

UPEI Integrated Dietetic Internship Program

Preceptor Handbook



Table of Contents

- I Program Overview
- II Performance objectives and sample activities
- III The Learning Contract
- IV Responsibilities of Dietetic Interns and Preceptors
- V Off to a Good Start
- VI Providing feedback and student evaluation

Section I

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

You have graciously agreed to participate in the training of a dietetic intern enrolled in the University of Prince Edward Island Integrated Dietetic Internship program. In this important role you will introduce the student to the exciting world of dietetics and guide her/him in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and competences required to practice as an entry level dietitian. The role of a preceptor can be both a challenging and rewarding experience. This guide has been developed to assist you in this role by providing some basic program information and a few tips on precepting. The guide provides an overview of the UPEI internship program, outlines the general responsibilities of the student and the preceptor, planning of learning activities, development of a learning contract, and a review of the evaluation process. However, not every topic can be address in a guide so preceptors are encouraged to contact the internship coordinator directly should questions arise.

Program Overview

The University of Prince Edward Island Dietetic Internship Program is a comprehensive integrated program consisting of two program levels offered after third and fourth year of the degree program in Foods and Nutrition. The total length of the program ranges from 36-40 weeks depending on the individual student's learning needs. The program offers a diversity of experiences in both traditional and non-traditional settings. The program is designed to not only prepare interns to work in currently existing positions but to also equip them to enter emerging areas of dietetic practice.

The internship program is divided into two levels of varying duration. Students accepted into the internship program complete Level I during the summer months following the third year of the degree program. Level I begins with a one week orientation to the internship program where interns are introduced to the program structure and how competencies and performance indicators are achieved. As well, numerous professional practice topics are covered during the week including, scope of practice, confidentiality, and professional conduct. Following the week of orientation interns complete two placements. Each student completes a basic four week clinical nutrition placement which is generally completed at a diabetes centre, long term care facility or at a small rural hospital. This placement is followed by a four week basic food service placement. During this placement interns are introduced to a food service operation and spend time learning about the functions of the department subunits.

Following level I interns return to university to complete the fourth year of the academic program. The final level of the internship program is completed after the student has graduated with their degree in foods and nutrition. Level II consists of placements in three different practice areas. Following graduation from the degree program the intern completes the remainder of the dietetic internship program, 27 to 30 weeks. The final level is intended to offer more advanced training in the areas of management, nutrition care (clinical nutrition) as well as, a placement in public and population health. The student spends 6-8 weeks in a food service operation learning the role and responsibilities of the department manager. A ten week clinical nutrition placement is completed with the majority of the placement spent in an acute care setting and time devoted to speciality areas. Finally students complete a ten week public/population health placement. During this placement the student is expected to work with at least two different target groups.

Learning guides have been developed for each program level. Each guide lists the performance objectives, competencies/performance indicators and sample activities for each area of dietetic practice. Preceptors who accept a student from the University of PEI program will be provided with a package of information which includes a list of the performance objectives and suggested activities which the student may undertake during the placement. It is important to note that the sample activities listed are only intended to be suggestions from which the preceptor may select the ones the intern will complete. However, preceptors are encouraged to identify alternate activities which are more suited to the organization where the intern is placed. The intern has a personal copy of the learning guide for their reference.

Section II

Performance Objectives and Sample Activities

Performance objectives have been established for each level of the program. The objectives are categorized into the three broad areas of dietetic practice Management, Nutrition care, and Public/Population Health. As a preceptor you will be provided with a copy of the performance objectives for the placement to be supervised (ie Level II, Nutrition Care objectives). Following each performance objective is a list of sample activities. The activities presented are ***not required*** rather they are examples of the types of activities/projects student might undertake during a placement to achieve the stated performance objective. There is great flexibility in the type of projects a student might complete to achieve the required competencies. Preceptors and interns are strongly encouraged to selected activities and projects which will be beneficial to the organization as well as, support the student's personal learning needs.

All performance objectives must be completed during the placement. In some cases it may be necessary for the intern to complete the activities numerous times until competence is achieved. This is especially true if the intern completes rotations in various areas.

Section III

The Learning Contract

At the beginning of each placement the intern is required to prepare a learning contract. In consultation with the preceptor activities and projects to be completed during the placement are identified. The activities and projects selected must support the achievement of the established performance objectives for the placement. The program coordinator may be consulted in situations where alternate activities are identified to ensure they support achievement of the performance objective. A copy of the finalized contract is forwarded to the coordinator by the intern.

Steps:

1. The intern reviews the performance objectives and competencies to be completed during the placement
2. The intern then identifies possible enabling activities to be completed which will support the performance objectives and competencies
3. The intern discussed the purposed learning plan with the preceptor. The preceptor may suggest alternative learning activities.
4. The intern and preceptor agree on the activities and projects to be undertaken, as well as, established completion dates
5. The learning plan is approved by the preceptor
- 6.. The Intern forwards a copy of the plan to the coordinator

Section IV

Responsibilities of Dietetic Interns and Preceptors

Preceptors are responsible to:

- provide an orientation to the work setting
- assist the intern to adapt to the new role
- advise the intern regarding policies, procedures and problem-solving approaches
- collaborate with the intern to identify learning activities which are beneficial to the organization and will support the established program learning objectives.
- provide help and supervision as needed
- provide guidance in complex, delicate and politically sensitive situations

- monitor the intern's progress, provide timely feedback to the intern
- complete an objective midpoint and final placement evaluation of the intern's performance

Interns are responsible to:

- take responsibility for their own learning
- clearly communicate any limitations/challenges they may have in the area of practice
- collaborate with the preceptor to identify learning activities which will support achievement of the identified performance objectives
- review the learning contract with the preceptor
- keep the preceptor informed about progress on assigned projects/activities
- inform the preceptor about what help or guidance is needed
- seek feedback from the preceptor on a regular basis, as well as, arranging periodic discussions of progress and learning needs
- arrange with the preceptor a time to complete the midpoint and final evaluations

Section V

Off to a Good Start

Beginnings are apt to be shadowy ~ Rachel Carson

At the beginning of a rotation an intern may often feel uncertain and anxious. Taking time during the first day to share important information can save considerable time later. Below is a list of topics to consider discussing with the intern on the first day. Clearly laid out expectations often eliminates the potential for confusion and misunderstandings to arise.

- **Provide orientation to:**
 - Physical space-tour of institution, location of washroom, parking, use of phone, workspace for intern, computer access etc.
 - Other staff
 - Dietitian's role (job description)
 - Resources- teaching materials, AV equipment, resource manuals

- Policies and procedures- mission of the organization, description of programs, dress code, protocols, confidentiality, emergency procedures
- Baseline knowledge and tools needed e.g. formulae, calculators, background readings etc.

➤ **Provide scheduling details for:**

- Hours of work
- Daily routine
- Lunch and coffee breaks
- Rounds
- Meetings
- Availability of dietitian
- Personal and written evaluations

➤ **Determine where the intern is at academically, professionally and personally. Suggested questions for discussion.**

- What style of learning best suits the learner?
- What experience does the intern have thus far?
- What courses does the intern feel have prepared them for this placement?
- What skills will be useful in this placement?

➤ **Clarify goals and objectives of the placement by reviewing the learning materials provided. In addition, discuss the following topics:**

- What does the intern personally hope to accomplish during this placement?
- How will this be achieved?
- Are there specific skills the student needs/wants to develop/practice?
- Discuss the tasks and projects to be completed. Clarify expectations.

➤ **Discuss feedback and evaluation process.**

- Preferred means of communication
- Role of the dietitian in the learning experience
- Discuss when evaluation will occur
- Set up appointments times for formal evaluation.

Section VI

Mentoring Behaviours Which Support and Challenge

The goal of mentoring is to guide the professional development of others. There are three broad categories of mentoring behaviours; support, challenge and vision. Finding the perfect balance between support and challenge is what promotes the ideal learning situation. In challenging our students we are asking them to go beyond their personal comfort zone and to venture out into unfamiliar territory. The word support on the other hand includes the idea of providing scaffolding which is something temporary which can be gradually removed as the student becomes stronger and more competent in the area of practice.

SUPPORT: The mentor affirms the validity of the mentee's experience and lets the learner know that he/she is understood. This fosters trust and helps develop the courage to move ahead.

Support, examples:

- provide an outline
- goals and objectives
- active listening
- make time for intern to research-slower pace
- make yours elf accessible
- be present during difficult situation-actually tell them you do support them
- ask for feedback on your practice
- ask interns opinions and feelings
- share experiences
- discuss strengths / weaknesses/goals
- remember positive feedback
- consider how feedback is given
- advocate for intern when things go wrong
- explore intern=s reasons for decisions-let intern be heard.

CHALLENGE: opening a gap between learner and environment, a gap that creates tension in the learner requiring learning/skill development. Evaluate skill set of learner beforehand in order to assign appropriate challenge. Avoid overwhelming the learner.

Examples

- new, different activity without supervision and then allow for feedback afterwards-discuss what happened
- give problem, which they need to clarify first
- allow taking risks
- challenge with questions on the spot
- quiz on previous information
- expect them to have questions
- be the devil=s advocate
- insist on high standards
- role-play other dimensions for a case

VISION: Offer a kind of light ahead and show the path of success, helping learners make a leap, from a dream and be self-reflective.

Examples:

- guide them to self-reflect re: strengths, weaknesses, activities to overcome weaknesses, clarifying goal
- encourage keeping a journal
- offer our own personal experiences
- role-modelling- professionalism
 - enthusiasm
 - commitment
- appreciation after difficult part of evaluation, say AI appreciate...about you@
- contribute to profession-past/future pf profession
- positive conclusion to rotation
- highlighting transferable skills
- encourage identification of interest

Section VII

Providing Feedback and Student Evaluation

Timely feedback is an important component of the learning process. Dietetic interns are encouraged to request feedback from their preceptors throughout each placement. The purpose of the feedback is to help the intern recognize areas of strength in their performance and areas where change/improvement is required. They may need direction on how to modify their performance to achieve the desired outcomes. Although valuable to the learning process, providing feedback that addresses issues or problems can be difficult. The following is a list of tips which may prove helpful when giving feedback to a student on their performance.

When to Evaluate:

Ongoing feedback

- Provided immediately as activities/tasks are completed
- Helps the intern define progress.
- Helps the intern integrate theory and practice.

Mid-point evaluation (verbal or written)

- Provides summary of progress.
- Conducted to indicate to the intern how well s/he is meeting the objectives and whether there is a need for improvement
- Provides intern an opportunity to implement a plan to strengthen areas of weakness.

Final evaluation

- The intern's stage of progress is evaluated at the end of the placement.
- This evaluation should reflect the intern's performance near the end of the placement rather than the beginning.
- It is recommended that the student complete a self-evaluation.
- The evaluation is to be reviewed with the intern.
- *The results of the final evaluation should not come as a surprise.*

The Process of Giving Feedback on Specific Issues/Concerns

Step 1: Prepare

- have sufficient information about the issue
- have sufficient knowledge of the learner
- have an understanding of the problem

Step 2: Involve the learner

- provide a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in a private setting
- remove distraction(forward phone, turn off pager, etc.)
- allow the learner to speak first. AHow would you assess your performance?@

Step 3: Describe the Issue

- limit the discussion to one or two points/issues
- limit your discussion to observed behaviour
- separate the performance/issue from the person

Step 4 : Ensure understanding

- be specific, unambiguous, concrete and objective when explaining expectations
- be supportive and encourage an exchange of ideas
- make practical recommendations
- identify resources and sources of reference materials
- confirm learning

Step 5: Review and agree

- review critical points to ensure common objectives
- discuss strategies and agree on the next step(s)
- avoid dictatorial words: Amust@, Ashould@, Aought@ Such words ad Arecommend@, Ayou may wish to try/explore@

Evaluation General Guidelines

- Evaluation is based on the student=s ability to apply skills and knowledge in the completion of established enabling activities.
- An evaluation form is provided for each placement and is to be completed by the

preceptor by the end of the placement.

- In situations where a student has spent time with more than one preceptor it is recommended that each preceptor complete a separate evaluation.
- A midway evaluation is recommended for placements which are greater than two weeks in length. Activities completed can be signed off and progress on other activities reviewed.
- The student's performance will be rated using the scale of Observed to Competent/Independent.
- To successfully compete the program interns must achieve a rating of Independent for most competencies/performance indicators.
- Competent performance is a complex set of behaviours built on the components of knowledge, skills and attitudes.