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Introduction

The College of Dietitians of Ontario was founded in 1991 through the [Dietetics Act, 1991](#), and became a regulatory body on December 31, 1993. Its mandate under the [Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991](#), and the [Dietetics Act, 1991](#), is to regulate the profession of dietitians in Ontario in the interest of the public and public protection. An essential part of that public protection mandate is to ensure that only those individuals who are qualified become registered with the College and use the title of dietitian in Ontario.

The registration requirements for the College include academic and practical training requirements. This document was prepared to provide guidance to applicants who intend to meet the College's practical training requirement by organizing their own alternative to an accredited internship.

The College refers to this type of practical training as "independent" because the applicant takes the responsibility for organizing the practical training, arranging the placements and documenting the learning experiences and assessments for submission to the College.

The College is not an Educational Institution

It is important to remember that the College itself does not provide practical training. The College's role is to assess the practical training that an applicant has completed and to determine whether it meets the requirements set out in the [Registration Regulation](#). If an applicant chooses to meet the practical training requirement through this route, **then the applicant is responsible for planning and organizing all aspects of the practicum.**

The College is not in a position to be able to provide individual guidance to students who choose to attempt this route of entry. For this reason, all applicants who choose this route must have an advisory dietitian.

You MUST have an Advisory Dietitian

You must have an advisory dietitian to help you plan and organize your experiences, to help you interpret feedback in each rotation and to ensure that you develop a plan to address that feedback in future rotations. The role of the advisory dietitian is highly comparable to the role that an internship coordinator plays in an accredited internship, in terms of advising the student, advising supervisors, monitoring the progress of the student, and adjusting the program plan as required to address the student's identified learning needs. The advice and guidance you receive from your advisory dietitian will be critical to your success. For this reason, your advisory dietitian must have the following qualifications:

- Be a member in good standing with the College of Dietitians of Ontario or other Canadian dietetic regulatory body;
- Have been practicing for at least 5 years; and
- Have had previous experience with interns or practicum students.

I. Planning the Practicum

Competencies

In Canada, the standards used for the accreditation of dietetics education programs and for the development of the Canadian Dietetic Registration Examination are the [Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice, 2013](#) (ICDEP). These competencies are statements that outline the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and judgements necessary for the competent performance of entry-level dietitians. You and your advisory dietitian will plan and organize placements and activities that will enable you to develop and demonstrate all of the performance indicators in the ICDEP.

Independent Practicum Standards Worksheet

The Independent Practicum Standards are the standards that you will use to plan your practicum, and prepare your submission. They are the same standards that will be used by the Registration Committee to evaluate your practicum. The [Independent Practicum Standards Worksheet](#) outlines the standards that will be used to assess your practicum, the documents you must submit, and the criteria that will be used to evaluate those documents.

Be Careful not to Misrepresent Yourself

This route to becoming registered with the College is not well known. You will need to take care in how you introduce yourself when you approach potential supervisors. Many people misunderstand and assume that you are a student from a structured educational program that is sponsored or organized by the College. It is very important when you explain the Independent Practicum to potential supervisors and that you do not represent yourself as being a “student” from the College of Dietitians of Ontario. When explaining the purpose of the placement, you should indicate that you are “organizing practical training experiences in order to meet the registration requirements for the College of Dietitians of Ontario”.

Supervisors

You will be arranging a series of placements/practicum experiences. These placements must be supervised by Registered Dietitian who will give you guidance and feedback, and who will evaluate your performance.

The supervisor must:

- be a General Member of the College of Dietitians of Ontario or a member of another Canadian dietetic regulatory body (in good standing);
- not have been identified by the Quality Assurance Committee as needing remediation;
- not have any terms, conditions or limitations on their certificate of registration prohibiting them from practising dietetics in the area related to the placement;
- not have signed any voluntary undertakings preventing them from practising dietetics in the area related to the placement;
- be free from conflict of interest or bias;
- have recent (within the three years prior to the start of the supervised placement) practice in the area of practice covered by the placement, or provide evidence of continuing education within that area of practice satisfactory to a panel of the Registration Committee;

- notify the College if they terminate the placement for reasons of conduct or competence;
- Each supervisor must sign the [Declaration and Consent to Disclose Information Form](#) prior to beginning the placement; and
- receive a copy of this Independent Practicum Guide and CDO's [Guidelines for Supervising Learners](#).

Evaluation

The following documents must be used to track the attainment of competencies during your practicum placements:

1. [Competency Attestation Log Book](#)

Use the log book to keep track of the activities that you complete and the competencies that you address during each placement. Do not submit this document to the College with your application. It is meant to help you reflect on your learning activities when you are completing the placement evaluation at the end of each placement and writing your activity summary (see Submission requirements on page 8).

2. [Placement Evaluation Form](#)

Use this form at the end of each placement. You will use your log book to help you reflect on the activities that you have completed that support the achievement of the competencies. You will use this form to complete your self-assessment of your performance during the placement. Review your self-assessment with your supervisor and work together to complete a final version of the evaluation. The final version is sent to your advisory dietitian, who will review and determine if any changes to your program plan are required. A copy of the Placement Evaluation Form for each placement must be included with your final submission.

3. [Master List of Competencies](#)

This document must travel with you to each placement. Use it to track achievement of ICDEP. When you meet with the supervisor to do the final evaluation for each placement, review the [Placement Evaluation Form](#) to identify all competencies for which you have achieved the required rating of "C" (Competent). The first time you achieve a "C" rating for each competency, the supervisor should sign off on that competency in the Master List of Competencies. You must achieve a rating of "C" in all competencies by the end of your Independent Practicum.

Culminating Practical Experience (Summary Evaluation)

In addition to providing you with the opportunity to demonstrate competencies that have not yet been signed off, your last rotation in each area of practice (Nutrition Care, Population and Public Health, and Food Services Management) will also be used to evaluate your entry-level proficiency.

Much like the "staff relief" rotation in an accredited internship, the dietitian who supervises your final placement in each area of dietetic practice (Nutrition Care; Population and Public Health; and Food Services Management) will be asked to evaluate your overall competence compared to entry-level proficiency using the [Summary Evaluation Form](#). For the benefit of both student and supervisor, "Entry-Level" is defined on

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all of the evaluation forms. The Summary Evaluation Forms should be directly submitted to your advisory dietitian by the supervising dietitian.

If your supervisor does not feel that you have demonstrated entry-level proficiency (even though an RD may have signed off on all of the individual performance indicators for that area of practice), you must complete additional experiences until you have addressed the issues/deficiencies identified. The additional experiences can be with the same supervisor or with someone else.

Important Note: Although simulated activities are accepted for demonstration of individual performance indicators, they are not acceptable for demonstration of overall competence for completing the Summary Evaluation Form. The [Summary Evaluation Form](#) for each area of practice must be based on observations of your performance in real-life situations.

Practicum Length

It is not enough to simply “put in the time”. In the evidence worksheet, under standard 3, the minimum length for the practicum is listed as 1,250 hours, which works out to roughly 34 weeks based on a 37.5 hour work week.

Although the standards identify the minimum amount of time that an applicant may need to complete the practicum, you will need to spend as much time as it takes to demonstrate all of the competencies, and successfully demonstrate entry-level proficiency in all three areas of dietetic practice.

For many applicants, this will likely mean more than 1,250 hours.

II. Overview of Steps

The following are the steps and requirements that an applicant must follow in order to complete an Independent Practicum.

Step 1. Review this Guide along with the supporting documents and forms.

Step 2. Find an advisory dietitian. Make sure the advisory dietitian has a copy of this Guide as well as the supporting documents and forms.

Step 3. Evaluate the currency of your dietetic knowledge. Accredited internships require all applicants who graduated from their undergraduate program more than 3 years ago to complete upgrading before they can apply for internship. The amount of upgrading required is determined by the length of time since the applicant graduated from their undergraduate program.

If you graduated more than 3 years prior to beginning a practicum, the next step for you is to determine the currency of your knowledge. You may consider a variety of activities to improve the currency of your knowledge, including self-study, workshops, online courses or webinars, or university-level courses in:

- therapeutic/clinical nutrition;
- population health/health promotion; and/or
- Food Services Management/Quantity Food Production and Management.

Step 4. Work with your advisory dietitian to plan your experiences. Your final submission to the College must include a report from your advisory dietitian that outlines your program plan and must include:

- The process used by the advisory dietitian to determine your suitability to pursue practical training through this route;
- How placements were planned to ensure a logical progression of learning activities;
- A map showing which of the performance indicators and competencies were addressed by each learning activity; and
- How evaluation was planned and monitored.

Step 5. Ensure that your program plan includes evaluation. This guide prescribes the format for documenting the following:

- achievement of the [Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice \(ICDEP\)](#) (see [Master List of Competencies](#));
- evaluation of performance at the end of each placement (see [Placement Evaluation Form](#)); and
- overall entry-level proficiency in each area of practice (See [Summary Evaluation Forms](#)).

In addition to these evaluation documents, however, your program plan must include a discussion of how you will:

- receive ongoing feedback about your strengths and areas for further development during the rotation (e.g. at the end of each day, at the end of each week);
- adjust your program plan to address any issues that may be identified during your placements; and
- ensure that each new supervisor receives information about the feedback from your previous placements, to help set learning goals and identify activities that will address areas for improvement.

Step 6. Organize placements. This can take much more time that you think. You need to find Registered Dietitians who meet the qualifications described on page 3, who are willing to supervise your experiences, and who will:

1. attest to your competence by signing off on the various entry level competencies.
2. review and sign descriptions of the activities that you have completed under their supervision.

Be prepared for significant challenges:

- Even if an RD has agreed to supervise a placement for you, their employer may refuse to allow the placement for a variety of reasons.
- You may be asked to sign an education agreement or learning contract. These contracts can take several weeks to draft and get approved.

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- Many organizations require proof of professional liability insurance and workplace safety and insurance board (WSIB) coverage. Some organizations will refuse to accommodate you on this basis.
 - You may be able to purchase liability insurance and accident insurance through Dietitians of Canada (www.dietitians.ca) or another independent insurance provider.
 - WSIB is not available to you as an independent learner who is not enrolled in a school or internship program.
- The *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*, made several changes to Ontario's [Employment Standards Act, 2000](#), that may impact employers who take on dietetic learners. Students completing independent practicums should consult with their placement supervisors and seek legal advice as necessary to ensure that they are complying with these and all other employment standards requirements.

Step 7. Prepare for placements. Prior to each placement, you should have a meeting with the supervisor to discuss your learning goals and review the documents used for evaluation. If you have not done so already, you should ensure that the supervisor has received and reviewed the following:

1. Independent Practicum Guide.
2. CDO's [Guidelines for Supervising Learners](#).
3. [Placement Evaluation Form](#) from each of your previous placements.
4. The [Declaration and Consent to Disclose Information Form](#).
5. A list of your learning goals for the placement. This includes the performance indicators as well as areas of weakness identified in a previous evaluation.

This will help the supervisor to plan your experiences and projects. It also provides the opportunity for the supervisor to give you feedback about whether your learning goals are achievable in their specific work setting. There should be no surprises for the supervisor at the end of the placement regarding what performance indicators and activities they are being asked to evaluate.

Step 8. Complete your placements. During your placement, keep records of the activities you complete in your [Log Book](#). The Log Book will help you to complete the Activity Summary (see details on page 9) and your self-assessment, which will form the basis for the discussion with your supervisor to complete your final [Placement Evaluation Form](#).

When the placement is finished ensure that you book time to meet with the supervisor to review your self-assessment, draft the final Placement Evaluation, and sign the Master List of Competencies where appropriate. Ensure you also schedule time to meet with your supervisor so that they can sign off on your Activity Summary for the placement. You should ensure that you complete the Activity Summary as soon as possible after the placement. It can be difficult for a supervisor to provide an honest, objective evaluation of your performance if too much time has passed before they receive documents to review and sign. The supervisor will only sign off on a summary if they agree that the description of the activity is accurate.

Step 9. Prepare your submission for the College and submit it along with your [application form](#) and [fees](#). Your complete submission must include the following documents (see details below):

1. Application Form
2. Master List of Placements
3. Placement Evaluation Form from Each Placement
4. Master List of Competencies
5. Activity Summary
6. Program Plan
7. Evaluation Plan (may be addressed as a sub-section of the program plan)
8. Summary Evaluation Forms from All Three Areas of Practice
9. Documentation of Currency of Dietetic Knowledge
10. Declaration and Consent to Disclose Information Form from each supervisor
11. Resume from your advisory dietitian and each supervisor

III. Submitting the Practicum Documents for Assessment

When you have completed the practicum, submit one original copy of the documents listed below for review by the College's Registration Committee. The documents must be originals and should not include any photocopied or electronic signatures.

Your submission should be organized so that the pages are numbered sequentially and there should be a table of contents using the headings in Appendix I. Double-sided printing is acceptable as long as, where required, each page is signed by the RD who supervised the activities/placement.

IMPORTANT: Original Documents must not be altered

If you discover an error on the page that has been signed by your advisor or a supervisor you should correct the error and print a new page for the advisor/supervisor to sign. Your submission will not be accepted if it appears that pages have been altered after the advisor/supervisor has signed it.

Submission Requirements

1. Application Form for Registration with the College.

- Download the [application form](#) and submit this along with all required documents to complete your application.
- Where the [application form](#) asks about practical training, check "Independent Practicum".
- Fees for assessment of an Independent Practicum include an application Fee of \$185.00 and an Academic Assessment Fee of \$425 (only for non-accredited academic programs) and a Practical Training Assessment Fee of \$425, payable to the College of Dietitians of Ontario. The preferred payment is credit card, but cheques are accepted. If paying by cheque, please make it payable to "The College of Dietitians of Ontario".

2. Master List of Placements ([Click here for sample](#))

Master List of Placements with the following information about each placement:

- Name of organization;
- Dates of the placement, and total hours completed during the placement;
- Area of dietetic practice covered in placement (e.g. population health, clinical, food services, etc.);
- Name of supervisors (and provincial regulatory body registration number); and
- Signature of supervisor.

3. Placement Evaluation Form ([Click to view](#))

Your submission must include a Placement Evaluation Form for each placement/rotation. To ensure that the document is not altered, each page of the placement evaluation form must be initialed by the supervisor.

4. Master List of Competencies ([Click to view](#))

Refer to page 4 of this document for details. You should submit one document with original signatures. Multiple copies will not be accepted.

5. Activity Summary ([Click here for Sample](#))

Prepare a summary of the activities that you completed at each placement. The summary must include a description of:

- The orientation to the organization or practice;
- The types of activities completed to achieve competencies;
- Any challenges you experienced during the placement; and
- A summary of the feedback received.

Each page of the summary must be signed and dated by the supervisor. Double-sided printing is acceptable, as long as each page has been signed by the supervisor who supervised the activity/placement.

6. Program Plan

You and your advisory dietitian must submit a joint report about your program plan (see details on pages 3 - 4 of this document). To ensure that the document is not altered, each page of the program plan must be signed by the advisory dietitian.

7. Evaluation Plan

Your program plan should include a sub-section with information about evaluation for your practicum (see details on pages 3-4 of this document). To ensure that the document is not altered, each page of the evaluation plan must be initialed by the advisory dietitian.

8. Completed Summary Evaluation Forms from all Three Areas of Practice ([Click to view](#))

Your submission is not considered complete without a [Summary Evaluation Form](#) that attests to your having demonstrated entry-level proficiency in the last placement for each of the three areas of practice (Nutrition Care; Population and Public Health; and Food Services Management).

Your advisory dietitian is responsible for liaising with the dietitian who supervised your final placement in each area of dietetic practice (a total of 3 Summary Evaluation Forms). The advisory dietitian must ensure that you have demonstrated entry-level proficiency and/or identify any additional learning needs. The Summary Evaluation Forms must be sent directly to the College by your Supervisor or provided to you by your supervisor in a sealed envelope to be included in your Independent Practicum submission to the College.

9. Documentation of the Currency of Your Dietetic Knowledge.

If you graduated from your undergraduate degree more than 3 years prior to your first practicum placement, you must submit a description of what you did to ensure that your dietetic knowledge was current. For example, did you complete upgrading courses or workshops; did you have a Registered Dietitian evaluate the currency of your knowledge?

10. Declaration and Consent to Disclose Information Form from Each Supervisor and Your Advisory Dietitian

The advisory dietitian and all supervisors must complete and sign the [Declaration and Consent to Disclose Information Form](#). Your submission will not be considered complete without a signed form from your advisory dietitian and each supervisor that appears on your master list of placements.

11. Resume for Your Advisor and Each of Your Supervisors

You must arrange for your advisor and each supervisor to provide a resume or summary of their qualifications. The advisor or supervisors may choose to provide you with a copy their resume to be included in your submission or they can choose to send it directly to the College.

The College will use this information in evaluating whether all individuals in your practicum were academically and experientially qualified (Standard 5 of the [Independent Practicum Standards](#)). Being registered with a Canadian provincial regulatory body ensures that the advisor/supervisor is academically qualified. The advisor/supervisor's resume will provide the evidence that they are experientially qualified.

Note: If the advisor/supervisor chooses to send their resume directly to the College, they must include a covering note indicating that they are providing their resume in support of an Independent Practicum submission and clearly indicate your name.

Appendix I

Example of an Independent Practicum Submission Table of Contents

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7. Master List of Placements Pg. 17
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9. Placements:
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 - 9.2. Placement 2 – Location (Population & Public Health)
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 - 9.2.2. Activity Summary Pg. 89-99
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 - 9.2.5. Supervisor Resume Pg. 102-106
 - 9.3. Placement 3 – Location (Foodservices)
 - 9.3.1. Placement Evaluation Form Pg. 107-118
 - 9.3.2. Activity Summary Pg. 119-136
 - 9.3.3. Consent to Disclose Information Pg. 137
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- 9.4. Placement 4 – Location (Population & Public Health)
 - 9.4.1. Letter from Applicant re: her performance for this rotation [Pg. 142-143](#)
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- 9.5. Placement 5 – Location (Clinical)
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- 9.6. Placement 6 – Location (Clinical)
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 - 9.7.3. Consent to Disclose Information [Pg. 286](#)
 - 9.7.4. Supervisor Resume [Pg. 287-291](#)

- 10. Workshop summaries and certificates [Pg. 292-302](#)

- 11. Summary Evaluation Forms
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