



**SINGAPORE NUTRITION AND
DIETETICS ASSOCIATION**

*Proficiency Standards for
Dietitians in Singapore*

Developed by:
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Introduction

Dietitians are professionals with a recognised degree in nutrition and dietetics. Dietitians translate and apply the science and art of food and human nutrition to maintain and promote the health of individuals, groups, and the community, in both health and disease.

Dietitians are essential members of the health system and assume a variety of roles, in different areas of practice such as clinical, education, health promotion, food service management and industry, 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 dietitians in Singapore may include but is not limited to:

- Establish and review the principles of nutrition and nutrition guidelines for the healthy and diseased throughout their lives
- Assess nutritional needs of individuals, develop and implement care plans based on the assessments
- Advise individuals, families, and groups on the principles of food and nutrition, and the practical application of those principles
- Manage food service systems to provide nutrition care
- Assess the overall nutritional needs of a community to establish priorities and influence policies of health promotion programs; plan, coordinate, implement and evaluate those programs
- Collect, interpret and evaluate for consumer protection, information on nutrition that is available 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 We Need Standards?

Standards are developed to:

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

Development of Proficiency Standards for Dietitians

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

With reference to the standards set out by other National Dietetics Associations¹⁻⁴, and in consultation with practising dietitians in Singapore, we have developed 30 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 dietitian. We have not attempted to create exhaustive lists of all the areas that each standard covers. They are mainly applicable to all dietitians 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 Dietitian 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, patients, clients, their relatives and carers
- 1.7. Know the professional and personal scope of their practice and be able to make appropriate referrals

2. Professional Knowledge

Accredited Dietitian must:

- 2.1. Know the key concepts of the biological, physical, social, psychological and clinical sciences which are relevant to dietetic practice
- 2.2. Possess in-depth scientific knowledge of food, human nutrition and diet therapy, and integrate this knowledge with that from other disciplines including health and social sciences, education, communication and management
- 2.3. Possess knowledge and experience in food service and administration
- 2.4. Know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different assessment, treatment and management approaches
- 2.5. Understand the methods commonly used in nutrition research
- 2.6. Know how and where to locate needed information to provide effective service

3. Professional Skills

a. Communication

Accredited Dietitian must be able to:

- 3.1. Demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, clients, their relatives and carers
- 3.2. Understand how communication skills affect the assessment of patients and clients, and how the means of communication should be modified to address potential barriers such as age, physical and learning disability
- 3.3. Select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with patients, clients and others

b. Assessment

Accredited Dietitian must be able to:

- 3.5. Gather appropriate information such as anthropometry, biochemical, clinical, dietary and social, for assessment of individuals or groups
- 3.6. Use appropriate assessment techniques; choose, undertake and record the most appropriate method of dietary and nutritional assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- 3.7. Analyse and evaluate the information collected, and evaluate responses to intervention provided

4. Application of Practice

a. Knowledge and Skills

Accredited Dietitian must be able to:

- 4.1. Competently apply appropriate professional knowledge and skills to make professional judgements and take appropriate actions
- 4.2. Conduct evidence-based 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 with respect to dietetic practice
- 4.4. Be sensitive to physical, psychological, socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors that affect diet, lifestyle and health when advocating dietary intervention
- 4.5. Adopt a client centred approach; know how to select or modify treatment and management approaches or strategies to meet the needs and goals of each individual or group
- 4.6. Adapt dietetic practice according to unexpected outcomes or information gained during the assessment
- 4.7. Formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of agreed timescales and goals with clients
- 4.8. Maintain records, especially clinical records, appropriately

b. Critical Evaluation

Accredited Dietitian must be able to:

- 4.9. Critically evaluate new nutritional and dietetic information and research
- 4.10. Critically review, reflect on and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of practice to modify it accordingly
- 4.11. Make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease nutrition therapy or activity, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately

APPENDIX A

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
<p>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:</p>
<p>1. Professional Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<p>2. Confidentiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain confidentiality of privileged information• Seek consent wherever applicable
<p>3. Objectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<p>4. Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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*
<p>* Applicable to Dietitians only.</p>

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.

COMMENTS

The following Proficiency Standards for Dietitians in Singapore have been developed to reflect the present practice of dietitians. As dietetics is still an evolving 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