

DIETETICS - MS

Mission Statement

With an emphasis on social justice, professional excellence, and the capacity to lead and influence in a variety of settings with diverse populations, the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics prepares students for eligibility for the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) credentialing exam to become Registered Dietitian Nutritionists.

Student-Centered Active Learning

Within the classroom and on-site rotations, students use hands-on experience to apply evidence-based dietetics guidelines in simulation and real-life settings. A strong foundation of critical concepts is built during student-centered classroom engagement with dedicated faculty.

Community Partnerships

The Twin Cities Metropolis has countless hospitals, clinics, community centers, and food service facilities serving its community. St. Catherine's has partnerships with many of these facilities for students' supervised experiential learning rotations. These rotations focus on clinical, community, and food service nutrition while taking into account students' interests and goals.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics at St. Catherine University is an entry-level, graduate education program that prepares students to be Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs). RDNs translate the science of nutrition into practical solutions for healthy living and use their nutrition expertise to help individuals make unique, positive lifestyle changes. They work throughout the community in hospitals, schools, public health clinics, businesses, nursing homes, fitness centers, food management, food industry, universities, research, and private practice. RDNs are advocates for advancing the nutritional status of people around the world.

This program prepares students for practice in a range of settings with a variety of individuals and groups. Students will earn a Master of Science degree in Nutrition and Dietetics upon successful completion of the program and will be prepared to take the National Registration Examination required to earn the Registered Dietitian credential.

Most states in the United States (US) require certifications or licenses to provide medical nutrition therapy. Completion of the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics at St. Catherine University and passing the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) credentialing exam will result in eligibility for dietetics certification and licensure in all states in the US.

Degree Program

St. Catherine University's Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics is a full-time program that consists of 48 credits and more than 1,000 supervised experiential learning hours. Students enroll in full-time courses during the fall and spring semesters. No courses are scheduled for the summer between years one and two. The program takes 21 months to complete and graduates are eligible to take the CDR credentialing exam to earn the RDN credential.

The program integrates didactic and experiential learning for a complementary approach that develops the skills necessary to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. The program has a major focus on clinical and community nutrition but also includes strong research, intercultural, and culinary components.

Students take 4 classes each semester for a total of 48 credits over 4 semesters. The courses build upon one another, with foundational concepts covered in the first year and advanced application in the second year.

Minnesota State Licensure for Dietitians

The state of Minnesota requires a license to provide medical nutrition therapy. To earn a state license, an individual must have earned a degree at the appropriate level (graduate degree after Jan 1, 2024), passed the CDR credentialing exam, completed a minimum of 900 practice hours under the supervision of an RDN, and completed an application for a state license with a notarized copy of a registration card from the CDR. After completion of the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics at St. Catherine University and successful completion of the CDR credentialing exam, the CDR card is issued and the graduate is eligible for Minnesota state licensure to provide medical nutrition therapy.

Program Goals

To continuously improve the program and ensure objectives are met, the following program goals of the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics are assessed regularly.

Goal 1: The Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics will prepare graduates to obtain employment as registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) who are competent in entry-level practice in a variety of settings.

Objective 1 At least 80% of students complete program requirements within 2.6 years (150% of planned program length).

Objective 2 Of graduates who seek employment, at least 80% are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation.

Objective 3 At least 80% of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion.

Objective 4 The program's one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of the first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%.

Goal 2: The Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics will prepare graduates with leadership skills who conduct evidence-based practice.

Objective 1 80% of employers that return the survey state graduates are competent and well-prepared and rate graduates at an average of 4.0 (on a 5.0 scale) in content areas (critical thinking, conduct evidence-based practice) on the Employer Survey.

Objective 2 80% of students graduating who complete the survey will rate themselves as mostly prepared (an average of 4.0 on a 5.0 scale) to achieve educational and professional endeavors on the Graduation Survey.

Objective 3 50% of graduates who respond to the 1-5 Year Graduate Survey will indicate they have a leadership role in a professional organization or paid position in the field.

Competency-Based Learning

Dietetics education is outcomes based with a focus on real-world application. Students gain the breadth and depth of curricular and co-curricular content necessary for the fulfillment of the program mission, for first-attempt passing of the RDN national credentialing exam, for state licensure and certification, and for entry-level practice as an RDN. During the graduate program in Nutrition & Dietetics at St. Catherine University, students will be assessed on the competencies and performance indicators as established for the Future Education Model Graduate Programs by ACEND. Assessments of student performance related to the competencies and performance indicators are collected in the classroom setting and in supervised experiential learning with faculty and preceptors. Students will be expected to demonstrate competency in seven core units:

1. Foundational Knowledge: Applies foundational sciences to food and nutrition knowledge to meet the needs of individuals, groups, and organizations.
2. Client/Patient Services: Applies and integrates client/patient-centered principles and competent nutrition and dietetics practice to ensure positive outcomes.
3. Food Systems Management: Applies food systems principles and management skills to ensure safe and efficient delivery of food and water.
4. Community and Population Health Nutrition: Applies community and population nutrition health theories when providing support to community or population nutrition programs.
5. Leadership, Business, Management, and Organization: Demonstrates leadership, business, and management principles to guide practice and achieve operational goals.
6. Critical Thinking, Research, and Evidence-Informed Practice: Integrates evidence-informed practice, research principles, and critical thinking into practice.
7. Core Professional Behaviors: Demonstrates professional behaviors and effective communication in all nutrition and dietetics interactions.

Degree Requirements

In addition to fulfillment of university requirements and following all university policies for graduate program standing and progression, students enrolled in the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics must observe the following progression requirements:

1. Completion of program prerequisites
2. Completion of the 48 credits in the program
3. Maintenance of a minimum of a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale
4. Adherence to the code of ethics of the RD/RDN profession
5. Demonstration of professional behavior

6. Meet all competencies at the required benchmarks and completion of remediation as necessary

7. Completion of the 1,000+ hours of supervised experiential learning

"3+2" dual degree option

St. Catherine University offers a fast track, "3+2" dual degree option for earning a baccalaureate and master's degree. Qualifying students complete the undergraduate course requirements in the first three years. In the fourth year - while enrolled at the undergraduate level - students will take graduate courses in the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics, and will earn their baccalaureate degree at the end of their fourth year. In the fifth year, students will complete the graduate program requirements while enrolled as graduate students and earn their master's degree.

Transfer Credits

Requests for transfer of credit are considered on an individual basis. A total of nine relevant credits of transfer and special classes can be applied toward the Master's in Nutrition and Dietetics degree with the approval of the program director. To be eligible for transfer, the course must have been completed at a regionally accredited institution.

Supervised Experiential Learning Assessment

Supervised experiential learning will take place throughout the duration of the 4 semesters, but is especially concentrated in the practicum course in the 4th semester. This course is exclusively for supervised experiential learning in which students will rotate through different community, clinical, and food service sites developing independence to further prepare them for entry-level RDN positions.

In the practicum course, students will be evaluated on their performance related to whether the competencies have been met at a satisfactory level (rated on a 4-point scale and a pass/fail). Early concerns will be discussed directly among the program director, student, and preceptor. The program director will monitor students closely during practicum. Mid-semester reviews will be conducted to ensure that students are progressing through practicum appropriately. Preceptors are required to notify the course instructor and/or program director immediately with concerns about student performance in practicum. If there are concerns related to performance in the practicum course, the program director will provide guidance and support to increase the likelihood of successful practicum completion.

Preceptors will evaluate students at the midpoint and at the completion of each rotation. The preceptor is responsible for evaluating student performance during the practicum, at the end of the practicum as well and is encouraged (but not required) to discuss this evaluation with the student prior to the completion of the practicum. Students are evaluated on competencies to be completed in each particular rotation as well as interpersonal and communication skills, and professionalism.

Students are required to complete an evaluation at the end of the practicum period. The information from these evaluations will be used to update the data on each practicum site, and as a resource for placing future students on that site.

Students are expected to maintain their overall GPA minimum of 3.0 to remain in good academic standing in the Graduate Program. The practicum is pass/fail. If a student receives a final grade that is below 80%, the student must repeat the practicum. The final grade is

determined by multiple factors including the preceptor evaluations, attendance, professionalism, and completion of required assignments (see individual syllabi).

If the student is not performing at an acceptable academic and professional level at the practicum site and is either removed or dismissed from the site prior to the end of the practicum due to poor performance or unprofessional behavior, an investigatory process will be completed by the program director. If it is determined that the student earned a less than satisfactory grade for that practicum, the student will have to repeat the practicum in its entirety. Depending on the academic standing of the student, he/she may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Students are expected to behave in a professional manner consistent with the Professionalism Guidelines for the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics. Behaviors indicating difficulty in displaying responsible learning, such as failure to attend class regularly, chronic tardiness, unsatisfactory work, and difficulty with interpersonal communication, require the student to delineate professional development goals and strategies as a part of the plan for professional development to resolve these problems. Failure to improve or achieve competency in professional behavior may lead to academic probation and program dismissal.

Remediation

Failure to meet any requirement for meeting a competency will result in remediation. In the case of not meeting a competency, remediation is required. Remediation terms will be determined by the instructor for the course that includes the competency, with input from the program director as needed. All competencies must be satisfactorily met for a student to complete the program.

Academic Probation

Probation establishes formal conditions for the student's continuance in the program. Grounds for academic probation include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to maintain a cumulative GPA above 3.0
2. Requiring more than 4 remediations related to competency performance in didactic courses and the practicums course
3. Course failure
4. A pattern of lapses in professionalism

During the probation term, the student will:

1. Meet with his or her advisor prior to the beginning of the term to review the situation and to plan the necessary steps to be removed from probation
2. Meet with his or her advisor during the probation term to monitor progress and address any difficulties.

During the probation term, the advisor will:

1. Monitor the commitments made in the student plan, and inform the program director if recommendations are not being followed.

During the probation term, the program director will:

1. Verify and report to the student any failure by the student to supply the plan or meet its goals and to give the student warning that a failure to meet the plan's goals will lead to termination.

Removal from Probation

Students are removed from academic probation if all of the following criteria are met:

1. Earning a grade of B or better in two or more courses in the following semester
2. Achieving a grade point of 3.0
3. Completing all required course assignments as expected
4. Meeting all competencies as expected

Students will be notified by a letter from the program director that they have been removed from academic probation.

Students may be offered a second semester of extended probation if substantial progress is made towards improving grades but conditions have not been fully met. The program director approves extended probation in consultation with the faculty and faculty advisor.

Academic Dismissal

In some situations, it will be recommended that the student no longer continue in the Graduate Program in Nutrition and Dietetics. The student will be counseled to withdraw from the program. If that does not occur, the student will be dismissed from the program. In either case, the student will be provided with documentation regarding the specific reasons for their dismissal and the conditions, if any, under which he or she may return. Grounds for program dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Failure to raise the cumulative GPA above 3.0 at the completion of the semester of probation
2. Requiring more than 6 remediations
3. Two course failures
4. A pattern of lapses in professionalism

Readmission to the Program

Students who have been dismissed are not eligible to register for courses but may apply for readmission after the lapse of at least one semester or as specified in the dismissal letter. To be readmitted, students must submit a petition to the Dean of the School of Health via the program director describing why they will be successful if readmitted and address the conditions of the probation, suspension, or termination.

If readmitted, students are automatically placed on probation, and the terms of probation will be provided in writing to them. A readmitted student must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the next 12 credits of coursework taken. Should the student fail to achieve a 3.0, she or he will be terminated from the program with no option for readmission. If a student is placed on probationary status, dismissed, or terminated, she or he may use the institutional grievance policy and procedures of St. Catherine University to appeal any decision. This policy does not supersede or replace any applicable Institution-wide process or policy.

There may be circumstances that warrant immediate discipline including termination from the program. The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics has the right to discipline or terminate a student during the course of or in lieu of the processes described.

Curriculum

Code	Title	Credits
NUTR 5100	Nutrition Education and Counseling	3
NUTR 5300	Professionalism in Dietetics	3
NUTR 5400	Lifecycle Nutrition: Pediatrics	3
NUTR 5700	Advanced Nutrition	3
NUTR 5450	Life Cycle Nutrition - Adults	3
NURT 5200	Community Nutrition I	3
NUTR 5500	MNT I	3
NUTR 5600	Foodservice and Nutrition Management	3
NUTR 6200	Community Nutrition II	3
NUTR 6700	Applied Research	3
NUTR 6500	MNT II	3
NUTR 6270	Current Issues in Nutrition	3
NUTR 6600	Foodservice Operations and Production	3
NUTR 6800	Practicum/Clinicals	3
NUTR 6300	Food Science	3
NUTR 6400	Culinary and Experimental Food and Nutrition	3
Total Credits		48

Code	Title	Credits
Fall Term		
NUTR 5100	Nutrition Education and Counseling	3
NUTR 5300	Professionalism in Dietetics	3
NUTR 5400	Lifecycle Nutrition: Pediatrics	3
NUTR 5700	Advanced Nutrition	3
Spring Term		
NUTR 5200	Community Nutrition I	3
NUTR 5450	Lifecycle Nutrition: Adulthood	3
NUTR 5500	Medical Nutrition Therapy I	3
NUTR 5600	Foodservice and Nutrition Management	3
Fall Term		
NUTR 6200	Community Nutrition II	3
NUTR 6300	Food Science	3
NUTR 6500	Medical Nutrition Therapy II	3
NUTR 6600	Foodservice Operations and Production	3
Spring Term		
NUTR 6270	Current Issues in Nutrition	3
NUTR 6400	Culinary and Experimental Food and Nutrition	3
NUTR 6700	Applied Research	3
NUTR 6800	Practicums	3
Total Credits		48