

How to Become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) as a BYU–Idaho Student

If you are visiting this page, you are likely interested in becoming a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). This is an excellent career choice. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of dietitians is projected to grow faster than the average over the next decade, which is faster than the average for all occupations.

? Can I Become an RDN at BYU–Idaho? The short answer is no—but BYU–Idaho can prepare you extremely well for the path forward.

BYU–Idaho does **not** offer an accredited dietetics program, which means students cannot complete all requirements for the RDN credential here. However, BYU–Idaho does offer most of the prerequisite coursework you need to successfully transfer to another university that does have an accredited dietetics program.

The accrediting body for dietetics education programs in the United States is the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). Only ACEND-accredited programs can offer certain required dietetics courses and accredited supervised practice experiences.

At BYU–Idaho, students can complete many needed courses such as chemistry, human anatomy and physiology, microbiology, statistics, foods and nutrition course and many more that are needed to become a RDN.

However, some advanced dietetics courses—such as Medical Nutrition Therapy, Dietetics Management, and Foodservice Systems—can only be taken through an ACEND-accredited program. These courses typically account for about 30 credits and must be completed after transferring.

Think of BYU–Idaho as providing a strong foundation that prepares you to be competitive and successful when you transfer.

What Is Required to Become an RDN?

To earn the RDN credential, you must successfully complete all of the following:

1. **A bachelor's degree**
2. **Specific dietetics coursework** through an ACEND-accredited program
3. **A supervised practice experience** through an ACEND-accredited program (similar to a highly specialized internship)

4. A master's degree

- The master's degree can be in any field, but it is often in nutrition, dietetics, public health, or health sciences
- Many programs combine the master's degree with accredited supervised practice

5. Pass the national RDN exam

Because schools package these requirements differently, the process can feel confusing at first. Below are two common pathways for students who start at BYU–Idaho.

Example Pathways After BYU–Idaho

◆ **Example 1: Transfer to a DPD Program, then complete accredited supervised practice. This path typically requires two applications. Historically this has been the most common type of program students take**

1. Complete 2–3 years at BYU–Idaho, taking prerequisite courses and earning an associate's degree

Earning the associate's degree is very important for smooth transfer and financial aid purposes. The associate's degree would typically be in Allied Health or General Studies.

2. Apply to and transfer to an ACEND-accredited undergraduate program, called a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD)
3. After completing the DPD and earning your bachelor's degree, apply to an ACEND-accredited supervised practice program, which is often combined with a master's degree
4. Take and pass the RDN exam

Nearby schools offering this option include:

- [Idaho State University \(ISU\)](#)
- [Utah State University](#) (USU – one of their program options)

[BYU–Provo](#) also offers this type of program. If your goal is to complete a dietetics degree at BYU–Provo, it is generally best to **transfer earlier** and fully integrate into their system.

◆ **Example 2: Complete a Bachelor’s Degree at BYU–Idaho, then Enter a Coordinated Graduate Program. This is a streamlined option, but the number of options are limited nationally.**

1. Complete a bachelor’s degree at BYU–Idaho, including all prerequisite coursework needed for your school of choice
2. Apply to an ACEND-accredited coordinated master’s or graduate program that includes:
 - Required dietetics coursework (prerequisite course work)
 - Accredited Supervised practice experience
3. Take and pass the RDN exam

 **Nearby schools offering this option include:**

- [University of Utah](#)
- [University of Idaho](#)

Choosing a Transfer Program

There are over 600 ACEND-accredited programs in the United States. Each program has its own prerequisite course requirements and structure for combining coursework, accredited supervised practice, and the master’s degree. You can explore all accredited programs using the ACEND Program Directory:

- <https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/accredited-programs/program-directory>

BYU–Idaho historically transfers a high number of students to **Idaho State University** for dietetics. Some advantages include:

- Reasonable cost
- Proximity to Rexburg
- Smooth credit transfer
- Mostly online coursework, with distance options in Idaho Falls

That said, BYU–Idaho students successfully transfer to programs all over the United States, and we can help prepare you for nearly any program you choose.

Next Steps at BYU–Idaho

As you begin your journey at BYU–Idaho to become an RDN, here are three important questions to consider in determining which path is best for you:

1. What Should I Major In at BYU–Idaho?

Declaring a major is essential for financial aid eligibility. As you make this decision, consider how each major aligns with your interests, personal values, and career goals, as well as how it will prepare you for professional success. Common options include:

a. Food Science

Food Science is an excellent major for students at BYUI interested in pursuing a degree in dietetics. The program includes a pre-dietetics track specifically designed to prepare students to transfer after their junior year to ISU. Some of the unique strengths of this option are outlined below: <https://www.byui.edu/majors/food-sciences-nutrition-dietetics-emphasis-bs>

- The track is explicitly aligned with Idaho State Universities required prerequisite courses, but it can also be adjusted to meet the requirements of other schools. Details about this program are in the ISU advising guidelines.
- Majoring in food science provides a strong back up plan. If, after your third year, you choose not to transfer into a dietetics program, you can complete the Food Science degree at BYU–Idaho in a timely manner and graduate with a marketable degree that leads directly to strong employment opportunities and competitive salaries. This makes Food Science a strong option while you consider pursuing the graduate education required to become an RDN.
- The rigorous curriculum provides excellent scientific preparation and practical skills that prepare students for success in graduate work in dietetics.

b. Exercise and Rehabilitation Science

The Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences major (Exercise and Wellness track) is another good option, particularly for students interested in physical fitness and human performance. It aligns well with many dietetics prerequisite requirements and provides an excellent foundation for advanced dietetics training. It does not have the same clear employability option at the bachelor's level as food science does.

c. Other Majors 🎓

Other majors such as Health Science will work as well. We strongly recommend meeting with a member of the **nutrition faculty and the Advising Center to design** a plan that best fits your goals.

Verification Statement: If you graduate from BYU with a bachelor's degree, you do not necessarily need to complete a second bachelor's degree to continue forward in dietetics, you may only need to obtain a verification statement from an ACEND accredited school. This requires you to complete all the prerequisite accredited course work needed to apply to a given school, but without having to seek an additional degree. If you have questions about this please contact a member of the nutrition faculty at BYU.

2. Where Do I Want to Transfer?

You do not need to decide immediately, but the sooner you identify a short list of potential transfer schools, the better. This helps you:

- Choose the correct prerequisite courses to be eligible for transfer
- Avoid unnecessary classes
- Prevent extra semesters or courses not covered by financial aid

3. Where Can I Get Advising Help?

You are not expected to navigate this process alone.

📍 Advising Center

Located in MC 102, the Advising Center is an excellent place to begin planning. Anna Dixon is a health profession advise that has worked closely with pre-dietetic students and can be reached at 208-406-9919 or by email at dixona@byui.edu

🍎 **Nutrition Faculty**- for personalized guidance, meet with a member of the BYU-Idaho nutrition faculty.

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