

Navigating the DICAS Platform: What I Learned from Filling out the DICAS Application

By:

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One of the crucial requirements that must be fulfilled prior to being able to sit for the RDN exam is to successfully complete the DICAS application that most dietetic internships require and utilize. DICAS, which is an abbreviation for “Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services”, is the portal that the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics employs to help students consolidate all their internship application materials when they are applying to dietetic internships.¹ The DICAS portal contains the following sections: applicant information, educational information including information about DPD (didactic program in dietetics) courses, sessions and coursework, and attended colleges, and other associated required information including “awards, experience, and volunteer activities”, personal statements, resumes, and letters of recommendation.¹ While some of these DICAS application sections are quick and easy to complete, other sections do require some preparation ahead of time. After experiencing first-hand filling out the DICAS application as well as consulting the advice and opinions of some members from my Nutrition and Dietetics program cohort at Western Michigan University (WMU), I compiled some helpful tips and keys to successfully navigate filling out the DICAS application. Here are the findings from my experience and investigation:

- Start early! Register and create a DICAS account well before the dietetic internship application due dates. This will provide plenty of time to familiarize yourself with the DICAS portal and ensures an ample opportunity to gather all necessary pertinent information. Read through all the application sections and their instructions so you know exactly what information you will need and how DICAS requires in to be entered into the portal.
- Get organized! Keep track of all your work and volunteer experiences: Open a word document or excel spreadsheet. Designate a notebook. Utilize another online or electronic service or organization method tool. Find a way that works for you and record every applicable experience as you are participating in and completing them. This way you have everything at your disposal when you go to input the information into DICAS and are not hunting for or trying to recall important information at the last minute. Pay close attention to the start and stop date’s months and years as well as the total hours for all of your activities. Be sure to keep track of what you did, your supervisors, and what you learned from your experiences. This is valuable information that you will need to be specific about when filling out your DICAS application.
- Utilize your resources! Communicate with your program director. Peruse eatrightpro.org or the student corner on the MiAND webpage. Contact former students who have graduated from your nutrition and dietetics program. These individuals all

have experience with the DICAS portal, how DICAS operates, and can be valuable resources of information. Also, do not hesitate to contact the DICAS customer service directly! The DICAS platform offers a “Live Chat” function for applicants to connect with customer service representatives directly to ask questions.¹ You also have the ability to call the DICAS customer service line, especially during high volume times. I contacted the DICAS customer service operators several times while I was working on my DICAS application and every representative that I interacted with was incredibly nice and extremely helpful!

- Remember to proofread and edit! While some sections of the DICAS application allow you to simply upload a word document or pdf file, several sections of the application do not, including your personal statement. Write out your personal statement and other sections in a word document prior to entering them into your DICAS application. This will give you extra time and assurance to edit your application sections before you copy and paste them into DICAS.
- Speaking of personal statements...Your personal statement is a very crucial part of your DICAS application. Start writing your personal statement early and create multiple drafts of it. Remember to do your research and read what each dietetic internship program is requesting to be included in it, as these requirements may vary between programs. Have several people read it and provide you with feedback. Also, remember to utilize the writing center and other associated resources at your school. These places can be additional resources that can be utilized while putting together the elements of your personal statements, resume, and other elements of your DICAS application.
- In addition to editing and perfecting each of the DICAS application categories, make sure that the information in your personal statement aligns with the information in your resume and in the each of the DICAS sections. Be sure that it is the same information. Additionally, know that once you hit the “submit” button that there are only certain sections of your DICAS application that you will be able to edit or change such as uploading a new personal statement.
- Ask early and give the individuals that you will ask to write letters of recommendation plenty of time. If you can contact these individuals a few months before the DICAS due date, do so. As you would with any application that requires letters of recommendation, you may want to put together some materials such as your resume, personal letter, and transcripts for them to refer to for when they write their letters. Make sure that they are aware that they will receive an email notification from DICAS with reference letter instructions and will have to submit their letters electronically to DICAS.¹ Also, make sure that they know all the pertinent DICAS due dates for their recommendation letters. Be sure to thank and follow-up with those individuals who have written recommendations for you and let them know the turn out from your applications.
- Finally, be sure to check out [eatrightpro.org](https://www.eatrightpro.org) for more information and tips for filling out the DICAS application: <https://www.eatrightpro.org/acend/students-and-advancing-education/dietetic-internship-match-students/video-for-dietetic-internship-centralized-application-service>.

Remember, by starting early and preparing ahead of time, your DICAS application experience will set the stage for a smoother and less stressful dietetic internship application cycle.

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References:

1. Dietetic Internship Centralized Application Services. https://portal.dicas.org/applicants21_spring/index.cgi?rm=home. Accessed January 6, 2021.