

A photograph of several students sitting around a table, working together. One student is pointing at a laptop screen, while others are looking at papers and writing. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Dietetics Focus Application Process & Supervised Experiential Learning

An Initial Guide

The mission of the UNE Master of Science in Applied Nutrition program is to prepare individuals for leadership roles in the field of nutrition, to advance knowledge and expand skills that promote excellence and innovation in all areas of nutrition practice, and to emphasize evidence-based best practices to support the well-being and health outcomes of individuals, families, and communities through education, research, and scholarship.

The Master of Science in Applied Nutrition Dietetics focus provides a verification statement upon successful completion of program requirements, which prepares graduates for practice as an RDN after passing the national registration exam.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Application Process	3
Introduction to SEL	4
SEL Sites	5
Preceptors	6
Scheduling	7

Application Process

Want to become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)? Apply to the Master of Science (MSAN) Dietetics Focus at UNE.

- 1. Speak with an enrollment counselor:** Prospective students should reach out to (855) 751-4447 or nutrition@une.edu to confirm that they meet the admission requirements.
- 2. Determine your start date:** The enrollment counselor will help prospective students determine their anticipated start date (spring, summer, or fall) based on their prerequisite course needs and other relevant student information. The anticipated start date is subject to change based on securing SEL site and affiliation agreements.
- 3. Begin your online application:** After the start date has been decided, prospective students can then begin their online application and start to compile their required essays, references, a current resume, and an official transcript confirming completion of their bachelor's degree or documentation that their degree will be completed before program matriculation.
- 4. Prepare for your meeting with the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator:** Once the applicant has been accepted, the enrollment counselor will connect applicants to the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator to discuss locating preceptors and sites, and to prepare a tentative plan of study. For this meeting, applicants should review the required Dietetics Focus webinars and prepare a list of potential preceptor sites they are considering in their local community for the three different types of SEL hours (Clinical, Community, and Food Service Management).



PRO TIP: To apply for the Master of Science in Applied Nutrition - Dietetics Focus at the University of New England, students should first speak with an enrollment counselor at (855) 751-4447 or nutrition@une.edu to confirm that you meet the requirements for admission.

A note on prerequisite courses: If prospective students need to take prerequisites, they can do so either prior to finishing their application (as non-matriculated student) or after they complete their application and are accepted (in which case they will be a provisionally-accepted student until their prerequisites and SEL planning are complete). Due to the length of time the SEL planning process takes (typically six to nine months, or longer, depending on location), prospective students may be taking their prerequisite courses either before or in the same months that they conduct their SEL discussions, preparation, and outreach. All prerequisite courses and all first year SEL preparation must be complete before a student can officially start their core MSAN Dietetics curriculum.

Upon successful completion of the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) accredited MSAN Dietetics Focus program courses and SEL hours, a verification statement will be issued to allow graduates to sit for the RDN exam.



Introduction to Supervised Experiential Learning (SEL)

A distinctive feature of all Graduate programs accredited by ACEND under the Future Education Model (FEM) standards is the “supervised experiential learning (SEL)” requirement. Supervised experiential learning gives the students the opportunity to actively apply their knowledge of nutrition and dietetics in nutrition practice settings under the guidance of professional preceptors.

At UNE, students will complete 510 SEL hours in the first year and 540 in the second year, as well as in-class SEL experiences, for a total of 1214 hours of supervised experiential learning. Prior to admission into the program, students are required to secure at least 400 hours of SEL, equivalent of the first year SEL requirements. Through the SEL hours, students gain valuable hands-on experience that can be directly connected to concepts in the graduate courses they are taking during the program and preparing them for professional practice as an RDN.



PRO TIP: It may take 6-9 months, or longer, depending on location, to secure your SEL sites for year one. This process includes outreach to sites, scheduling meetings with the preceptors, and finalizing the affiliation agreements with the support of the Assistant Director, Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition / Director of Dietetics Focus and the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator. These SEL sites must be approved and secured prior to enrolling in your first class.

As a part of ACEND accreditation requirements for FEM programs, SEL hours are done concurrently with the graduate coursework. This supports active learning in clinical, community and food service management sites while enrolled in the MSAN Dietetics Focus.



SEL sites and hours are pre-approved by the Assistant Director, Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition / Director of Dietetics Focus and site preceptor, and must align with the plan of study which is generated based on the expected date of matriculation.

Students working to locate their hours can be provisionally accepted during this process.

In this 48-credit hour program, there are 12 required three-credit courses offered with a co-requisite one-credit SEL lab course. In each lab, students will complete 90 hours of SEL (an estimated 15 hours per week). The total time estimate for participation in course work and SEL hours is close to 40 hours per week. Based on accreditation requirements, students must complete this program on a full-time basis.

SEL Sites

An SEL site is the location where the preceptor oversees students engaging in supervised experiential learning hours. Students gain hands-on experience and work with their preceptors to attain the ACEND required competencies for successful completion of the program.

Depending on the type of SEL, the site may be a hospital, food bank, fitness center, school, treatment center, or private practice setting. Hours may be completed through telehealth or virtual alternatives only as allowed by ACEND and approved by the program. All SEL sites must be approved by the Assistant Director of the Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition / Director of Dietetics Focus to ensure that the required competencies will be offered and supported by the preceptor. The Assistant Director, Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition / Director of Dietetics Focus will determine with the preceptor if the site may be used for multiple courses.

A distinctive benefit of the MSAN Dietetics Focus at UNE is the student's ability to complete their SEL at sites most convenient to them with no relocation required. Most Dietetics programs—even online ones—require students to be on-site for a portion of the program. UNE is one of only a few institutions to offer the didactic program for dietetics students completely online.

There are three primary types of SEL sites, these include but are not limited to:



CLINICAL

Hospitals or medical centers with in-patient facilities as well as outpatient facilities and private clinical settings where Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) is practiced



COMMUNITY

Organizations that work with food systems, food access, nutrition communication and education such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education), Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Dairy or Beef Council



FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT (F.S.M.)

For profit or non-profit institutions that offer meal planning programs such as K-12 public schools, college or university dining, hospitals, or care facilities

The Master of Science in Applied Nutrition, Dietetics Focus program is accredited by ACEND and is a graduate-level, competency-based program that integrates coursework and at least 1,200 hours of supervised experiential learning. Upon successful completion of the program, a verification statement is awarded that allows graduates to sit for the RDN exam. More information on ACEND accreditation standards for Graduate Programs can be found [here](#).



PRO TIP: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has a list of potential preceptors that students may access via the Academy website found [here](#).

Preceptors

A preceptor is a credentialed nutrition professional or an expert in a related field who provides instruction, training, and evaluation of students during their supervised experiential learning hours.

Examples of professionals that may serve as preceptors include—but are not limited to—registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN), licensed dietitians (LD), nutrition and diet technicians (NDTR), food service directors, nutrition educators, and social workers. Other health professionals with extensive nutrition experience may be considered in consultation with the Assistant Director, Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition / Director of Dietetics Focus.

It is the student's responsibility to locate Supervised Experiential Learning sites and preceptors in the geographic location in which they desire to complete the SEL. While the student is responsible for finding and securing their own SEL sites, the program will provide suggestions to support all students as they work to locate acceptable sites to achieve their SEL requirements. The program does not require students to move temporarily to accept a site. The program does not require travel at any point to Maine for SEL sites.

In all cases the student will be supported to the extent possible by the Assistant Director, Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics Clinical Coordinator to identify potential SEL sites and negotiate successful affiliation agreements with these sites, however it remains the student's responsibility to locate appropriate sites. Being organized and clear when reaching out to preceptors is imperative to successfully securing sites.

Students are responsible for finding and securing their own SEL sites and preceptors. It is important that the students are very clear on the specifics of the MSAN Dietetics Focus program and what they need from the preceptors. If an approved SEL site becomes unavailable for any reason, UNE will work with students to find an acceptable alternative site.



PRO TIP: You will need to search for and prepare a list of multiple types of SEL sites to meet the competencies over the course of the program. Although prospective students should prepare a list of potential preceptors, they should not reach out to those potential preceptors until after having a meeting with the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator.

There are certain geographical areas that are more saturated with dietetic internships, and finding SEL in these locations can take perseverance--you may need to consider dividing up your hours between a few facilities. You might also offer to complete your SEL hours during weekends or evenings if the facility can accommodate this option.

Scheduling

Once students have found potential SEL sites and preceptors, they need to plan out their expected weekly schedule for the first year SEL hours. The amount and type of SEL aligns with the student's plan of study (see sample below) and coordinates with the preceptor's schedule. The plan of study will be completed prior to starting the program.



PRO TIP: Preceptors are working professionals that offer their time and expertise to work with prospective students. Being respectful, organized, and clear when reaching out to potential preceptors is imperative to successfully securing sites.

Master of Science in Applied Nutrition, Dietetics Focus

First Year Plan of Study to guide selection of SEL for students seeking admission

Year 1 Spring		Year 1 Summer		Year 1 Fall	
Didactic Courses					
Spring A	Spring B	Summer A	Summer B	Fall A	Fall B
APN 600 (3 Cr) Trends & Issues in Nutrition	APN 604 (1 Cr) Nutrition Across the Lifespan	APN 610 (3 Cr) Research Methods	APN 615 (3 Cr) Nutrition & Metabolism	APN 620 (3 Cr) Nutrition Education & Health Behav Chg	APN 734 (3 Cr) Nutrition Leadership, Community, and Wellness
Lab Courses & Required SEL					
APN 602 (1 Cr) Trends & Issues in Nutrition Lab	APN 606 (1 Cr) Nutrition Across the Lifespan Lab	APN 611 (1 Cr) Research Methods Lab	APN 616 (1 Cr) Nutrition & Metabolism Lab	APN 621 (1 Cr) Nutrition Education & Health Behav Chg Lab	APN 736 (1 Cr) Nutrition Leadership, Community, and Wellness Lab
SEL	Required Hours				
Clinical	20 hours*	30 hours	30 hours	90 hours	
Comm.	20 hours*	30 hours	30 hours		90 hours**
F.S.M.	20 hours	30 hours	30 hours		
Total	510 SEL Hours				

**Students do not need to find these hours, UNE provides the hours



SPEAK TO AN ENROLLMENT COUNSELOR TODAY!

Our enrollment counselors are available to discuss the best path for your education. Contact us today!

(855) 751-4447

nutrition@une.edu

online.une.edu/applied-nutrition

