

Essential Program Standards for Admission to the Dietitian Nutritionist Program

This information is provided to inform applicants of the nonacademic technical performance and expectation standards required to complete the program successfully. Applicants should review the essential program standards to ensure that they are able to meet and maintain the standards of the program. The University fosters a culture of inclusiveness and is committed to providing an accessible environment for its faculty, staff and students. Please note, the Dietitian Nutritionist Program is committed to nondiscrimination, including on the basis of disability. Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply and reasonable accommodations will be provided as appropriate.

The Dietitian Nutritionist Program at the University of Pittsburgh is a rigorous and intense program that places specific requirements and demands on the students enrolled in the program. The aim of this program is to prepare graduates to enter a variety of employment settings and to render care to wide spectrum of individuals. All candidates and graduates must possess the essential physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities considered necessary for students admitted to this program to achieve the knowledge, skills, and competences to meet the Future Education Model (FEM) Standards of the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND).

Essential Standards for Admission Consideration

The following abilities and expectations must be met by all students admitted to the dietitian nutritionist program, noting that individuals with disabilities may be granted reasonable accommodations related to these standards, as appropriate.

1. Intellectual

A student must have the quantitative ability (i.e., measurement, calculations, etc.), and intellectual, conceptual and reasoning capacity, to assimilate, analyze and synthesize data to distinguish deviations from the norm in patient care and research activities. The student must be able to integrate concepts and problem solve to formulate assessment, diagnosis and intervention judgments. Testing and evaluation of these abilities is required to progress through the curriculum to meet formative and summative entry-level competencies.

2. Sensory and Observation

A student must be able to observe and participate in demonstrations and experiences to assess the nutritional status of clients and implement the Nutrition Care Process obtaining the client's history, performing physical examinations, anthropometric measurements and analysis of laboratory data. The student must have sufficient ability to obtain information accurately in didactic, laboratory, and clinical settings, (i.e., physical changes such as skin or lesions and sanitation compliance and food service).

3. Strength and Coordination

A student must be able to obtain information from clients by palpation, auscultation, and percussion, and to perform diagnostic procedures including, but not limited to history taking, physical examination, anthropometric measurements and analysis of laboratory data. The student must be able to prepare assignments and documentation, both written and computer generated, and perform public presentations and food skill-based demonstrations. The student must be able to travel to sites (classroom and experiential).

4. Communication

A student must be able to communicate effectively with students, faculty, preceptors, health care team, and clients (including individuals from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds). Students must be able to establish rapport with patients and communicate nutrition assessment, diagnosis and treatment information effectively and efficiently. Students must be able to collect and exchange information, understand and speak the English language at a level consistent with competent professional practice. Students must be able to use appropriate grammar, spelling and vocabulary.

A graduate student is expected to analyze, conceptualize and summarize complex relationships as ascertained from patient records, research studies and other written reports and be able to communicate that information effectively.

5. Behavioral and Social Attributes

A student must possess the emotional health required for utilization of their intellectual abilities. The student must be reliable and responsible to complete all academic and clinical responsibilities in a timely manner without supervision. Students must be able to develop mature, sensitive ethical and effective relationships with students, faculty, clients, members of the health care or research team and other diverse groups. Students must be able to adapt to change, display poise and flexibility in the face of uncertainties and stressful situations, and to independently demonstrate empathy, integrity, compassion, motivation and commitment commensurate with the habits and mannerisms of professional training to become a dietitian/nutritionist.

Candidates for selection to the dietitian nutritionist program will be required to meet these essential standards, noting that individuals with disabilities may be granted reasonable accommodations related to these standards, as appropriate.

It is the policy of the University of Pittsburgh to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including changes made by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for individuals who voluntarily disclose a disability and complete the interactive process with the office of disability resources and services. The purpose of an accommodation is to ensure an equal educational opportunity for qualified individuals with disabilities.

If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations, we encourage you to submit an accommodation request to the Office of Disability Resources and Services. The Office of Disability Resources and Services can be reached through their website or by phone at 412-648-7890 voice or (TTD). The office of Disability Resources and Services is located in 140 William Penn Union on the Oakland campus.

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University's mission. For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and complaint/grievance procedures, contact the Office of Affirmative Action, 901 William Pitt Union, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260, 412-648-7860/412-648-7860.