

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. Am I a good candidate for the Master of Science & Dietetic Internship (MS/DI) program?

### Answer:

- A. Have academic, work and volunteer experiences prepared you to contribute to the food and nutrition field?
- B. Are you interested in serving rural healthcare populations and have a desire to experience supervised practice in a rural Montana community?
- C. Are you interested in understanding how a sustainable food system is key knowledge for a dietetic professional?
- D. Can you articulate why you want to be an RDN?
- E. Do you have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale)? Applicants with post-baccalaureate experience must have a graduate GPA of at least 3.00.
- F. Then check out our program! Submit a personal statement that describes your fit for the Montana State University MS/DI. Your personal statement is 40% of your application score. The MDI leadership team and a committee of reviewers score based on scholastic achievement, work/volunteer experience, professional references, leadership abilities and program fit.

## 2. How does this MS/DI work?

**Answer:** Montana State University's Master of Science degree in Dietetic Systems Leadership includes one year of online learning that begins in May, immediately after selection. Graduate student interns remain in their own communities while completing 27 credits of online graduate courses in four semesters (Year 1: Summer, Fall; Year 2: Spring, Summer). We estimate that online coursework requires 20-30 hours each week to complete readings, assignments, independent projects, discussion, group projects, and some class meetings and synchronous class time. Upon successful completion of the first four semesters, maintaining a GPA of at least 3.0 and a "C" or better in each class, graduate student interns come to Montana for the second year of the program to complete supervised practice.

Interns arrive in Bozeman, Montana in the Fall of year two. After orientation, professional development, and sustainable food systems foundation weeks at MSU-Bozeman and surrounding areas, each intern will leave the Bozeman area to complete supervised practice rotations at one of seven assigned geographic regions. Locations include Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, Montana and Sheridan, Wyoming. Interns can indicate their top two location choices in the MS/MDI application and will be placed based on intern preferences and preceptor availability.

During supervised practice from August – May of the second year, interns will complete 12 credits of coursework including a weekly synchronous course in Dietetic Professionalism & Supervised Practice and complete over 1200 hours of supervised practice in food service management, community nutrition, clinical nutrition, and sustainable food systems dietetic practice.

After successful completion of the graduate coursework, supervised practice and all program requirements, graduate student interns will be awarded an M.S. in Dietetic Systems Leadership and a Verification Statement (VS) of completion to be eligible to take the Registration Dietitian Nutritionist Exam (RDN Exam).

**3. How many graduate student interns does this program accept?**

**Answer:** The Master of Science & Dietetic Internship (MS/DI) may accept 26 students. Applications are due in DICAS in early January for MSU Pre-select applicants and by February 15 for the national selection. Applicants must register online with D&D Digital to participate in national selection. Additionally, a \$55 application fee is due by the application deadline to the MDI program. For successful applicants, the MDI requires a \$1000 non-refundable deposit by early April to confirm your place in the cohort, and the MS Coordinator will communicate the next steps to complete your graduate school enrollment within a few days of acceptance. The first semester of graduate coursework will begin in the first session of the summer term in mid-May.

**4. May I do the Master of Science & Dietetic Internship program part-time?**

**Answer:** No. MSU's MS/DI program is designed as one year of online coursework for working professionals. Graduate students complete a second year of full-time supervised practice in Montana or Wyoming.

**5. May I change the sequence of the MS/DI rotations and/or classes?**

**Answer:** No, the classes are offered in a set sequence to support your learning. The MS is designed to complete remotely in exactly the order and cadence described in the curriculum posted on the [MS track](#) webpage

**6. May I just do the Dietetic Internship and not take the graduate classes?**

**Answer:** No, there are no DI-only slots currently.

**7. May I work while completing the MS/DI?**

**Answer:** Yes, in year one but no in year two. During the first year of online coursework, students may work. While we encourage work during the graduate program, you will be expected to successfully complete (C grade or better) four semesters of graduate coursework each with three semester-long courses or one or two 6-week summer courses. We estimate that online coursework requires 20-30 hours each week. Graduate student interns need to earn a "C" or better in each graduate course and maintain a 3.0 GPA each term and cumulatively.

Interns are advised to avoid employment during supervised practice in year two.

Supervised practice requires 35 hours per week on rotation with additional assignments and a weekly course meeting. Interns must meet all competencies at entry level for each rotation before being allowed to continue in the program.

**8. Is the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) required?**

**Answer:** No, GRE scores are not required, yet can be a helpful consideration point if your GPA is low. Official GRE scores should be sent to Montana State University, Campus Code 4488.

**9. What experiences and coursework should I expect to complete related to a Sustainable Food Systems focus?**

**Answer:** Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) is a **focus area** within the dietetic internship year. The Sustainable Food Systems foundation work and practicum follow the internship orientation at MSU-Bozeman. Interns complete the three-credit course, NUTR 560 - Food Systems Leadership for Nutrition Professionals, during program orientation and the SFS rotation. Interns work at Towne's Harvest Garden, an experiential learning laboratory for students at MSU. Other experiences include tours and field trips of local farms, food production facilities, local food banks and other community organizations. Interns will also lead interprofessional Culinary Medicine sessions with medical and nursing students, and research and teach peers about food system issues and how they relate to the dietetics profession.

**10. How much does this program cost?**

**Answer:** You can review [program costs](#) for resident and non-resident tuition & fees on the MDI web pages.

**11. Does the MS/DI have an open house?**

**Answer:** Yes! The program has a [2020 Virtual Open House](#) that you are encouraged to visit at your convenience.

**12. What is something you wish applicants understood or did differently when applying?**

**Answer:** Really research our program well. We have a unique program in that we use the whole state. We're not always in the same location. We are in Bozeman for a little while, but then you're off in a different city and have a wide variety of experiences. Understanding and embracing our adventure-filled internship, and if that's not a good match for you, be clear that this might not be a good fit. If you have flexibility and adaptability, and adventurous spirit, this program could be a great fit. Thoroughly research our program and what we have to offer and what you'll be asked to do.

**13. May I contact the program Director or Assistant Directors if I have a question?**

**Answer:** Certainly, but you are encouraged to navigate through the website to see if you can find the answer to the question on your own first. One of the major challenges working in the online environment is taking the time to slow down and read the information available first before you ask. You can reach the MDI Leadership at:

## Montana State University MS/DI FAQs

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You can also learn more about our program by following us online:

