

Dietetic Internships (DI) Frequently Asked Questions

Part II. DI Application Period and Process

General comment: This sections addresses common questions that pertain specifically to the application process (when DandD and DICAS begins to the time the application is due only), and the application requirements. It is assumed, that the student has done his/her research on the various DI programs, and have identified the DI programs that he/she intends to apply to.

A list of DI programs participating in the computer matching process for each fall and each spring matching period can be found on the DandD website. See the *Programs* link and the *Timeline* link for all participating programs, and important dates related to the computer matching process.

The application process is not difficult, but does require that the student **READ** and **FOLLOW** the instructions carefully. DandD and DICAS provides excellent instructions on each section of the application process. In addition, there are some great resources (eg. A free tutorial, tips for being successful, instructions, etc.) on the Academy's and ACEND's website. I strongly encourage you to look at those before you start the application process.

Q: What are the most common errors that students make when completing the application process?

A: These are the most common errors I have seen students make:

- Not reading the instructions with comprehension.
- Not staying organized.
- Failure to follow the instructions explicitly.
- Failure to check his/her work (eg. Spelling errors, grammatical errors, incomplete information, etc.)
- Waiting to the last minute to begin the application process (results in mistakes or missing parts)
- Writing a weak personal statement, and does not answer the required questions.

Q: What do I have to do to participate in the Computer Matching process?

A: To participate in the computer matching process, the student **must register** with:

1. DandD Digital
2. DICAS

Once the student has registered with both, the student can then begin the application process through the "applicant portal" using his/her assigned username and password. There is a link to both on the DandD website (www.dandddigital.com)

Q: When does the computer matching process (DI Application period) begin?

A: See the DandD Digital website for the starting-ending application dates.

Fall computer matching period starts in July, and *Spring* matching period starts in December. Student has about 6-7 weeks to complete and submit the application. However, the student should begin the process as early as possible.

See the *Programs* link and the *Timeline* link on DandD for all participating programs, and the specific dates related to the computer matching process

Q: What information will I find on DandD Digital?

A: Student will use the DandD website to:

- a. identify the DI programs that are participating in that matching period.
- b. identify the specific DI Program Code.
- c. rank (prioritize) his/her DI programs using the DI Program Code before the due date.
- d. find out if he/she receives a “match” to a DI on Notification Day.

Q. What is DICAS and what do I do on DICAS?

A: DICAS stands for *Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System*. DICAS is the website (system) that you **must** use to complete and submit all the application requirements. You will use the “applicant portal” once you have registered on DICAS.

These are the items that **all applicants must submit** on DICAS:

- a. Official transcripts from all schools.
- b. The DPD Course List. (Download the list from the UA Food & Nutrition program website)
- c. The names and contact information of 3 references.
- d. The request for a *Verification Statement* **or** the request for an *Intent to Complete*.
- e. The personal statement.
- f. The resume and information on volunteer and work experiences.
- g. Supplemental documents, forms, videos, etc., if applicable.

Note: each of these will be discussed in more details below.

Q: What can I do to better ensure that I enter the correct information on DICAS?

A: Before starting DICAS, student should view the following:

(i) DICAS Application Overview - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP28aNF_hkI

(ii) DICAS Coursework 2.0 video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A8SXcU9768>

Q: Do I need transcripts from all schools?

A: YES! You need to request official transcripts from all schools that you have taken a class from. You will need to list the names of the schools on DICAS. There is an “*instruction form*” on DICAS pertaining

to transcripts and the submission process. Provide a copy of the *instruction form* to the schools that you are requesting transcripts from.

Your school is responsible for sending official transcripts directly to DICAS. You can check the submission status on DICAS.

Q: How soon should I request transcripts?

A: Make the request as soon as you have registered on DICAS. Some schools make take longer than expected. I strongly recommend that requesting transcripts be the first thing you do once the application period begins.

Note: Since DICAS will be receiving thousands of transcripts, it will take them some time to upload all of it to DICAS. Therefore, you should request transcripts asap to avoid any delays.

Q: What is the DPD Course List?

A: The DPD Course List is a list that has all your DPD required courses. The list helps the DI Program Directors know what courses you had to take, and complete to meet the requirements at The University of Alabama for a Verification Statement.

The DPD Course List is specific to the UA Food Nutrition program.

Note: DI Program Directors are smart enough to know the equivalent class if you took a class at another institution/university.

Q: How Can I Get a Copy of the DPD Course List?

A: The DPD Course list is located on the FN Program website (www.ches.ua.edu). Go to the website, and look for the DPD Course List link. The *DPD Course List* is listed by academic year. Select the course list based on the academic year you started the UA program.

Download a copy of the course list and submit as an attachment on DICAS. You will also use the DPD Course List as a guide to enter the required information on all your DPD courses.

Q: Do I have to enter all the classes I have taken in College?

A: NO! You only need to enter the information on ALL the DPD Required courses. The courses are divided into two (2) categories: *DPD Science courses* and *DPD Professional courses*.

Refer to the DPD Course List as a guide.

Q: How should I enter a class if I took the class twice?

A: You only have to enter each class taken once. If you took a class twice to earn a better grade, only enter the information on the class with the highest grade, and indicate that it was a "retake"

Q: If I withdrew from a class and it is listed as a "W" on my transcripts, do I have to enter that grade?

A: No! You do not have to enter a course that you withdrew from, and it does not count as a re-take. It is only counted as a re-take if grades were earned in both attempts.

Q: Since I am a Post-Graduate student, how do I determine if a class should be listed as freshmen level, sophomore level, etc?

A: If you are a post-graduate student, use your “*best guess*”. I recommend that you list the 100-200 level courses as “*sophomore level*”; the 300 level courses as “*junior level*”; and the 400 level as “*senior level*” courses.

Q: How should the class be listed if I took the class at another school?

A: If you took a DPD required class at another school, you need to list the class on DICAS as it appears on the official transcript from that school. For example, if you took an Introduction to Psychology course from the University of Kent as PSCY 1101, then you **must list** the class on DICAS as PSCY 1101, and not as PY 101 (the equivalent at UA)

Q: How do I know if a DPD course should be listed as lecture only, lab & lecture only, or lab only?

A: Use this as a guide:

Lab and lecture only courses are: *CH 104 & 105; BSC 215, 216 and 242; NHM 253, 363, and 374.*

Lab only course is: *NHM 491*

Lecture only courses: *All others on the DPD course list (eg. All NHM designated, BER 245, and PY 101), excluding those listed above.*

Q: How many references do I need?

A: You will need a minimum of **3 references**. You have to enter the names and contact information of those that will submit your reference for you on DICAS. Then, DICAS will send them an email with instructions on completing the recommendation letter. You can also track the “submission/completion status” on DICAS.

Q: Who should I ask to write me a reference?

A: Some DI programs will have information on who references must come from, so check the DI program website. If there is no specific requirements, then ask any 3 people that would be your strongest advocate, and knows you the best.

You should **never ask** the following people to write you a reference/recommendation:

- (a) a family member or a relative
- (b) a family friend

Good options are:

- (a) a current or previous employer
- (b) the Preceptor(s) that you completed your NHM 374 or 491 experience with.
- (c) the Supervisor or Director for any place that you have done (or currently doing) some

volunteer/community work.

(d) a teacher that you took a class with in-person (not an online class)

Note: Please ask and get their approval before you list their names on DICAS.

Q: Can I ask a teacher that I took a class from to write a recommendation letter for me?

A: Unless a DI program specifically indicates that a recommendation must come from a teacher, try to avoid asking a teacher.

Most of the DPD classes you took were taken online, therefore the teachers can only speak and evaluate your ability as a student as it pertains to completing the work in the class. They will not be able to evaluate you in the other required areas such as: leadership, oral communication skills, adaptability, reaction to stress, creativity, working with peers/co-workers, etc.

Q: What can I do to help those who willing to write me a recommendation letter?

A: The more information you can provide to the person who is writing the letter for you, the better the recommendation letter will be.

- how the letter is to be submitted (are there specific forms to use, or is it done online via DICAS).
- A copy of your updated resume, strength and weaknesses.
- The due date.
- General info or unique info on the DIs you are applying to. What are they looking for?
- Start early! You can check on DICAS to see if a recommendation has been submitted.

Q: What's the difference between requesting an "Intent to Complete" and requesting a "Verification Statement" on DICAS?

A: You ***must select only one*** of the following options on DICAS:

(i) Select and request the "***Intent to Complete***" if you ***have not*** (or are currently completing the last DPD requirements) ***completed all*** the DPD requirements and/or BS degree requirements.

(ii) Select and request the "***Verification Statement***", only if you ***have completed all*** the DPD requirements and the BS degree requirements. (BS degree or Verification Statement already awarded to you)

Note: Do not request both. Determine the appropriate one, and make the request on DICAS. You have to enter my name (Alvin Niu) and email (aniu@ches.ua.edu) as the current DPD Program Director on DICAS.

Q: Once I have submitted the request for an Intent to Complete or the Verification Statement on DICAS, who verifies your request?

A: All requests are verified by the DPD Director on DICAS. The Director uses DegreeWorks to verify the information and will submit information on the student based on what's listed on DegreeWorks. To avoid any mistakes or delays, the student should check DegreeWorks. If the Student has completed a class from another school, or is currently taking a class from another school (but is not reflected on DegreeWorks), please send the DPD Director a short email with the information.

Q: Is there anything else that I must do after submitting the request for an Intent to Complete or Verification Statement?

A: Once you have made the request on DICAS, DICAS will then notify the DPD Program Director. Once the Program Director has confirmed your request, you will need to "**Confirm the Submission**". If you notice an error, or if the information is incorrect, then you need to "**Deny**" the submission. DICAS will then return the request to the program Director for corrections.

Note: As program director, I get numerous request each matching period. I will process your requests in the order they are submitted and importance. Be assured that your request will be verified and submitted before the application due date. Do not feel that you need to email me constantly. Please check the submission status on DICAS.

Q: If I have earned a Verification Statement, do I need to submit an original hard copy on DICAS?

A: No, you do not need to submit a hard copy of it. DICAS only accepts electronic copies, and it will be submitted by the DPD Program Director, after you have made the request on DICAS.

Q: What if I am applying to a "Pre-select" DI Program that requires a hard copy of the *Intent to Complete*, or an original copy of the *Verification Statement* form?

A: If a hard copy of the "*Intent to Complete*" form is required, you need to email me (DPD Director) with the information and request a copy of the "*Intent to Complete*".

If a hard copy of the "*Verification Statement*" is required, then you should already have original copies of the form in your possession, since you would have already completed all the requirements. If this is the case, then it is your responsibility to provide an original hard copy of the Verification Statement to the DI Director.

Note: If you have met the requirements for the Verification Statement, but you never requested that original copies be mailed to you, please go to the FN program website (www.ches.ua.edu) and complete the "**Request for Verification Statement Form**" and submit the form to the DPD Director for processing.

Q: What is the Personal Statement?

A: As part of the application process, all applicants **must** submit a personal statement on DICAS. The personal statement requires the applicant address all of the following questions (limit 8000 characters/1000 words):

- (i) Why do you want to enter the dietetics profession?
- (ii) Discuss experiences that have helped to prepare you for your career.
- (iii) What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- (iv) What are your strengths and weaknesses or areas needing improvements?
- (v) What other information do you consider important for the selection decision?

Note: *Short-term* goal is 1-3 years after you have completed your DI and taken the Rd exam. So your first job. Long-term would be 3 years and beyond.

Q: How important is the Personal Statement?

A: Of all the items submitted by applicants, it is considered one of the most important application material that is reviewed by DI Program Directors. DI Directors use it as a means to evaluate your ability as a potential intern to:

- to state/express your thoughts in a logical manner.
- demonstrate good writing ability (grammar, prose, sentence structure, flow, etc.).
- pay attention to details (spelling mistakes, etc.)
- market (sell/brand) yourself effectively and convincingly.
- read and comprehend and follow written instructions provided on DandD and DICAS.
- answer the required questions effectively.
- write the personal statement using the proper “business/formal” format for writing an application letter.

Note: It should not be in a bullet point. Every DI program has a Director, and you should be able to locate the name of the program director on the program website. You should **never use** “*To whom it may concern*” or *Dear Sir/Madame*”, that just shows you’re too lazy to make the effort to look it up, or you have poor professional skills.

Address it to the DI Program Director using his/her last name and appropriate salutation, such as “Dear Dr. Smith, Dear Ms. Jones, or Dear Ms. Jones and Committee”.

Q: Can I submit a different personal statement for each DI that I am applying to?

A: You can write just one personal statement and use the same one for all the DIs you are applying to.

However, you can also choose to write and submit a different personal statement to each DI program. While you must answer the same questions for each DI, I would strongly encourage you to *customize your personal statement letter* to each DI program. Make sure your values and goals and interests matches the goals and values of the DI program you’re applying to.

DICAS gives you the option to attach a different personal statement letter to each DI program you selected.

Q: Who is able to review (see) your application on DICAS?

A: The only people who is able to see your DI application on DICAS are the DI Program Directors of the DIs that you have selected to apply to (those that you ranked on your list).

Q: Who reviews the applications and make the selection?

A: Most DI programs will have a committee (eg. DI Director, Preceptors, Faculty) review all the applicants, then make the final selection on who to offer an internship position to.

Q: Can I contact the DI Program Director after the application due date?

A: No, the student is not allowed to contact the DI Director after the application due date. However, the Director may contact the student if needed. Sometimes, the Director will contact the student to schedule an interview, or to request additional information.

Q: Do all DI Programs Require an Interview?

A: Not all programs will require an interview. However, there are more DI programs that are now doing interviews (via skype, in person, or by phone) to ensure that they select the applicant/student that best fits the program goals and values.

Note: If you do not get a call to schedule an interview, it does not mean that you are not qualified or competitive. **DI Directors do not interview all applicants**, only those applicants that they may have some additional questions for, to help in their decision making process on the selection.

Q: What about the resume and work or volunteer experiences?

A: There is a section on DICAS, where you can enter the information on work experiences, volunteer work, leadership, etc. If you think that you have done something that could be listed as leadership and also as volunteer work, then enter the information in both sections.

I suggest you divide you experiences by:

- (i) paid work experiences
- (ii) non-paid work experiences (eg. Volunteer and community service)
- (iii) didactic experiences (eg. NHM 374 and 491)

Q: Can I list work or experiences that I have done when I was in high school, or those over 10 years ago?

A: There is no time limit (expiration date) on work experiences. The point is to “Sell/Market” yourself as effectively as possible. If you feel that an older previous experience is beneficial, and will highlight your desirable skills, abilities, and qualities, then by all means, certainly include that. Use your good judgement. Select appropriate one, not all.

Not all experiences you list have to be related to nutrition. A person can acquire and develop very good skills and abilities from non-related nutrition activities.

Q: If there are supplemental requirements, how do I submit the supplemental requirements?

A: First of all, not all DI programs require that you submit supplemental items or documents. If a DI program requires supplemental items, the program will have “Submission instructions” on their website, so read the information carefully. In most situations, you can attach (upload) the supplemental information with your DICAS application. Sometimes, you will be required to mail the supplemental requirements directly to the program (use certified US mail).

Some of the common supplemental requirements that I have seen are:

- a short video
- a written response to additional questions
- a link to an electronic portfolio (if you have one)
- a pre-test (usually taken online at the link provided by the DI program)

Q: The DI I am applying to requires that I submit a short video. What should I do?

A: If a video is required, the DI program will provide you with clear instructions on the requirements (eg, length, content to discuss, etc.). Read and follow the requirements explicitly. In addition, you should review the video for the following before you submit:

- **Lighting:** Check to make sure that the lighting is adequate, that your face can be seen.
- **Attire:** Dress appropriately (not in PJs ☺). You will be judged on how you present yourself.
- **Background:** Consider what’s in the background. Make sure there are no inappropriate items, pictures, etc. that are in view of the camera when you’re taping.
- **Script:** Stay within the required time limit, and make sure you answer the questions that are required clearly. Create a script to help you stay on track and on points.
- **Speech:** Speak clearly and slowly.
- **Edit:** Once you’ve completed the video, view the video. Edit it, or re-tape if necessary before you submit.
- **Time limit:** Do not exceed the time limit, if there is a time limit requirement. (If you exceed it, it shows you do not know how to follow simple instructions, or that you don’t care.)

Q: What does “Prioritize/ranking internship” mean?

A: To complete your application, you **must rank** (1st choice, 2nd choice, etc.) the DI programs you have selected to submit applications to before you submit your application. Each DI program has its own **Program Code**. You must rank the DI program using the Program Code, which is listed on DandD on the Participating Programs link.

Q: Some DI programs have more than one Program Code. Can I apply to DI Programs with multiple Program Codes?

A: Yes, you can apply to any program you desire. Each program code is specific to the type of DI program. For example, if a DI program offers a part-time option and a full-time option, they will have one program code for the part-time option, and a different program code for the full-time option. You may apply to both, or only one.

Q: Will the DI programs I am applying to know how I have ranked them?

A: No. The DI programs will not know how you ranked them on your list. All they know is that you have selected them as a program for consideration. DI programs and applicants are not told by D&D Digital how they were ranked by each other.

Q: What does releasing my matching results mean?

A: Choosing to give permission to D & D Digital to release your matching results means, your name will be included in a list, indicating a match or no match, that is sent to all Dietetic Internship Directors, and Didactic Program Directors. If no match occurs, your name, address, email address and college or university where your verification statement was or will be granted will be included on another list that the internship programs with openings receive. If a program has a vacant slot, they can then make contact with any unmatched applicants.

Note: I strongly recommend that you select the “release my matching results” option.

Q: Should I release my results if I cannot relocate?

A: Yes. If you do not match, and a vacant slot is available in a DI program in your area, this is the only way Internship Directors and Didactic Program Directors will know of your possible availability.

Note: If you are contacted and offered a slot, and you cannot relocate, you do not have to accept the offer.

Q: Can I change the ranking order after the application due date?

A: Yes, but only during a specific time period, following the application due date. During this period, you can *change the ranking order*, or *remove one of the DI program* from your original list. However, you **cannot add any new** DI programs to your list. Use the **Timeline Link** on DandD to find the beginning and ending dates to reorder your priorities.