, or a sports coat with dress slacks with a dress shirt and tie, or dress shirt and slacks. Socks and business footwear are also a requirement. Tennis shoes or open toed shoes are not allowed. Examples of inappropriate clothing include athletic T-shirts, halter tops, tank tops, walking shorts, leotards, denim jeans, sundresses, backless or low-cut blouses, mini skirts or dresses of inappropriate length, and sheer apparel.

- The internship name badge should be worn with the name visible while working.

- Hair should be neat and clean, and in a conservative style. Beards and mustaches should neatly trimmed and of moderate length. Hair restraint must be worn while in the kitchen for any foodservice or clinical rotations. In addition, food service rotations may not allow jewelry, nail polish or artificial nails to be worn.

- Cologne and perfume should not be worn in the event of working with patients or clients who have allergies.

- Wearing jewelry requiring piercing of body parts other than ear lobes is prohibited.

- Fingernails must be clean and trimmed. Nail polish, if worn, should not be cracked or chipped.

- Wearing of enhanced and/or artificial fingernails is prohibited.

- If lab coats are required, they should be cleaned and pressed and worn over professional street clothing.

- Interns are also to abide by any additional dress rules imposed by the facility in which they are working. Excessive jewelry is inappropriate, and safety precautions should be taken especially when working in the foodservice management rotations.

Interns must set an example of adherence to all site policies and procedures. Interns should obtain information regarding attire and protocols prior to arriving at each site.

17. Confidentiality of Medical Records

REMEMBER THAT YOU MUST KEEP CONFIDENTIAL ALL INFORMATION THAT YOU RECEIVE AT THE FACILITIES REGARDING A PARTICULAR PATIENT AND HIS OR HER FAMILY. FAILURE TO DO SO CAN RESULT IN DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM. DO NOT DISCUSS PATIENTS IN PUBLIC AREAS SUCH AS CAFETERIAS, ELEVATORS, RESTROOMS, ETC. DISCUSS PATIENTS ONLY IN STAFF-SECURED AREAS WITH APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL. A MEDICAL RECORD OR CHART IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT THAT CAN BE USED AS EVIDENCE IN A COURT OF LAW. DOCUMENTATION MUST FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES OUTLINED BY THE FACILITY. INTERNS WILL FOLLOW THE STANDARDS AS SET FORTH IN HIPPA AT ALL TIMES.

18. Medical Leave of Absence

Request for medical leave must be approved by the internship director. Documentation of the medical condition will be required. If a medical leave of absence is taken, the intern must agree to re-enter the program at a time when the Internship Director can schedule the intern for remaining rotations. Medical leave for more than one year will result in forfeiture of the internship slot and tuition.

19. Non-completion of Internship

In all cases, interns who do not complete the internship program successfully within a one year period are subject to dismissal from the program and forfeiture of tuition fees. Interns will have 60 days from the completion of supervised practice rotations to submit all required paperwork and complete the exit exam. Failure to meet this requirement will result in forfeiture of eligibility for the DI verification statement.

20. Protocols and Grievances

It is the policy of the UHDI that interns have a right to redress their grievances. The Internship Director is the primary focus for problem-solving. Problems at a site or with a preceptor, should be discussed with the Internship Director as soon as possible. However, it is expected that interns cultivate cordial, professional relationships with the preceptor at the outset of any rotation.

Interns must first discuss the issue with the Site Preceptor, and attempt to resolve before bringing it up with the Internship Director. If an issue is not resolved to an intern's satisfaction after discussing the matter in a mature fashion with both the Site Preceptor and the Internship Director, the intern may request a formal review by the Chair of the Department of Health and Human Performance.

The following is the complete order in which a grievance may be reviewed:

Site Preceptor

UH Dietetic Internship Director

HHP Department Chair

Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Grievance for removal from the UHDI must be initiated within 30 days of intern dismissal from the program.

ACEND will review complaints that relate to a program's compliance with the accreditation/approval standards. ACEND is interested in the sustained quality and continued improvement of dietetic education programs but does not intervene on behalf of individuals or act as a court of appeal for individuals in matters of admissions, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff, or students/interns. Interns should submit complaints regarding

accreditation matters to ACEND only after all other options with the program have been exhausted.

A copy of the accreditation/approval standards and/or the Council's policy and procedure for submission of complaints may be obtained by contacting the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), 120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000, Chicago, IL, 60606-6995 or calling 312/899-0040 extension 5400. A file will be maintained in the Program Director's office for all grievances and complaints.

21. Verification Statements

It is the policy of the UHDI to issue verification statements to all interns who have successfully completed a minimum of 1200 documented hours of supervised practice, completed all required assignments, completed the exit exam with a score of 80% or better, in two attempts, returned any and all borrowed resources and turned in original copies of all rotation documents in a completed portfolio within 60 days of completion of rotations. Verifications will be mailed to the intern's permanent address approximately 3 weeks after program completion when all files have been verified. Original signed copies of the verification statements remain on file at UH indefinitely.

22. Site Selection

It is the responsibility of the distance intern to identify appropriate practice sites. Based on the information supplied through the application process, sites will be selected for affiliation with the UHDI based on the ability of the site to provide an appropriate learning facility. Program director will discuss with the lead preceptor and review relevant competencies and learning activities appropriate to the site's emphasis area. Scheduling procedures, length of rotation and learning activities will be mutually agreeable to both the PD and primary preceptor. An affiliation agreement must be signed by both parties before interns may be placed in rotation at that site. Site evaluation will occur through intern evaluations and correspondence between the program director the primary preceptor.

23. Assessment of prior learning:

It is the policy of the UHDI to grant credit for prior learning to interns who can provide documentation of significant compensated work experiences that comprise the same types of learning experiences as required by the ACEND competency statements in particular emphasis areas.

Prior learning credits are granted when there is a minimum of six months FTE paid work experience. A maximum of four weeks of credit for clinical work experience will be considered for DTR credentialed individuals with documented experience. Only hours that meet or exceed the number of required hours for a particular rotation will be considered. No partial credit will be allowed and not more than two rotations will be waived. There is no fee reduction.

The request for prior learning credit consideration and all associated paperwork must be submitted at least two weeks prior to program start date. Supervisor must be a Registered Dietitian and must submit letter of corroboration including dates of employment, hours worked, responsibilities, and activities performed.

Final determination of assessment of prior learning is at the discretion of the internship director.

24. Discipline and Termination

It is the policy of the UHDI that interns may be disciplined or terminated from the program as outlined below:

Interns may be disciplined by:

- 1) termination from the program (see below)
- 2) suspension for a time commensurate with the offense
- 3) suspension for remediation of knowledge or other aspects of performance as determined by the Internship Director

Interns may be terminated from the program for the following causes:

- 1) Repeated poor performance
- 2) Not following instructions as requested
- 3) Repeated absenteeism or tardiness
- 4) Unprofessional or unethical conduct or violating the policies of the internship as set forth in this document or the intern's signed contract
- 5) Two rotation failures
- 6) Non-payment of tuition.
- 7) Failure to pass drug screen or background check
- 8) Other reasons as set forth in the signed contract

Grievance for removal from the UHDI must be initiated within 30 days of dismissal from the program.

25. Financial aid

The UHDI is a self-funded non-academic program. As such, interns are not eligible for financial aid through the University of Houston. Scholarships may be available through state dietetic associations and/or the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. It may be possible for students to obtain loan deferment for student loans while enrolled in the program. The program director will work with the interns to provide necessary documentation.