

## Selecting, Evaluation, and Maintaining Agreements for Experiential Learning Sites

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### Policy

The Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) requires students to complete experiential learning activities in NUTR 495: Advanced Field Experience in Nutrition, taken in the summer after their junior year. Students are expected to complete 300 hours of experiential learning in a nutrition-related area to pass the 3-credit course. Students may complete their 300-hours at sites internal to Penn State or outside the organization.

### Procedure

This document provides the guidelines and procedures used to select and evaluate sites for the field experience. Additionally, this policy details when written agreements with institutions, organizations and/or agencies are required for the field experience.

1. **DPD students are required to take NUTR 391: Professional Development in Nutrition and Dietetics, the semester prior to taking NUTR 495: Advanced Field Experience in Nutrition. The NUTR 391 instructor of record, in consultation with the DPD Director as needed, is responsible for ensuring all experiential learning sites meet the stated learning outcomes and objectives of NUTR 495.**
  - **Site selection criteria includes:**
    - The supervisor or preceptor should have the RDN credential. Exceptions are made for students requesting to work with Nutritional Sciences research faculty holding the PhD degree, and for students working in food service management under the supervision of a preceptor with significant management experience.
    - The site can provide the expected learning experience for students.
    - The site can provide supervision for the expected number of hours to complete the experience.
    - The site preceptor is available to supervise students during the duration of site placement.
    - The site can provide adequate communication and responsiveness to instructor and student contact.
    - If the site is external to the university and requires a signed Affiliation Agreement, a signed Affiliation Agreement must be provided either by Penn State or by the external organization (see #2 below).
    - The site meets the additional requirements stated in the NUTR 391 Student Handbook.
  - **Evaluation Process:**
    - Sites and preceptors are evaluated by the instructor of record for NUTR 391: Professional Development in Nutrition and Dietetics, to determine if they meet selection criteria prior to student placement.
    - Students are instructed to ask the point of contact at the site whether an Affiliation Agreement is required by the site (see #2) prior to the start of the field experience.
    - Site supervisors/preceptors complete a mid-point and final evaluation of student performance.

- Following completion of the field experience hours, students complete an evaluation of the experiential learning site.
- The course instructor assesses the responsiveness of contacts at experiential learning sites to students and the instructor.
- **Timeline for evaluation of adequacy and appropriateness of NUTR 495: Advanced Field Experience in Nutrition site:**
  - Students enroll in NUTR 391: Professional Development in Nutrition and Dietetics during the spring semester prior to taking NUTR 495.
  - Students are given access to the field experience database that contains a list of previous sites used and are taught networking skills and create application materials to assist them with finding a site.
  - Students are encouraged to begin looking for their site placement in February and to continue searching during the spring semester. When students find their potential site, they fill out a “field experience agreement form” and submit it to the NUTR 391 instructor for approval. Once approved, students work with the preceptor to outline the projects that will be completed during the 300-hour field experience and report this information in the Field Experience Proposal that is submitted at the end of the semester.
  - Students must have their sites secured by the late drop deadline listed on the Penn State academic calendar the semester they are enrolled in NUTR 391 to enroll in NUTR 495: Advanced Field Experience in Nutrition in the summer. Students who do not have their sites secured at this time will work with the instructor to discuss their options.

**2. The Penn State DPD does not require DPD students to obtain an Affiliation Agreement to participate in the field experience hours. Affiliation agreements are used in the event the external site requires an affiliation agreement signed by Penn State for the student to be placed at the site.**

**The following outlines the procedures taken when the affiliation agreement is required and when it is not required by an external site.**

- *Affiliation Agreement is required by the external site:*
  - When the student identifies a site and they are told by the contact person that an affiliation agreement is required, the students provide their contact with the Penn State University standard affiliation agreement. The contact at the site is asked to share with the site’s legal counsel for review. From that point, the NUTR 391 instructor serves as the liaison and ensures all legal documents are shared between the legal representatives at each site.
  - If the external site prefers to use their own affiliation agreement, the student obtains a copy of the external site’s affiliation agreement and sends it to the NUTR 391 instructor. From that point, the NUTR 391 instructor serves as the liaison and ensures all legal documents are shared between the legal representatives at Penn State and the external site.
  - Students are encouraged to allow at least 6 weeks for the University legal counsel and site legal counsel to review the affiliation agreements.
- *Affiliation Agreement is not required by the external site*

- When the external and internal site does not require an affiliation agreement, the students provide the preceptor of the site with a copy of the Nutritional Sciences Field Experience Agreement Form. This document contains a statement that the “site waives their right to an affiliation agreement.” The preceptor is asked to provide their signature to show that they have read this statement and waive their right to an affiliation agreement.

Students are provided with detailed information about this process in NUTR 391: Professional Development in Nutrition and Dietetics.