

# **Dietetic Internship Program**

**A Handbook for Preceptors**

**DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE AND HUMAN NUTRITION**

**Jointly administered by:  
College of Family and Consumer Sciences  
College of Agriculture**

**Iowa State University**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Acknowledgements.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Role of the Preceptor .....	5
3. Preceptor Functions .....	8
4. Before You Start... Precepting Hints .....	14
5. Effective Precepting = Effective Teaching.....	16
6. Evaluation .....	20
7. Rotation Time-At-A-Glance Checklist.....	26

## ISU Dietetics Internship Handbook for Preceptors

Fall 01

Acknowledgments:

Material found in this handbook is adapted from four sources:

- 1) The ISU Community College Induction-Preceptoring Program Handbook created and edited by: John Van Ast, PhD, Janet Woldt, Jennifer Catron, and the ISU Department of Educational Leadership and Policies Studies. References and bibliography available upon request. 2000.
- 2) The Dietetics Educators Practice Group of the American Dietetic Association: Preceptor's Guide For Teaching Dietetic Internship Students. This guide is an adaptation of information presented at DEP Area Meetings and COE Workshops, Developing Clinical Preceptors. Bruce Rengers, Janice Gary, Kyle Kimbel, and Noreen Schvaneveldt developed the materials on which this guide is based. 1999
- 3) Preceptor's Guide For Teaching Dietetic Internship Students. Adapted and provided by the East Carolina University Dietetic Internship Program from the materials and information presented at DEP Area Meetings and ADA Workshop for "Developing Clinical Preceptors." Bruce Rengers, Janice Gary, Kyle Kimbel, Janet Sundberg and Noreen Schvaneveldt developed the materials on which this guide is based.
- 4) The Preceptor in Dietetics Education; Mardell A. Wilson, EdD, RD, 2002. The American Dietetic Association.

## 1. Introduction

*One important key to successful precepting is moving the intern from some level of dependence to a high level of independence.*

In the dietetics field, a preceptor is similar to a mentor. The origin of the term "mentor" dates to the time of Homer, specifically to *The Odyssey*. Homer describes his hero, Odysseus, preparing to set out on an epic voyage, but his son, Telemachus, must remain behind. Odysseus asks a trusted friend, Mentor, to guide and counsel Telemachus in his absence. From this ancient literary figure, mentor has come to mean *one who helps guide a protégé through a developmental process*, whether that process be the transition from childhood to adulthood or from intern to professional or from novice dietetics professional to expert dietetics professional. Because of the complexity of this task, mentors are considered to be teachers, counselors, friends, role models, and more. As a preceptor with the ISU dietetics internship program you will fulfill many of these different roles.

The American Dietetic Association has affirmed the three-pronged approach to training dietetics professionals: Didactic knowledge, supervised practice, and examination. The supervised practice component is crucial in preparing interns and fostering the skills they need to be entry-level practitioners.

### Supervised Practice

What constitutes supervised practice? This information is included here to help your awareness of the others working with the interns and their expectations and responsibilities.

Practice is what you (the professional) do on a day-to-day basis. The intent is to give interns the necessary skills so that they could, if necessary, do your job. They are not expected to perform your job at the same level as you, but should be able to do the job satisfactorily – **i.e., interns should be trained at the level of what you'd expect in an entry-level competence by the end of their supervised practice experience rotations.** It helps to focus on the concept that what you do on a day-to-day basis is what you are trying to train interns to do. Special projects are acceptable and often desirable, as long as they teach the skills and experiences that would be ordinarily used by you in your work.

In supervised practice precepting is similar to coaching and mentoring. At a recent preceptor workshop we discussed the differences between coaching and mentoring:

<b>Coaching is:</b>	<b>Mentoring is:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not always equal treatment, but fair</li> <li>• People development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeling</li> <li>• Global</li> <li>• Molding, shaping</li> <li>• People development</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Reflective/mirror</li> <li>• Empower</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching is NOT:</b>	<b>Mentoring is NOT:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dictating</li> <li>• Abdicating (i.e.: not direction)</li> <li>• One size fits all</li> <li>• Embarrassing/belittling</li> <li>• Tyrant</li> <li>• Doing someone else's work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One way</li> <li>• Criticizing</li> <li>• Mothering</li> <li>• Patronizing</li> <li>• Intimidating/manipulating</li> <li>• Exhibiting behavior or attitudes of "you'll just have to work through this" and not provide answers or assistance.</li> </ul>

In the 1999 Journal of The American Dietetic Association (96:614-617) Chambers et al. discussed the professional Novice-Expert Continuum. According to Mardell Wilson's EdD, Rd, presentation at The American Dietetic Association Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibits in October, 2001:

- The undergraduate dietetics intern fits the "novice" to "beginner" level of the continuum.
- The dietetics intern moves from "beginner" to "competent" during the internship.
- The dietetics professional becomes "proficient" and "expert" as their practice evolves.
- The following table describes the different learning and evaluation components of the continuum:

Table 1. Dietetics education information. ©2001, American Dietetic Association, "The Preceptor in Dietetics Education" used with permission.

	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Expert</b>
<b>What is learned?</b>	Facts and detail	Some synthesis	<b>Combined procedures</b>	Broader experiences and workplace norms	Focus and mastery
<b>Method of learning?</b>	Didactic	Problem-based	<b>Realistic settings and competency-based</b>	Informal, on the job	Self-directed
<b>Evaluation</b>	Objective, demos	Projects, simulations	<b>Portfolio work samples</b>	Job related	Internal standards

The preceptor's role is critical in preparing interns to function as dietitians. Your participation as a preceptor sustains the dietetics profession by providing a structured environment for the beginner (intern) to learn and develop skills. These skills will include technical dietetics skills as well as professional behavior skills. Your participation also indicates that you believe in investing a part of yourself into others.

*In several studies, a large portion of highly successful people in business have reported that mentors and preceptors played an important role in their career development.*

***Many of us remember the first job jitters related to:***

- Managing time, including striking an appropriate balance between personal and professional time.
- Motivating self, clients, employees, co-workers in general, but especially working with those who have special problems or needs, whether the needs are perceived or real.
- Managing nutrition education/instruction including: planning the instruction, finding resources and materials, evaluating client progress and coping with a wide variance of interest, ability and commitment.
- Experiencing feelings of isolation.
- Developing positive relationships with superiors, colleagues, clients, staff, and others.
- Coping with workload: number of patients/clients to see per day, teaching outside area of expertise, being assigned more "difficult" clients, and too many additional responsibilities.
- Self-confidence!

***Wouldn't you have appreciated someone to help you through those problems?***

## 2. Role of the Preceptor

Preceptors are special people. They are highly accomplished professionals, yet “résumé” expertise is not enough. They may have many years of “front-line” experience behind them, yet more than experience is required to be a successful preceptor. The qualities and responsibilities of a good preceptor include, but go beyond, those of an accomplished dietetics professional.

**Good preceptors provide interns with appropriate learning experiences, honest feedback and assessment, penalty-free advice, and communicate often with the ISU faculty and other preceptors to share ideas and experiences.** The preceptor plays a vital role in the development of the intern. It is the job of the preceptor to provide support and collegiality while helping the intern learn the “ropes” in the complex art and science of dietetics and professionalism. In a variety of ways, the preceptor offers the intern opportunities to share and learn from an experienced colleague. Important roles of the preceptor include: acting as a model, providing feedback and guidance for expected work, and assurance about common fears and problems of being a new professional.

The essence of precepting is the individual relationship between an experienced and expert professional, and an educated, but inexperienced intern. The preceptor may incorporate a variety of strategies and activities to help the intern grow and develop in professional competence, attitudes, and behaviors.

The preceptor's goal should be to help the intern develop and enhance:

- **Competence** - mastery of the field --knowledge, skills, and application.
- **Self-Confidence** - belief in one's ability to make good decisions, to be responsible, and to be in control.
- **Self-Direction** - the assurance and ability to take charge of one's personal, professional, and career development.
- **Professionalism** - to understand and assume the responsibilities and ethics of the dietetics profession.

### What Do Preceptors and Mentors Teach?

Interns learn competency skills from their preceptors and mentors. Competency is the ability to carry out a specific task within parameters of control.

Summarize your own image of what your professional role is AND what it should be. Practice those tasks that achieve that image. Separate the nice-to-know from the need-to-know tasks. **The need-to-know tasks take priority and MUST be taught to interns.** The nice-to-know, which can also contribute important skills, can be taught later after the intern has attained entry-level competence.

The following tables are adapted from Mardell Wilson's, EdD, RD, presentation at The American Dietetic Association Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibits in October, 2001, describing the differences between teachers, preceptors and mentors.

Table 2. Characteristics of Teachers, Preceptors and Mentors. ©2001, American Dietetic Association, "The Preceptor in Dietetics Education" used with permission.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Precepting</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Discipline-based	<b>Practice-based</b>	Person-based
<b>Goals</b>	Professional	<b>Professional</b>	Personal goals that are professional in nature
<b>Content</b>	Information/knowledge of the discipline	<b>Real world applications</b>	Adapting personal style and talent to the profession
<b>Context</b>	Prescribed academic setting	<b>Workplace</b>	Assorted- includes networking
<b>Relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractual</li> <li>• Time limits</li> <li>• One-to-one or One-to-many</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contractual</b></li> <li>• <b>Time limits</b></li> <li>• <b>One-to-one</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-contractual</li> <li>• Internship-based only</li> <li>• One-to-one</li> </ul>

Table 3. Focus of Teachers, Preceptors and Mentors. ©2001, American Dietetic Association, "The Preceptor in Dietetics Education" used with permission.

	<b>Teacher (ISU Faculty)</b>	<b>Preceptor (You!)</b>	<b>Mentor</b>
<b>Conceptual Focus</b>	Focus on discipline-based learning	<b>Focus</b> on practice-based learning	Focus on personal development
<b>Theory/Practice</b>	Teach basic subject matter concepts	<b>Demonstrate</b> the incorporation of theory into practice	Identify unwritten workplace policies and practices
<b>Learning Experiences</b>	Arrange useful learning experiences to help intern achieve objectives	<b>Suggest</b> useful learning experiences to help intern achieve learning objectives	Encourage intern to determine learning experiences to achieve objectives

What would you think if the following was published in the positions available section of the ADA journal? Would you apply?

### ***Preceptor Faculty Vacancy Announcement, Volunteer Position***

#### Description

Experienced dietetics professionals who have mastered their profession and are dedicated to promoting excellence in the profession are sought as preceptors for beginning interns and dietitians just starting careers. Preceptors must play several roles, including guide, role model, sponsor, counselor, coach, resource, colleague, shoulder to cry on, and heart to celebrate success.

#### Responsibilities

As a preceptor, you will be responsible for:

- Meeting regularly with your intern, both formally and informally.
- Guiding your intern through the daily operation of the program/facility.
- Arranging for your intern to visit different professionals as appropriate.
- Demonstrating skills and behaviors for your intern.
- Observing your intern's professional style and providing feedback.
- Being a role model in all aspects of professionalism.
- Developing your skills as a preceptor as well as a professional.
- Supporting and counseling your intern, providing perspective when needed.
- Listening (over and over and over).
- Modeling and providing time management techniques.

#### Qualifications

It takes a special person to be a good preceptor. Maturity, self-assurance, patience, and confidence in your knowledge and ability are prerequisites for this important undertaking. More specifically, a good preceptor is a teacher who:

- Is a skillful teacher.
- Is able to transmit effective professional strategies.
- Is a good listener.
- Can communicate openly with the intern.
- Is sensitive to the needs of the intern.
- Understands that dietitians/interns may be effective using a variety of styles and is careful not to be overly judgmental.
- Focuses on professional and learning outcomes, not curriculum content/outcomes.

#### Conditions of Employment:

Extra time, effort, and commitment are required. Increased contact with colleagues, professional stimulation and sense of accomplishment are likely. Tangible compensation--never enough; intangible rewards--priceless.

**Preceptors needed every year, apply now!**

### 3. Preceptor Functions

#### Enthusiasm

**Preceptors who are dynamic, energetic, and enthusiastic about their topic, stimulate intern interest and learning.** In the educational settings, preceptors with these characteristics are consistently rated highly by interns. Enthusiastic teachers use vocal inflection, humor and movement, and are generally characterized as having charisma. Not all of us fit that mold. But it is critical that preceptors communicate their enthusiasm. This is incredibly important. **Find ways to share your enthusiasm with your interns.** Tell interns why you like your job and why you enjoy being a dietitian. Let them know that you enjoy working with and supervising them—that you enjoy helping them acquire new knowledge. **Enthusiasm is infectious and influences interns dramatically.** It increases their appreciation for dietetics and keeps morale high as well as stimulates learning.

#### Informal Contact

Any concerns of new interns are valid subjects for frequent informal conferences. Consequently, the preceptor should make an effort to be both available and easily accessible to the intern, especially the first few weeks of the program. In many ways, interns perceive that the most important role of a preceptor is to provide adequate communication so intern concerns could be discussed. **REMEMBER** to set a time limit for any conference with the intern in advance!

#### Role Modeling

Interns must have role models for personal and professional behavior. In addition to helping the intern acquire skills and knowledge, the preceptor must model a commitment to professional growth and lifelong learning as well. What seems to confirm and enhance the preceptoring relationship is the intern's respect for the preceptor as a professional. Throughout the entire length of practice experience training, interns observe experienced staff members making decisions, interacting with patients, and communicating with others. These observations allow interns to learn through imitation.

Role modeling is part of effective precepting. Role modeling assists the intern in developing a sense of professional identity and competence, while the preceptor profits in the area of technical and psychological support, internal satisfaction, and increased respect from colleagues. Role modeling is much more than demonstration teaching by the preceptor. It is demonstrating realistic ways of solving problems; it is exhibiting energy, self-confidence, security and competency.

**Researchers suggest that the responsibilities of preceptors include: acting as a role model, being responsible for hands on training, being committed to helping the intern in his/her professional development, and to give honest 2:1 (*two positive attributes for each negative one*) feedback to the intern.**

The preceptor becomes a role model:

- In relations with colleagues, supervisors, staff, clients, and others.
- By demonstrating a commitment to the profession, and to individual growth and development.
- By demonstrating exemplary skills at all times.
- In collaborative endeavors with other professionals (collegial interaction and support).
- In work habits.
- By modeling a professional growth commitment; having a personal and professional development plan.
- By active involvement in professional activities and professional organizations.
- By expressing a positive set of values and beliefs concerning profession as a career.
- By being a facilitator of change and improvement.
- Having balance \*between a professional life and personal/family life. (\**Because--if one suffers, it negatively and directly effects the other.*)

### **Preceptor and Professional Practice Competence**

The preceptor must not only be knowledgeable but must also be professionally competent. Examples of specific skills include:

- A. objectively identifies and analyzes or assesses patient, management, or community nutrition problems
- B. effectively performs procedures
- C. implements interventions designed to address problems
- D. establishes rapport with patients or employees
- E. works effectively with health care team members

### **Preceptor Knowledge**

Preceptors who are knowledgeable, up-to-date in their specialty, demonstrate logical thinking for interns, and relate theory to practice are perceived to be excellent teachers. Interns love to relate theory to practice. Interns also appreciate being exposed to preceptors' knowledge. Preceptors may work in specialty areas that interns have only touched on in their education. Exposure to "tricks of the trade" and the unique skills of preceptors are especially beneficial.

### **Direct Assistance Provided by Preceptors**

#### **Assist the intern to develop professionally.**

- Set preceptor-intern goals.
- Develop a preceptor-intern action plan.
- Help the intern assess his/her professional skills, including skills that he/she already possesses.
- Give feedback on the intern's progress .
- Help the intern identify specific competencies which need improvement.

### **Assist with the intern's concerns and progress.**

- Respond to specific requests by the intern.
- Help the intern organize and manage responsibilities, time, resources, and energies.
- Help the intern develop and maintain a record-keeping system.
- Act as a confidant for the intern to express personal/professional concerns.

### **Assist by:**

- Modeling skillful professional service/outreach strategies.
- Identifying resource people within the profession in their geographic area.
- Informing the intern about professional development opportunities for professional involvement and networking.
- Encouraging and supporting self-direction and autonomy.
- Encouraging the interns' efforts to try their own ideas.

Some problems which might be addressed through direct assistance by the preceptor:

- Moral support, guidance, and feedback.
- Discipline and management, routines and scheduling.
- Motivational techniques.

### **Demonstration/Modeling**

If you are ever asked by an intern to demonstrate a skill or if you ever ask the intern to model a skill, the following procedure is recommended:

- A. Pre-Conference. The mentor and intern determine the goal of the demonstration/observation and what the intern should observe and record. Intern questions are discussed.
- B. Demonstration/Observation. The mentor or intern demonstrates the pre-established procedure at the scheduled time, while the intern or mentor observes.
- C. Post-Conference. The mentor and intern review and analyze what was accomplished by the demonstration, provide 2:1 feedback (*two positive attributes and one negative*), and make plans for
  - a) the intern to practice the observed skill(s), and/or
  - b) additional observations or demonstrations with incorporated concerns.

This method works very well in two areas where interns consistently request more feedback --

- 1) public presentations
- 2) nutrition education/instruction sessions.

### **Organization and Clarity**

Effective classroom and professional practice teaching is based on the ability to present information clearly and in an organized manner. Clear and organized presentation of ideas is consistently identified as a characteristic of the best teachers/preceptors.

About 80% of all job failure is related to unclear expectations. Remember that about 90% of all problems are "process" related and only about 5% are people related. Most times, simply stating your clear expectations concretely, as well as the objectives and goals for the intern/rotation will resolve any differences.

Once you have realistic expectations and objectives, then plan the specific learning experiences to allow the practice or skill where the intern actually does something. The intern then has better problem-solving skills and greater confidence.

### **Intern's Professional Development Plan**

One important key to successful precepting is moving the intern *from some level of dependence on the preceptor to a high level of self-dependence*. As a logical step in this process, the intern begins to plan, formally or informally, a professional development plan. Assisting the intern in developing a professional development plan is preparatory for the Professional Development Portfolio and is not a part of any assessment of the intern.

The preceptor can assist the intern in planning professional development by:

- Sharing views concerning first year success (survival) and possible career goals.
- Providing direct assistance, e.g., answering questions, suggesting strategies, identifying resources.
- Assisting the intern in setting short- and long-term professional goals and developing a workable action plan.
- Creating opportunities for the intern to become involved in professional activities, e.g., faculty activities, professional associations, special projects, advisory committees, and to "prove" him/herself as a professional.
- Providing information on the preceptor's own professional development plan as a model.
- Acting as a resource to help the intern obtain information such as professional advancement process and requirements.

A professional development plan also includes a commitment to *balance* personal and family commitments at all times.

### **Professional Behaviors of Preceptors**

These behaviors distinguish the differences between the best and worst preceptors. Practicing all of the positive traits and behaviors does not guarantee that all interns will succeed; remember, as learners, interns play a major role in their own achievements and success.

Some identified positive professional behaviors that reflect professional standards include:

## **Appropriate Behavior**

### **Self Evaluation Behavior**

- accepting responsibility for actions and outcomes of those actions.
- self-evaluation; acknowledging “I’m not perfect” and knowing one’s own limitations
- displaying self-confidence and demonstrating skills, attitudes and values to be developed by interns

### **Professional Behavior**

- showing respect for others, including individual differences among patients or employees; showing respect for interns and their work
- not appearing arrogant
- present a positive attitude and commitment toward the profession, Use appropriate professional language
- demonstrate professional ethics in regard to patient care and management decisions
- participating in lifelong learning; participating in local nutrition organizations and continuing education

### **Student Attitudes**

- showing enthusiasm and patience; view interns positively—emphasize what interns know and do correctly; remember interns are preparing for entry level competence/positions
- being accessible, create an atmosphere for open communication
- guiding interns, providing practice opportunities, and promoting problem-solving skills, allow interns to be creative while still meeting expectations and performing professionally; challenge interns to perform by giving them increasing responsibility; offering professional support and encouragement
- observing, giving feedback on, and evaluating intern performance; support interns with appropriate, frequent specific feedback in a timely fashion; use specifics with respect to praise or changes that need to occur

## **Worst Preceptor**

The worst teachers/preceptors were characterized by several negative personal attributes:

Arrogant  
Insensitive

Demearing  
Authoritarian

Inaccessible  
Insecure

## 4. Before You Start...Precepting Hints

1. Provide a clear orientation for the intern (to the facility, the unit, etc.).
2. Establish ground rules -- dress code, timing, reporting.
3. Define expectations -- clarify, clarify, clarify!
4. Be purposeful and focused.
5. Explain how the typical days for work occurs.
6. Explain what is expected of them as interns.
7. Solicit information from the interns:
  - a. List and explain previous experiences
  - b. Explain your expectations and goals
  - c. Acknowledge the role or importance of your tasks.

### Rewards & Pitfalls of Precepting

*Interns break the routine of day-to-day practice and challenge the preceptor.*

First and foremost, preceptors are dedicated professionals. Additionally, they are not only competent with commitment to be the best they can be, but they are willing to extend themselves, continually seeking professional growth and rejuvenation.

Research suggests that exemplary preceptors possess the following qualities:

- Effective preceptors are secure; they have power and expertise. They are people-oriented; they like and trust their interns.
- Successful preceptors take a personal interest in the careers of their interns, encourage their ideas, and help them gain confidence in becoming self-directed professionals.

### The Rewards

As demonstrated in the following quotes from Iowa State University's *Community College Induction Mentoring (CCIM)* project, mentors and mentees indicate that mentors gain as much or more from their participation as do the novices: (note: as you read these comments—you may substitute the word *preceptor* for *mentor* and the word *intern* for *mentee*)

“The mentor-mentee program acts as a catalyst for mentors to share their ideas and experiences with new faculty, enabling them to grow professionally and thus maximize their potential.”

“When mentors share their unique talents, there is a sense of electricity in the air. Mentor-mentee programs provide an environment for this excitement to occur. It brings faculty together to share and grow professionally.”

“I consider the mentor-mentee programs to be a most powerful effort initiated to upgrade the growth process and status of mentees as they avail themselves of the professional development opportunities offered.”

## **Benefits to Preceptors and Administrators of Providing Supervised Practice Experiences for Dietetic Interns**

1. Interns can perform certain tasks for you such as conduct in-services or quality improvement which you may have difficulty completing during your usual schedule.
2. Interns can help give better supervision of employees. They can act as an extension of the dietitian rather than as someone else to supervise.
3. Interns can help define what you do and how you do it. Interns' questions and your explanations often result in clearer ways of doing things.
4. Interns can solve problems creatively (e.g., assign interns to a particular problem that they will research and resolve.)
5. Interns increase your learning since they bring new knowledge and perspectives to your institution.
6. Interns can assist with journal clubs to help update staff on the latest information in dietetic practice.
7. Interns can help employee morale. Staff members selected to play a role in teaching interns will feel more important and valued.
8. Your role as a preceptor may be included in your CDR professional development portfolio.

## The Pitfalls

The potential pitfalls may be summarized into five general categories:

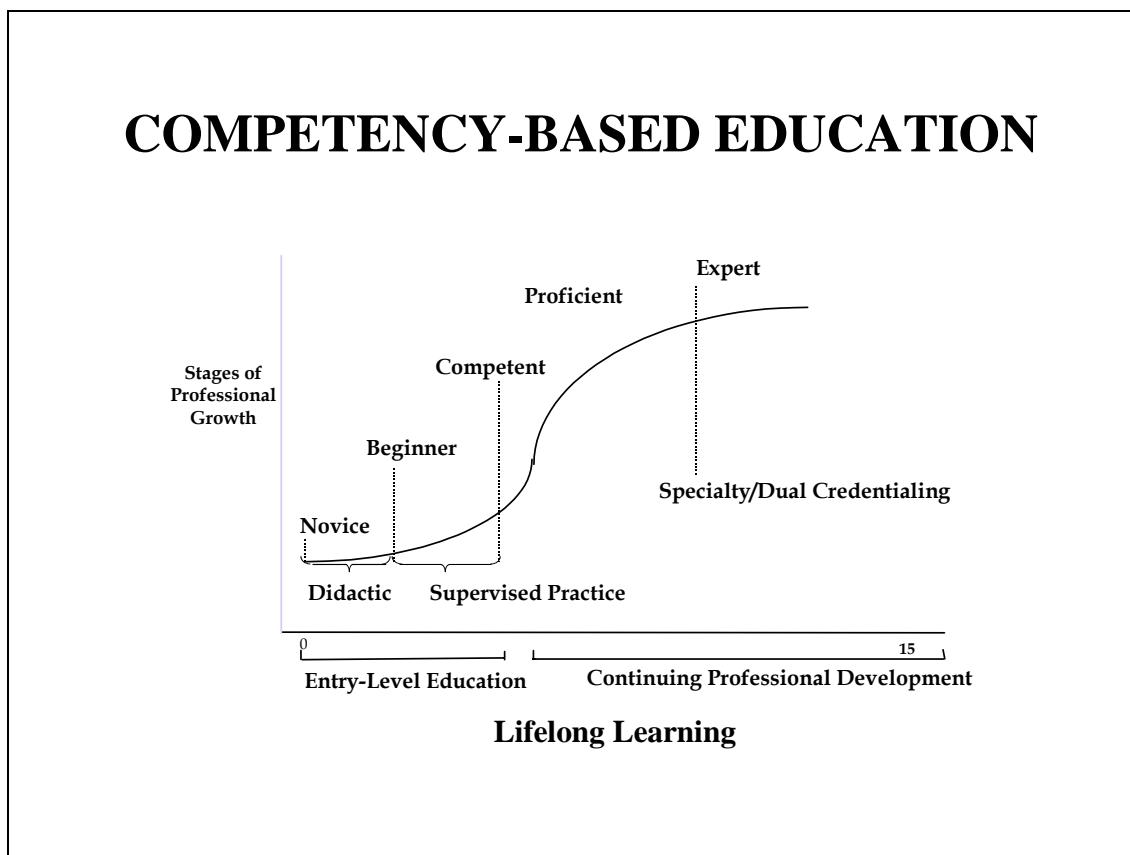
Category	Description
Preceptor is overextended.	<p>Experienced preceptors want to be effective managers of their personal and professional lives but, too often because of their professional commitment, they find themselves saying "yes" to too many projects. The "super professional" myth implies that we do all that is asked --and do it perfectly.</p> <p>Simply saying a professional "no" to too many requests is a beginning – a “win-win” for the preceptor AND the intern.</p>
Preceptor and intern proceed without clarification.	Establishment of clearly defined expectations between all parties, coupled with consistent feedback/communication between these groups, are absolute necessities.
Preceptor assumes too much responsibility.	Preceptors may become overly involved with the intern, fostering a relationship of dependency. It is paramount that mentors have a clearly defined concept of facilitating as compared to defending.
Preceptor under utilizes professional growth opportunities.	<p>In the psychological and developmental literature, it is widely recognized that novices do not learn simply by copying or modeling what experts do. Complex understandings and skills follow developmental patterns similar to other complex learning, research and outreach endeavors. To assist interns in their route from novice to expert requires that the preceptor facilitate the beginner's professional growth through a variety of methods and techniques.</p> <p>Preceptors must incorporate into their professional repertoire various skills, including collaborative learning, working with interns of various ages, conducting observations and data collections, problem solving, demonstrating empathy, and constructive criticism.</p> <p><i>Take care not to let your added responsibilities eclipse your own personal and professional growth and development. You can't give what you don't have.</i></p>
Time	This needs no explanation. We all are asked to do more with less of everything including time! Remember that as you practice your excellent time management skills, the intern is also learning and practicing this skill. You teach the intern to spend less time per task as they progress through the program. Remember, efficiency and effectiveness are not the same thing!

## 5. Effective Precepting = Effective Teaching

When preceptors teach, it is done in a work setting, not a classroom. While interns are taught knowledge and reasoning skills in school, it is in the practice setting that interns truly learn to apply their knowledge. The best thing about mentoring interns is that you get to teach what you actually do. Preceptor teaching is really education at its finest.

Teaching in work settings consists of helping interns learn how to collect data, interpret and synthesize findings, formulate alternative management plans and evaluate the effect of the action taken. ***In other words, you are helping interns develop analytical skills.*** Whenever possible try to create an environment in which interns are expected to solve problems and receive feedback for their efforts. Allow interns to make mistakes without having a fear of reprisal. Interns learn by making mistakes; they flourish best in an environment which supports their learning in a way that helps them synthesize and apply the enormous amount of textbook knowledge previously learned.

How do you know when/what the intern is learning? Throughout the internship the intern is on a very steep learning curve. The dietetics intern begins the internship program at the Beginner state and leaves the program at the Competent stage.



Gilmore CJ, O'Sullivan Maillet J, Mitchell BE (1997) Determining educational preparation based on job competencies of entry-level dietetics practitioners. JADA 97(3): 306-316

Try to avoid asking the close-ended question: "do you understand?" and the intern nods "yes". Use open-ended questions that require the intern to demonstrate the level of understanding, application and synthesis. For example, ask the intern to "think out loud"--justifying and clarifying their point of view, their explanation of a decision or process. You might phrase questions using Bloom's Taxonomy, which evaluates different levels of knowledge based on the questioning. The ISU faculty uses questioning based on Bloom's taxonomy. Interns frequently comment that they enjoy being "quizzed" or challenged because they use their abilities to answer/problem solve correctly as part of their self assessment.

When most of us were in college and in our internships we were taught by lectures and exams. Times have changed and post-secondary educators now use more interactive, cooperative learning to achieve the best learning level in interns.

**Here is information about the six ascending levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action/Assessment Verbs</b>	<b>Question example</b>
Knowledge	The recognition or recall of specific pieces of information. Knowledge can be measured through the ability to literally restate or identify information.	define, identify, label, list, match.	What is ___? Identify or name ____.
Comprehension	The ability to demonstrate understanding of information by presenting it in another format. Comprehension can be measured by using own words to capture the intent or substance of a concept	describe, generalize, paraphrase, summarize, estimate.	Can you describe ___? What are the steps of _____?
Application	Uses knowledge in a situational context. Application can be measured by the accuracy with which learned concepts, procedures, or other knowledge are applied to solve problems, generate methods to find answers, or dramatize courses of action	chart, determine, implement, prepare, solve, use, develop.	Demonstrate how you ____. Calculate ____. How did you determine ___?
Analysis	Deconstructs an idea or other knowledge to identify its individual components and the relationships of these components to each other and the whole. Analysis can be measured by the ability to accurately identify the individual components and to explain the contribution of each to the whole.	differentiate, distinguish, discriminate, compare, identify.	Contrast ___ with ____. How did you prioritize ___? How did you recognize ___?
Synthesis	Merges knowledge to create new knowledge. Synthesis can be measured by the ability of the learner to arrange knowledge into a unique, heretofore unknown, structure and to understand and demonstrate how and why these various elements work together.	create, design, plan, organize, generate, write.	Design a new ___? What would you anticipate ___?
Evaluation	The application of a criteria or set of standards to conclude a value judgment. Evaluation may be measured by the generation of the criteria regarding the value, usefulness, quality, effectiveness, or some other standard, and/or applying that criteria to an idea, or other knowledge.	appraise, critique, judge, weigh, evaluate, select.	In your opinion, ___? Justify why you ____.

**Here are some questions you might ask the intern based on the purpose of the questioning:**

Purpose of questioning	Example
<b>Assessing basic knowledge—open ended</b>	What are your reactions to this case? What aspects of this problem interested you the most? What are the most important variables?
<b>Diagnostic</b>	What is your analysis of the problem? What conclusions did you draw from these data? Why were you successful in the solving this problem?
<b>Information-seeking</b>	What was the patient's albumin? What was the cost per patient per day?
<b>Challenge</b>	Why is that lab value important to consider? What evidence do you have to support your conclusions?
<b>Action</b>	What needs to be done to achieve the nutritional outcomes you have envisioned for the client? Who needs to be included in the decisions related to the current CQI project?
<b>Questions on priorities</b>	Given the limited resources available to this community feeding center, who should be served first? Why? You have identified 3 nutritional concerns to be addressed by the healthcare team. How would you prioritize these concerns.
<b>Prediction</b>	How do you think the employees will react to this new policy? When would you expect to see the benefit of the nutrition intervention in the XXX lab value?
<b>Hypothetical</b>	If your facility uses a Foley catheter for n-g tube feedings, what should you do? If there is a severe blizzard in your community, how will you serve your patients and the community?
<b>Extension</b>	What are the implications of using the "closed system" of enteral tube feedings vs. the "open system" for the elderly patient population?
<b>Generalization</b>	Based on the financial information for this department, what are the opportunities and the threats? Based on what you know about this specific drug, what do you know about other drugs in this class?

## 6. Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of the learning process and should be viewed in a positive light. This is not always easy to do or comfortable to do but it must be done. Evaluation tells interns what they do correctly and helps them to modify performance when needed.

Clear expectations lead to improved outcomes and evaluations.

You may receive specific evaluation forms to complete when interns work with you. These forms should be completed and reviewed with the intern. The information on the form is a learning tool for the intern as well as a method for the ISU faculty to determine that the intern has achieved the desired state of competency. When you review the completed form with the intern, the intern is able to have a behavior to model when s/he is required to do evaluations on the job as well as able to learn and modify their own behaviors as needed.

If you do not receive a specific form to complete, (not all rotations do formal evaluations) it is perfectly appropriate for you to have an “exit interview” with the intern. Here you should discuss strengths and challenges you observed while working with the intern. Remember, the exit interview is a learning opportunity for the intern.

### Give Positive Feedback

Trust and support will be enhanced and anxiety reduced if the preceptor takes care to offer feedback in positive terms. The following rules are a guide for providing constructive 2:1 feedback:

- Focus feedback on teaching and learning.
- Focus feedback on the behavior rather than the person.
- Provide objective feedback on observation, and cite specific examples.
- Describe rather than judge.
- Point out specific causes and effects—the positive and negative consequences of one’s actions.
- Share ideas rather than give advice.
- Explore alternatives rather than give solutions.
- Give only the amount of feedback the receiver can use.
- Provide feedback valuable for the receiver rather than the giver.

Consider the following when assessing and evaluating the intern's:

### **Technical Skills**

- Specifically indicate how the intern has improved.
- Direct intern's attention to the cues.
- If demonstrating, leave part for the intern to do.
- Clarify why acceptable work is not perfect.
- Praise specific aspects rather than generalities.
- Direct intern's attention to relevant cues and make sure he/she can detect them.
- Prompt intern to help give answers to your questions.
- Determine if intern needs directions on what to do.
- Set clear (operationally defined expectations) criteria for performance.
- Ask questions during demonstrations to direct attention to various components.
- Describe contingencies to influence behavior.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

- Never belittle intern's personality or personal characteristics.
- Give intern the benefit of the doubt that he/she is not trying to get away with something.
- If you make a mistake with an intern, acknowledge the error.
- Ask for intern's evaluation of their own work before evaluating, to determine if intern can perceive errors.
- Avoid showing excessive anger or frustration. Get yourself under control. Then express the emotions verbally.
- Start with praise when making a correction.
- Act in a way consistent with professional values and ethics.
- Indicate what has been done correctly as well as any errors.
- Indicate how you had a similar difficulty.
- Can the intern do the required task?
- Encourage the intern to present alternatives and new ideas about procedures and processes including patient care.
- Attend to the intern's questions and concerns so that he/she feels respected.
- Show concern for an intern who is having trouble and appears anxious.

**In the internship we consider three types of evaluation:**

**PROCESS EVALUATION.** Process evaluation or feedback should be viewed as good two-way communication between the preceptor and interns. Preceptors need to be very specific in their reinforcement and suggestions for improvement. Interns may not "catch" or understand subtle suggestions or comments. Feedback that is provided by interns regarding the preceptor's performance is also beneficial. By learning interns' views, the preceptor can determine if interns truly understand what is required.

Evaluation should be based on reasonable and known performance criteria. Interns cannot read the preceptors' minds, nor do they have the same experienced perspective of what constitutes good dietetic practice. Preceptors need to listen to interns to evaluate their own communication skills. Interns may fail at performance because expectations were not clearly defined, assumptions were made without interns' knowledge of them, or because interns had not observed a previous example. Remember that what is obvious to you as a seasoned professional is often not obvious to an intern.

Evaluation should be continuous in everything interns do. Often it is done informally. Positive reinforcement can build interns' confidence and enthusiasm. It also helps to solidify good behaviors and practices in the early stages of rotation. Confronting poor performance as soon as possible after it occurs is also necessary. Delaying or ignoring evaluation of problem performance can lead interns to believe their work is okay. They won't know they should change unless someone tells them. Interns who are evaluated and corrected early on, generally, have fewer difficulties in performance later.

In making suggestions for improvements to interns, make sure the interns know which suggestions are recommendations and which ones are required. Criticism should be constructive and point out in very practical, specific terms the ways that performance can be improved.

**PRODUCT or FINAL EVALUATION.** You may find that this is the most difficult type of evaluation. Final evaluation at the end of a project or rotation can be used to build interns' confidence, to reinforce desirable performance, or to inform interns about behaviors that need to be changed in the future. It is also used by the program director to evaluate future experience needs of interns to successfully complete their program. Realistically, final evaluation may also be used to prevent unqualified interns from progressing beyond their skill and knowledge level. This is one of the hurdles that interns must successfully pass to qualify for writing the registration examination

Criteria for the final evaluation of performance should be clear and known to interns. Evaluation criteria should be given to interns at the beginning of a rotation so that they know what is expected. The results of interns' evaluations at the end of a rotation should NEVER come as a complete surprise. Continuous process evaluation should lead up to the final evaluation, and give interns a good idea of how they will be evaluated in the end. Interns should be evaluated in person by the preceptor and should be aware of any major comments that are made in a written evaluation before it leaves the preceptor. It is highly unethical for a preceptor to tell interns very little, or worse, that everything is fine, and then send a highly critical evaluation to the program director.

**Feedback Should:**

- be undertaken with the preceptor and intern working as allies, with common goals.
- be well-timed and expected.
- be based on first-hand data.
- be regulated in quantity and limited to behaviors that are remediable.
- be phrased in descriptive non-evaluative language.
- deal with specific performances, not generalizations.
- offer subjective data, labeled as such.
- deal with decisions and actions, rather than assumed intentions or interpretations.

The following table suggests ways to identify if you are "confronting" or "criticizing" the intern:

<b>Confronting</b>	<b>Criticizing</b>
This is based on observable behaviors and facts: Problem--focuses on the problem, with concrete, objective facts. Specific--identifies specifically what should occur or change starting with the most recent event. Change--focuses on the future and what can be changed, not on making the intern feel guilty, weak, or pessimistic; encourages intern to want to change. Relationship--focuses on improving performance, increasing commitment, and building a positive work relationship.	This is based on feelings and perceptions:  Person--focuses on the person and her attitude or traits. General--uses general statements that may magnify the problem by using words like never, always, continually and so on. Blame--establishes blame, making the intern feel guilty and focuses on the past. Self--centers on the needs of the preceptor and sometimes involves venting own anger or frustration.

## CRITERIA FOR FEEDBACK

### Examples

*Purpose: to help the intern consider changing behavior by providing information about how s/he affects others.*

1. DESCRIBE the intern's behavior RATHER THAN JUDGE the intern.
  - "I saw you using the elevator. Remember to take the stairs when possible to keep the elevators uncongested."
  - **Not**, "Don't be so lazy by taking the elevator".
2. PROVIDE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK, NOT GENERAL.
  - "You need to wear a hairnet when you are in the kitchen."
  - **Not** "You're not prepared to work with your hair that way".
3. PROVIDE CONCERN FOR the NEEDS OF both YOURSELF AND the INTERN.
  - "I NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM THIS SITUATION—I'M FEELING REALLY STRESSED RIGHT NOW. Please meet me in 30 minutes in my office and we will discuss the language you used with the cook."
  - **Not**, "I don't have time for this nonsense. Don't be rude to the cook any more!"
4. DIRECT FEEDBACK TO SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR which the INTERN CAN actually CHANGE.
  - "The last time we met to evaluate your progress, I felt uncomfortable when you interrupted me and stood up and leaned toward me. Today when I review your progress, I will appreciate your staying seated and not interrupting. You will be given time to tell me things you believe I do not know."
5. The INTERN SOLICITS FEEDBACK.
  - This is evidenced by the intern asking YOU how a specific situation or event or behavior was accomplished. This is an ideal situation—but not usually what occurs.
6. TIME your FEEDBACK APPROPRIATELY.
  - It should be as immediate as possible so that clarity is not lost.
7. CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING with the Intern TO ENSURE CLEAR COMMUNICATION.
  - "I want to check that we have both arrived at the same conclusions about how you will fulfill this competency. Please reiterate for me the steps you will take to complete this objective."

### **How to deal with difficult interns:**

Although the ISU faculty screen and select the interns carefully, match them cautiously with each other and with preceptors, and select only the very best, we do occasionally have a difficult intern. Please be aware that we do have a policy in place for “creepy behavior”. This policy is very similar to those found in the workplace. Please respond to the difficult intern much the same as you respond to a difficult employee. If there are specific behaviors you won’t tolerate from your employees and staff, you should not tolerate them from the interns. Include the ISU faculty as necessary as you work with the difficult intern, we must have documentation at all levels if we are expected to take any action. Sometimes the action will include simply placing the intern in another location---perhaps there is a personality conflict. Other times the action will include terminating the intern’s participation in the program entirely. While this is unfortunate and no one leaves the situation with a smile on, we have taken this step when necessary in the past.

## 7. Rotation Time-At-A-Glance Checklist

At the beginning:

- Meet, welcome your intern
- Develop collegial relationship
- Communicate with Supervisor
- Informal Meetings
- Weekly Conference
- "Socializing" intern
- Preceptor-intern action plan
- Observation and feedback
- Preceptor-Intern Assessment Forms
- Celebrate any successes you can find!

Then---

- Weekly conference
- Observation and feedback
- Informal discussions
- Share resources
- Communicate with supervisor
- Preceptor-Intern Assessment Forms
- Celebrate any successes you can find!

Then:

- Weekly conference
- Observation and feedback
- Professional development opportunities
- Communicate with supervisor
- Preceptor-Intern Assessment Forms
- Celebrate any successes you can find!

Then:

- Weekly conference
- Informal communications
- Observation and feedback
- Communicate with supervisor
- Preceptor-Intern Assessment Forms
- Bring Closure to rotation
- Celebrate any successes you can find!

Then:

- \_\_\_\_ Weekly Conference
- \_\_\_\_ Review time
- \_\_\_\_ Celebrate
- \_\_\_\_ Informal contact
- \_\_\_\_ Communicate with supervisor
- \_\_\_\_ Preceptor-Intern Assessment Forms
- \_\_\_\_ Celebrate any successes you can find!

**Celebrate successes (including survival!!)**

End: Review the rotation's Success/Assessment forms:

- Discuss highlights
- Evaluate growth experience
- Review experiences and evaluate current success of program with mentor:
- identify any modifications
- Mentee communicate with department chair
- Review preceptor-intern action plan

Bring closure to rotation

**Celebrate! No, the light at the end of the tunnel was not a train. It was the lights of the Christmas tree! (or 4<sup>th</sup> July fireworks!)**

# Preceptor-Intern Action Plan: Goals

Preceptor: \_\_\_\_\_

Intern: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## Three Priority Goals For The Rotation:

I.

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II.

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III.

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The preceptor-intern action plan document is designed to be a collaborative guide for preceptors and interns as they conjointly plan their activities for the rotation. Typically, the action plan serves three function:

1. Clarifies the *roles* and *responsibilities* of the preceptor and the intern.
2. Provides a *focus* and *framework* for preceptor and intern teamwork.
3. Becomes an *informative resource* when shared with other preceptor-intern team.

# Rotation Achievement Report

Intern Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preceptor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preceptor Report for the Month of: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I met with my intern.      \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    \_\_\_ formally \_\_\_ informally \_\_\_ # of times  
    General topics/concerns discussed:
  
2. I included my intern in a function/committee/meeting, etc... that they had not encountered before.      \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    Please describe that "event."
  
3. I demonstrated (or let my intern observe) a lesson.      \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    What teaching skills/techniques were demonstrated? What other term besides lesson? What do RDs do? Teaching is appropriate part of the time but not all...
  
4. I observed my intern's **teaching** and provided feedback to them.  
    \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    \_\_\_ formally \_\_\_ informally  
    What skill/techniques did they use?
  
5. Do you feel that you are being a positive role model for your intern?      \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    List examples:
  
6. Did the need arise to support or counsel your intern?      \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    Give a short description of the situation.
  
7. Did your intern meet with you to set goals and develop their own development plan?  
    \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
    Are they progressing in this area?    \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no