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Introduction to the Preceptor Handbook

This handbook and associated materials were created to serve as tools and resources for the preceptors who have so graciously agreed to precept for the Benedictine University Dietetic Interns. According to data from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (A.N.D), many preceptors express that they feel poorly prepared for their role as a preceptor, as it is not a typical component of dietetics education and related fields. In addition, the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the A.N.D. has recently revised the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards (ERAS) for Dietetic Internships; therefore, some aspects of the dietetic internship may be new to even the most seasoned preceptors.
Dear Site Preceptor:

I want to express my most sincere appreciation to you for agreeing to precept interns in the Benedictine University (BenU) supervised practice program. As a preceptor, you are an essential and integral component of dietetics education and that there would be no supervised practice without YOU! I know you agreed to take on the role of preceptor in addition to the traditional responsibilities of your job and out of your willingness to support nutrition education and help develop skilled practitioners.

I view you, the preceptor, as my partner in the education of dietetic interns. My goal is to have you actively participate in the continuous quality improvement process surrounding the BenU Dietetic Internship (DI). As the DI Director, it is challenging for me to always know what will work best for all sites, preceptors, and students. Please communicate to me what is working well and what processes require improvement or modification.

Your input regarding the interns, scheduling, rotations, assignments, etc. is essential to the success of this internship. I RESPECT your expertise and welcome your feedback on a continuous basis, both through informal and formal means.

Please feel free to contact me through email, jmoreschi@ben.edu, or phone, 630-829-6548.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

5700 College Road, Kindlon 224F
Lisle, IL 60532
jmoreschi@ben.edu
630-829-6548
Introduction to Supervised Practice

In order to earn the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) credential, registered dietitians must meet the following criteria:

- Complete a minimum of a bachelor’s degree at a U.S. regionally accredited university or college and course work accredited or approved by ACEND of the A.N.D.
- Complete an ACEND-accredited **supervised practice program** (aka dietetic internship) at a health-care facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation or combined with undergraduate or graduate studies.
- Pass a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).
- Complete continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration.

The supervised practice program represents a crucial step in developing the intern from “beginner” to “entry-level” competence. Competence is defined as the quality or state of having requisite or adequate ability or qualities. The supervised practice program provides an opportunity for dietetic interns to practice or perform dietetics-related activities under supervision while building skills, gradually increasing workload and complexity of work, and applying didactic learning to real-life dietetics practice. Didactic education and traditional exams, while excellent methods for developing and assessing foundation knowledge, cannot replace supervised practice.

The supervised practice program offers an environment in which dietetic interns can learn new skills and apply classroom education. Supervised practice will help the intern attain competencies and learning outcomes appropriate to the entry level dietetics practitioner. Essentially, interns will be learning what you, the preceptor and professional, do on a daily basis as part of your job. Upon culmination of each rotation, interns should have developed the skills necessary for them to perform your job in a satisfactory manner. It is not expected that interns will be able to perform your job with the same level of skill as you, a seasoned professional.
Professionals in each field might have a wide variety of education, experience, and certification; some are registered dietitians, others are school nutrition specialists, chefs, or administrators. It is experience and mastery of each individual’s field of expertise that are important as a preceptor, not title or level of education.

Sometimes new preceptors are uncertain about just how much they should teach. We encourage you to share any information you believe is important to nutrition, food service, clinical or community nutrition. You live this profession everyday—you know what interns need to know to be successful.
The Role of the Preceptor

Preceptors perform the following 6 essential roles:

**Planner** – Preceptors serve as planners in a number of capacities. On a day-to-day basis, they are responsible for planning the experiences and learning activities of the intern. In addition, they play an integral role in the planning and modification of the curriculum and supervised practice experience in conjunction with the DI team.

**Role model** – By exemplifying professional behaviors and the principles outlined in the Code of Ethics, preceptors teach by example.

**Information provider** – By sharing relevant information in their area of expertise and staying current with recent developments and research, preceptors serve as information providers and assist interns with gathering the necessary information for competency development.

**Facilitator of learning** – Preceptors function as facilitators of learning by coupling experiences and tools with guided questioning and feedback. In this manner, interns are able to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

**Resource developer** – By guiding interns to the appropriate materials (current research, protocols, practice guidelines, manuals, etc.) and other professionals that will assist interns in their practice and professional development, preceptors serve as resource developers.

**Assessors of learning** – Preceptors serve as front-line evaluators of interns’ learning and competence as they progress through the supervised practice rotation.
General Benefits of Precepting Dietetic Interns

Serving as a preceptor can provide a number of benefits to both you and your institution. These benefits might include:

- **Enhanced productivity and project completion** – Often certain projects are placed on hold due to lack of resources and time. Such projects, where appropriate, can be delegated to interns. Through such projects, interns learn and develop competency while making real-life contributions to the supervised practice site.
- **Improved employee morale and performance** – Team members who are given a role in teaching interns often feel a greater sense of importance and contribution to the team.
- **Alternative perspectives through fresh eyes** – Interns may bring new perspectives to a facility. Often through an intern’s questions and a preceptor’s expertise, best practices are identified.
- **Challenge and variety** – Interns can provide variety in the day-to-day routine and challenge the staff and preceptor through their questions and learning process. Learning can be rewarding at all ages and all levels of experience.
- **Professional development opportunities** – The Dietetics Preceptor Training Course and other activities that support effective precepting can contribute to the preceptor’s portfolio and professional development.

Benefits of Precepting BenU Dietetic Interns

- Annual invitation to Hot Topics in Nutrition & Wellness seminar each May
- Annual invitation to Current Trends in Nutrition Research seminar each November
Progression of Learning

The supervised practice experience is designed to build intern skills and entry-level competency upon the intern’s existing foundation of didactic knowledge. Throughout each supervised practice rotation, the goal is to gradually increase the intern’s level of:

- Responsibility
- Proficiency
- Independence
- Competence

While at first the intern may simply observe, the intern should gradually take on increasing portions of the preceptor’s role until the intern is able to assume all entry-level aspects of the preceptor’s job independently. Throughout the rotation, the intern should gradually progress from heavily supervised practice to increasing independence and minimal supervision. Responsibilities and problems should progress from basic to complex, and the work load and speed expectations should increase similarly.
Mission

The Benedictine University Dietetic Internship will provide a high quality program that is recognized as a superior model for the preparation of entry-level dietitians, and through the community and public health nutrition program concentration display excellence in provision of community and wellness initiatives and interventions across the lifespan.

Goals & Objectives

Goal #1 – The Dietetic Internship will prepare highly qualified entry-level Registered Dietitians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on the most recent seven year period, 100% of Benedictine University (BU) graduates will successfully complete the program within 27 months or 150% of the anticipated 18 month program completion length. (Guideline 6.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the most recent seven year period, at least 80% of graduates will pass the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within one year following first attempt. (Guideline 6.1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on averages from the most recent seven year period, 100% of Ben U graduates will take the Registration Examination within 1 year of program completion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on the most recent seven year period, using data obtained by both the BenU graduate survey and other information from professional networks, 75% of graduates will seek employment in dietetics within the first 12 months after program completion. (Guideline 6.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 90% of graduates will become skill entry-level Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, as evidenced by one or more of the following... (Guideline 6.4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being hired by site preceptors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Receiving a work or professional organization award</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Receiving a work promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employer survey rating of “outstanding” or “above average” entry level dietitian</td>
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</table>
Goal #2 – Benedictine University’s Dietetic Internship will prepare graduates who demonstrate professionalism through their interpersonal relationships with patients and the health care team, as well as encouraging our graduates to participate in the mentoring of future dietetics professionals.

| Based on returned BenU Employer Surveys completed one year post BenU program completion, 90% of employers will rate graduates at 4 on a 5 point scale for “developing interpersonal relationships” and “practices professionalism”. (Guideline 6.4) |
| Based on returned BenU Employer Surveys completed one year post BU program completion, 90% of graduates will rate themselves 4 on a 5 point scale for “interacting effectively with health care disciplines”. |
| Based on data collected annually from a “Graduate Update Survey”, 50% of graduates that respond to the survey will have experience serving as mentors for dietetic student education. (Guideline 6.4) |

Goal #3 – The Benedictine University Dietetic Internship program will prepare dietetics professionals with knowledge and skills in community and public health nutrition as defined by Benedictine University’s public health nutrition competencies.

| Based on returned BenU Graduate Surveys completed one year post BU program completion, 90% of graduates will rate themselves 4 on a 5 point scale for “The DI experience increased my knowledge related to community and public health nutrition?” AND 4 on a 5 point scale for “The DI experience increased my skills related to community and public health nutrition?” |
Rotations

The BenU Dietetic Internship is an 18 month post-baccalaureate program that is combined with a MS in Nutrition and Wellness degree. Dietetic Interns begin coursework in June, begin DI rotations in October, and complete the program the December of the next year. The program has a Public Health & Community Nutrition emphasis and consists of over 1200 hours of supervised practice.

Dietetic Interns work Monday through Thursday, and have a classroom day on Fridays. Dietetic interns may work some Saturdays and Sundays if this enhances the Di experience.

Prior to beginning rotations, dietetic interns complete pre-work and also complete an extensive orientation.

The supervised practice hours are divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotation Area</th>
<th>(Minimum Hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical (Acute Care)</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical (LTC/Sub Acute)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Management</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Nutrition</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Wellness</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Supervised Practice Hours (F9)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1312</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dietetic interns must complete experience in Clinical (Acute Care) before being placed in Clinical (LTC/Sub Acute) or Employee Wellness. Each intern’s rotation sequence varies due to site availability and need to keep the Employee Wellness rotation open year round.
**Program Calendar**

The planned time for completion for this full-time, MS in Nutrition and Wellness/DI program is approximately 18 months.

The formal graduation will occur in December (assuming completion of all program and rotation requirements).

Interns have the following days off during the program:

- **Memorial Day** – Monday, May X, 20XX (1 day)
- **Labor Day** – Monday, September X, 20XX (1 day)
- **Thanksgiving Break** – Wednesday, November X, 20XX to Friday, November X, 20XX (3 days)
- **Winter Break** – Monday, December X, 20XX to Friday, January X, 20XX (2-3 weeks)
Responsibilities of Preceptors, Interns, and the DI Director

Responsibilities of Preceptors

- Conduct a thorough orientation to the supervised practice setting.
- Meet with the intern(s) that you precept on a regular basis (incorporating weekly meetings).
- Identify and facilitate learning activities that support the attainment of competencies/learning outcomes.
- Assist the intern(s) in setting appropriate goals and a schedule for completion of competencies during the rotation.
- Provide assistance and supervision as needed.
- Evaluate each intern’s progress and provide timely formative and summative feedback. Let interns and the DI Director know if they are not meeting expectations early in the rotation so they can learn and adjust. Intern evaluation results should be a surprise at the end of a rotation.
- Complete required supervised practice documentation in a timely manner.
- Model evidence-based practice, professional behavior, time management, and ethical practice.
- Communicate each intern’s progress and any issues regarding the intern(s) or the supervised practice experience in general to the internship Director.
Responsibilities of Interns

- Prepare for and participate in all supervised practice activities. Assume responsibility for their own learning and be self-directed learners.
- Demonstrate professional attributes including timeliness, organization, **RESPECT**, a positive attitude, motivation, open-mindedness, flexibility, and patience.
- Adhere to the dress code of the facility and of the DI Student Handbook.
- Communicate regularly with preceptors regarding expectations, progress, questions, and difficulties.
- Be respectful of preceptors’ willingness to precept and the **preceptors’ full-time commitment and priority to providing patient/client care and/or high-quality food and nutrition services in addition to precepting**.
- Be respectful of experience and knowledge gained through professional practice.
- Expect a challenging supervised practice experience while acknowledging that many skills will take years to develop and require experience far beyond the internship.
- Manage their time well, while recognizing the commitment to intensive and long hours in most rotations.
- Manage their health and personal lives in order to be able to give the supervised practice experience their full focus and energy.

Responsibilities of the DI Director

- Communicate any changes in policy and procedures, curriculum, rotation descriptions, or competencies/learning outcomes with preceptors and interns.
- Monitor progress of interns through the competency evaluation forms.
- Address any concerns raised by either preceptors or interns in a timely manner.
- Conduct regular site visits
- Incorporate preceptor feedback into the continuous quality improvement process.
- Work with preceptors to develop alternatives and solutions to challenges and difficulties as they arise.
- Facilitate didactic coursework and evaluation.
Grievances

If an intern is unhappy with any aspect of the program, he or she is encouraged to make an appointment with the Internship Director. Any problem with the supervised practice facility should first be brought to the preceptor’s attention by the intern in a professional and thoughtful manner. If the intern feels that the problem with the facility is not being solved by the preceptor, the problem should be brought to the Internship Director.

If a dietetic intern wishes to proceed with a compliant regarding an academic dispute, he/she shall proceed in the following sequence. The student proceeds to the next level, if the prior level does not resolve the compliant.

a. Meet directly with faculty member or site preceptor
b. Meet with Dietetic Internship Director
c. Meet with Nutrition Department Chairperson
d. Meet with Dean of the College of Education and Health Services
e. File a written notice of appeal

Dietetic interns will not be subject to retaliation by personnel at the supervised practice site or Benedictine University. Should a dietetic intern have concern that retaliation is occurring, they can follow the sequence described in point 2 of this policy.

Unresolved grievances may be sent to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) will review complaints that relate to program’s compliance with the accreditation/approval standards. ACEND is interested in the sustained quality and continued improvement of dietetics education programs but does not intervene on behalf of individuals or act as a court of appeal for individuals in matters of admission, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff, or students.

A copy of the accreditation/approval standards and/or ACEND’s policy and procedure for submission of complaints may be obtained at http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/ or by contacting ACEND at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000 Chicago, Illinois 60606 Phone: 800/877-1500
Preceptor Training

**CDR Dietetics Preceptor Training Course**

BenU strongly recommends that all preceptors complete the on-line CDR Dietetic Preceptor Training Course.

The Commission on Dietetics Registration (CDR) offers a free, on-line Dietetics Preceptor Training Course. The course is available to RDNs as well to preceptors who are not RDNs. For RDNs, 8 CPEUs are provided following completion of the course. The course is available on-line and can be accessed at your convenience.

The course is self-paced and tracks what sections have been completed. In addition, the course includes a component which allows you to view comments, best practices, and suggestions from other preceptors who have taken the course. The course may be accessed via the following link: [https://www.cdrnet.org/news/online-dietetics-preceptor-training-course-free-of-charge](https://www.cdrnet.org/news/online-dietetics-preceptor-training-course-free-of-charge)

After accessing the web site you will be prompted to complete login information. You do not have to be a member of A.N.D. to access this course. The course title is: **Dietetics Preceptor Training Program**.

The course takes several hours to complete. We suggest that you work on one module per day over the course of a week. The sample forms in the course do not have to be completed. You will be provided with forms for the BenU internship prior to any rotation. Many professionals can earn continuing education credit by completing the quizzes and the entire module. Follow the module instructions for earning credits.
### Preceptor’s Checklist for Intern Orientation to Facility

The following are some important topics to include in the orientation process for interns at your site (please adapt to your particular site as needed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How students will obtain an appropriate ID (if needed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What, if any, office, locker, or other space the student may use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking restrictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the student will access phones, pages, computers/library, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required facility orientation (dress code, HIPAA, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission &amp; goals of the facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility policies &amp; code of conduct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to other staff: Food Service Professional, Administrator, or Dietitian job description at site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical routine and schedule (i.e. work hours, breaks, special events, rounds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (i.e. manuals, education materials, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools – items the intern should bring to rotations (i.e. calculator, lab coat, binder containing essential documents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intern’s learning style, comfort, and experience with facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and goal setting (including when this will occur)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required documentation the preceptor must submit regarding a student’s progress and evaluations (and schedule)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Competencies and Intern Evaluation

The following is simply an overview of the process:

Both preceptors and interns will be provided with a Rotation Packet for each rotation prior to the start of the rotation.

Preceptors and interns should familiarize themselves with all of these documents prior to the start of each rotation.

Site Preceptors are required to complete the following feedback tools/evaluations as appropriate during the rotation:
- Site Preceptor Mid-Term Evaluation
- Site Preceptor Final Evaluation
- Initial completion of elements on a Work Completion Checklist
- Presentation Evaluation
- Counseling Evaluation
- Clinical Competency Evaluation
- Staff Relief Evaluation

All forms may be found on the BenU Site Preceptor webpage at http://www.ben.edu/college-of-education-and-health-services/nutrition/preceptor.cfm
Planning and Feedback

BenU kindly requests that preceptors and interns to set aside a specific time each week for a preceptor/intern conference (in addition to less formal interactions during the week) to do the following:

- Set goals/plan for the following week.
- Allow for intern questions and discussion
- Discuss preceptor concerns
- Summarize the learning and experiences that occurred during the week
- Discuss and complete evaluation regarding competencies that were completed during the week
- Identify areas that require additional development
- When feasible, Thursdays may be an excellent time for this meeting. This will allow the intern to prepare for the following week over the weekend.
Tips for Efficiency

The following are some tips which may assist in creating a more positive experience for both preceptors and interns:

- Thoroughly orient the student (you may want to develop a notebook with written material the student can read and a checklist for each item)
- Agree together on daily tasks and expectations for supervised practice experiences
- Use planning tools such as prioritized Work Completion Checklists
- Set limits on the time allotted to tasks
- Encourage just-in-time learning
- Debrief at the end of an assigned task (competency) and follow up by planning for the next session
- Accomplish multiple purposes with single real-world activities
- Take advantage of technology
- Find opportunities for double-dipping = maximize benefit to the student and the facility (i.e. assigning the menu analysis project that you did not have time to finish to the intern as a way for the intern to meet a competency)
- Conduct weekly conferences