



Community Health and Nutrition Graduate Program Handbook  
2025-2026

A Supplement to the TN Tech Student Handbook and the TN Tech College of Graduate Studies  
Handbook

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## Preface

The faculty and staff of the School of Human Ecology, Community Health and Nutrition graduate program welcomes you. We are pleased that you have selected this program to pursue your professional education and training.

This handbook was developed to familiarize you with the program policies and procedures, which you are required to follow while you are a student enrolled in the program. The program handbook is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather, to be used as a supplement to the [Tennessee Tech University Student Handbook](#) and the [Tennessee Tech University College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

All the policies and procedures apply to all students; however, this handbook delineates specific interpretations as they apply to students enrolled in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program. It outlines accepted policy, based on the program's compliance to the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and provides the framework within which the Program Director, Experiential Learning Coordinator, University faculty and staff, and students can work together effectively.

It is important that you read and become knowledgeable about the information presented in both this handbook and the Tennessee Tech University College of Graduate Studies Student Catalog. It is also important that you retain and use both handbooks as a basic reference while you are enrolled in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program handbook is also available on our website: [Community Health and Nutrition](#)

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program has been granted full accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (A.N.D.), ([ACEND@eatright.org](mailto:ACEND@eatright.org)), phone (1-800-877-1600 or 1-800-877-1600 x5400), or mail (120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2190, Chicago, IL 60606-6995).  
<https://www.eatrightpro.org/>

## **Program Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

### **Mission:**

The Community Health and Nutrition Graduate Program seeks to prepare competent nutrition professionals through an integrated and student-focused curriculum to practice as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with advanced skills in rural community health.

Goal 1: Program graduates will be able to deliver high quality nutrition care in a variety of settings as entry-level Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN).

### **Objectives:**

- At least 80% of students complete program requirements within 3.3 years (150% of program length). (RE 2.1.c.1.a)
- Of graduates who seek employment, at least 80% are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation. (RE 2.1.c.1.b)
- At least 80% of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion. (RE 2.1.c.1.c.2)
- The program's one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80%. (RE 2.1.c.1.c.2)
- At least 80% of program graduates who respond to exit surveys will rate the quality of the Community Health and Nutrition Graduate Program as Good to Excellent. (RE 2.1.c.1.d)
- At least 80% of employers who respond to employer satisfaction surveys will rate the preparation of graduates as Good to Excellent. (RE 2.1.c.d)

Goal 2: Program graduates will be prepared for careers in nutrition and dietetics and will be equipped to uniquely address the health and nutrition needs of rural communities.

### **Objectives:**

- At least 80% of recent graduates will indicate that they feel more than adequately or very well prepared to address the health and nutrition needs of rural communities.

## **Competency Based Education**

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program is a competency-based education program. The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) specifies that in competency-based education "the focus is on defining and measuring progress toward reaching the required competencies (the described knowledge, skill, judgment, and attributes) needed to perform professionally-related functions." Rather than offer traditional time-based learning and internship hours, this program focuses on student mastery of competencies and performance indicators outlined by ACEND.

## **Graduate Student Expectations**

To facilitate learning and achieve the mission of the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program, students should follow all policies and procedures found within this handbook. Failure to follow policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action including termination from the program. Disciplinary actions are outlined later in this document.

Graduate students are expected to:

1. Be familiar with all policies and procedures found within this handbook.
2. Be prepared for each supervised experiential learning placement by examining the practicum syllabus and attending and/or completing mandatory orientations.
3. Be punctual and communicative throughout the supervised experiential learning.
4. Behave in a manner consistent with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Code of Ethics.
5. Represent the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program in an appropriate manner and appearance when attending supervised experiential learning, volunteer activities, conferences, on-campus days, etc.
6. Maintain confidentiality of all information.
7. Communicate effectively with preceptors throughout each supervised experiential learning placement.
8. Inform preceptors and the Experiential Learning Coordinator of any change in their schedule in a timely manner and accept program changes that may arise.
9. Maintain a positive and hardworking attitude.
10. Submit all orientation materials and other documents required for experiential learning on the date specified by the Experiential Learning Coordinator. Failure to do so may alter the ability of the student to be placed in certain supervised experiential learning sites.

## **Admission Requirements**

Per TN Tech's College of Graduate Studies, [admission to the College of Graduate Studies](#) is open to anyone holding a bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited college or university. A foreign degree must be equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree and must be accredited by its regional or national accreditation agency or Ministry of Higher Education. Applicants should have completed undergraduate or graduate work of sufficient quality and scope to enable them to successfully pursue graduate study. Tennessee Tech University offers equal educational opportunity to all persons, without regard to race, religion, sex, age, creed, color, national origin, or disability.

Students are admitted to Tennessee Tech University through a cooperative effort of the Graduate College and the departments, colleges, and schools of the University. When the Graduate College receives the student's application material, an official file is established. The department then reviews the application file and makes a recommendation to the Graduate College. The Graduate College notifies applicants as soon as a decision has been reached.

Degree only applicants must apply through the Tennessee Tech application portal for admission consideration:

1. The online application for graduate admission and the nonrefundable fee;
2. Official transcripts of undergraduate and graduate credit from all institutions attended;
3. Undergraduate degrees accepted include: nutrition, dietetics, public health, kinesiology, health sciences, nursing, psychology, human development and family studies, family and consumer sciences, and biobehavioral health. Other undergraduate degrees not specifically listed here will be reviewed based on transcript content;
4. Prerequisite undergraduate coursework must include an introductory nutrition course (equivalent to Tennessee Tech's HEC 2020 Nutrition for Health Sciences); one advanced nutrition course (higher level than introductory nutrition) must have a "B" or better in these two nutrition courses.
5. Undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale;

6. References (2): when you submit your application provide contact information for two references. An email will then be sent to these references to complete an online recommendation form. At least one reference should be from a former professor/instructor. Your application is not completed until these recommendation forms are submitted by your references;
7. Questions: you will need to indicate on your graduate application if you are applying to only the MS degree in Community Health and Nutrition or both the degree and the optional Experiential Learning Track. The Experiential Learning Track has additional admission requirements;
8. Resume: upload your resume (no more than 2 pages);
9. Personal Statement: upload a separate document which includes the following: state why you have the abilities, experiences, skills and knowledge to succeed in this degree program. Your statement should demonstrate why you are interested in this graduate degree program and how it will help you meet career goals. Please limit your statement to 1,200 words or fewer and use 12-point font, single-spaced format.
  - a. Specifically address the following questions in your personal statement:
    - i. What are your professional goals; elaborate on future career plans and the motivation for pursuing a MS in Community Health and Nutrition.
    - ii. In what ways will the MS in Community Health and Nutrition build upon your current skill set?
    - iii. Why are you a good fit for this degree program?
    - iv. Elaborate on your unique story which motivates you to seek this graduate degree.

Applicants are selected on a competitive basis and, therefore, admission is not granted to all applicants who meet only the minimum requirements.

Individual program requirements are described in the Tennessee Tech University Graduate Catalog and on department websites. Requirements are subject to change.

The current rate for the nonrefundable graduate application fee is \$35.00 for domestic applicants and \$40.00 for international applicants. Applications received without the application fee will not be processed.

Application deadline for degree only seeking students varies based on the semester you wish to enroll. Application deadlines can be found here: [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies: How to Apply](#)

Accelerated admission to the degree only pathway:

Any Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist will be admitted with the following verifications:

1. Current registration status with the Commission on Dietetic Registration

Admission Requirements, Experiential Learning Pathway:

To apply to Experiential Learning Track, register and complete the DICAS (Dietetics Inclusive Centralized Application Service) application: <https://dicas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>.

In addition to the requirements for admission to the MS in Community Health and Nutrition degree as stated above, applicants who want to also be admitted to the Experiential Learning Track must also provide:

1. Evidence of Work/Volunteer Experience: documentation of 300 hours of work or volunteer experience completed within four years of application is preferred. Of the 300 hours, at least 200 hours must be in a nutrition- or dietetics-related field. You will be required to complete the Experiential Track Supplemental Form to document your experiences. This form will be uploaded with your Graduate application and is available here: [Online Forms](#)
2. Prerequisite coursework: for applicants who do not have a Verification Statement from an ACEND accredited Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), the following prerequisite coursework must have been completed within five years from an accredited institution:
  - a. Introductory Nutrition course equivalent to Tennessee Tech's HEC 2020 Nutrition for Health Sciences
  - b. Advanced Nutrition course (higher level than Introductory Nutrition)
  - c. Organic Chemistry
  - d. Microbiology or Biochemistry
  - e. Experimental Foods, Food Preparation, Quantity Food Production, or Foodservice Management*Additionally, students must have a grade of B or better in each of the nutrition courses and a grade of C or better in the science courses.*
3. DPD Verification Statement: for students with a bachelor's degree from an ACEND accredited Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), you will be required to upload your DPD Verification statement or an Intent to Complete form or letter from the DPD director stated courses to be completed with your Graduate application.
4. Personal Statement: in addition to the questions listed above for the Personal Statement, applicants for the Experiential Learning Track should include why they are pursuing the Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist (RDN) credential.
5. Candidates for admission to the Experiential Learning Track will be required to participate in a virtual (face to face) interview via a video conferencing platform.

For questions regarding the DICAS application, contact the help center here: [https://help.liaisonedu.com/DICAS Applicant Help Center](https://help.liaisonedu.com/DICAS_Applicant_Help_Center) or call 617.612.2855. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' website also has guidance for using DICAS.

The fee to submit a DICAS application is \$50 for the first submission, \$25 for each additional submission. DICAS will open August 5, and applicants may apply at any time once the platform is open but no later than October 1 in the Fall and February 1 in the Spring.

Those interested in the supervised experiential learning necessary to become a registered dietitian/nutritionist must apply by October 1 for a Fall start date the following year. If the cohort of 10 does not fill, applications can be submitted until February 1. All students who submit applications by October 1 will be notified by November 1 regarding their application status. All students who submit applications by February 1 will be notified by March 1 regarding their application status. Students may inform the program of their acceptance of an admission offer by November 15 or March 15, respectively.

Degree only students will not utilize DICAS but will instead apply through the College of Graduate Studies.

All credentials become the property of the University and will not be forwarded or returned. If the applicant does not enroll, credentials will be maintained in active files for 1 year, after which they will be destroyed. After that time, candidates must reapply for admission and submit a new set of

credentials if they wish to be admitted to the Graduate College. Students who do not enroll for a Fall or Spring semester must apply for readmission.

### **Monitoring Student Performance**

The TN Tech College of Graduate Studies has the following guidelines in place for probation and dismissal:

A graduate student is required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least B (3.0) on all courses taken for degree purposes.

Credit toward a degree objective will be granted for any graduate course in which a grade of A, B, C, S, or SP (for thesis or dissertation) is assigned; however, not more than six (6) hours of C credit will be accepted. If a grade of D, U, F, WF, or NF is assigned in a degree-related course, the course must be repeated; and both the original grade and the grade for the repetition will be counted in the cumulative average.

When a student's cumulative average on courses falls below 3.0, but not less than 2.0, the student will be placed on probationary Academic Standing. If the cumulative average falls below 2.0, the student will be dismissed.

Any graduate student placed on probationary Academic Standing at the end of the semester must return to Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester.

If the term average, on all courses presented as part of the hours required for graduation, during any semester is less than 2.0, the student's record will be reviewed, and the student may be placed on probation or dismissed.

A graduate student will be dismissed from the graduate program if any one of the following conditions occurs:

1. The student's current or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0.
2. The student earns two grades of "F."
3. The graduate student fails to achieve Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester following a semester that the graduate student was placed in probationary Academic Standing.

*Please see the information below for performance monitoring and dismissal policies specific to the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.*

A graduate student who has been dismissed for unsatisfactory performance may request reinstatement through the appeal procedures in [TN Tech Policy 281 \(Graduate Student Dismissal, Reinstatement, and Appeal Procedures\)](#).

This information can be found in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

Regarding both monitoring student performance and retention/remediation procedures in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program, the following sequence will be initiated, based on whether the unsatisfactory performance is in the academic or experiential learning setting.



The Program Director, Experiential Learning Coordinator, and Preceptor have the responsibility for monitoring and reporting student performance. Regarding responsibility of reporting student performance in the Experiential Learning setting:

1. The dietitian or other preceptor in the affiliating facility will notify the student of unsatisfactory performance orally and in writing.
2. The dietitian or other preceptor in the affiliating institution shall notify the Program Director and the Experiential Learning Coordinator about the student's unsatisfactory performance.
3. A conference will be scheduled and held to include the student, the affiliating facility's dietitian or other preceptor, and the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator. At this meeting, a written plan for improvement will be developed and signed by all the parties at the conference identifying the specific knowledge and skills that must be satisfactorily demonstrated and the expected timeframe for completion of the improvement plan. This timeframe may vary depending on the experience, but students will typically be given 3-5 days to improve performance depending on each student's situation. Ultimately the Program Director has the authority and responsibility to determine if a student (after two attempts at remediation) will not be successful in the graduate program. This meeting may be held virtually.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation will be counseled into different career pathways appropriate to their skill level and removed from the Experiential Learning pathway.

If the unsatisfactory performance is academic (as defined by the College of Graduate Studies policies):

1. The Program Director will explore tutorial support and remedial instruction available to the student.
  - a. Student support services available to the student include those available through TN Tech's provision of free tutorial support to all its students, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - b. Any student who needs learning accommodation should inform the professor(s) immediately at the beginning of the semester. The student is responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation and information regarding needed accommodations from the TN Tech Accessible Education Center and providing it to the professor early in the semester. The office information is as follows:  
Location: Roaden University Center, 112  
Phone: (931) 372-6119  
Fax: (931) 372-6378  
Email: [disability@tntech.edu](mailto:disability@tntech.edu)
2. Depending upon what is needed by the student, further stipulations and remedial actions including a formal plan for improvement will be developed to facilitate continued improvement in performance. The plan will include a timeframe for improvement.
3. If performance improves to an acceptable level during the agreed upon time allotment as signed by the involved parties, the student will be allowed to continue in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at academic remediation will be counseled into different career pathways appropriate to their skill level and removed from the Experiential Learning track. Students must also meet the minimum academic performance criteria specified by the College of Graduate Studies.

If the performance issue is not academic (unethical behavior, substance abuse, etc.):

1. The student may remain in the master's program but will be removed from the Community Health and Nutrition Experiential Learning pathway. The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Code of Ethics](#) will be used as the standard for professional behavior and provides the definitions for unethical and unprofessional behavior.
  - a. Depending on the behavior, the student may also be dismissed from the degree only pathway. The program will follow all university policies.
2. Unsatisfactory conduct includes failure to submit experiential learning orientation materials by the deadline provided by the Experiential Learning Coordinator and could result in disciplinary procedures and/or a delay in graduation should the student not be able to complete the required practicum experiential learning hours in the semester the course is offered.

For additional information, please see the Disciplinary/Termination section of this handbook.

### **Student Retention**

Formal and informal assessment of student learning occurs routinely. Assessment occurs in the form of assignments and supervised experiential learning assessments from preceptors. Each assignment has a rubric that states student expectations and grading criteria.

In supervised experiential learning practicums, preceptors will complete assessments of student performance after each rotation. The procedure will include regular oral feedback from the preceptor to the student; completion of preceptor written evaluation of the student as well as a written evaluation of the site/preceptor by the student at the conclusion of the rotation. These are submitted electronically to the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator for review.

Those students who receive scores below the benchmark of "C" for an assignment, or a 3 or below on an assessment of a performance indicator or competency at any point in the semester will be counseled by the instructor of the course, Program Director, and/or Experiential Learning Coordinator as appropriate for explanations and discussion regarding performance below the benchmarks.

Students will be given the opportunity for remediation within a specified timeframe as explained in the previous section. If a student does not achieve a 4 or above on competencies in a practicum course, they will be required to complete additional experiential learning hours as needed in HEC 6253 in place of an elective week.

Those students who routinely receive low scores from preceptors or on assignments will be counseled by faculty regarding ways to improve performance.

As noted in the "Monitoring Student Performance" section, students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation for either academic or practicum performance will be counseled into different career pathways appropriate to their skill level and removed from the Experiential Learning pathway.

## **Supervised Experiential Learning Documentation**

Typhon software is used to manage supervised experiential learning. This software is available to the student for a one time, \$100.00 fee. Students will document time spent in site supervised experiential learning using this software. Preceptors will verify student data. Typhon houses documents useful for preceptors, preceptor and student evaluations, and student forms such as proof of insurance and background checks. Students also utilize this software to see their site supervised experiential learning schedules.

Students also submit a tracking form with each experiential learning assignment that is completed within the didactic courses (Didactic Experiential Learning Tracking Form). On this form, they note how many hours they spent completing the assignment, and the types of activities they engaged in, including time spent in the community. Hours are assessed at the end of each semester by the Program Director to ensure students are earning adequate alternate supervised experiential learning hours.

All experiential learning hours must be earned in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.

### **Policies that differ among various tracks**

Only one track is offered in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.

### **Insurance Requirements**

Community Health and Nutrition graduate students are required to carry professional liability insurance. This insurance is available through a contract the university has with American Casualty Company, and students are billed for the insurance (approximately \$12.00) when they enroll in the experiential learning practicum courses.

### **Liability for Safe Travel**

During all occasions that students take their own vehicle for experiences related to the Community Health and Nutrition Graduate program, students will be required to have automobile insurance that follows Tennessee law.

### **Injury or Illness**

Students who are injured or become ill while at a supervised experiential learning site as part of the requirements for the Community Health and Nutrition Graduate program or other graduate course should notify their preceptor immediately and receive appropriate care (Emergency Room, Urgent Care, private physician, etc.).

In the event of a major injury, the Community Health and Nutrition Graduate Program Director should be notified. All costs associated with injuries or illnesses that occur while completing site supervised experiential learning (or other experiences as assigned within the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program) are the responsibility of the student. Students are required to show proof of health insurance prior to being placed at an experiential learning location to ensure

they have medical coverage. TN Tech is not liable for injuries or health incidents that arise from the student spending time at experiential learning sites.

### **Experiential Learning Work Schedule**

The student will participate in experiential learning according to the schedule assigned by the affiliating facility and will participate in their learning experiences on any day of the week (Monday-Friday) as scheduled by the dietitian or other preceptor. The student can be excused for special meetings and workshops that have been approved by the Community Health and Nutrition Experiential Learning Coordinator and the supervising dietitian or other preceptor at the affiliating institution.

Specific details related to policies relating to vacation, holiday and absences are as follows: The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program will allow for 4 personal days which can be used for illness, additional holidays not included in the TN Tech Academic Calendar, and other personal needs. It is considered a personal day if the student asks to be off during a semester in which they have a practicum and would otherwise be scheduled to work.

The student is not expected to work on university breaks or holidays specified on the Academic calendar (i.e. Spring Break, Independence Day). Students are also not expected to work on weekends. However, if the student or the facility requests that the student work and the student is willing to work on the specified holiday or weekend, that is acceptable. There is no penalty if the student chooses to not work during a break/holiday/weekend.

Experiential learning will be scheduled approximately 4 months prior to placements. If requesting to use any of the 4 personal days, the Experiential Learning Coordinator should be notified at least 4 months in advance of the first day of the practicum.

If a student is sick, a doctor's note should be provided to Student Affairs and this office will notify the Experiential Learning Coordinator. If ill, students must notify the preceptor and Experiential Learning Coordinator as soon as they are able.

Decisions regarding scheduling for HEC 6253 are made with consideration of the following: The student should be scheduled for learning experiences that will help them achieve those competencies not completed and in areas they have shown the least competence as evidenced by previous faculty and preceptor evaluations and observations. If the student has achieved competence in those supervised experiential learning opportunities they have already participated in, they may request placements at sites they have an interest in. Students may also be placed considering the availability of preceptors.

The graduate student is required to complete at least 162 hours of supervised experiential learning in each practicum course. If a preceptor dismisses the student early, this should be logged into Typhon and will result in the student being placed at additional sites to earn the total number of hours needed.

## **Absence from Practicum**

Any time a student needs to be absent from an affiliating institution (including inability to arrive at the rotation site due to weather), the student will notify the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Experiential Learning Coordinator and the dietitian or other preceptor at the affiliated agency. The student will be scheduled for additional hours per week until competencies are completed.

## **Tardiness**

Students will receive a schedule of experiential learning hours at least one week prior to the start of each placement. The start time for each day will be included on the schedule. Students are expected to have checked on parking and other considerations ahead of the first day of each placement. Students are expected to be on time for their experiences. "On Time" is defined as 15 minutes early. Tardiness is defined as arriving at the start time or later and will not be tolerated. Students who find they will be late to a placement should notify the preceptor immediately.

## **Professional Communication Expectations**

As representatives of TN Tech, the Department of Human Ecology, and the Community Health & Nutrition Graduate Program, all students must communicate tactfully and respectfully when emailing preceptors, professors, and fellow students. Emails should be written in a professional manner beginning with a greeting, followed by a clearly written body, and ending with a sign-off indicating your name and position as a graduate student of the Community Health & Nutrition Graduate Program at TN Tech. This practice will not only represent the program well but will also prepare students for professional communications in the future workforce.

## **Drug Testing and Criminal Background Checks**

Most health care facilities utilized as experiential learning sites require drug testing. TN Tech Community Health and Nutrition graduate students are required to comply with any drug testing required at experiential learning location and are responsible for cost of drug testing if not covered by facility. All Community Health and Nutrition graduate students must complete and pass a criminal background check prior to starting their experiential learning to adhere to clinical affiliation agreements. Background checks are completed through TrueScreen, and the cost (\$25.00) is the responsibility of the Community Health and Nutrition graduate student.

## **Estimated Cost**

Per the College of Graduate Studies at Tennessee Tech (May, 2025):

Estimated [tuition](#) for Fall/Spring semesters for a 9 credit course load:

\$5,643 for in-state

\$6,903 for out-of-state

\$12,177 for international out-of-state

Nine hours in considered full time.

Estimated tuition for Summer semester for a 6 credit course load:

\$3,963 for in-state

\$4,803 for out-of-state

\$8,319 for international out-of-state

For more information on current tuition and fees for the graduate program visit the Bursar's website: [Fee Schedule](#)

Other anticipated fees:

- Background Check with TrueScreen: \$25.00
- Student Liability Insurance: included as part of registration fees during the semester this course is taken: approximately \$12.00-\$15.00
- Proof of Health Insurance: varies based on personal monthly premium
- Current immunizations and proof of TB test: varies
- Drug Test: may be required at some facilities: varies
  - Students will be placed at a variety of health care facilities within Tennessee and possibly surrounding states, depending on the student's location. Each health care facility has its own requirements for student volunteers. Some facilities require drug testing prior to beginning the experiential learning, and students should be prepared to submit to this drug testing and pay the testing costs.
- Account with Typhon: \$100.00; one-time fee.
- Textbooks: varies; approximately \$200.00 per semester.
- Travel costs: varies depending on the location of the experiential learning site. Sites will typically be located within one hour of the home address provided by the student. The Experiential Learning Coordinator will work with each student to place them at the location most convenient for them that will provide them with the experience they need to achieve the competencies.
- [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics student membership fee](#): \$58.00. It is strongly recommended that each student be a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Many assignments will utilize aspects of the AND website that are only accessible with a current membership.
- Attendance at Tennessee Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual meeting (conference registration, one night hotel, travel): approximately \$250, one-time
- Laptop, if not already owned: approximately \$400
- Approximate cost of rent and utilities in Cookeville, TN: \$1,000 per month
- Physical Exam for medical clearance: varies, based on personal insurance
- Fuel expense each semester: approximately \$500
- CPR/First Aid Certification: approximately \$45
- Total Clinical Placement System (TCPS) required for certain locations: \$50.00 for initial placement, \$25.00 for each additional placement. Cost is subject to change.

Note: Extra costs may be incurred due to additional immunizations, drug testing, or background check requirements that are enforced by the individual supervised experiential learning sites.

### **Policy Regarding Students Replacing Employees**

The purpose of placing students at various health care locations is to provide experiential learning opportunities under the supervision of a registered dietitian/nutritionist or other appropriate professional staff. Under no circumstances are students allowed to replace employees.

The status of the student in the supervised experiential learning facility is that of a student. They shall not replace regular staff or employees but will complete assignments and learn competencies under their supervision.

## **Compensation**

Most experiential learning placements are unpaid experiences.

Paid supervised experiential learning hours are allowed within the practicum under the following guidelines:

The work experience must be relevant for the set practicum and must take place in the timeframe of the set practicum. For example, foodservice work-related experience must take place in HEC 6250 in the foodservice practicum.

All paid experiences must:

- Meet a set of competencies within the practicum
- Have a willing “expert within the field” preceptor in that practicum as determined by the experiential learning coordinator
- Have a preceptor willing to give experiences to meet competencies (shadowing, mentoring, observation, etc.) beyond hourly duties. For example, students may need to work unpaid hours to meet certain competencies
- Have a preceptor willing for students to perform competencies and projects required of the practicum
- Have a university contract with the facility
- Be understanding of other supervised experiential learning needs and hours within the practicum

Areas not considered: fast food, non-healthcare or organizational foodservice, establishment that does not have an expert within the field, and sites that do not meet the competencies.

All potential workplace/paid competencies must be approved by the Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator as a sufficient supervised experiential learning site.

The Experiential Learning Coordinator will determine the number of approved hours counted toward the practicum. For example, if the student is employed for 100 hours, the Experiential Learning Coordinator may determine that only a percentage of those hours will be approved for experiential learning hours.

All prospective workplace/paid competencies must be approved 3 months ahead of the practicum it has a potential to be utilized in. This gives the opportunity for discussion of hours, competencies, and contracting. If done after this timeframe, it will not be considered.

## **Program Complaints**

The TN Tech Student Complaint policy is found at: [Student Complaint](#)

Students who have a grievance with the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program are encouraged to meet with the Program Director to resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved, the

student may present the grievance to the Director of the School of Human Ecology and/or the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Ecology without fear of retaliation. In addition, a student may initially present his/her grievance to the Director of the School and/or Dean if preferred. Some grievances may be under the jurisdiction of the College and/or University and university policies for student complaints/grievances will be followed as specified in the [TN Tech Student Handbook](#). The office of Student Affairs may facilitate the processing of student grievances as appropriate.

There will be no retaliation toward any student who files a complaint. If a student suspects that retaliation has occurred, the same procedure for filing a complaint may be followed and/or the student may contact the office of Student Affairs directly at: [Student Affairs-Contact](#)

The process for submission of written complaints to ACEND related to program noncompliance with ACEND accreditation standards after all other options with the program and institution have been exhausted is as follows:

If a student has followed the proper procedures and still believes that the matter has not been properly handled, the student has the right to [file a complaint](#) with the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND).

Written complaints may be sent to: ACEND, 120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2190, Chicago, IL 60606.

The phone number is: ACEND: 800-877-1600, ext. 5400.

Website: <https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend>

Email: [ACENDReports@eatright.org](mailto:ACENDReports@eatright.org)

ACEND will review complaints that relate to a program's compliance with the accreditation standards. ACEND is interested in the sustained quality and continued improvement of dietetics education programs but does not intervene on behalf of individual students or act as a court of appeal for individual students in matters of admission, appointment, promotion or dismissal of faculty, staff, or students. The procedure for submitting complaints to ACEND may be obtained by contacting ACEND staff by phone or email as listed above.

Preceptors of TN Tech Community Health and Nutrition graduate students who have concerns or complaints against TN Tech Community Health and Nutrition graduate students may contact the Program Director, Dr. Samantha Hutson at 931-372-3865 or [shutson@tnitech.edu](mailto:shutson@tnitech.edu) to discuss those concerns.

As an alternative, preceptors may contact the Director of School of Human Ecology, Dr. Melinda Anderson at 931-372-3378, or the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Ecology, Dr. Darron Smith at 931-372-3149.

### **Prior Assessment of Supervised Experiential Learning Policy**

All experiential learning practicum hours must be completed within the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program. The program does not accept experiential learning hours from other institutions, work experiences, or volunteer hours toward the required experiential learning hours for the program.

Some applicants may enter the Graduate Program (GP) in Community Health and Nutrition with prior education and experience.



While we acknowledge the value of prior education, we are also committed to ensuring a fair and comprehensive learning experience for all our students, which means that prior education cannot exempt students from courses or learning activities. Because alternative experiential learning hours are earned in each online didactic course, no transfer credit is accepted in the Community Health and Nutrition FEM graduate program.

Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) is designed to grant credit for specific supervised experiential learning (SEL) outlined in the Community Health and Nutrition curriculum. Credit is based on the student's previous work and/or volunteer experience.

Coursework or experiences required by the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) or other undergraduate curriculum will not be counted towards APL credit. APL credit is only awarded for an experience that is directly related to supervised experiential learning outlined in the Community Health and Nutrition curriculum. This includes experiences in HEC 6250, HEC 6251, HEC 6252, and HEC 6253. The APL credit is awarded to students who would not benefit from additional time or training in a specific area of dietetics because their skills already meet the competent level.

APL allows GP students to replace up to 80 hours (2 weeks) toward a supervised experiential learning/practicum course and to complete these hours in an alternative setting in consultation with the experiential learning coordinator and program director. As an example, a student may spend these 80 hours in a special emphasis experience, research, or other agreed-upon supervised practice area.

If an APL is granted, students are expected to complete the same number of SEL hours as other students in the practicum course, which is 162 hours of on-site supervised experiential learning per course.

Instructions for submission of APL applications and required materials are available to students from the experiential learning coordinator or program Director upon request. APL application materials must be submitted to both the experiential learning coordinator and program director. Submitted applications will be reviewed for APL eligibility. Late or incomplete APL applications will not be considered. Applicants are responsible for providing adequate documentation or evidence that they have sufficient knowledge and experience for which credit is being sought. Additional documentation or clarification may be requested. Supervisors listed in the APL application may be contacted to request verification of the applicant's activities and documentation provided in the application.

Tuition and fees for the program remain the same regardless of the amount of APL credit awarded as students will complete the same amount of supervised practice hours in each practicum course as those students not receiving APL credit.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must have been in their position for more than 12 months, full-time, or the equivalent.

Assignments will NOT be waived. The Community Health and Nutrition GP may award up to 4 weeks of APL credit per student.

#### APL Credit Criteria

- Foodservice Management (FSM)

- o 1+ years (full-time or equivalent) work experience = up to 2 weeks APL credit
- Community Nutrition
  - o 1+ years (full-time or equivalent) work experience = up to 2 weeks APL credit
- Clinical Nutrition \*Applicable experience: LTC dietary manager (DTR)
  - o 1+ years (full-time or equivalent) work experience = up to 2 weeks APL credit

*To be eligible to apply to more than 1 rotation, the applicant must demonstrate that they have at least 12 months of experience per rotation.*

While credit is awarded in terms of supervised practice hours, it is assessed based on the competency attained, not the number of hours spent in the experience.

Examples of prior experience that would not count as credit towards APL may include but are not limited to:

- Any undergraduate or graduate course-related practicum or experience
- Food distribution volunteer at a food bank
- Personal trainer at an athletic facility
- Owning a nutrition coaching business
- Fast food/Restaurant management
- Experiences outside of the United States
- Experiences completed more than 5 years ago

All experiences need to have been done in a supervised context. Self-employment experiences do not qualify for APL.

APL applications can be submitted after an applicant is officially accepted into the Community Health and Nutrition GP. Application deadline for all practicum courses: **September 15** of the first fall semester. Students may submit a second application by **July 1** of their second year if they have completed additional experiences that they would like to have evaluated for APL.

The experiential learning coordinator and program director will review the application and provide a final decision as to how many (if any) supervised practice hours can be granted as APL. Decisions will be provided within two weeks of application receipt.

The Assessment of Prior Learning Portfolio must include:

Assessment of Prior Learning Form: All sections must be completed (written summary of work performed, hours worked, site name, job title). The bottom of the form should be signed by the supervisor and include their name, title and contact information.

One form must be submitted for each experience (foodservice, community, or clinical).

#### Samples of Work:

Provide work samples to support that the competencies were met; may include projects, reports, presentations, etc.

Food Service Management experiences may include: Safety/sanitation audit, HACCP audit, in-service training sessions, theme meals, budgeting, inventory, menu review/development, recipe review, etc.

Community Nutrition or Wellness Promotion experiences may include: Lesson plans, meeting notes, nutrition education materials, newsletters, marketing content, social media posts, counseling notes, etc.

Clinical/Long Term Care experiences may include: Nutrition assessments, diet order accuracy audit, weight change audit, etc.

APL Competency Assessment Form and Rotation Log (only need to complete the one(s) you are applying for APL):

Community Nutrition

Food Service Management

Clinical Nutrition

Additional information may be requested, in which case the material must be submitted by the graduate student within 1 week of the request.

The decision regarding APL is final.

### **Annual Assessment of Student Learning**

Assessment of student learning occurs in both the didactic and practicum courses through formative and summative assessments. When receiving feedback, each student can ask questions (via email, phone call, or virtual meeting) for clarification and understanding.

Formative evaluation techniques are used to assess knowledge gained from class activities, while summative evaluation techniques are implemented to assess students' ability to apply what they learned.

Summative evaluation activities include community-based projects, case studies, and simulation activities. Rubrics are given to students when projects are assigned to ensure that students are aware of project expectations. The rubrics are used to assign grades and to track competencies and performance indicators required by ACEND. Rubrics are also used in supervised experiential learning practicum courses.

Formal assessment and an update regarding student progress on competencies occurs when each student is advised in the Fall and Spring semesters by the Program Director. Individual meetings occur in person or on Teams to ensure students receive personalized feedback about their progress and can ask questions. The Program Director follows up the Teams call with an advising note in TechConnect to document each advising session.

In addition, at the end of each semester, data regarding student progress on each competency and performance indicator will be evaluated by the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator. Deficiencies or lack of progress will be immediately communicated to the student for follow-up, remediation, or support as needed.

If students meet competencies prior to completing their required hours for a particular supervised experiential learning experience, they may be eligible for alternative learning activities, which will be determined by the student, Experiential Learning Coordinator, and/or preceptor or faculty member, if applicable. Students who pass competencies prior to rotation completion may have the

opportunity to participate in projects and experiences in a particular area of interest that goes beyond the requirements for the rotation.

### **Advisement and Registration**

Academic advising for graduate students is coordinated through the Program Director. All students within the Community Health and Nutrition graduate should meet face-to-face or via electronic communication (phone, email, Zoom, etc.) with the Program Director prior to registration each semester. The Program Director will communicate with each student regarding scheduling an advising session. Students are encouraged to communicate with the Program Director to ensure enrollment in required courses.

Students who are experiencing academic difficulties should contact the Program Director for information about resources to promote academic success. Students who need to change course schedules, including dropping or adding courses, should see the Program Director regarding the process and to discuss the impact of these actions on their academic program and anticipated graduation date. If a student in the GP pathway drops a course, it will delay graduation by at least one year.

Students should monitor the TN Tech academic calendar for add, drop, withdrawal dates. Students are reminded that while the faculty and staff of the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program are available to assist students in the achievement of their academic goals, each student is ultimately responsible for knowing and meeting the degree requirements.

### **Program Retention and Remediation**

Formal and informal assessment of student learning occur routinely. Preceptors complete evaluations for each student after each rotation and may have performance and progress reports regularly during the rotation. The procedure includes student meetings with the preceptor for oral discussions; completion of preceptor written evaluation of the student after completion of the rotation as well as a written evaluation of the experience/preceptor by the student at the conclusion of the rotation. These are submitted through Typhon for review by the Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator.

If a preceptor evaluation indicates that a student is not performing well, the Program Director will initiate the steps listed below to ensure early detection and intervention of academic difficulty.

Those students who routinely receive low scores from preceptors will be counseled by faculty regarding ways to improve performance.

Regarding both monitoring student performance and retention/remediation procedures in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program, the following sequence will be initiated, based on whether the unsatisfactory performance is in the academic or experiential learning setting.

The Program Director, Experiential Learning Coordinator, and Preceptor have the responsibility for monitoring and reporting student performance. Regarding responsibility of reporting student performance in the Experiential Learning setting:

1. The dietitian or other preceptor in the affiliating facility will notify the student of his/her unsatisfactory performance orally and in writing.
2. The dietitian or other preceptor in the affiliating institution shall notify the Program Director and the Experiential Learning Coordinator about the student's unsatisfactory performance.
3. A conference will be scheduled and held to include the student, the affiliating facility's dietitian or other preceptor, and the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director and Experiential Learning Coordinator. At this meeting, a written plan for improvement will be developed and signed by all the parties at the conference identifying the specific knowledge and skills that must be satisfactorily demonstrated and the expected timeframe for completion of the improvement plan. This timeframe may vary depending on the experience, but students will typically be given 3-5 days to improve performance depending on each student's situation. Ultimately the Program Director has the authority and responsibility to determine if a student (after two attempts at remediation) will not be successful in the GP program. This meeting may be held virtually.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation will be counseled into different career pathways appropriate to their skill level and removed from the GP Experiential Learning pathway.

If the unsatisfactory performance is academic (Unsatisfactory academic performance is defined by the College of Graduate Studies policies.):

1. The Program Director will explore tutorial support and remedial instruction available to the student.
  - a. Student support services available to the student include those available through TN Tech's provision of free tutorial support to all its students, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - b. Any student who needs learning accommodations should inform the professor(s) immediately at the beginning of the semester. The student is responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation and information regarding needed accommodations from the TN Tech Accessible Education Center and providing it to the professor early in the semester. The office information is as follows:  
 Location: Roaden University Center, 112  
 Phone: (931) 372-6119  
 Fax: (931) 372-6378  
 Email: [disability@tntech.edu](mailto:disability@tntech.edu)
2. Depending upon what is needed by the student, further stipulations and remedial actions including a formal plan for improvement will be developed to facilitate continued improvement in performance. The plan may include a timeframe for improvement.
3. If performance improves to an acceptable level during the agreed upon time allotment as signed by the involved parties, the student will be allowed to continue in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program;
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at academic remediation will be counseled into different career pathways appropriate to their skill level and removed from the FEM Experiential Learning track. Students must also meet at least the minimum academic performance criteria specified by the College of Graduate Studies.

If the performance issue is not academic (unethical behavior, substance abuse, etc.):

1. The student may remain in the master's program but will be removed from the Community Health and Nutrition Experiential Learning track. The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Code of Ethics](#) will be used as the standard for professional behavior and provides the definitions for unethical and unprofessional behavior.
2. Unsatisfactory conduct includes failure to submit experiential learning orientation materials by the deadline provided by the Experiential Learning Coordinator and could result in disciplinary procedures and/or a delay in graduation should the student not be able to complete the required practicum experiential learning hours in the semester the course is offered.

For additional information, please see the Disciplinary/Termination section of this handbook.

### **Disciplinary/Termination Procedures**

The TN Tech College of Graduate Studies has the following guidelines in place for probation and dismissal:

A graduate student is required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least B (3.0) on all courses taken for degree purposes.

Credit toward a degree objective will be granted for any graduate course in which a grade of A, B, C, S, or SP (for thesis or dissertation) is assigned; however, not more than six (6) hours of C credit will be accepted. If a grade of D, U, F, WF, or NF is assigned in a degree-related course, the course must be repeated; and both the original grade and the grade for the repetition will be counted in the cumulative average.

When a student's cumulative average on courses falls below 3.0, but not less than 2.0, the student will be placed on probationary Academic Standing. If the cumulative average falls below 2.0, the student will be dismissed.

Any graduate student placed on probationary Academic Standing at the end of the semester must return to Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester.

If the term average, on all courses presented as part of the hours required for graduation, during any semester is less than 2.0, the student's record will be reviewed, and the student may be placed on probation or dismissed.

A graduate student will be dismissed from the graduate program if any one of the following conditions occurs:

4. The student's current or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0.
5. The student earns two grades of "F."
6. The graduate student fails to achieve Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester following a semester that the graduate student was placed in probationary Academic Standing.

*Please see the information below for performance monitoring and dismissal policies specific to the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program.*

A graduate student who has been dismissed for unsatisfactory performance may request reinstatement through the appeal procedures in [TN Tech Policy 281 \(Graduate Student Dismissal, Reinstatement, and Appeal Procedures\)](#).

This information can be found in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

In addition, per the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program, reasons for dismissal of a student include but are not limited to:

- a. Repeated unsatisfactory academic performance or supervised practice performance evaluations. Please see specific guidelines above.
- b. Excessive/blatant absenteeism.
- c. Excessive and/or blatant violations of University or Community Health and Nutrition policies and procedures or those of a supervised practice facility.
- d. Justifiable dismissal from a supervised practice facility.
- e. Unacceptable behavior, as outlined in this handbook or by the AND Code of Ethics.

### **Assessment of Professionalism/Ethical Behavior**

Professionalism and ethical behavior are defined throughout this handbook, and by the following papers provided by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession
  - [Code of Ethics](#)
- Revised 2017 Standards of Practice in Nutrition Care and Standards of Professional Performance for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists
  - [SOP and SOPP](#)

In addition, the following competencies and performance indicators will be assessed by the preceptors to monitor professionalism and ethics:

*Competency 2.3:* Utilizes the nutrition care process with individuals, groups or populations in a variety of practice settings.

*Performance Indicator:*

2.3.26 Documents all elements of the nutrition care process following professional standards and organizational policies.

*Competency 3.2:* Oversees the purchasing, receipt and storage of products used in food production and services.

*Performance Indicators:*

3.2.2 Applies ethical decision making to determine the need for reduction or increase in resources.

3.2.3 Creates internal or external professional relations and/or agreements to solve problems in foodservice operations.

*Competency 7.1:* Assumes professional responsibilities to provide safe, ethical and effective nutrition services.

*Performance Indicators:*

7.1.1: Demonstrates ethical behaviors in accordance to the professional Code of Ethics.

7.1.2: Engages in self-reflective practice activities to develop and maintain ongoing competence and professional behaviors.

7.1.3: Adheres to nutrition related legislation, regulations and standards of practice.

7.1.4: Applies client/patient-centered principles to all activities and services.

7.1.5: Identifies and takes steps to manage unethical, incompetent and unsafe behavior.

7.1.6: Practices in a manner that respects diversity and avoids prejudicial treatment.

7.1.7: Adheres to legislative requirements and facility/employer guidelines regarding protection of privacy and security of information.

7.1.8: Maintains confidentiality and security in the sharing, transmission, storage and management of protected health information.

*Competency 7.2: Uses effective communication, collaboration and advocacy skills.*

*Performance Indicators:*

7.2.1: Applies effective and ethical communication skills and techniques to achieve desired goals and outcomes.

7.2.2: Works with and facilitates intraprofessional and interprofessional collaboration and teamwork.

Please note that this may not be an exhaustive list of measures of ethics and professionalism.

## **Graduation Requirements**

To earn the master's degree is Community Health and Nutrition and Verification Statement (if pursuing), the student must:

- Complete all didactic graduate courses and supervised experiential learning hours and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Complete experiential learning assignments and site visit placements with a score of "4 Met Expectations" or above on faculty and preceptor assessments.
- Perform in a professional and ethical manner.

Graduation information is available in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#)

Additional details relating to graduation can be obtained from following website: [Registrar's Office](#)

## **Verification Statement Requirements**

The signed verification statement documents that an individual has completed the requirements of a nutrition and dietetics education program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). The verification statement allows an individual to establish eligibility to take the registration examination for dietitian nutritionists upon completion of the Graduate Program. It indicates completion of academic or supervised practice requirements.

Verification statements can be signed only by the current program directors of ACEND-accredited nutrition and dietetics education programs in an ink color other than black.

The Program Director will issue the verification statement as soon as possible after a student completes the program. Any student who successfully completes the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program will be given a digital copy of the verification statement; students will not have to ask for a verification statement. Each graduate should keep an original signed verification statement in a secure place as a permanent record. The Program Director will mail hard copies of the verification statement upon request.

The Program Director will keep an electronic file with an original signed verification statement for everyone issued one. This is necessary to protect both the program and the program director from a possible grievance and the student from being denied access to credentialing if additional verification statements are needed by a student at a future date.



Verification statements will be issued when the student has completed the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program requirements (both didactic and experiential learning), which indicates that all graduate degree requirements have also been completed. This occurs after graduation.

The Program Director is responsible for determining coursework and/or supervised experiential learning that students must complete to fulfill curriculum requirements for this program. A student must complete the current requirements of the program from which they will receive the verification statement.

Verification statements do not expire; however, this Community Health and Nutrition graduate program reserves the right to evaluate courses that were taken more than 5 years ago in a DPD program to ascertain whether content was appropriate for current requirements. Thus, the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program may have different admission requirements related to recency of education for courses, which may include prerequisite courses.

For additional information from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: [FAQs about Verification Statements](#)

### **Verification of Student Identity**

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)(Public Law 110-315), Federal Requirement 34 CFR §602.17(g), and HLC Policy Number FDCR.A.10.050, institutions offering distance or correspondence education must have processes to establish that the student who registers in such courses is the same student who participates in and receives academic credit.

The following institutional practices are identified by the HEOA/HLC guidelines as acceptable practices for verifying student identity:

- A secure login and passcode
- New or other technologies and practices

During the application and admission process, student identity is vetted in accordance with standard practices. Upon matriculation, each student receives a unique and secure Tennessee Tech University network user account. This network user account allows the student to authenticate into the learning management system (D2L Brightspace/iLearn) and email. All systems are secured in accordance with industry best practices. As part of the activation process, each student must read and accept the terms of the Authorized User agreement, which explains the terms of use of the network user account, including:

#### **Federal Compliance - Verification of Student Identity in Online Learning**

- Network user account credentials may not be shared or given to anyone other than the user to whom they were assigned
- User responsibilities for keeping account credentials secure
- Disciplinary action for violating terms of the agreement

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program also requires that students participate in various meetings, both synchronously and asynchronously throughout the program, including a

one-time on campus orientation in the Fall before classes begin. Other meetings will be held as specified by individual faculty. Students are expected to participate in all meetings.

### **Withdrawal and Refund of Tuition and Fees**

The TN Tech policy for withdrawal and refund of tuition and fees can be found at the following link: [Registrar's Office - Withdrawing](#)

### **Affiliation Agreements/Preceptor Selection Criteria**

An affiliation agreement is obtained for all experiential learning sites. Affiliation agreements must be signed by all parties before students are placed at that site. Ongoing site evaluation will occur through student evaluations of the site and preceptors, correspondence between the Experiential Learning Coordinator, Program Director, and the primary preceptor, and observations of the Experiential Learning Coordinator or other faculty when visiting the site.

Selection criteria for supervised experiential learning sites include geographic location, qualified preceptors, willingness to precept students, and the variety and quality of dietetic experiences that can be provided by the site.

For all new sites, either the Program Director or the Experiential Learning Coordinator will review the site and primary preceptor qualifications and their ability to provide experiences necessary to achieve the competencies.

It typically takes approximately six-eight weeks to complete a new clinical affiliation agreement, but it may take longer, depending on the facility.

Each preceptor must submit a resume or Preceptor Qualifications Form. They must have appropriate credentials and work experience to mentor the graduate student in the specified rotation.

To be a preceptor, an RDN must have at least 6 months of experience for clinical rotations. For foodservice and community rotations, the preceptor must have degree or certification in dietetics-related field, or 1 year of experience or equivalent work experience without a degree or certification.

After each rotation, the student will evaluate the site/preceptor.

The affiliation agreements are maintained by the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director, Experiential Learning Coordinator, and TN Tech's Purchasing and Contracts department and are reviewed annually for expiration dates. In addition, the Experiential Learning Coordinator will evaluate each site annually based on both preceptor and student evaluations and on visits to the supervised experiential learning sites.

## **Program Schedule, Vacations, Holidays, and Leaves of Absence**

The academic year at Tennessee Tech University is divided into three consecutive terms: Fall Term, Spring Term, and Summer Term, each of which is 15 weeks long. All official academic events for the academic year are published in the academic calendar. The TN Tech academic calendar can be found at: [TN Tech Academic Calendar](#)

The TN Tech Community Health and Nutrition graduate program schedule follows the university calendar with classes offered in fall, spring, and summer sessions. Holidays are determined by the university. Students participate in experiential learning practicums in the Spring 1, Summer 1, Fall 2, and Spring 2 semesters. During these semesters, the students' experiential learning practice hours are similar to that of the preceptor the student is assigned to. During clinical and ambulatory rotations, students can expect to work normal business hours, approximately 40 hours per week. Rotations in foodservice management may require the student to work early morning and late evening shifts on various days.

The graduate student is required to complete at least 162 hours of supervised experiential learning in each practicum course. If a preceptor dismisses the student early, this should be logged into Typhon and will result in the student being placed at additional sites to earn the total number of hours needed.

In addition, alternative experiential learning takes place in each didactic course and may require the student to be available to go to an experiential learning site.

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director is available to students year-round and is available by phone and email during holiday breaks. In the event the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director were to take a temporary leave of absence, an appropriately qualified member of the Human Ecology faculty would be appointed to cover the duties of the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director during that absence.

Students may apply for a leave of absence. Leaves of absence may be granted for a period of up to six months. A written request stating the dates of the absence must be submitted to the Program Director as far in advance as possible. The decision to grant or deny a leave of absence is made on an individual basis. If the request for a leave of absence is related to a medical issue, appropriate documentation from a medical provider is required.

If a leave of absence is granted, a written agreement will be created and signed by the student, Program Director, and Experiential Learning Coordinator. A plan and timeline would be made for the student to complete the required supervised experiential learning hours and didactic coursework. The student will be required to satisfactorily complete all coursework, supervised experiential learning, and assignments and meet the current established competencies for the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program to be eligible for program completion and receive a Verification Statement.

Students are encouraged to complete the graduate program within three years from the start date of the program year they are accepted. Each course is offered only once during the academic year, therefore, any departure from completing a course in its planned sequence will result in a one-year delay in completing the course, the remaining program requirements, and the year of graduation.

## Readmission/Reapplication

As stated in the TN Tech Graduate Catalog, if a student has not been active in the graduate program for more than a year, a readmission form must be filed and approved by the Dean of the graduate school prior to re-enrollment. A student who has applied for graduate study and is admitted, may defer enrollment for up to one year. If enrollment is not activated at the end of one year, the student must reapply and be readmitted to the program.

## Online Course Participation Expectation

It is expected that students will actively participate in online classes and provide the faculty with a reason for any absence. Failure to participate in class can affect students' grades. At the beginning of the course each faculty member will provide a written attendance policy and expectations (including laboratory/clinical sessions where applicable) for the course so that all students may be fully informed of their responsibilities, including penalties that may be imposed for failing to meet these responsibilities. Responsibilities may include volunteer work, synchronous Teams meetings, on campus events, etc.

### Program of Study: GP

<b>Fall 1 Courses – 9 credits</b>	<b>Experiential Learning Credits – 0 credits</b>
HEC 5010 Principles of Nutrition Research 3 credits	No experiential learning courses this semester.
HEC 5025 Cultural Issues Influencing Health 3 credits	
HEC 5015 Perspectives in Rural Community Health 3 credits	
<b>Spring 1 Courses – 9 credits</b>	<b>Experiential Learning Credits – 3 credits</b>
HEC 6201 Community Nutrition Programs and Services 3 credits	HEC 6250 Experiential Learning Practicum: Foodservice Management/Extended Care 3 credits
HEC 6225 Advanced Applications of Counseling Techniques 3 credits	
<b>Summer 1 Courses – 0 credits</b>	<b>Experiential Learning Credits – 6 credits</b>
HEC 6410 Nutrition and Aging 3 credits	HEC 6251 Experiential Learning Practicum: Community Nutrition 3 credits
<b>Fall 2 Courses – 6 credits</b>	<b>Experiential Learning Credits – 3 credits</b>
HEC 6405 Nutrition Across the Life Cycle 3 credits	HEC 6252 Experiential Learning Practicum: Clinical Nutrition 3 credits
HEC 6440 Leadership, Advocacy, and Nutrition Policy 3 credits	
<b>Spring 2 Courses – 9 credits</b>	<b>Experiential Learning Credits – 0 credits</b>
HEC 6430 Community Health and Nutrition Capstone 3 credits	HEC 6253 Experiential Learning Practicum: Elective Experience 3 credits
HEC 6640 Review of Nutrition and Dietetics 3 credits	
<b>Total Credits: 30 credits/360 hours</b>	<b>Total Credits: 12 credits/648 hours</b>

The didactic and supervised practice courses must be taken in a planned sequence. In addition, each course is offered only once during the academic year, therefore, any departure from completing a course in its planned sequence will result in a one-year delay in completing the course, the remaining program requirements, and the year of graduation.

**Program of Study: M.S. only pathway**

<b>Fall 1 Courses</b>	
HEC 5010	3
HEC 5025	3
HEC 5015	3
<b>Spring 1 Courses</b>	
HEC 6201	3
HEC 6225	3
PRST 6540 or HEC 6525 or HEC 6640	3
<b>Summer 1</b>	
HEC 6440	3
HEC 6410 OR PRST 6100	3
<b>Fall 2</b>	
HEC 6430	3
HEC 6405	3
Total	30

Those students enrolled in the M.S. only pathway have the option to take courses on a part-time basis. Those enrolled in the experiential learning pathway are required to follow the Program of Study specified for FEM students above.

**Protection of Privacy of Student Information**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student information. TN Tech takes the privacy of student information very seriously. The complete policy statement of “Privacy Rights of Students” is available online in the Student Handbook and can be viewed at: [TN Tech Student Handbook](#)

**Student Access to Their Own Files**

Community Health and Nutrition graduate program student files are maintained by the Program Director and stored in a locked and secured location. Access to the Community Health and Nutrition graduate student files is limited to only the Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director, faculty, and staff. Information contained within each student file may include but is not limited to academic advising notes, program of study progress, and assessment of competency achievements. This information is kept digitally on a password protected computer. Community Health and Nutrition graduate students may view their files upon request and schedule a time to view the file with the Program Director.

The student may not remove any material from their personal record; however, they may make a request to correct information or to insert a statement of disagreement in their file by writing to the

Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director. If the student's correction is not accepted, the Program Director will notify the student and include an explanation for the denial of the correction. If the correction is accepted, it will be added to the record with appropriate documentation by the Program Director.

### **Access to Student Support Services**

The Office of Student Affairs at TN Tech serves as a liaison between administrative and academic faculty and staff and the student. For more information, visit: [Office of Student Affairs](#)

Campus Health Services provides medical care through an outpatient facility staffed by licensed physicians and nurse practitioners. Services include a general medical clinic, allergy and immunizations, preventative care, and referrals as needed. A valid current university student ID card is required to access services. More details are found at: [Health Services](#)

The TN Tech Counseling Center offers services such as personal counseling, academic counseling, career counseling, testing, campus outreach and consultation services free of charge to enrolled students. More information is found at: [Counseling Center](#)

The Office of Financial Aid website provides information for students related to financial aid at: [Financial Aid](#)

Students have access to the TN Tech Volpe Library system. Area hospitals also house libraries and have multiple resources available to nutrition students. It is very important that students respect the guidelines for each individual library for all students to be able to continue to use these resources. This resource can be found at: [Volpe Library](#)

### **Assessment of Transfer Credit**

Only students in the degree only pathway can request transfer credit. Students who request to transfer graduate course credits from an accredited institution to Tennessee Tech must request that the institution send official transcripts directly to TN Tech. Official transcripts must include all grades.

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate Program Director, will determine, at his/her sole discretion, what transfer coursework is eligible for transfer to the student's program of study, provided the department's decision follows SACSCOC Accreditation Standard 3.6.3, which stipulates that 33% of the credits earned toward a degree be completed at Tennessee Tech.

For a request for transfer credit to be considered, the student must submit the following:

1. A syllabus from the course taken at a previous university;
2. Examples of completed assignments; and
3. An official transcript to the College of Graduate Studies.

The student will be required to discuss these materials with the Program Director. The meeting may take place virtually, but the requested materials must be sent prior to the meeting. The coursework transferred or accepted for credit toward a graduate degree must have a minimum grade of "B" in each course.

Please see the assessment of prior learning policy for information regarding gaining credit for past site supervised experiential learning.

### **Professional Dress Guidelines**

Professional attire and appearance are an expectation, not an option. As representatives of the Community Health and Nutrition graduate programs, students must present a professional appearance during any clinical or practicum experience including but not limited to (a) visits to prepare for clinical experience in an agency; (b) participating in observational experiences; (c) conducting interviews and assessments in the community; or (d) attending professional seminars, workshops, or meetings.

In general, business professional or business casual attire must be worn. Clothing should be in good repair. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shirt or sweater with sleeves
- Closed toe, low-heeled or flat shoes
- Khaki or dress pants no shorter than 1" above the ankle or skirt no shorter than 2" above the knees.

At no time should a student present for a clinical or practicum experience be dressed unprofessionally. Examples of unprofessional appearance and attire include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Jeans or denim of any color style
- Sweatpants, sportswear
- Shorts
- Tank tops, or spaghetti strap tops
- Visible undergarments
- Visible abdomen, cleavage, or buttocks
- Disheveled clothing
- Dirty shoes
- Flip-flops or other open-toed shoes or sandals

### **[Professional Dress for Success](#)**

Additionally, hair should be clean and styled in such a manner that it does not interfere with the objectives of the clinical or practicum experience, including patient contact. Jewelry should be minimalistic. No visible piercings other than earlobes (e.g. nose, tragus, tongue) are permitted in the clinical or practicum experience. Nails should be clean, well-groomed, and of an appropriate length. Polish, if permitted, should not be chipped. Artificial nails are prohibited due to infection risks. Perfumes and colognes are not permitted during clinical experiences.

Students completing experiences in clinical agencies are required to follow that agency's dress guidelines. Students should wear professional dress and display proper identification during all practicum experiences. Students should, at a minimum, display their TN Tech Eagle card as student identification. Each facility may require additional identification. Students are also responsible for having the required equipment needed for clinical or practicum experiences (calculators, pocket guides, pens, etc.).

Any exceptions to these guidelines must be approved prior to the clinical or practicum experience by preceptors or the Experiential Learning Coordinator.

### **Social Media/Networking**

Students enrolled in the Program are required to follow these professional statements from AND and HIPPA on Social Media.

From AND: [Guidance for Professional Use of Social Media in Nutrition and Dietetics Practice](#)

Accountability Act - HIPAA of 1996 (P.L. 104-191) Students enrolled in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program are required to follow these guidelines regarding social media and 27 online social networking throughout their entire program of study until graduating or leaving the program.

1. Be cognizant of the potential impact of each post made, with the understanding that patients, classmates, instructors, employers, and other personal or professional contacts may view an individual's online activity as a reflection of the individual's career as well as the nutrition profession in general.
2. Stay informed about privacy settings of the social media sites they utilize, as privacy settings often change.
3. Utilize social networking sites by actively maintaining an awareness of how their professionalism may be affected by friends' and peers' usage of the same sites.
4. Students should restrict their personal activity to family and friends and maintain a second option for their "public face" for colleagues, classmates and peers while in office. This is also recommended for students to maintain a separation of their personal lives from their professional lives.
5. Not share, post, or otherwise disseminate any information, that can identify a patient, or in any way violate a patient's rights of privacy. Limiting access through privacy setting is not sufficient to ensure privacy of patients.
6. Never refer to anyone in a disparaging manner, even if the person cannot be identified with the information stated.
7. Never make threatening, harassing, sexually explicit, or derogatory statements regarding any person's race, ethnicity, gender, age, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, political views, or educational choices.
8. Never make disparaging remarks about any college, university, or school of nursing, including the students, faculty members and staff within the Community Health and Nutrition graduate program or University in general.
9. Not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of any college, university, Community Health and Nutrition graduate or other student association unless authorized to do so.
10. Remember that standards of professionalism are the same online as in any other circumstance.
11. Not share or post information or photos gained through the health professional-patient relationship.
12. Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Online contact with patients blurs this boundary.
13. Never take, or post from others, any photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones.
14. Promptly report a breach of confidentiality or privacy to Community Health and Nutrition graduate faculty as soon as discovered.



## Employment of Students

There is no policy limiting the number of hours a student enrolled in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate may be employed, since the ability to handle the combined responsibilities of college and employment depends upon the individual. However, students are strongly advised not to exceed a total of 40 clock hours, including employment, coursework, and practicum experiences.

Students who fail to meet the established academic standards in the Community Health and Nutrition graduate due to employment will not receive special consideration. Therefore, students who need to work should discuss their course load with their advisors before they risk academic jeopardy.

In these situations, students may need to temporarily defer academic course work for a period, choose part-time academic status and/or take advantage of various loans and scholarships.

Those students enrolled in the experiential learning pathway should refer to the leave of absence policy mentioned above, as they are required to be enrolled as a full-time student.

## Equitable treatment

The Community Health and Nutrition graduate program follows Tennessee Tech's policies regarding equitable treatment of students. The program expects that anyone representing Tennessee Tech's program, including preceptors, would abide by these policies. For the purposes of the graduate program, the definition of "employee" in policy 604 would also include preceptors.

These policies include:

1. [TN Tech's Policy 141: Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment](#). It states:  
Tennessee Tech is committed to maintaining an inclusive community that recognizes and values the inherent worth of every person, fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect, and encourages each individual to strive to reach his/her own potential.

Tennessee Tech does not condone and will not tolerate Discrimination or Harassment against any individual on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, sex, age (as applicable), ethnic or national origin, genetic information, disability, veteran status, and any other bases protected by federal and state civil rights law.

Tennessee Tech is committed to ensuring that all individuals have equal access to its employment opportunities and educational programs, services, and activities.

2. The program also follows [TN Tech's Policy 604: Healthy Workplace Policy](#). It states:  
Employees shall treat all other employees, students, and visitors with dignity and respect. No employee shall engage in threatening, violent, intimidating, or other abusive conduct or behaviors.