

London Dietetics Placement Allocation Policy for 2024/2025

1. Background Information

- 1.1. Pre-registration dietetics training includes 4 compulsory professional practice placements as follows:

London Metropolitan University

Degree Programme	Practice Placements
BSc Dietetics & Nutrition	Practice Based Learning 1 (2 weeks and 1 day), Practice Based Learning 2 (12 weeks and 1 day), Practice Based Learning 3 (11 weeks), Public Health Practice Based Learning (3 weeks)
BSc Dietetics	
MSc Dietetics & Nutrition	

- 1.2. London Metropolitan University, King's College London and University College London mostly work with a subset of placement providers in London as below:

London Metropolitan University	Health Education North Central and East London (HENCEL)	Health Education North West London (HENWL)
Kings College London	Health Education South London (HESL)	Health Education North West London (HENWL)
University College London	Health Education North Central and East London (HENCEL)	Health Education North West London (HENWL)

There may be times when one university uses another university's capacity if there is capacity available if and when there is a shortage of LMET placements.

- 1.3. Practice placements are undertaken in a variety of approved healthcare settings, the majority of which are funded by the National Health Service (NHS) with some simulation across all placements. Practice Based Learning 1 is all simulated. Public Health placements are undertaken in a variety of charity, not for profit organisations and local council borough teams.
- 1.4. The capacity of NHS providers to provide dietetic placements is affected by uncertainties in staffing, demand for services from patients, government policies and budgetary allocations. In some years, students have not always been placed within the London cluster and/or at the time when they expected to be undertaking placement. Students should be aware that placement supply remains uncertain.
- 1.5. Although every effort is made to place students within the London cluster, there is no guarantee of a London placement (or of a placement per se) and some students may need to be placed outside the London area for one or more placements and/or may face a delay in being allocated to one or more placements (whether inside or outside London). This may result in delays to progression and graduation.
- 1.6. Students are notified of this situation at the following stages:
- At the interview stage of the University application process
 - Induction week
 - Pre-placement preparation sessions within the academic setting

- d. In the Course Prospectus
- e. Via the University websites

2. Allocation process

- 2.1. Placement allocation takes place as part of an annual cycle, from September to August. The system of student placement allocation is intended to be:
 - Fair
 - Transparent
 - Practical
- 2.2. To be eligible for a placement in the forthcoming cycle, it is the student's responsibility to submit their placement preferences through their local processes by the date specified. This acts as your application for placement. Applications received after that time may not be accepted. Students need to refer to LMET processes and policies and guidance will be provided before the allocations.
- 2.3. When completing the application for a placement for the current cycle, students will be asked to indicate three preferences for each placement type.
- 2.4. Public Health Practice Based Learning capacity is difficult to secure in advance due to fluctuations in service funding and therefore these placements are normally allocated separately from clinical placements, approximately 1-2 months before the placement start dates. Students will be allocated their Public Health Practice Based Learning site and will not make a preference for this.
- 2.5. Students will not normally be allocated placements in dietetic departments where they are currently or have in the past been employees or volunteers, and are advised to indicate alternative preferences if they are connected to placement providers through an employment relationship (past or current). If students have close friends or relatives working in the placement setting this should also be declared and discussed with one of the placement tutors as it may not be appropriate to be allocated to such a site.
- 2.6. A list of placement providers (by placement type) likely to be offering placements to London students at their placement cohort time will be made available on the Health Placements database. Detailed information about placement providers (including public health placements) can be found on the London Metropolitan University Health Placements Database. Please note that placement providers do not provide all types of placements at all times of the year e.g. placement provider X may only provide Practice Based Learning 2s starting in February and June and so will not appear on the lists for any other placements. Some placement providers offer placements in partnership with other providers. Please note that any partnerships are correct at time of publishing but may be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.
- 2.7. Some placements have bases at multiple sites, we are not able to guarantee that a particular site will take a placement during that period and that requests to be placed at a specific site will be considered on a priority basis in line with the equality act but are not guaranteed. Also note that you may be at multiple locations for the duration of your placement e.g., if you are based at a hospital, you may have a clinic elsewhere in the borough. The addresses used for the dietetic base may be different from where you spend time on placement. Community based placements will involve travelling throughout the area covered by the organisation
- 2.8. Where possible, student preferences will be considered by the London Dietetics Placements Team, depending on the placements available at the time the student is selected for allocation. **However, there is no guarantee that a student will be allocated to one of their preferred locations.**

- 2.9. If it is not possible to allocate a student to one of their listed 'preferences' indicated, the London Dietetics Placements Team will endeavour to minimise travel times as much as possible by allocating to the closest available placement. Students' term time addresses currently held on file will be used during this process, it is each individual student's responsibility to ensure contact details are up to date on the Health Placements Database. Placement opportunities are dependent on offers made by placement providers.
- 2.10. Students have the opportunity to indicate on their placement application form any carer responsibilities which may impact their ability to take up specific placements. Students must provide details of their carer responsibilities and provide supporting evidence on the health placements database at the same time as making placement preferences. Students should outline clearly how their carer responsibilities impact on their placement selection and what features are required of the placement. **Providing this information will not guarantee that the student will be allocated to their first preference site, but the student's circumstances will be considered at the time the student is selected for allocation.**
- 2.11. Students who have other requirements which impact on their ability to take up placements in particular locations (due to a health condition or disability defined by the Equality Act (2010)), should register with the appropriate university's disability and dyslexia service as recommendations relating to reasonable adjustments made by this service will also be considered at the time the student is selected for allocation. Placements have experience of managing additional needs and **reasonable adjustments** will be put in place.
- 2.12. In the first-round allocation cycle, the normal procedure will be that for each placement type and cohort, students' names will be drawn electronically at random and the database will allocate students to the London placements within their sites in the order in which the names are drawn.
- 2.13. Students will not be permitted to make changes by swapping placements with other students at any time. This is to allow placement providers to be informed of placement allocations at the same time as students, and to streamline administrative processes.
- 2.14. If students remain unplaced after an allocation cycle, all students will be allocated after those unplaced from the previous cycle, according to the procedure outlined above.
- 2.15. Subsequent allocation rounds: If any student remains unallocated after the first allocation round they will be placed on a waiting list. Students will be allocated placements as and when new placements become available. Every effort will be made to secure placements for unallocated students either within the London cluster or elsewhere in the country. Students will be regularly updated on the number of students unallocated until all students are allocated.
- 2.16. In the event that not all students can be allocated to placements in time to keep them in cohort, those unallocated students will be allocated first for the next occurrence of that placement available to their university.
- 2.17. It is unlikely that it will be possible to consider preferences of students not allocated in the first round, due to the lack of choice available when subsequent placements are offered by providers. However, reasonable adjustments as recommended by university disability and dyslexia services will be taken into consideration and students have the right to refuse an out of cluster placement (See Section 3 for further guidance).
- 2.18. Students can view their allocation through the database. Further action will not be required **unless** you are considering to decline the placement(s) allocated. If you wish to decline the placement(s) allocated then you must contact the placement team by emailing healthplacements@londonmet.ac.uk **within 48 hours** of the placement offer.

- 2.19. All students are expected to take up any London cluster placement offered, and it is not possible to guarantee a placement in any particular location.
- 2.20. Although it is strongly discouraged and likely to be against the students' best interests, a student may decide to refuse a placement in the London cluster by submitting the refusal in writing to the placements tutor at their respective university (see Section 3 below). The student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the current placement cycle and will re-enter the placement cycle the following year when a new application for placement will need to be submitted.
- 2.21. Students waiting for repeat placements should refer to the Repeat Placement Panel Policy.
- 2.22. The Placements Team will at all times act to ensure each individual student's educational needs are met, and reserve the right to vary the procedures outlined where necessary to meet these needs.

3. Placement Refusal

- 3.1. Students will not be given approval to refuse any London cluster placement offered. Students who refuse a London cluster placement anyway will not be offered an alternative placement in the current allocation cycle.
- 3.2. Students may apply for and receive approval to refuse a placement offered outside of the London cluster. This involves completion of a Request for Placement Refusal form, with accompanying supportive evidence that they are unable to take up a placement outside London. In the case of 'approved refusal' the refused placement will be allocated to a student from the university next to receive a placement for allocation and the student with 'approved refusal' will be offered the next placement available to their university (they will go to top of waiting list).
- 3.3. Once an 'out of cluster' offer which the student deems unacceptable has been made, the process is as follows:
 1. Completion of the Request for Placement Refusal form by student (availablehealthplacements@londonmet.ac.uk)
 2. Form is submitted together with evidence of situation to Placement Tutor within 48 hours of placement offer.
 3. Student notified whether approval to refuse the placement has been granted within 48 hours of receipt of the form by the tutor.
- 3.4. There are two categories under which students may apply to stay in cohort despite refusing an out of cluster placement allocation: a) dependents and b) protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act (2010)).
- 3.5. The decision to approve placement refusal will be made by the London Dietetics Placements Team, taking into consideration the robustness of the evidence supplied and the geographical location of the placement offered in relation to the student's residential address.
- 3.6. Each case is evaluated individually and decisions taken are at the discretion of the London Dietetics Placements Team. This decision is final and will not be open for further discussion. An appeals process may be logged and students should follow the university appeals procedure.
- 3.7. Please note that submitting evidence does not guarantee that the application will be upheld. Having approval to refuse a placement on a previous occasion does not guarantee approval to refuse for future allocations and a separate application will need to be made and considered.

- 3.8. Students are strongly encouraged to accept any placement offered to them to ensure they progress as expected on their enrolled programme. Any student who refuses to accept a placement locally or outside the cluster (without approved refusal) will be deemed to have withdrawn from the current placement cycle and will re-enter the placement cycle the following year when a new application for placement will need to be submitted. **Another placement will not be offered in the current cycle.**

4. Withdrawal of allocated placements by placement providers

- 4.1. If a placement provider withdraws a placement which has already been allocated to a student, the displaced student will be allocated when the next placement becomes available to that student's university (they will automatically be placed at the top of the waiting list).

5. Additional guidance

5.1. Health

Applications for placement should only be made in the knowledge that the student concerned is fit to complete the placement period. If there are any circumstances which may prevent completion of the placement, such applications should not be made. You must ensure that you have attended an Occupational Health assessment. If this was not done for any reason at the start of the course you must attend assessment as soon as possible. You will be asked annually to self-declare any changes to your health that may make you unfit to complete placement.

Some placement sites pose particular difficulties or risks for pregnant staff and students and therefore disclosure is essential in order to allow for a student to be allocated to an appropriate placement site and for a full risk assessment to be completed. A placement would not normally be allocated to a student whose expected delivery date is during the expected placement period.

Students who withdraw from placement on health grounds or as a result of a change in personal circumstances should discuss their progression with their placement tutor.

Most placements take place in multiple environments at a variety of locations and some of those environments may be challenging (e.g. noisy, distressing or with significant distractions). Placements are both physically and mentally tiring and students who feel that they may struggle to perform in such an environment should speak to their course leader or placement tutor to arrange appropriate support.

All information given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be disclosed to members of the Dietetics teams responsible for allocating the London Cluster placements.

5.2 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Students who are under investigation or being questioned by police regarding a criminal matter, will inform their course lead immediately. Students will be required to undergo fitness to practice reviews through the University process.

Students are expected to register with the DBS update service and are responsible for ensuring their payment details for the annual subscription are up to date.

5.2. Failure of pre-requisite subjects and reassessments

Students who fail subjects that are university pre-requisites for placement will not be allowed to progress to placement.

Following successful completion of pre-requisites by the student, a placement will usually be allocated in the next allocation cycle (i.e. they will join the cohort of students in the year below) or sooner, if available.

Students who have met the academic pre-requisites for placement, but may require reassessments in **one** other module may be able to progress to placement at the discretion of their course leader. Students should not normally take re-assessments during the placement period and can only do so with the prior agreement of the placement provider and the university placement tutor or lecturer.

Students who have met all placement pre-requisites at the first attempt will be prioritised. This may include the need to deallocate students who have reassessments or who are re-sitting modules due to previous module failure.

- 5.3. All students must be fit to practice in order to undertake practice-based learning. Regular checks are in place throughout the course however students remain responsible for informing their course leader if there is a change in their fitness to practice in line with the HCPC Standards of Conduct and Ethics for Students (HCPC, 2016). All students should refer to the Fitness to Practice Policy which is available in course handbooks.

5.4. Placement Dates

Whilst start dates for placements are requested by the University, students are advised that the final decision on start dates is made by placement providers. As patient care often necessitates changes to NHS services at short notice, start dates can and do change with little warning and students are advised not to make plans (such as bookings for holidays) that cannot be changed. In addition, students may require additional placement time for a variety of reasons, which may affect placement finish dates. Advice should be sought from placement lecturers/tutors if students are unclear about availability expectations for placements.

Placement cohort time	Placement
January and summer period	Practice Based Learning 1
September, February and June	Practice Based Learning 2
October and January	Practice Based Learning 3
August and June	Public Health Practice Based Learning

5.5. Policy on student contact with practice placements

Students who are allocated to a placement should await confirmation regarding placement dates from the practice placement provider. Confirmation and paperwork is usually sent to allocated students approximately one to two weeks prior to the given start date. If the placement provider has not made contact approximately 2 weeks prior to the start date, students should notify their placement tutor to seek advice about contacting the placement trainer.

Under no circumstances are students to contact placement providers directly to request placements, or to use family connections to make requests on their behalf. Such action will be considered unprofessional behaviour and will result in disciplinary action from the university where the student is enrolled, and could jeopardise the student's status as 'fit for placement'.

Reference

Great Britain. Parliament. Equality Act 2010: Elizabeth II. (2010) London: Stationery Office.
London Dietetics Placements Team
July 2024 – For review 2025

Appendix A

Practice Based Learning: simulated and collaborative learning expectations agreement

Practice based learning will allow you to develop your dietetic judgement based on the clinical decision making process, through a focus on the integration and practical application of the knowledge and skills learnt in the university setting. The practice based learning modules will be delivered through a mixture of simulated learning, collaborative learning and practical learning in approved dietetic settings, primarily within NHS organisations.

Throughout the practice based learning modules you will be able to demonstrate confidence, resilience, ambition and creativity and act as inclusive, collaborative and socially responsible practitioners.

You will be provided with a variety of learning experiences to support you in meeting the Practice Based Learning outcomes and it is expected that as an adult learner you will also take responsibility for your own learning.

With this in mind, you should review the following expectations agreement at the start of your simulated learning and collaborative learning programme and sign it to ensure that you are clear about what is expected from you.

Support on Placement and Workload Expectations

There are a number of mechanisms in place to support you throughout your placement experience. This includes your placement team as well as staff and services (e.g. Disabilities and Dyslexia Service (DDS)) available at your University. For further details on the support available please refer to section 6 of the practice based learning 2 and/or practice based learning 3 student handbooks.

You are required to work the same hours as a full time member of staff at the clinical placement site and during the simulated activities. For further details on workload expectations please refer to practice based learning student handbooks. The placement handbooks can be found here in the 'placements' section of the webpage <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/subject-areas/dietetics-food-and-nutrition/>

Simulated Learning

Simulated learning is an important part of your dietetic education and will provide you with a safe space to practice your skills and to increase your confidence. It provides equity in learning experiences via students having access to the same simulation-based clinical experiences to help put your dietetic skills and knowledge into practice.

To get the most from your simulated learning experience we ask you to enter into a learning agreement to help you immerse yourself into the simulation based experiences. We will make efforts to provide opportunities that reflect some aspects of clinical practice through the use of simulated patients (actors, role-play, avatars) and case examples that mimic patient demographics and clinical presentations you may come across in clinical practice. However there may be limitations to what can be achieved and we ask you to suspend disbelief, accept these limitations by agreeing to overlook aspects of simulated based learning that may appear unrealistic and buy into the simulated learning experience cognitively and emotionally.

During simulated learning experiences we expect you to:

- Treat all members of staff, students and external facilitators with respect and behave professionally.
- Accept feedback and work to address any areas highlighted.
- Be self-motivated.
- Read and be familiar with the contents of the practice based learning student handbooks. The placement handbooks can be found here in the 'placements' section of the webpage <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/subject-areas/dietetics-food-and-nutrition/>
- Be prepared to reflect, evaluate yourself critically and to learn from your mistakes.
- Prepare adequately for simulated learning experiences or other tasks by reading through relevant material and completing necessary tasks beforehand.
- Ask if you are unsure about something.
- Meet deadlines without prompting and inform your supervisor in advance if you are having difficulty.
- Ensure you understand what is expected in terms of evidence required for your portfolio.
- Be on time, present and visibly engaged during simulated learning activities.
- Approach simulated learning activities as if you are in a clinical setting.
- Any recording (audio, video, or photo) in the simulation lab without prior approval is unacceptable.
- Any publication of recordings to social media is unacceptable and unethical and will result in disciplinary action.

Simulated learning equipment should be treated with care, respect and should not be used for any purposes other than those specified by the assignment. We accept accidental damage may occur, however, if it is found that the simulated learning equipment has been deliberately misused, abused, and/or damaged then you may be reported for non-academic misconduct as governed by the Institutions' Student Conduct regulations, within the academic regulations.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your learning, reflect on your practice both in action and post activities/experiences having taken place and enable you to share your knowledge and learning with your peers. Collaborative learning will be delivered through a mixture of facilitated case discussions and peer learning via online or in-person sessions. During these learning experiences, we expect you to

- Treat all members of staff, students and external facilitators with respect and behave professionally.
- Be self-motivated.
- Be prepared to reflect, evaluate yourself critically and to learn from your mistakes.
- Be on time, present, and visibly engaged.
- Ask if you are unsure about something.
- Read and be familiar with the contents of the practice based learning student handbooks. The placement handbooks can be found here in the 'placements' section of the webpage <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/subject-areas/dietetics-food-and-nutrition/>
- Approach collaborative learning activities as if you are in a clinical setting.
- Keep your video on if participating in online learning activities. If this is not possible, you should explain why, (for example bandwidth issues) as this is expected in a professional context. Seeing your video helps to see if you are engaged and allows the presenter to adapt information provided appropriately. Valuable feedback is provided to presenters from seeing the faces of the online audience they are presenting to
- Mute your microphone when participating in online learning activities if you are not actively speaking or in a breakout room.

- Staff and external facilitators will not record collaborative or simulated learning activities due to the sensitive nature of information that may be discussed. To allow you to refer to the material after the session students will receive:
 - a briefing prior to collaborative learning activities which can be recorded.
 - on completion, a recorded or written summary of the key learning points from the case or scenario

I agree to comply with the above expectations agreement