



Specialist areas of dietetic practice

All dietitians are responsible for training students as part of their ongoing job requirements and to meet professional standards. Taking students is an ideal way to increase interest in your area of speciality and potentially improve recruitment by raising awareness.

Placement focus

The placement should focus on developing and demonstrating core transferable dietetic skills these are:

- Application of the Nutrition and Dietetic Care Process
- Communication
- Professional Issues

In addition time management can be considered on a day to day basis or when delivering presentations to staff or patients. All students should be able to reflect on their experience whether this is their own practice or observation of a specialist dietitian or area demonstrating reflection in and reflection on practice.

Remember:

At this level of training we are not aiming to develop specialists the aim is to develop the core basic skills that dietitians use.



Placement structure

Time spent in this area could be in concentrated blocks of time successful placements in this area have been developed for 6 weeks and for full 12 week placements.

Successful Planning

Design the weeks around skill acquisition, not sub specialities. Skills should be built up in a step wise logical manner for example

Early weeks

Start with data collecting for record cards (relevant information)

Meeting and greeting patients/carers

Meet and spend time with other members of the extended care team. Get students to reflect on how dietitians and patients engage with the extended team.

Any observation should have a specific purpose - guided reflection is a useful tool for example following an observation *"What communication skills were used?" "How did the patient respond?" "How receptive do you think they were?" "What was it the patient said or did that lead you to that conclusion?"*etc.

Provide tutorials for new areas - these provide scaffolding by highlighting extra information, different ways of working, different communication strategies, or differing patient requirements that students need to be aware of before being set tasks in these areas. This support will allow students to work safely at their level and helps to support progression, as students will be able to "do" rather than watch.

As skills progress you will encourage students to complete assessments at their level of competence, come up with a nutritional diagnosis, identify a suitable intervention and consider monitoring and review to assess impact of intervention.



Student Dietitians

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What about assessment of skills?

In specialist areas students would be expected to work with the standard paperwork for assessing students on placement the focus being on developing and demonstrating core generic skills. It is important that both staff and students are clear on what is expected from the designed activities - these must clearly link into the placement learning outcomes. In addition it is important to ensure that expectations are set at the appropriate level for student's level of experience.

Students can carry out a range of tasks such as:

- Presentations formal or informal - presenting patients at MDT meetings
- Audit
- Teaching skills (MUST screening/ CHO counting etc)
- Assessing food dairies
- Designing appropriate meal plans - menus
- Reviewing snack provision
- Meal time/hydration audits
- weighing/measuring and plotting growth
- using prior patient data to practice calculating NG /PN feeding regimens justifying clinical reasoning of chosen regimen
- reviewing and updating patient leaflets/ diet sheets
- reviewing a patient by picking on issues at last visit
- picking up on verbal and non -verbal communication cues from parents and careers (directly /indirectly).
- reflect on communication skills used in different settings and with different teams (carers/parents/patients) etc



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What skills do Dietetic Students have?

Alongside Registered Dietitians, dietetic students also work within a strict code of professional practice and are regulated by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), providing a code of professional practise.

In addition student dietitians have a range of skills to offer they are excellent communicators, they can work independently with guidance or in teams. They have a good working knowledge of nutrition and are able to access and critique the evidence base around nutritional advice.

What to do if you are interested

Visit the BDA Website for further information. You will find contact details for your local University Dietetic Programme Team who can discuss opportunities with you.



Visit bda.uk.com