

University of South Carolina

M.S. in Performance Nutrition & Dietetics Application Essay

One step of the application process for the USC M.S. in Performance Nutrition and Dietetics program is to compose an application essay. Please carefully read the following instructions and rubric several times while composing the essay. You are encouraged to take full advantage of all resources available to you to assist you in composing and editing this essay prior to your submission.

Please submit with your application.

Application Essay Format

- 1-2 pages in length
- Calibri 11pt size font
- Single spaced
- Title: USC MS/PND Application Essay
- Subtitle: Your Full Name and the date
- As needed: References and Citations in APA format (may be on a third page)

Application Content

Please use complete sentences, appropriate grammar and syntax, as well as proper punctuation. Please address the following items:

1. Your motivation to become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and career goals.
2. Highlights of your experience/exposure to the professional field of dietetics (ex. shadowing, professional conferences, volunteer and/or paid work)
3. Aspects of the USC MS/PND program that appeal/interest you.
4. What do you hope to gain from the USC MS/PND program (beyond fulfilling the requirements to sit for the RDN exam)?
5. Aspects of your character and experience that align with the program mission and that indicate potential to support the program goals and objectives.

Please keep in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to these items. They are designed to help you reveal your thoughts and reasoning for pursuing entrance into this program and pursuing a career as an RD/RDN. The Admission & Curriculum Committee members that are reviewing the application essays understand that all individuals have unique experiences and reasons for their career choices. Therefore, they will NOT be critically evaluating your choices or the reasons behind those choices. They WILL be evaluating the way you communicate this information. Please see (below) the USC MS/PND Application Essay Rubric that will be utilized by the Admission & Curriculum Committee members as they evaluate the application essays.

USC MS/PND Application Essay Rubric

Score	4	3	2	1
Criteria				
Presentation of Answers	All questions are thoroughly answered in a detailed, concise, and specific manner.	All questions are fully answered with detailed answers.	All questions are answered. Most of the answers are supported with adequate detail.	Not all questions are answered. AND/OR The answers of two or more questions do not contain adequate detail or support.
Development of Topic & Details	Writer successfully presents the topic in a novel or unique way. Writing includes excellent, concrete, and specific detail and insightful commentary.	Writer successfully presents the topic in an interesting way. Writing includes good, concrete detail and some insightful commentary.	Writer presents the topic in an ordinary way. Writing includes concrete detail, but commentary is obvious, simplistic, or generic.	Writer presents topic in an ordinary way. Concrete details and commentary are either weak or missing.
Organization	Writing has a compelling and logical flow of ideas.	Writing has a logical flow of ideas.	Writing sometimes has a logical flow but is off topic at other times.	Writing is aimless and disorganized.
Format	The entire essay is formatted correctly.	A majority of the essay is formatted correctly.	Some of the essay is formatted correctly with minor inconsistencies.	The essay has major formatting issues and is not consistent with the instructions.
Topic Sentences & Transitions	Paragraphs have focused and poignant topic sentences as well as seamless transitions.	Paragraphs have focused topic sentences and obvious transitions.	Paragraphs have topic sentences that need to be more focused and rough transitions.	Paragraphs lack topic sentences and transitions.
Description	Writing consistently and effectively shows rather than tells through specific and vivid details.	Writing shows rather than tells, but some details lack specificity.	Writing includes some showing but needs more.	Writing uses all telling and no showing.

Voice	Writing reveals the writer's unique personality and perspective to a degree that enables the reader to easily empathize.	Writing reveals some of the writer's thoughts and feelings but does not reveal too much of the writer's personality and/or perspective.	Writing is bland with too little exposure of the real person behind it.	Writing is too informal. Writing does not reveal that the writer cares about the topics.
Word Choice	Writer uses words that are natural, vivid, varied, striking, and appropriately applied.	Some word choices are high quality while some are routine or ordinary.	Writer uses words that are dull or uninspired. AND/OR Unnatural word choice reveals the writer is trying too hard to impress.	Writer uses the same words repeatedly. Some words may be used in a confusing or inappropriate manner.
Grammar Usage & Sentence Fluency	Proper grammar is utilized 100% of the time. Sentences flow well and vary in construction and length.	Writing has a few grammar issues. Sentences flow well but do not vary much.	Writing has enough grammar errors to distract the reader. Some sentences do not flow well and/or are not varied at all.	Writing has numerous grammar mistakes and poor sentence construction that make the essay hard to read.
Spelling & Punctuation	Writing uses correct punctuation and spelling 100% of the time.	Writing has a few errors to fix, but generally uses correct conventions.	Writing has enough errors to distract the reader.	Writing has numerous errors that make the essay hard to read.

Total Score _____ **x 2.5 =** _____