

Ryerson Graduate Nutrition Programs

Preceptor Guide

January 2017

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Thank you for precepting a Ryerson School of Nutrition student. Your contributions to students' education and training, to our dietetic programs, and to our profession are highly valued and appreciated. Your efforts help us ensure that future generations of dietitians have the best possible training.

School of Nutrition Graduate Programs

To learn more about the mission, vision and objectives of each graduate program please see the following links:

MHSc Nutrition Communication

<http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/nutrition/prospective/ProgramGoals/>

Professional Masters Diploma in Dietetics (PMDip):

<http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/nutrition/pmddietetics/>

Ryerson's School of Nutrition Graduate Programs' Policies and Procedures:

<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/graduate/nutrition/Documents/Practicum/Graduate%20Programs%20Practicum%20Policies%20and%20Procedures%20-%20%20Oct%2019%202015.pdf>

What is precepting (vs. mentoring)?

To precept is to teach or instruct someone else for the purpose of training her/him.¹ In the case of dietetic practical training, the preceptor instructs, observes, and assesses students as they demonstrate their competence with respect to the Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice (ICDEPs). Dietetic practical training occurs within a specified time period and uses standardized evaluation practices.

In contrast, a mentor is a more experienced person who enters into a relationship with a less experienced person to guide or advise her/him.¹ Mentoring takes many forms and may be: training-, discipline-, or activity-specific; time-limited; involve formal arrangements, instruction, observation, or assessment. The mentoring relationship may last for weeks, months, or years.

What is expected of Ryerson preceptors?

Ryerson preceptors are expected to plan learning activities that provide students with opportunities to meet the Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice (ICDEP). Preceptors take the time to teach and coach students to support knowledge and skill development. By regularly

¹Dietitians of Canada. Precepting and mentoring: Key practice points. Practice-based evidence in nutrition (PEN Pathway): 2007. Retrieved March 22, 2015 from <http://www.pennutrition.com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/KnowledgePathway.aspx?kpid=2981&pqcacatid=148&pqid=2922>

discussing their learning needs and providing timely feedback on performance, preceptors help students' hone their skills and deepen their understanding of dietetic practice.

How do I prepare for a Ryerson dietetic student?

About one month before a placement, the Ryerson student will email you to describe the specific learning goals s/he would like to achieve during the placement. You will also receive a brief biography that will help you get to know the student, how s/he learns best and how s/he likes to receive feedback. Based on this information, you can consider the opportunities in your organization and prepare a schedule for the placement. It is also the preceptor's responsibility to help the student prepare for their placement by sending them readings, case studies and/or assignments to complete prior to their first day. *See Appendix 1 for a sample schedule and work plan template.*

What should I include in a student orientation?

Orienting the student to your organization is crucial to making her/him feel welcome and sets the stage for success. Schedule 1-2 hours on the first day to discuss the placement schedule, align expectations, show them their workspace and introduce them to colleagues. This is time well spent. You can split up the orientation meeting throughout the student's first day, but you should meet and greet the student when they arrive to explain the activities of the day. This will ease anxiety and set the educational climate. *See Appendix 2 for a sample orientation schedule.*

How do I evaluate a Ryerson dietetic student?

Student performance should be evaluated informally throughout the placement in the form of feedback. Performance should also be formally evaluated at the midpoint and final stages of the placement.

The preceptor uses the same form for the **midpoint** and **final evaluation**. Halfway through the placement you should schedule a meeting with the student to review his/her progress and re-evaluate expectations of the placement. The student will document completed and in-progress activities and their self-ratings in their student logbook. It is the student's responsibility to share their logbook with you for review. If the student has not shared their logbook please request access from the student.

In preparation for the **midpoint evaluation** complete as much of the form as possible prior to meeting with the student. The form can be saved for you to return to at a later date, click the button at the end of the form that says: "send me a copy of my responses." You will then receive an email with a link to access the form. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the student's progress and to plan opportunities for the student to meet their learning goals and outstanding performance indicators.

The **final evaluation** of the student's performance should occur during the last week of the placement. The student will update their logbook at least **24 hours** prior to the final meeting. This will allow the preceptor time to review the student's documentation of activities/self-ratings, and prepare their final evaluation. The preceptor and student should then meet to review the preceptor's final evaluation. Once complete the preceptor will click submit for the practicum coordinator to review. The preceptor will receive a copy of their evaluation if requested on the form.

When will I receive the link to the evaluation form?

Each student evaluation form is tailored to the learning opportunities within the placement. The practicum coordinator will discuss the placement activities with you to develop the form. The form can be tailored further once the placement begins if additional learning opportunities present. The practicum coordinator will email you a link to the evaluation form once the placement has been confirmed.

To see a sample evaluation form based on a nutrition care placement see:
<https://goo.gl/forms/qKGrUuDiWx8YIcHX2>

How should I give students feedback on their progress?

It's important to provide feedback regularly and in a way that is most helpful for the student. This requires a discussion on how and when the student would prefer to receive feedback. Some students learn best when they receive feedback right after performing a task, others like to reflect on their performance and receive feedback later in the day or week. Schedule feedback meetings regularly to ensure you and the student are prepared.

Giving feedback to dietetic students may be the most challenging aspect of being a preceptor. Whether you avoid it all together or take a direct approach, the uncertainty of the student's reaction can make any seasoned preceptor sweat.

Joanna Holt, Registered Psychotherapist at Ryerson University has worked with numerous nutrition students and has recognized similar characteristics over the years. She noticed that some nutrition undergrads were lonely. The competitive nature of this field may cause students to isolate themselves for fear of losing a prized internship position. The constant drive for perfection, fear of failure, and lack of social support can create anxious students, who may not respond well to feedback.

Anxiety can present differently in students depending on their reaction to stress. Students may exhibit 3 different reactions when receiving feedback: Fight, Flight or Freeze. You may be familiar with the fight or flight response, where a student becomes defensive, loses his/her temper, or conversely, exhibits avoidance behaviour out of fear. Students can also freeze when receiving feedback. They may find it difficult to take in new information, their responses may be slowed or they may simply give up due to lack of self-efficacy. ²

Understanding the challenges a dietetic learner may face and their responses to receiving feedback can help when applying the feedback model presented here. These six steps of our proposed feedback model for navigating difficult conversations were formulated through discussions of preceptors' lived experiences.

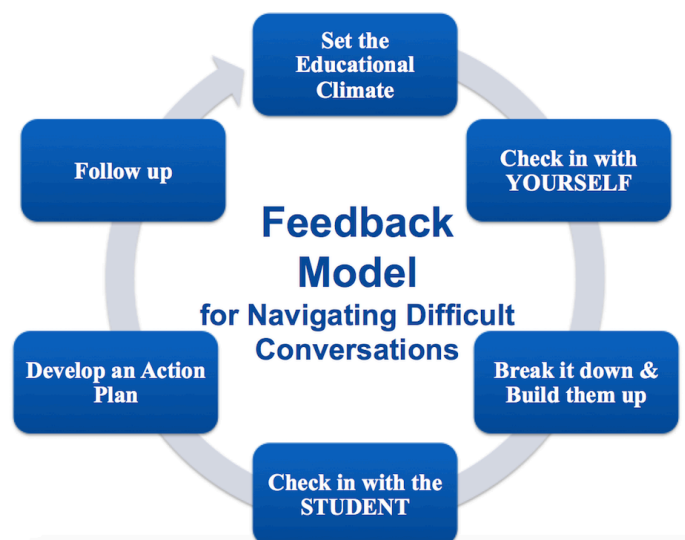
Feedback Model for Navigating Difficult Conversations

Set the educational climate by scheduling an orientation meeting with the student on their first day of placement to discuss: an introduction to the placement area, a day at a glance, the student's prior learning experiences, learning objectives, learning style and preference for receiving feedback. Agree on placement expectations and discuss any readings or assignments they completed in preparation for the placement.

By setting the educational climate you will start the placement with clear expectations. This conversation is a great reference if the student is not meeting expectations and you need to have a challenging chat during the placement.

Check in with YOURSELF before providing critical feedback to the student. How are you feeling? Is now a good time to provide feedback? If you are feeling frustrated or disappointed with the student this may not be a good time to chat. Once you have managed your own emotions, take a few deep breaths and reflect on the feedback you need to deliver. Preparing for the chat will help you to deliver clear feedback in a calm manner.

Break it down and build them up. Find a private, quiet space to meet with the student. Clearly explain feedback and give examples for each issue. Limit the feedback to focus on 2-3 main issues to prevent overwhelming the student. Explain why these issues are important by describing the impact on the student, the patient, the preceptor and the organization. It's important to also acknowledge what the student is doing well.



² References:

Lordly, D. (2007). Performance issues of dietetic interns: A dietetic educator's perspective. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 68(1), 36-40.
Scanlan, J.M. (1996). *Clinical teaching: The development of expertise*. Published doctoral dissertation, University of Manitoba, Manitoba, Canada

This will help them focus on what they need to improve.

Check in with the STUDENT, do they agree with the feedback? What do they need to do to be successful? Do they have feedback for you?

Develop an Action Plan. With the student's input, set specific, time limited goals through which to address any issues you have identified. Include any supports and resources the student will require. Encourage the student to write out the plan and ensure you both have a copy. Schedule a time to follow up with the student within 1-2 days after the feedback meeting.

Give this proposed model for delivering feedback a try the next time you have a challenging chat. Keep in mind that students have a preference for receiving feedback and it's up to you as their preceptor to adapt your teaching style to meet their needs. This will advance your skills as well as theirs.

Forms of Feedback and when to use them

Utilizing different forms of feedback will help preceptors to meet the needs of the dietetic learner. Each form of feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation, satisfies a different set of learner needs. Learners need **evaluation** to set expectations for the placement and to feel reassured that they are progressing in meeting the ICDEPs for entry level practice. They need **coaching** to accelerate their learning, to focus their efforts on developing specific skills, and to learn from experts in the field. And they need **appreciation** to reinforce their learning and build self-confidence in their ability to practice independently as an entry-level dietitian³.

Let's take a look at the 3 forms of feedback in action:

Evaluation: This form of feedback compares the student's performance with a standard set of competencies. Evaluation should be based on facts supported by examples. Personal opinions or comparisons such as "this student is not as good as my last student" should not be communicated to the student. For example: A preceptor is meeting with a student for their midpoint evaluation. They provide the student with feedback on their progress over the past 2 weeks. When discussing this feedback the preceptor provides specific examples of when the student did not meet expectations as compared to the ICDEPs. This feedback identifies areas the student needs to work on over the final 2 weeks of the placement. The student can then set goals based on this feedback.

Coaching: When a learner asks for more direction, they are asking for coaching. The focus of this form of feedback is to help the learner improve, whether it involves a skill, knowledge, or an attitude. For example: a preceptor meets with a student following a client interaction. The student missed asking a couple key questions and the preceptor wants to ensure the student is aware of this

³ References:

Stone, D. & Heen, S. (2014). *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. New York, NY: Penguin.
Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most* (10th ed.). New York: Penguin.

oversight. The preceptor starts the meeting by asking the student how they thought the interaction went. The student explains they feel uncertain about their performance and asks for direction on how they can improve. The preceptor provides the student with feedback and makes suggestions to help the student complete a more thorough assessment. The student then takes this feedback and applies the suggestions to their next client interaction.

Appreciation: This form of feedback can be given formally or informally to show gratitude to the learner. Appreciation conveys to the learner that you recognize their efforts and you are glad they are working with you. Appreciation is a strong motivator to learners and it acknowledges what they are doing well. With all the critical feedback learners receive it is very welcoming to hear praise for a job well done.

Preceptors are encouraged to use all forms of feedback when working with a dietetic learner. Each form provides the student with the communication they need to develop both professionally and personally.

How should I manage challenging student issues?

Our Practicum Coordinator is always available to discuss challenging student issues. Contact Megan by phone 416-979-5000 x7072 or email megan.cowan@ryerson.ca. If required, Megan will schedule an onsite meeting with the preceptor and student to discuss placement expectations and develop a remediation plan.

See the School of Nutrition Graduate Programs Practicum Policies and Procedures Manual: Policies 22 and 27: <http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/nutrition/pdfs/preceptors/practicum-policies-procedures.pdf>

Is there support available for Ryerson students who are facing challenges?

Yes. The Practicum Coordinator can connect students with support services. See: <http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/nutrition/Preceptors/student-resources.html>

How do I receive feedback on my skills as a preceptor?

At the end of each placement students complete a feedback form. The practicum coordinator at your request can discuss the information gathered from this form. To maintain student confidentiality, the preceptor may only request feedback after supervising at least 2 Ryerson students. Any information identifying the student who provided the feedback will not be disclosed.

How can I further develop my skills as a preceptor?

We are keen to provide events, resources, education, and training that adds value to your experience as a preceptor, including:

- **Education events:** You'll receive invitations in spring and fall to attend events designed to match your education and training needs. These are great opportunities to network and share your experiences with colleagues while learning something of interest. Past events have focused on: conflict resolution, knowledge translation, challenging conversations with dietetic students.
- **Open classroom education:** throughout the academic year professors in the MHSc Nutrition Communication program open their classrooms for preceptors to learn along side students in the program. Past events have focused on: media training, building your personal brand, creating a career in digital media, food styling and photography, and adapting your practice to meet AODA standards.
- **Newsletters:** To update you on the upcoming events, feature the work of outstanding preceptors, students, and graduates, and link you to useful resources.
- **RYECAST channel:** You will have exclusive access to educational and training videos created by Ryerson students to match your interests.

We've updated our website to provide information you'll find useful, such as:

- **Teaching resources:** Reading and writing research, universal teaching design
- **Events:** Info on future and past preceptor education events
- **Newsletter Archive:** Peruse past issues
- **Practicum Policy Manual and Forms:** Everything you need to precept our students
- **Preceptor Support, Training, and Recognition Program:**
 - How to apply for Associate Member, Yeates School of Graduate Studies status
 - Developing Preceptor Excellence Committee activities
 - Preceptor Awards
- **Resources for knowledge and skill development, including:**
 - **E-Tips for Practice Education:** Eight 20 minute modules to support precepting skills from UBC (used with permission)
 - **Teaching Tips:** 1 page summaries from Albert Einstein College of Medicine
 - **Teaching & Learning Styles Assessments:** Online precepting modules from University of Virginia Preceptor Development Program
 - **Teaching Skills for Community based Preceptors:** Downloadable PDF from UBC

See <http://www.ryerson.ca/nutrition/preceptors/>

Are there other ways I can contribute to the Dietetic Community of Practice @Ryerson?

Yes! We value your insights and expertise. We often seek preceptors who would like to:

- Be guest speakers on their area(s) of interest
- Create case studies for classroom use
- Participate in panel discussions on practice issues
- Participate in our interview process or join a Developing Preceptor Excellence committee

To participate contact Megan Cowan, Practicum Coordinator at megan.cowan@ryerson.ca

How does Ryerson recognize preceptors for their contributions?

- **Letters of recognition:** As a Ryerson preceptor you will receive a letter documenting your contribution to training dietetic graduate students in late January.
- **Preceptor awards:** Annual awards recognize excellence in precepting
- **Associate Member, Yeates School of Graduate Studies status**

See: <http://www.ryerson.ca/nutrition/preceptors/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Placement Schedule

The preceptor should schedule the first week and then encourage the learner to schedule the remaining weeks of their placement and share this with the preceptor.

Student Name: Jane Smith

Placement Dates: May 2nd to May 27th 2016

Preceptor Name: Mary Preceptor, RD

Week 1: Monday May 2, 2017			
Time	Activity	Lead	Location
9 – 10am	Orientation	Mary	Room 1
10 – 12pm	Observe diabetes 101 group	DEC RN and RD	Education Room
12 – 12:30	Lunch	With team	Boardroom
12:30 – 3:30pm	Observe individual counselling	Mary	Room 1
3:30 – 4pm	Feedback Meeting	Mary	Room 1
Tuesday May 3, 2017			
8 – 10am	Team Meeting	All team members	Boardroom
10 – 12pm	Individual counselling: choose 1 client to lead 24hr recall	Mary	Room 1
12 – 12:30pm	Lunch	With team	Boardroom
12:30 – 3:30pm	Project time	Independent	Room 2
3:30 – 4pm	Feedback Meeting	Mary	Room 1

Sample work plan to assist students in organizing project work attached.

Appendix 2: Sample Orientation Schedule

- 9:00 am Meet Preceptor at reception
Address: 123 Learning Ave, Toronto, ON
- 9:00 – 9:15 am Tour of organization and Introduction to staff
Show the student their workspace/where to store their coat etc.
- 9:15 – 10 am Meeting with Preceptor
- Brief review of preceptor’s role and typical daily schedule
 - Review student’s learning goals and placement expectations
 - Review the placement schedule/work plan
 - Discuss the student’s learning style and how they like to receive feedback

Resource: Setting the Stage for Success (University of British Columbia)

<http://dietetics.landfood.ubc.ca/preceptors/preceptor-resources/setting-the-stage-for-success/>