

Basic Information on Supervised Practice Experiences (SPEs)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Coordinated Program?

In a Coordinated Program (CP), students complete Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) hours concurrently with the didactic classes (theory) portion of the program. The MS CP length is two years. This differs from a didactic program, where students seek a dietetic internship after earning a degree.

What is a Preceptor?

A preceptor is an RD/RDN or other related professional (such as a food service manager) who works with you to fulfill the objectives needed to obtain a verification statement upon graduation from the Coordinated Program. Preceptors supervise you in their workplaces to assist in the completion of Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) hours. The Clinical Coordinator assigns on-campus students to preceptors. Distance-online students secure their preceptors.

Can I work full-time while I'm in the Coordinated Program?

The CP is a full-time commitment. You will carry a full course load, in addition to SPE hours. We do not recommend working full-time during the program. The CP is available online; however, **one cannot complete it only in the evenings and on weekends**. Most SPE rotations occur on weekdays. *See the information below.*

Will I need a Background Check and Drug Screen? If I have a criminal history or test positive, what are the consequences?

Students accepted into the Coordinated Program in Dietetics must successfully pass a comprehensive background check and 10-panel drug screen before starting the program and beginning SPE rotations. Individual SPE sites/student-identified remote practice sites and preceptors are not under the authority of Eastern Michigan University and may have standards that do not permit students to complete Experiences at their site if a student has a criminal conviction on record. Depending on the nature of the conviction, it may be difficult for such students to complete all required Supervised Practice Experiences/student-identified remote SPE's at these sites. In addition, a student may find it challenging to secure an SPE following a positive drug screening test. *The recent increase in the legalization of marijuana does not change this requirement.*

Therefore, students with relevant criminal (even misdemeanor) or drug (including prescription) history are strongly encouraged to contact the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator at the email below, early in their application process. Unfortunately, students with a felony record will not be accepted into our program, as the vast majority of SPE sites/preceptors will not receive a student with a felony history.

Do I need liability insurance while I am a student in the EMU CP?

EMU Legal Affairs carries a separate insurance rider for Dietetics covering our students only while in SPE rotations for the program (not for their jobs, volunteering, etc.). It provides general liability and student medical professional liability insurance. Students do not need to purchase liability insurance while in the program unless they want coverage for their paying job.

How are the SPE rotations arranged if I am a Campus Student vs. a Distance-Online Student?

Campus Students: The EMU Clinical Coordinator will secure Supervised Practice Experience (SPE) sites/preceptors for you. You will be assigned and scheduled at sites each Fall and Winter semester.

The full day of didactic classes is on Friday each week of the Fall and Winter semesters. Supervised Practice Experience Courses (SPEs) are the days the student is at experience sites with RD/RDN preceptor(s), working on accomplishing specific competencies. For any SPE Course day, the 8 hours (plus lunch) will vary according to the preceptor's schedule. It may involve early mornings or evenings (the hours listed in course registration are just examples of a typical day). Some days may be longer than 8 hours and may involve driving distances of up to 90 minutes one way. We do our best to place students as close to home as possible. Be aware for **both** Winter semesters that we schedule students at SPE rotations during the Winter Break week. Here is a breakdown by semester:

- **First Fall:** Two weekdays/week of SPEs, for DTC 351/551. Students do not choose their days; the Clinical Coordinator schedules them. Two days SPE + Friday classes mean students typically have two weekdays "off."
- **First Winter:** An average of three weekdays/week of SPEs for DTC 575, with variations that may include four weekdays per week and some weeks without SPE. A varying SPE schedule plus Friday classes mean students may have no weekdays off for at least 2/3's of the semester.
- **First Summer:** (Extended – 10-15 weeks): Students have online didactic classes, no SPEs.
- **Second Fall:** Two or three weekdays/ week of SPEs, for DTC 535. Two or three days SPE plus Friday classes mean students usually have 1-2 weekdays "off." The three different rotation schedules (WIC, Private Practice, and Specialty) vary. Some rotations may be compressed into four days a week of SPEs. The preceptor's convenience will take precedence in building your schedule.
- **Second Winter:** Four days per week (Monday thru Thursday) of SPEs for DTC 671 and DTC 655, plus Friday classes. There are no weekdays "off." This is an intensive semester with significant homework. The program does not recommend employment during this semester.
- **In every semester**, the SPE instructors may require 1 or 2 additional days (on ANY weekday) that the whole class meets for orientations, mid-semester meetings/reviews, field trips, case study presentations, simulation activities, etc. Instructors give students advance notice of this.

Distance-Online Students: You are responsible for securing student-identified remote practice sites/preceptors for each Fall and Winter semester SPE. Go to the Course Catalog link [Directions for Securing Distance-Online Preceptors](#) for detailed information on this. That link is a priority for distance students to refer to.

Here is some brief info:

- Student-identified remote practice sites/preceptors must be secured by the time of application to the program. Applications missing this information will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. If you have questions or need assistance from the Clinical Coordinator, reach out in email early (at least four months) before the November - January application period in which you are applying. Online Preceptor Commitment Forms for First Year Fall/Winter, plus the Second Year Winter DTC 671 Clinical Experience, are due with the application by the January deadline.

- The remaining Second Year SPE sites/preceptors are secured by students after acceptance and start the program. These Second Year Fall Community Nutrition Experiences and Winter DTC 655 Foodservice Systems II Experience site/preceptor arrangements are due to the Dietetics Clinical Coordinator no later than February 15th in the first year of the program.
- Your schedule will vary. You will have the same courses and requirements as the Campus cohort. The difference is your didactic coursework is online, and you plan your SPE course rotation schedules directly with your preceptors each semester. Prepare to start during the Fall semester to coincide with the schedule of the live program and course orientations, plus possible virtual field trips. This typically takes 1-2 weeks at semester start; then rotations can begin. Winter rotations can start on the 3rd day of the semester start. Directions come from the program on how to schedule more specific to that semester/year. All SPE rotations must conclude by the “last day of classes” on the University academic calendar for that semester. See the EMU website for these dates. The On-Campus schedule (above) is a suggested guideline to plan for each semester.

To Summarize: Each semester, students are completing didactic coursework concurrently with supervised practice experiences. Students are in their supervised practice experience sites on average as follows:

First Year - Fall (average 16 hours per week) Winter (average 24 hours per week)

Second Year - Fall (average 16 - 24 hours per week) Winter (average of 32 hours per week)

These hours are in addition to a full load of classes of 12-15 credit hours. Supervised practice experience hours are generally during regular business hours (7:00 am - 7:00 pm); however, they are at the discretion of the preceptor and may vary. Students need to be flexible in their schedule to ensure the hours coincide with the preceptors' ability to supervise the student. Students are responsible for securing their transportation. If they own a car, they are responsible for auto insurance to cover them to and from SPE sites, related meetings and to attend all in-person classes if an on-campus student.

It is challenging to work full-time while completing the CP at EMU. If students desire employment, part-time evenings and weekends work best.

More Supervised Practice Experience Questions?

Contact: The Dietetics Clinical Coordinator at Dietetics_CCoordinator@emich.edu