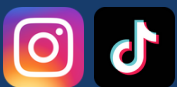




# The Ultimate Guide on How to Become a Registered Dietitian

BY JENNY WESTERKAMP, RD, CSSD  
FOUNDER AND CEO OF ALL ACCESS DIETETICS





This is the **most updated** and understandable guide on how to become a registered dietitian.

## **Learn the different pathways to RD!**

Because of the changing educational requirements to become a registered dietitian, it has never been more confusing to navigate the pathway to the RD credential.

If you Google search for answers, you'll find that a lot of information on blogs is outdated or includes conflicting or incorrect information.

That's why I created this up-to-date, easy-to-understand guide to tell you exactly what steps you need to take based on your unique background and interests.

**After helping thousands of RD2BEs become RDs, one thing is very clear:**

**THERE IS NO NORMAL PATH TO BECOMING A DIETITIAN!**

**Let's dive in...**



# THIS GUIDE COVERS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS...

- How to Understand the Different Program Structures
- The Recent Changes in Dietetics Education Requirements
- How to Choose Your Education Pathway to the RD Credential
- Important Notice about the 2024 Graduate Program Requirement
- How to Search for Programs
- If You are On the Fence About Spending Money to Become a Registered Dietitian
- My Advice for Future Dietitians
- Important Deadlines for Dietetic Internships
- How We Can Help Support You on Your Dietetics Journey



# HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT DIETETICS PROGRAM STRUCTURES

*Before we dive in, it's important to understand the names of the different programs so you know what each includes.*

## Coordinated Programs (CP)

- Coursework and concurrent supervised practice that results in a verification statement that leads to being eligible to apply to take the RDN exam. These may require pre-requisites, but don't require a DPD program. After 2023, there will be master's level coordinated programs or combined bachelor's + master's degree programs. These programs can be onsite, in which case your preceptors for supervised practice are secured for you, or distance programs where you stay in the geographical location of your choice and find your own preceptors. Pre-requisites vary by program.

## Didactic Programs in Dietetics (DPD)

- Coursework that results in a DPD Verification statement and leads to being eligible to apply to a dietetic internship. Usually this is part of a bachelor's degree or can be completed as a DPD Certificate Program.

## Dietetic Internships (DI)

- There will be stand-alone dietetic internships and those that are combined with a graduate degree. These programs will be on-site programs or distance programs where you stay in the geographical location of your choice and find your own preceptors for supervised practice. There are even a few programs like Aramark, Sodexo, Andrews University, and Morrison that have multiple locations throughout the US, which you may not be able to tell by just looking at a program directory. You would need to look at the programs' websites to know this. Dietetic Internships vary in length, but all meet the same required competencies to become a registered dietitian. Completion of the dietetic internship leads to a verification statement, which makes you eligible to schedule the RD exam.



# HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT DIETETICS PROGRAM STRUCTURES

*(Continued)*

## **Individualized Supervised Practice Pathways (ISPP)**

- These are similar and follow the same accreditation standards as dietetic internships. ISPP's were added as an option when the match rate for students applying to dietetic internships was declining. Since their inception, the match rate has improved mainly because of the addition of distance dietetic internships that often take more spots than on-site dietetic internships. Moving forward, ISPP's will be converting to dietetic internships or graduate programs. There are two ways to be eligible for an ISPP. The first way is if you previously applied to dietetic internships and did not receive a match. The second way is to have a doctoral degree.

## **Graduate Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics (GP)**

- AKA "Future Education Model Graduate Program" or "Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics" or "Future Graduate Program". Don't confuse these with any graduate program you find. These and Coordinated Programs are only the ones that integrate coursework and experiential learning for RDN eligibility. GP programs have different admissions requirements than dietetic internships.
- Similar to a CP, many don't require a BS degree in nutrition or a DPD verification statement. Some programs have as few as 3 prerequisite courses (Ex. University of New England). This makes it very accessible for career changers with bachelor's degrees in something other than nutrition and dietetics. The GP program will include the coursework and supervised practice, under new competencies at a graduate level. Different from DI's and CP's, it is competency-based education, meaning no set timeframe for each rotation. You advance based on when you show the competency.



# GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN NUTRITION AND DIETETICS (GPs)



[Read this interview from a Future Education Model Graduate Program student!](#)



[Dear Future Dietitian podcast episode with FEM Graduate Program student Brooke Margaret](#)



# THE RECENT CHANGES IN DIETETICS EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN

*Listen up career and major changers!*

It is not required to have a bachelor's degree in nutrition or a Verification Statement from a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) in order to become a registered dietitian. This means that for those interested in taking the leap and becoming a dietitian you do not need to get another bachelor's degree. Instead, you can apply to Coordinated Programs (CP) or Graduate Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics (GP). Many of these have prerequisites that take less than a year. Career changers with a non-dietetics bachelor's degree thought they had to complete DPD coursework (1-3 years, depending on undergraduate degree), as well as a dietetic internship (6 months-1 year, on average), and now a master's degree. But there are faster ways!

The program types that makes the most sense for career changers now are Coordinated Programs and Graduate Programs in Nutrition and Dietetics. GPs operate under different accreditation standards than CPs and for most, they don't require completion of a DPD program in order to apply. GPs use a competency-based model and integrate coursework with supervised practice. CPs include DPD coursework and supervised practice.

This now makes the ability to become a registered dietitian more educationally inclusive, and we hope to see more career or major changers entering the dietetics field!



# IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THE 2024 GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENT TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN

Prior to January 1, 2024, if you earn the eligibility to take the registered dietitian exam, then you will not need a graduate degree to practice as a registered dietitian. This means that if you are not yet a dietitian, but completed either a coordinated program at a bachelor's degree level or a DPD program and a dietetic internship and gained eligibility to sit for the RD exam, then you will never need to get a graduate degree. If you do not meet that deadline, then a graduate degree (plus the appropriate coursework and supervised practice) will be required to sit for the RD exam.

**The graduate degree can be in any specialty or area (e.g. MPH, MS, MBA, PhD) as long as you complete the appropriate coursework and supervised practice components. Note that in most cases you need to get a graduate degree either through:**

1. Graduate-level Coordinated Program (CP)
2. Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics (GP)
3. Combined with a Dietetic Internship
4. Completed before you do a stand-alone Dietetic Internship
5. Completed after you do a stand-alone Dietetic Internship if the Program accepts Interns without a Master's Degree (This is not as common, but one example of this is Priority Nutrition Care Distance Dietetic Internship.)

\*You do not need a graduate degree if you complete the supervised practice requirements and the Verification statement(s) and transcripts are uploaded to CDR by 12/31/23. You do not need to pass the RD exam by 12/31/23, but you will need to have completed all of the requirements.





# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR EDUCATION PATHWAY TO BECOME AN RD

## IF YOU HAVE NO BACHELOR'S DEGREE

(e.g. You have an associates degree, you are in high school, you have never earned a bachelor's degree)

- **Important:** When I say “BS in anything”, I mean there is no specific program you would have to get. It does not have to be in nutrition or anything related to that. When I say “Any graduate program”, I mean any program that is not a Graduate-level Coordinated Program or a Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics (or FEM or FG) as described above in program types. It can be any graduate program from any school in any subject. As you can see, this is only an option in certain pathways.

## YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...

- DPD Bachelor's program → Graduate degree in anything → Stand-alone DI (no graduate program)
- DPD Bachelor's program → Stand-alone DI (no graduate program) → Graduate degree in anything\*
- DPD Bachelor's program → DI (combined with a graduate program)
- DPD Bachelor's program → Apply and get no match → Any graduate program → ISPP (no graduate program)
- DPD Bachelor's program → Apply and get no match → ISPP (combined with graduate program)
- DPD Bachelor's program → Apply and get no match → ISPP → Any graduate program
- DPD Bachelor's program → Graduate Program
- DPD Bachelor's program → Coordinated Program (at graduate level)
  
- BS in anything → Prerequisites → Graduate Program
- BS in anything → Coordinated Program (at graduate level)
- BS in anything → DPD Certificate → Any graduate program → DI
- BS in anything → DPD Certificate → DI (combined with graduate program)
- BS in anything → DPD Certificate → Apply and get no match → ISPP (combined with graduate program)
- BS in anything → DPD Certificate → DI (combined with graduate program)
- BS in anything → DPD Certificate → DI → Any graduate program\*
- BS/MS Coordinated Program\*\*

\*Some DIs allow you to do the DI first as long as you complete any graduate degree by the end of their program.

\*\***Note:** There are some Coordinated Programs that combine the BS, graduate degree, and supervised practice into an accelerated 5-year program. They can be 3+2 programs or 4+1 programs. If you are open to transferring to a different school, this may be a quicker option for you.



# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR EDUCATION PATHWAY TO BECOME AN RD

*(Continued)*

## IF YOU HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ANYTHING (EVEN IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A DPD PROGRAM RIGHT NOW)

My assumption is that you would not want another bachelor's degree, but if you did want another bachelor's degree, then you would consider all the options for someone that has no bachelor's degree listed above.

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- DPD Certificate → Any graduate program → DI
- DPD Degree Program → Any graduate program → DI
- DPD Certificate or Degree Program → MS/DI combined program
- Prerequisites → Coordinated Program (Graduate level)
- DPD Degree Program → Apply and get no match → Any graduate program → ISPP (no graduate program)
- DPD Degree Program → Apply and get no match → ISPP (combined with graduate program)
- DPD Degree Program → DI → Any graduate program\*
- DPD Certificate → DI → Any graduate program\*
- Prerequisites → Graduate Program
- PhD program → ISPP

\*Some DIs allow you to do the DI first as long as you complete any graduate degree by the end of their program.

Note: The non-DPD pathways are notoriously faster and cheaper! There are programs online and distance that are less than 2 years. One example is University of New England.



# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR EDUCATION PATHWAY TO BECOME AN RD

*(Continued)*

## IF YOU COMPLETED (OR ARE ALMOST DONE WITH) A DPD PROGRAM WITHIN THE LAST 5 YEARS

When I say “Any graduate program”, I mean any program that is not a Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics (or FEM or FG) or a graduate-level Coordinated Program as described above in program types. It can be any graduate program from any school in any subject. As you can see, this is only an option in certain pathways.

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- DI with combined graduate program
- Coordinated Program (graduate level)
- Any graduate program → DI
- DI → Any graduate program\*
- Any graduate program → ISPP\*\*
- ISPP (combined with graduate program)\*\*
- PhD program → ISPP

\*Some DIs allow you to do the DI first as long as you complete any graduate degree by the end of their program.

\*\*An option for those that applied to dietetic internship programs in the past and did not receive a match. Match Day is early April for Spring cycle and early November for Fall cycle. These ISPP's usually are available in the second round of the Fall and Spring application cycles, which occurs the week after Match Day.



# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR EDUCATION PATHWAY TO BECOME AN RD

*(Continued)*

## IF YOU COMPLETED A DPD PROGRAM MORE THAN 5 YEARS AGO

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- Recency of education requirements\* → DI with combined graduate program
- Recency of education requirements\* → Coordinated Program (graduate level)
- Recency of education requirements\* → Separate master's program in anything → DI
- Recency of education requirements\* → DI → Separate master's program in anything\*\*
- PhD program → ISPP

\*Recency of education requirements vary by program. Reach out to the specific programs to learn more. For example, some require coursework like MNT and biochemistry, while others just want the DTR credential, which can be much cheaper to obtain!

\*\*Some DIs allow you to do the DI first as long as you complete any graduate degree by the end of their program.

## IF YOU HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND MASTER'S DEGREE IN ANYTHING

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- Prerequisites → Graduate Program
- Prerequisites → Coordinated Program (graduate level)
- DPD Certificate → DI only
- DPD Program → DI only
- DPD Program → No match → ISPP
- PhD program → ISPP



# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR EDUCATION PATHWAY TO BECOME AN RD

*(Continued)*

## IF YOU HAVE A DPD + A MASTER'S DEGREE IN ANYTHING

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- DI (no graduate degree) – The shortest option!
- DI (combined with graduate degree)
- Graduate Program
- PhD program → ISPP

There aren't many stand-alone Dietetic Internships now, but they do exist! Many are distance or have rotation locations in multiple cities across the country. There is even one that has no tuition – [OSF Saint Francis Medical Center Dietetic Internship!](#)

## IF YOU ARE AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

### **YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS...**

- Prerequisites → Graduate Program
- Prerequisites → Coordinated Program (graduate level)
- PhD program → ISPP

Be sure to reach out to directors first before getting transcripts evaluated to discuss your specific situation. It is typically easier to get accepted to a graduate school instead of a standalone DI due to the ability to get a F1 Visa.

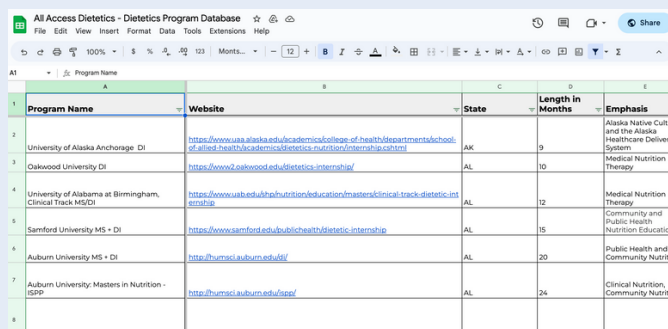
You will need to have your [international transcript evaluated by a foreign degree evaluation agency.](#) However, it is best to reach out to the directors of the programs first before spending the money on this as schools have different policies regarding international student admissions.

[For more on this read one RD's journey as an international student.](#)



# HOW TO SEARCH FOR PROGRAMS TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN

## START YOUR DIETETICS PROGRAM SEARCH BY USING OUR FREE DIETETICS PROGRAM DATABASE.



Program Name	Website	State	Length in Months	Emphasis
University of Alaska Anchorage DI	<a href="https://www.uak.alaska.edu/academic/college_of_health/department/school_of_allied_health/academic/science_nutrition/interalia/careers">https://www.uak.alaska.edu/academic/college_of_health/department/school_of_allied_health/academic/science_nutrition/interalia/careers</a>	AK	9	Alaska Native Culture and the Alaska Healthcare Delivery System
Oakwood University DI	<a href="https://www2.oakwood.edu/dietetics-internship/">https://www2.oakwood.edu/dietetics-internship/</a>	AL	10	Medical Nutrition Therapy
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Clinical Track MS/DI	<a href="https://www.uab.edu/health/nutrition/education/masters/clinical-track-dietetic-internship">https://www.uab.edu/health/nutrition/education/masters/clinical-track-dietetic-internship</a>	AL	12	Medical Nutrition Therapy
Samford University MS + DI	<a href="https://www.samford.edu/publichealth/dietetic-internship">https://www.samford.edu/publichealth/dietetic-internship</a>	AL	15	Community and Public Health Nutrition Education
Auburn University MS + DI	<a href="http://humsci.auburn.edu/">http://humsci.auburn.edu/</a>	AL	20	Public Health and Community Nutrition
Auburn University: Masters in Nutrition - ISPP	<a href="http://humsci.auburn.edu/ispp/">http://humsci.auburn.edu/ispp/</a>	AL	24	Clinical Nutrition, Community Nutrition

[ACCESS THE DIETETICS PROGRAM DATABASE HERE](#)

Our database is an extensive directory with more details on each program, the ability to download and filter programs by attributes like price and emphasis, and browse lists of programs such as “Programs That Are 12 Months or Less”, “Stand-alone Dietetic Internships”, and more.

You can also check out the Accredited Programs Directory on the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website. [Here is the link to view the directory.](#)

*Note that more filters appear when used on desktop and not your phone.*

For application tips, download our FREE [Application Toolkit](#), which includes sample resources used in our Dietetics Admissions program.



# IF YOU ARE ON THE FENCE ABOUT SPENDING MONEY TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN

It is an investment in time, money, and resources to become a registered dietitian. What is important to consider is all the opportunities that become available to you once you have the RD credential. Many people don't realize all the different industries that hire dietitians. They might think it is only clinical, community, and food service management. But there is so much more! We compiled a list of 75 exciting career opportunities in this free ebook – Dietitian Dream Jobs.



**Download your copy [HERE](#) and get inspired by all the ways you can use your RD credential and get a return on your investment!**



# MY ADVICE FOR FUTURE REGISTERED DIETITIANS

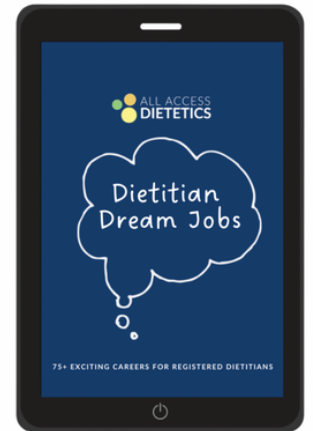
1. Remember...there is no typical path to becoming a dietitian. Everyone is different, don't compare your journey to others.

2. Get opinions in the “real world” not just professors and advisors. There are so many career options for registered dietitians beyond what is covered in dietetics education. Learn more about 75 exciting careers with our free ebook - Dietitian Dream Jobs.

3. Make the decision that is right for you. You can choose a program based on location or price. You can choose a program simply because it is the shortest option. Our [Dietetics Admissions](#) clients have a long list of factors that they consider when narrowing down their program options. Do what is important to you.

4. Do your research and get support. Don't rush this part! Sometimes the extra research can be the difference between tens of thousands of dollars. Reach out to us by clicking the “Need Help” button at the bottom of our website.

5. It doesn't have to be stressful and confusing! And you don't have to do it alone. Work with us in our [Dietetics Admissions program](#) and we will guide you through every step of the process!



[DOWNLOAD HERE!](#)

[DM US ON IG FOR MORE SUPPORT!](#)



[@ALLACCESSDIETETICS](#)







# IMPORTANT DEADLINES FOR PROGRAMS

**Dietetic Internships have two application cycles each year with the following timelines:**

- February 15 deadline → Early April Match Day → Fall start
- September 25 deadline → Early November Match Day → Spring start

**Please note:** Check dietetic internship websites for the most updated information about their deadlines.

**Some programs offer Pre-Select or Early Decision options. There are even a few programs that have a February 15 deadline for a Spring start.**

**For other programs besides Dietetic Internships, admissions deadlines will vary depending on the school. They generally have a winter deadline for Fall start and fall deadline for Spring start. Some programs also have rolling admissions.**



# HOW WE CAN HELP SUPPORT YOU ON YOUR DIETETICS JOURNEY TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN

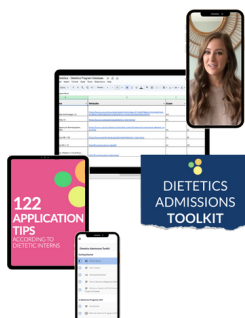
If you are looking for 1:1 support to guide you through every step of the admissions and application process, apply for [Dietetics Admissions](#).

After completing an application, you will be directed to schedule a call with an Enrollment Coach to get your questions answered and make sure this is a good fit for you.

With Dietetics Admissions, you will apply to dietetics programs with the roadmap, individualized advice, accountability, and support to get into your top choice program. You'll have more confidence and be less overwhelmed knowing an expert is by your side.

## Think of your admissions coach like a cheerleader, expert, and mentor all in one.

Get expert guidance, get your questions answered quickly, save time, and feel supported in every step of the application process.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT  
DIETETICS ADMISSIONS [HERE!](#)**



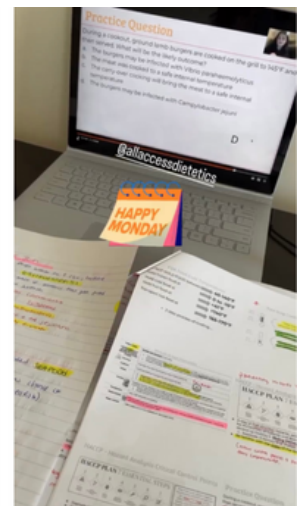
# WHEN YOU'RE READY: PASS THE RD EXAM WITH PASS CLASS



Pass Class is our all-inclusive program to pass the RD exam. Pass Class teaches an evidence-based study method with an interactive study guide, videos, and tutor-led community. Unlike other tools, it offers a complete program that does not require mix-and-matching different tools. Over 2,500 future dietitians have used our RD exam prep since 2019!

but seriously could not have done it without PTEP 🥺 the best structured study i've ever had in my life 😊😊💕

THANK YOU! Pass Class was truly a saving grace and HUGE part of why I passed!



**[LEARN MORE ABOUT PASS CLASS HERE](#)**



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My name is Jenny Westerkamp. I started All Access Dietetics in 2008 after matching to the Massachusetts General Hospital Dietetic Internship. Since then, I have been on a mission to help future dietitians begin their careers with confidence. Over 38,000 people have used our resources to date! I'm honored that this guide sparked your interest and look forward to supporting you on your dietetics journey.

As of November 2021, the Commission on Dietetic Registration reports that there are over 108,000 registered dietitians in the United States. I'm confident that this profession will continue to grow and make a big impact on future generations.

My team and I are here to give you the support you need to land a dietetic internship and pass the RD exam so that you can start your dietitian dream job! Explore our website to see our support options and free resources.

Thanks for being here!

Jenny :)

All Access Dietetics is the place for future dietitians! Learn more at [allaccessdietetics.com](https://www.allaccessdietetics.com)