



Rush University
College of Health Sciences
Department of Clinical Nutrition

Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition

MS Track Student Handbook
2026-2027 Academic Year

For students enrolled in the fully online MS track

Table of Contents

Welcome & Program Overview	3
MS Track at a Glance	3
Curriculum & Academic Planning	3
Academic Advising & Registration	4
Research & Scholarly Work	4
Professional & Community Service	5
Graduation Requirements	5
Academic Progression	5
Leave of Absence	5
Policies & Procedures	6
Technology & Online Learning	6
Student Resources	6
Faculty & Program Contacts	7
Key Links	7

About this handbook. This handbook provides program-specific guidance for students in the Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition (MS) track. The Rush University Catalog and official University and College of Health Sciences policies are the authoritative sources for academic policies and degree requirements. If information in this handbook conflicts with an official University policy or Catalog requirement, the official University source takes precedence.

Welcome & Program Overview

Welcome to the Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition program in the Department of Clinical Nutrition, College of Health Sciences at Rush University. The MS track is designed for students and professionals who want to deepen their knowledge of nutrition science, evidence-based practice, metabolism, research, and the factors that shape nutrition and health.

The MS track is fully online. Courses may be offered in synchronous and asynchronous formats, allowing students to complete the degree from a distance while engaging with faculty and classmates through Rush University learning technologies.

Important: RDN Eligibility

The MS track does not include the supervised experiential learning required for eligibility to become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). Students seeking an integrated graduate degree and supervised experiential learning should review the Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition - Dietetic Integrated (MSDI) track.

MS Track at a Glance

Program Feature	MS Track
Degree	Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition
Delivery	Fully online; courses may include synchronous and asynchronous formats
Minimum degree credits	30 graduate credit hours
Interprofessional education	IPE 502 is required
Professional/community service	Minimum of 16 approved contact hours
Minimum cumulative GPA	3.0
Time to degree	All degree requirements must be completed within five years of matriculation
RDN eligibility	The MS track alone does not provide eligibility for the RDN credential

Curriculum & Academic Planning

The MS curriculum is designed to build knowledge across foundational nutrition science, metabolism, applied clinical evidence, research, and professional development. Students complete a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours. The current curriculum includes the following areas:

- Foundational nutrition principles (NTR 610)
- Metabolism and nutrient regulation (NTR 620, NTR 630 and NTR 631)
- Applied evidence in clinical nutrition (NTR 660-661)
- Research and evidence-based practice (NTR 689-692)
- Interprofessional education (IPE 502)
- Graduate electives selected to support the student's professional and academic goals

The Rush University Catalog is the official source for the current curriculum, course titles, credit hours, prerequisites, and course descriptions. Because course offerings and sequencing may change, students should follow the individualized plan of study developed with their academic advisor rather than relying on a fixed semester-by-semester sequence in this handbook.

Individualized Plan of Study

Students may complete the program at a pace that fits their academic and professional needs. A plan of study is developed with the academic advisor and may be adjusted based on course availability, prior graduate coursework, approved transfer credit or prior competency, and the student's goals. Students should not add, drop, or substitute a required course without first discussing the change with the academic advisor.

Planning reminder

Before each registration period, review your current plan of study and confirm that your planned courses keep you on track for graduation. Students enrolled part-time should pay particular attention to courses that are offered only once per academic year.

Academic Advising & Registration

Academic advising for students in the MS track is coordinated by Sarah Peterson, PhD, RDN. Students should meet with their academic advisor each semester to review course selection, academic progress, degree requirements, and career or professional goals.

The Department of Clinical Nutrition typically coordinates registration for required courses through batch registration. Students are responsible for reviewing their registration each semester and confirming that their schedule matches their approved plan of study. Registration cannot be completed when a student has an unresolved hold. Students who are not registered as expected, or who miss a registration deadline, should contact the academic advisor promptly for assistance.

Students can use the Rush University Portal to review registration, account holds, tuition charges, final grades, and other student records.

Research & Scholarly Work

Research and evidence-based practice are central components of the MS curriculum. The research course sequence (NTR 689-692) is designed to help students critically evaluate scientific literature, apply research methods, interpret findings, and communicate evidence clearly.

Across the sequence, students may complete activities such as developing a focused research or evidence-based question, reviewing and synthesizing literature, applying appropriate methods, analyzing or interpreting findings, and presenting scholarly work. Specific requirements are described in the syllabi for each research course and may vary by project.

Students should communicate regularly with the faculty member supervising their scholarly work and complete research milestones according to the approved timeline. Delays in research-related requirements may affect the anticipated graduation date.

Professional & Community Service

Service to the community and profession is an important part of the Rush student experience. MS students are required to complete a minimum of 16 contact hours of approved professional or community service before graduation.

Examples may include Rush Community Service Initiatives Program (RCSIP) activities, community health events, nutrition education or outreach activities, approved professional service, and participation in service opportunities through Rush student organizations. Students should confirm that an activity is appropriate for the requirement and follow the Department's process for documenting completed hours.

Graduation Requirements

To graduate from the MS track and have the degree conferred, students must:

- Complete all required coursework and earn the minimum number of graduate credits required for the degree.
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater.
- Successfully complete all required research and scholarly work.
- Pass IPE 502.
- Complete a minimum of 16 approved professional or community service contact hours.
- Complete all degree requirements within five years of matriculation.
- Satisfy all University and College of Health Sciences graduation requirements in effect for the student.

Academic Progression

Academic progress is reviewed throughout the program. Students are expected to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater and earn a grade of C or better in all didactic courses.

A student may be placed on academic probation if the cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 or if the student receives a grade of D or F in a didactic course. A course in which a grade of D or F is earned must be repeated, which may extend the anticipated graduation date.

The Clinical Nutrition Academic Progress and Promotions Committee will communicate with students who are placed on probation and will identify the conditions that must be satisfied for removal from probation. Dismissal criteria and appeal processes are governed by current University, College, and program policies. Students should consult the Rush University Catalog and official academic policies for the most current requirements.

Leave of Absence

Students who need to interrupt enrollment should contact their academic advisor as early as possible. A leave of absence may affect course sequencing, financial aid, access to University services, and the expected graduation date. Students must follow the official Rush University process and applicable deadlines for requesting a leave of absence and returning to the program.

Policies & Procedures

Students are responsible for following all Rush University, College of Health Sciences, and Department of Clinical Nutrition policies. These include policies related to academic integrity, grading, academic progress, professional conduct, student rights and responsibilities, appeals and grievances, accessibility, nondiscrimination, and respectful learning environments.

Rather than reproducing policies that may change, this handbook directs students to the official University sources listed in the Key Links section. When questions arise, students should contact their academic advisor or the appropriate University office.

Technology & Online Learning

Because the MS track is fully online, reliable access to appropriate technology is essential. Students should maintain regular access to a computer, high-speed internet, Rush email, Canvas, Microsoft 365 applications, and any course-specific software identified by the instructor.

- Check Rush email and Canvas regularly for course and program announcements.
- Use the Rush University Portal to review registration, account information, and grades.

- Use approved Rush systems for storing or sharing University-related files when required.
- Contact the Rush help desk or technology support resources promptly if a technical problem interferes with course participation.
- Follow course-specific instructions for Zoom or other synchronous meeting platforms.

Student Resources

Rush University provides a range of academic, administrative, accessibility, financial, and wellness resources. The offices below are especially relevant for students in the online MS track.

Resource	How it can help
Office of the Registrar	Registration, academic records, transcripts, add/drop processes, graduation applications, and leave-of-absence forms.
Office of Student Financial Aid	Financial aid, scholarships, loans, and related student funding questions.
Office of Student Accessibility Services	Academic accommodations and support for students with disabilities.
Rush University Library	Online journals, databases, PubMed access, interlibrary loan, citation tools, and research support.
Rush Center for Academic Excellence	Writing support, academic coaching, and assistance with mathematics, statistics, and research.
University Wellness Services	Confidential mental health and wellness services for enrolled students.
Office of Community Engagement / RCSIP	Opportunities to participate in community-based service activities.
Student Life & Engagement	Student organizations, events, leadership opportunities, and campus engagement.
Rush University Portal / Canvas	Registration and student records; course materials, assignments, communication, and assessments.

Faculty & Program Contacts

Department of Clinical Nutrition faculty are listed below. Students should use the Rush directory for the most current faculty titles and contact information.

Faculty	Title	Email
Sandra Gomez, PhD, RD	Associate Professor	Sandra_L_Gomez@rush.edu
Mark McInerney, DHSc, RD, LDN	Assistant Professor	Mark_C_McInerney@rush.edu
Liam McKeever, PhD, RD	Assistant Professor	Liam_McKeever@rush.edu
Sarah Peterson, PhD, RDN	Assistant Professor / MS Academic Advisor	Sarah_J_Peterson@rush.edu
Samantha Pritchard, PhD, RD, LDN	Assistant Professor	Samantha_K_Pritchard@rush.edu

Key Links

- [Rush University MS in Clinical Nutrition - Curriculum](#)
- [Rush University Catalog](#)
- [Rush University Portal](#)
- [Canvas](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Office of Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#)
- [Rush University Library](#)
- [University Wellness Services](#)
- [Rush Center for Academic Excellence](#)
- [Rush Community Service Initiatives Program \(RCSIP\)](#)
- [Student Life & Engagement](#)

Handbook revision date: September 2026. Program requirements and University policies are subject to change. Students should confirm current requirements in the Rush University Catalog and with their academic advisor.