Overview of Cornell’s Dietetics Program

Cornell University offers both a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) and a Dietetic Internship (DI). These programs are separate. Both programs may be of interest to students pursuing the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential. The Registered Dietitian (RD) credential is the most widely held credential of nutrition practitioners. Many jobs in nutrition require the RD credential to be considered for employment. (See career ideas at http://www.eatright.org/students/careers/) The American Dietetic Association (ADA) confers this credential once you have met all of the criteria to be registered. In brief, to become an RD you must first complete the ADA minimum academic requirements and hold a Bachelor's degree. You are then eligible for supervised practice in dietetics. Once you complete supervised practice (typically in a dietetic internship) you are eligible to take the RD exam. If you pass this exam, you earn the RD credential.

The DPD includes required coursework necessary to complete ADA’s foundation knowledge requirements and learning outcomes (see “Foundation Knowledge Requirements and Learning Outcomes for Didactic Program in Dietetics”). DPD coursework may be completed with any major, however it fits best with majors in the Division of Nutritional Sciences. Issuance of a Verification Statement verifies that a student has completed DPD requirements and is eligible for supervised practice. Since the DPD is a program and not a major, completion of the DPD program does not appear on the Cornell transcript. The Verification Statement is the form used by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education to document that an individual has completed the requirements of a dietetics education program accredited or approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education. The completion of CADE Didactic Program requirements and at least a bachelor's degree from a U.S. regionally accredited college/university or foreign equivalent are necessary for eligibility to enter a CADE-accredited Dietetic Internship program. The form is also used to verify that all academic requirements are met for ADA Active membership. A Verification Statement will be issued after students have completed the necessary steps outlined in this Handbook and successful completion of required coursework has been verified.

Cornell also offers a Dietetic Internship (DI) program. Application to the DI is separate and follows the guidelines enclosed in this handbook. The DI begins in August and ends in June. The Cornell DI is highly competitive. Cornell students are generally competitive candidates for most DI programs. Due to their training, many prove to be good candidates for the Cornell DI. The Cornell DI program reserves several spots each year for Cornell DPD students. This process is referred to as “preselect.” Essentially, you may apply to Cornell’s DI program early. Application deadlines for the Cornell DI, including pre-select, can be found at www.nutrition.cornell.edu. Interviews for Cornell DI preselect applicants are typically completed by late January. Students who are accepted via the preselect process do not need to go through the match process. Students interested in a very strong general internship with high quality rotations in community, research, clinical and management are advised to consider preselect for Cornell’s DI. See http://www.human.cornell.edu/dns/dieteticinternship/index.cfm for more information. Students interested in the Cornell DI are strongly advised to meet with Cornell’s DI Director prior to application.

Didactic Program in Dietetics Policies

Registering as a Dietetics Student at Cornell:
Students intending to complete DPD requirements at Cornell are required to contact the DPD Director. Students will need to complete the DPD Intent Form and submit it to the Dietetics Office. Registering as a Dietetics student allows the program to keep track of students working to complete DPD requirements. It allows the program to plan for student needs in dietetics and allows students to receive individual advisement and guidance on the path to becoming an RD. There is a $75.00 fee to register as a dietetics student and complete the DPD requirements which is used to offset transcript evaluation, program supplies and accreditation fees. Students are required to pay this fee when submitting requests for transcript evaluation.
Credit for Prior Learning:
Transfer of coursework credit from other universities to fulfill degree requirements follows the policy of Cornell University. See the Courses of Study catalog for more information. In an effort to individualize didactic experiences for students who come with prior coursework and/or experiential learning, it is the policy of the Cornell University Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) to acknowledge appropriate substitutions where indicated. Substitutions are assessed by the DPD Director who will consider each case on an individual basis.

Requests must be submitted with ample lead time to fully assess the adequacy of the proposed substitution. Substitutions are reserved for students in unique and/or unusual situations (e.g. returning students, students completing studies off-campus, students seeking a Verification Statement post graduation) and are not intended as a typical replacement of the DPD Minimum Academic Requirements. In most instances substitutions will not be granted academic credit and substitutions will not show up on transcripts; students must still fulfill requirements for their major.

- Students seeking a course substitution will contact the DPD Director a minimum of two months in advance of the start of the required course. Students will be required to submit proof of prior coursework and/or proof of experiential learning as deemed appropriate by the DPD Director.
- The DPD Director will review submitted information and assess it for evidence of fulfilled foundation knowledge requirements and learning outcomes. If partial fulfillment is determined, additional activities to completely fulfill requirements and learning outcomes may be proposed by the DPD Director and used in combination to completely fulfill requirements.
- If the substitution is approved, the DPD Director will complete and sign a “Courses Substituted to Meet Didactic Program in Dietetics” form. This form will be kept in the student’s DPD file as proof of completion and referred to as needed during the transcript evaluation process for issuing a Verification Statement. The student will also be notified of the decision.
- For students applying to supervised practice programs, the course being substituted for should be listed on the DPD Course List page of the supervised practice application. Under the grade column, list a “P” for “passed” and leave this course out of the GPA calculation for the DPD. In the event that the course is substituted with a course from another institution, then that institution name, course name and number, number of credits and grade should be listed on the DPD Course List page.

Issuance of Verification Statements:
Upon successful completion of the program, each student will be issued eight Verification Statements signed by the program director. The Verification Statement is proof of completion of the Didactic Program in Dietetics. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that transcripts for all DPD and degree coursework is submitted to the Dietetics Office.

- Cornell students seeking a verification statement must request an official transcript with date degree conferred from the University Registrar. The transcript shall be sent to the Dietetics office.
- The Didactic Program in Dietetics Director and dietetics staff will review the transcript to ensure successful completion of required DPD coursework. CADE’s Verification Statement form will then be completed, embossed with the DNS seal and signed in blue ink by the Didactic Program in Dietetics Director.
- An original, signed Verification Statement will be mailed to the Dietetic Internship accepting each student, as appropriate. An original, signed Verification Statement will also be kept on file for all students completing the dietetics program. Additionally, each student will be mailed seven original statements for their personal use (e.g. for licensure application, future internship applications, ADA membership, employers, etc.).
- In order for a Verification Statement to be issued from Cornell University, a minimum of a baccalaureate degree and all DPD Minimum Academic Requirements must be met. In addition, a
minimum of 21 credits under the Professional Sciences requirement must be completed at Cornell. Alternatively, a Cornell University graduate student may be issued a Verification Statement by Cornell if dietetics requirements are completed while that student is a graduate student at Cornell University. In either case, transcripts and course syllabi for dietetics coursework taken outside of Cornell must be provided by the student in order to complete the transcript evaluation process (see policy on “Credit for Prior Learning”).

- In extraordinary situations, Cornell DNS graduate students may be granted course credit towards a Verification Statement for a course where they served as a Teaching Assistant. In this situation, the instructor for the course must complete a summary of the course description, content covered, credit equivalent and whether or not the course was successfully completed. The summary will then be sent to the DPD Director to determine if the necessary foundation knowledge and skills were successfully addressed by the student.

Program Complaints:
Complaints or concerns about the program should be discussed with the DPD Director. Grievances should be directed to the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Division of Nutritional Sciences.