



**SINGAPORE NUTRITION AND  
DIETETICS ASSOCIATION**

*Proficiency Standards for  
Nutritionists in Singapore*

**Developed by:**  
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## **Introduction**

Nutritionists are professionals with a recognised degree in human nutrition. Nutritionists integrate and apply scientific knowledge from relevant sciences to promote the understanding of the effects of nutrition, and to enhance the impact of food to maintain and promote the health of healthy individuals, groups, and the community.

Nutritionists are essential members of the health system and assume a variety of roles, in different areas of practice such as health promotion, food service management and industry, education, research, administration, and consulting. We practice independently, interdependently and collaboratively. We are therefore accountable to the public and to each other, and it is our responsibility to practice within professional and ethical standards and monitor our practice according to those standards.

The scope of practice for Nutritionists in Singapore may include but is not limited to:

- Establish and review the principles of nutrition and nutrition guidelines for the healthy throughout their lives
- Advise individuals, families, and groups on the principles of food and nutrition, and the practical application of those principles
- Apply sound nutrition principles to the characterisation, preparation, processing or labelling of foods and diets to meet the nutritional needs of man for normal development and good health
- Assess the overall nutritional needs and status of a community to establish priorities and influence policies of health promotion programmes; plan, coordinate, implement and evaluate those programmes
- Provide unbiased sound nutrition advice to the public

## **What Are Standards?**

Standards are based on the values, priorities, and practice of the profession.

**Standards describe the minimal levels of performance that a profession uses to evaluate the activities and performance of its members.** They are intended to guide the practice of each professional.

## **Why Do We Need Standards?**

Standards are developed to:

- Protect public's trust on safe and ethical nutrition practice
- Act as a guide to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to practice safely and effectively
- Help Nutritionists and others evaluate practice to ensure service quality and improve practice
- Promote the role and accountability of Nutritionists to the public and other professionals

## **Development of Proficiency Standards for Nutritionists**

This document sets out the standards of proficiency for safe and effective practice that SNDA expects Accredited Nutritionists in Singapore (ANS) to meet. We also expect ANS to keep to our Code of Professional Conduct (Appendix A).

With reference to the standards set out by other National Dietetics Associations<sup>1-4</sup> and Nutrition Society<sup>5</sup>, and in consultation with practising nutritionists in Singapore, we have developed 24 standard statements classified under four categories: i) professional characteristics; ii) professional knowledge; iii) professional skills; and iv) application of practice.

The standards explain the key obligations that we expect of each nutritionist. We have not attempted to create exhaustive lists of all the areas that each standard covers. They are mainly applicable to all nutritionists regardless of their area, setting or focus of practice. The broad standard statements can be used as a framework for the development of standards at a more specific level.

## PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

### 1. Professional Characteristics

*Accredited Nutritionist must:*

- 1.1. Adhere to SNDA's Code of Professional Conduct (Appendix A)
- 1.2. Assume responsibility and accountability for own professional actions
- 1.3. Exercise a professional duty of care
- 1.4. Know the limits of own practice and when to seek advice
- 1.5. Use resources effectively and efficiently in practice
- 1.6. Possess good interpersonal skills to work, where appropriate, with other professionals and clients
- 1.7. Know the professional and personal scope of their practice\*

*\*Nutritionist should not provide dietary advice to individuals with nutrition-related medical conditions.*

### 2. Professional Knowledge

*Accredited Nutritionist must:*

- 2.1. Know the key concepts of the biological, physical, social, psychological and sciences which are relevant to their scope of practice
- 2.2. Possess in-depth scientific knowledge of food and human nutrition and integrate this knowledge with that from other disciplines
- 2.3. Know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different assessment and management approaches
- 2.4. Understand nutrition research methodologies, interpret and utilise research findings appropriately
- 2.5. Know how and where to locate needed information

### **3. Professional Skills**

#### **a. Communication**

*Accredited Nutritionist must be able to:*

- 3.1. Demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues and clients
- 3.2. Select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with clients and others

#### **b. Assessment**

*Accredited Nutritionist must be able to:*

- 3.3. Gather appropriate information; use nutrition (and health needs) assessment and surveillance procedures to identify nutritional needs of individuals or groups
- 3.4. Use appropriate assessment techniques; choose, undertake and record the most appropriate method of dietary and nutritional assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- 3.5. Analyse and evaluate the information collected, and evaluate responses to intervention provided

## **4. Application of Practice**

### **a. Knowledge and Skills**

*Accredited Nutritionist must be able to:*

- 4.1. Competently apply appropriate professional knowledge and skills to make professional judgements and take appropriate actions
- 4.2. Provide evidence-based nutrition information and practice based on current evidence and knowledge
- 4.3. Use statistical, epidemiological and research skills to gather and interpret evidence in order to make reasoned conclusion and judgements on nutrition information
- 4.4. Be sensitive to physical, psychological, socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors that affect diet, lifestyle and health when advocating nutrition intervention

### **b. Critical Evaluation**

*Accredited Nutritionist must be able to:*

- 4.5. Critically evaluate new nutrition information and research
- 4.6. Critically review, reflect on and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of practice to modify it accordingly

## APPENDIX A

### CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

A breach of any of the following code of professional conduct shall be deemed detrimental to the interests of the dietetic and nutrition profession, and shall render any member guilty thereof and liable to suspension of membership:

#### 1. Professional Competence

- Apply professional practice based on scientific principles and current information
- Assume responsibility and accountability to maintain a high standard of personal competence through participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities

#### 2. Confidentiality

- Maintain confidentiality of privileged information
- Seek consent wherever applicable

#### 3. Objectivity

- Strive for objectivity and respect for unique needs and values of individual clients without discrimination
- Do not compromise standards of care and avoid bias in any kind of professional evaluation to meet commercial targets or when there is a conflict of interest

#### 4. Integrity

- Maintain integrity, honesty and empathy in professional practice
- Accurately present professional qualifications and credentials
- Do not advertise, promote or endorse products in a false or misleading manner
- Alert to situations that might cause a conflict of interest and prevent the occurrence
- Provide advise on dietetic treatment of disease only with cooperation of a registered medical practitioner\*

\* Applicable to Dietitians only.

## REFERENCES

1. British Dietetic Association. (1997). National Professional Standards. UK
2. Dietitians of Canada. (2000). Professional Standards For Dietitians In Canada. Canada.
3. Health Professional Council. (2003). Standards of Proficiency – Dietitians. UK
4. The American Dietetic Association. (1998). The American Dietetic Association Standards of Professional Practice for Dietetics Professionals. Journal of the American Dietetic Association. 98(1):83-87.
5. The Nutrition Society (2006). The Modern Nutrition Profession. Draft standards of proficiency. Public consultation. UK

## COMMENTS

The following Proficiency Standards for Nutritionists in Singapore have been developed to reflect the present practice of nutritionists. As nutrition is still an evolving field and profession in Singapore, we will keep these standards under continual review. To keep these standards current and reflective of your practice, we need your valuable comments.

If you think that these standards require revision, please email your comments and suggestions to us at [secretary@snda.org.sg](mailto:secretary@snda.org.sg)