

Dietetic Internships (DI) Frequently Asked Questions

Part I. Pre-DI Application Period

General Comments:

This section focuses on questions that a student typically has or needs to consider before starting the application process.

The list below are common acronyms and terms that are often used and encountered during the application process, and students should be familiar with the terms.

- **ACEND** = Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.
- **CDR** = Commission on Dietetic Registration
- **CP** = Coordinated Program
- **DI** = Dietetic Internship
- **DICAS** = Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services
- **DPD** = Didactic Program in Dietetics.
- **GRE** = Graduate Record Exam
- **ISPPs** = Individualized Supervised Practice Pathways
- **RD** = Registered Dietitian
- **RDN** = Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Q: When is the earliest I can apply for a Dietetic Internship (DI)?

A: The earliest a student may apply for a DI is just before the start of his/her final semester of completing his/her DPD requirements, or DPD & BS requirements.

Q: Do I have to apply for a DI immediately after completing my DPD or BS requirements?

A: No. Once you have earned (awarded) a Verification Statement, you will always be eligible to apply for a DI. Therefore, you can wait and apply at a later date.

Note: However, you might not want to wait too long before you start a DI. Since the field of nutrition, and science is always changing, a DI program may require that you re-take a “refresher” course, to ensure that you are current with what is happening in the field of nutrition.

Q: How do I apply for a DI?

A: Almost all DIs now participate in the *Computer Matching* process. Student must check and determine if the DI program he/she is interested in applying to, is participating in the computer matching process. Check the specific DI program website for all application information and requirements.

Q: What is Computer Matching?

A: In short, “*Computer Matching*” is the process of how applicants are selected for a Dietetic Internship. Computer Matching is managed by D and D Digital. The D&D Digital Internship Matching serves as a clearinghouse to help applicants obtain an Internship (supervised practice position) from their rankings

and to help Dietetic Internships (DI) obtain applicants from their choices. It eliminates unfair pressures and premature decisions in appointments by internships, and acceptance or rejection of appointments by applicants. D&D Digital has provided Dietetic Internship Matching Services to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) for 30+ years.

Q: Where can I find more information about the computer matching process?

A: Information (eg. Participating programs, application dates and timeline, etc.) and instructions on the computer matching process may be found on the **DandD Digital website** at www.dnndigital.com or <https://www.dnndigital.com/ada/questions.php>

Another very good starting point is ACENDs website at

<https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/students-and-advancing-education/dietetic-internship-match-students#timelines>

Note: Periodically, websites may change their links. So if these links do not work, go directly to the DandD website and the ACEND website to look for the new links.

Q: How often is the computer matching process?

A: The computer matching process takes place twice each year, once in the *fall*, and once in the *spring*. You may choose to participate in either computer matching process. Go to the DandD website to see future computer matching dates. An applicant may continue to participate in the matching process until he/she is accepted into a DI.

Q: When do DIs start?

A: DI programs usually start in the fall (August/Sept) or the spring (January). Check the DI program website for the application dates and start date.

Q: Do all DI programs participate in the fall and spring computer matching process?

A: No! Most programs will either, participate in the fall matching period, or the spring matching period. However, there are some DI programs which participate in both (fall & spring) matching periods. Check the DI program website (or DandD) for information.

Q: How often can I participate in the computer matching process?

A: As often as needed or until you receive a “match” to a DI.

Q: Is there a cost for participating in the computer matching process?

A: Yes, there is a registration fee. Student **must register** with DandD to participate in the computer matching process. Student should check the DandD Digital website for the most recent information on the cost.

Q: What should I be doing now to prepare to apply for a DI?

A: Since there are many different DI programs, you should start by deciding (researching) which DI program(s) you would like to apply to?

Q: What type of DI Program are there?

A: There are basically 3 types of DI programs. They are:

- (i) DI only option (no degree awarded)
- (ii) DI + Masters degree option (Masters degree awarded upon completion)
- (iii) Individualized Supervised Practice Pathways (ISPPs) – student can only apply to a ISPP

program only after he/she has participated in the computer matching process, and **did not** receive a match.

All 3 options may be available full-time, part-time or by distance. It varies with each DI program. Student should check with each program to determine the options that they offer.

Q: How many DI programs can I apply to?

A: As many as you like since there are no limitations. The main consideration is the cost. Most DI programs will charge an application fee (between \$25 – 60 per program).

Q: How many programs should I apply to?

A: I suggest you review your programs of interest, and select your top 5 programs to apply to.

Q: Where can I find a list of DI programs?

A: The list of all ACEND accredited DI programs can be found on the ACEND website , <https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend>. You can search DI programs by state and type of program (eg, DI only, DI + Masters only, or ISPPs)

Q: Can I apply to all types of DI programs?

A: Yes. The only exception is that you can only apply to an ISPP program, if you did not receive a match to a DI.

Q: What do I need to consider when selecting DI Programs to apply to?

A: Typical questions to ask yourself and consider are:

- Location of the DI program (are you willing/able to relocate)?
- DI program areas of emphasis?
- Length in each are of emphasis? Are additional/specialty options available?
- The program cost. Varies by program, eg, application cost, program cost, supplies cost, etc.)
- Application requirements and process?
- Full-time option or part-time option?
- Type of DI program (eg, DI only (non-degree), or DI with Masters degree option)

Q: What do I need, if I am interested in applying to a DI with a Masters options?

A: You will most likely need to take the *GRE exam* before you apply. You will also most likely have to complete an *additional and separate Graduate School application*. Check with the graduate program of interest to you.

If you intend to apply to a DI with a Masters options, make plans to take the GRE exam early. Most graduate programs require a GRE score of 300 or higher. See the DI program website for the most current information and requirements.

Q: Are there any paid internships?

A: There are only a very small number of DI programs that offer a small stipend. In almost all cases, you have to pay a fee to complete a DI. The fees (cost) will vary based on type of program you select. Student should look at the DI program website for the most current information on fees and costs.

Q: Are all DI programs the same?

A: No they are not the same. At the *minimum*, ALL DI programs have to provide you with a minimum of 1200 hours of supervised practice hours. The following three areas: Foodservice Management, Community/Public Health Nutrition, and Clinical Nutrition are required. The length in each area is different from program to program, and is established individually by the program.

In addition, many programs have some *optional* rotations towards the end of the program, such as in: geriatrics, food banks, corporate wellness, dialysis, pediatrics, etc.

Student should research each program carefully before selecting the programs he/she wants to apply to.

Q: Can I receive a match to more than 1 DI program?

A: No. You will be matched to only **ONE (1)** DI program.

Q: I have heard that some DI programs have an “Open House”. What is an “Open House”?

A: An Open House is an opportunity for interested DI applicants to visit the DI program, to meet the DI Director and other interns. It's basically a FREE information session, and is designed to address questions that potential applicants may have.

You do not have to attend an Open House, but it can be very helpful. More DI Programs are now doing a *Virtual Open House*. So check the program website to see if there will be a future Open House. You can also go to the Academy's website and look at the Open House Listings, or contact the DI program to see if they will be doing an Open House.

Q: What is a Distance Dietetic Internship?

A: A Distance DI, is a program that offers the student the opportunity to complete his/her required supervised practice (training) locally where he/she lives.

It may be a good option for students who might not be able to relocate to a traditional internship site (or for those who are likely to relocate often due to work, eg. Military personnel or dependents).

Q: What should I know about distance DIs?

A: Distance DIs **must** meet the same requirements as a traditional DI program. However, there are some challenges that students need to consider if he/she is interested in a distance DI program.

With most distance programs, the *biggest challenge for the student is in locating his/her own training facilities and preceptors*. Frequently, the student must locate these training facilities and preceptors

and submit the information with his/her application, and before knowing if he/she has been accepted to the DI.

Q: Is a Distance DI for me? Will I be successful in a Distance DI?

A: Only you can answer that question for yourself. However, here are a few things you have to consider.

- *Are you self-directed and motivated?* In a distance program, you are responsible for setting up all of 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 and communicate effectively.
- *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 other interns 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.

If you answered "Yes" to all the questions above, then you will most likely be successful in a distance internship program, otherwise consider a traditional on-site DI program.

Q: Will employers view me differently if I complete a distance DI versus a traditional DI?

A: No. Employers are most concerned about your ability to pass the RD exam, regardless of where you completed your DI.

Q: When can I take the RD exam?

A: The student becomes eligible to take the RD exam, only after he/she has successfully completed the Dietetic Internship. Your DI Director will provide you with information on the RD exam, once you have fulfilled all the requirements.

Q: How can I increase my chances of being selected for a DI?

A: Selection to DI programs are very competitive. DI Directors are looking for students with:

- high academic ability (Overall GPA), >3.0 , strong GRE score (if necessary)
- work experience
- strong letters of recommendation
- professional potential,
- an application package that **follows directions explicitly**, and is neat is very important.
- a well-written personal statement (a good reflection of your maturity and communication skills)