

Master of Dietetics Administration Assessment Report

Fall 2021

PROGRAM OVERVIEW – Master of Dietetic Administration

The Master of Dietetic Administration (MDA) degree is a professional degree that is designed to provide students with in-depth training in management and leadership specific to food and nutrition program administration. This unique graduate degree fills an important niche in graduate education because there is a shortage of dietitians prepared to take on management and leadership roles in organizations typically compensated with higher pay.

The Utah State University MDA degree was approved by the Utah Board of Regents as a new graduate degree offered through the Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences Department in 2001. The MDA was initially approved as a “Plan-B, non-thesis” option with graduate projects requiring a 3-person faculty committee for each student. In 2012, a “Plan-C, professional program” option was approved by the Utah Board of Regents. The Plan C option required additional credits with a focus on professional skill development consistent with other professional academic masters degrees, and the elimination of the graduate committee allowed for higher enrollment. The MDA was designed to build on competencies developed in the USU Dietetics Internship (DI), a graduate certificate program. Thus, 26 credits earned in the USU DI fulfill a component of the MDA requirements. There is also a route for MDA students that complete RD requirements in other institutions although this option requires completion of additional credits. It is a requirement that MDA students are RDs prior to beginning the MDA. The MDA is delivered in a completely online format. There is one primary faculty member that directs the program and teaches the core MDA coursework. The faculty is located at the USU Salt Lake Center, which is a statewide campus of Utah State University, approximately 90 miles south of the main campus.

MDA MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the USU Master of Dietetics Administration degree program is to prepare dietitians to become leaders in the dietetics profession and advance their careers, by enhancing skills in leadership and management.

The USU MDA mission statement is congruent with the University, college, and department mission statements with the thread of being student-focused, contributions to communities, and enhancing the health and the lives of others locally and beyond. The distance delivery model of the USU MDA is consistent with the statewide campus mission of providing access to higher education and high-quality courses through innovative technologies.

DEGREE OFFERED: Master of Dietetic Administration

Two options in the Professional Program (Plan C) are described below. While the Plan B option remains available for students, no students since the 2012 cohort have pursued the Plan B option. The Plan B option details are available in the USU catalog.

Option 1- Offered for students that completed the USU Dietetic Internship- 42 credits

Courses from USU Dietetic Internship: (26 credits)

NDFS 6900 -Special Problems -1 credit

NDFS 6250 – Clinical Nutrition Internship -9 credits

NDFS 6350 – Food Service Management Internship -11 credits

NDFS 6050 – Community Nutrition Internship -5 credits

MDA Coursework (18 credits)

NDFS 6770- Advanced Management in Dietetics 1- 3 credits

NDFS 6780- Advanced Management in Dietetics 2- 3 credits

NDFS 6790- Current Issues in Dietetics- 3 credits

NDFS 6750- Advanced Dietetics Practicum (Master's project) - 3 credits

Electives- 6 credits (from approved coursework in nutrition, food science, business, technology and adult education)

Option 2- *Offered for students are registered dietitians that did not complete the USU Dietetic Internship or completed the USU Dietetic Internship and whose internship credits have expired (graduate credits expire after 8 years).*

MDA Coursework (33 credits)

NDFS 6770- Advanced Management in Dietetics 1- 3 credits

NDFS 6780- Advanced Management in Dietetics 2- 3 credits

NDFS 6790- Current Issues in Dietetics- 3 credits

NDFS 6750- Advanced Dietetics Practicum (Master's project) - 3 credits

Electives- 21 credits (from approved coursework in nutrition, food science, business, technology and adult education)

For students with expired credits from the USU Dietetic Internship, up to 9 credits from the internship can be revalidated and used toward the 33 credit requirement for the MDA degree. These students take 12 credit of electives. Following is the revalidation criteria:

1. Applicants have worked in the dietetics field at least two years after completion of the USU Dietetic internship and passing the national RD exam
2. Applicants are currently working in dietetics
3. Applicants have current RD credential (75 hours of approved continuing education over a 5- year period, along with additional professional expectations are required to maintain the RD credential)

The core course work (NDFS 6750, 6770, 6780 & 6790) are all taught by the MDA program director/professor who has extensive experience in leadership and management.

NDFS 6770 and 6780 (Advanced Dietetics Management 1&2) includes topics such as: leadership theory and practice, evidence-based practice and policies, human resource management, decision making, negotiation, quality management, managing finances, customer service and entrepreneurship in dietetics.

NDFS 6790 (Current Issues in Dietetics) includes research methods in dietetics, ethics and current topics selected and peer taught by students.

NDFS 6750 (Advanced Dietetics Practicum) is an in-depth project developed by each student in their place of work. Projects focus on quality-improvement of products or services in the workplace and includes writing a project proposal with an in-depth evaluation plan. The project is then implemented and evaluated and a final report written to determine if project objectives were met. The project typically spans 2-3 semesters including the proposal process and evaluation and final report. The project implementation phase is expected to include at least 80 hours of hands-on activities.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM STATISTICS:

Program Numbers

1. Demand for the MDA continues to be high. This year (2021), there are 30 in the cohort. While cohort size fluctuates year to year, the average cohort size for the past 3 years is 30.7. This is twice the size of the cohort target when the professional practice option was established. The total number of MDA students from fall 2012 through fall 2020 is 232. Instructional support continues to be critical to support these student numbers and is funded from tuition generated by the increased student numbers. See spreadsheet below for yearly numbers.

MDA Cohort start	# students	Years to Completion								Continuing	% graduating at 1 year	% graduating within 2 years
		1	1.33	1.67	2	2.33	2.67	3+				
Fall 2012	9	6	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	67%	89%
Fall 2013	12	8	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	67%	92%
Fal 2014	11	5	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	45%	100%
Fall 2015	31	17	7	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	55%	94%
Fall 2016	25	13	5	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	52%	96%
Fall 2017	19	6	3	3	4	1	1		1	1	32%	84%
Fall 2018	33	18	4	2	3	1	1		4	4	55%	82%
Fall 2019	36	16	9	1	4				6	6	44%	83%
Fall 2020	26	6							20	20	23%	
Total (2012-2020)	202	95	33	19	15	4	4	1	31	31	47%	
Fall 2021	30											
		232 Total # students including current cohort										
		171 Total # grads (2012 cohort thru 2020 cohort graduates)										
		30.67 Average cohort size for past 3 years										

2. Completion rates and time frame continue to be very good. For cohorts that began in 2012 through 2020, there is a total of 171 graduates. For the past 3 years:
 - a. 41% completing within 1 year
 - b. 83% completing within 2 years

The remaining students are continuing and anticipate graduation under or around the 2-year mark. There is a trend for the average time to completion to be longer than several years ago. This is likely a reflection of the greater percentage of students are coming directly from the USU dietetic internship. These students often need an extra semester or two to complete coursework or the MDA project since they are beginning jobs as dietitians at the same time they are starting the MDA. One student has dropped from the program for personal reasons since 2012, thus retention in the program is above 99%.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

- Applicants must have a GPA of 3.0 or greater
- Applicant must have passed the national RD exam
- Applicant must be working in the field of dietetics
- Other application materials include a current resume, statement of purpose and letter of recommendation from the USU DI or 3 professional references if not coming from the USU Dietetic Internship.
- For applicants that have completed or are currently in the USU Dietetic Internship, a streamlined application is used with documents relevant documents from internship requirements are used as part of the MDA application.

In 2024, a graduate degree will be required for dietitians entering the profession. While graduates up until this time will not have the requirement of a graduate degree, it is imperative that graduates of USU dietetics programs can complete a master’s degree to be well-trained and to be competitive for jobs. Because of this, the MDA program and NDFS department are committed to accepting all qualified applicants for the MDA.

BUDGET:

The budget and finances for the MDA are managed by USU Statewide Campuses with oversight from the Associate Vice President (AVP) for the Wasatch Region. This includes the faculty line at the professor level for the MDA director, instructional and other related costs. Tuition and fees from are also managed through USU Statewide Campuses.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The MDA program director conducts ongoing program evaluation and assessment in consultation with the NDFS department head. Students provide feedback through formal end-of-semester course evaluations, survey feedback during the semester and exit interviews. In 2018, an advisory group of industry and academic leaders provided feedback via surveys and meetings and graduates were surveyed as well. In addition, coursework for core MDA courses has been reviewed by industry leaders and foodservice management instructors. Finally, focus groups were conducted with students in June 2020 to assess the effects of the pandemic on student experiences and the effectiveness of the MDA training in navigating the pandemic. Feedback from these sources along with program numbers and graduation rates are the basis for program objectives and evaluation in Table 1.

Table 1: Program Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes	
Program Goal #1: USU MDA will maintain expected program numbers with timely graduation rates	
Objective 1.1: MDA annual cohorts will have a minimum of 25 students.	3-year rolling Fall cohort outcomes: 2017-2019= 29.3 students 2018- 2020= 31.7 students 2019-2021= 30.7
Objective 1.2: 80% of students in MDA cohorts will graduate within 2 years.	3-year rolling graduation rate outcomes from Fall cohorts: 2015-2017=91.3% 2016-2018= 87.3% 2017-2019= 83%
Objective 1.3 The MDA will maintain a retention rate of at least 98%.	3-year rolling retention rate outcomes from Fall cohorts:

	<p>2017-2019=98.9%</p> <p>2018- 2020= 98.9%</p> <p>2019-2021= 100%</p>
<p>Program Goal #2: USU MDA students and graduates will apply leadership and management concepts in their dietetics workplaces and advance in leadership roles.</p>	
<p>Objective 2.1: 100% of MDA students will successfully apply management and leadership concepts taught in the core MDA classes.</p>	<p>MDA core coursework is built around management and leadership objectives that are applied and assessed in assignments in NDFS 6770 and 6780. 100% of MDA students have demonstrated success in meeting these objectives.</p> <p>100% of students report applying management and/or leadership skills in designing implementing and evaluating their master’s projects.</p> <p>Focus group data conducted in June 2020 indicated that students felt that the MDA coursework in management and leadership were key to their success in managing and leading others during the pandemic.</p> <p>Post graduation feedback from 7 Summer 2021 graduates included a primary theme that the MDA program and the management and leadership coursework was instrumental in graduates gaining confidence in these skills and applying them in their current leadership roles, as well as, their plans to pursue leadership and management positions in the future.</p>
<p>Objective 2.2: 75% of MDA graduates will report being promoted or taking on additional leadership responsibilities</p>	<p>In a survey conducted with MDA graduates from the 2012- 2017 cohorts, 88% reported being promoted and/or taking on additional leadership responsibilities since graduating from the MDA.</p>
<p>Program Goal #3: USU MDA students will have high program satisfaction</p>	
<p>Objective 3.1: MDA students will rate MDA coursework as effective.</p>	<p>MDA core courses consistently are rated as higher than average of</p>

	<p>similar courses at USU and in the profession.</p> <p>Student feedback in exit interviews and the June 2020 focus group is very predominantly positive.</p> <p>100% of graduates surveyed in 2018 indicated they would recommend the MDA to others.</p>
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MDA Program Strengths

1. Program is completely online and designed for working dietitians.
2. MDA core coursework is designed to enhance leadership and management skills and immediately applicable in the workplace.
3. Electives allow students to focus in area of interest
4. Allows graduate credits from USU Dietetic Internship to be applied toward MDA.
5. High value for cost of tuition. At approximately \$473 per credit hour cost for degree completion for students coming from the USU Dietetic Internship is \$8,514 for the additional 18 credits and \$15,609 for students completing 33 credits for those not coming from the USU Dietetic Internship.
6. MDA program director has extensive leadership and management experience.

MDA Areas for Improvement and Future Focus

1. Continue to diversify instruction for MDA core courses beyond one primary instructor.
 - Currently the supporting instructional faculty provide diversity.
2. Integrate MDA with USU Dietetic Internship to meet 2024 dietetics education requirements.
 - Integration planning is currently underway with plans to begin the integrated USU DI/MDA in 2023. Coursework and rotation schedules have been drafted and groundwork is in place for the needed approvals from USU for academic program changes. Advisory input from professionals and students is guiding the process.