

Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs Version 2.0



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Revision history

Version	Date	Section	Details
2.0	January 2017	-	Release of revised document with new title “Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs”.
Revision history of previous title “Accreditation Manual”			
1.3	October 2015	-	Updated DAA staff titles and Unit name
1.2	October 2011	Section 3.2 Sections 3.1 & 4 Section 3.9	Placement language, External advisory committees, Processes for new programs, Wording on dietetic course material and websites
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Introduction

The Dietitians Association of Australia (**DAA**) is the peak body of dietetic and nutrition professionals, providing strategic leadership in food and nutrition through empowerment, advocacy, education, accreditation and communication. DAA serves and protects the public by assuring the quality and continuing improvement of the minimum accepted standard for accredited nutrition and Dietetics education programs. This includes ensuring that graduate Dietitians have demonstrated competence as described in the NCS.

Dietetics is a self-regulated profession, and the DAA is a member of the National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (**NASRHP**) that benchmark against the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (**AHPRA**) requirements. The profession of Dietetics contributes to the promotion of health and the prevention and treatment of illness by optimising the nutrition of populations, communities and individuals. Dietitians have a defined and recognisable body of knowledge and utilise scientific principles and methods in the study of nutrition and dietetics, applying these results to influence the wider environment affecting food intake and eating behaviour. The scope of Dietetic practice is such that Dietitians may work in a variety of settings and have a variety of work functions.¹

Dietetics is the application of science in nutrition and dietetic practice, and its study is based on Human Biosciences and Food and Nutrition Science, taught within an evidence-based paradigm. The *Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (the Standards)* informs Universities about the requirements of Accreditation which aim to ensure that graduate Dietitians have demonstrated competence as described in the National Competency Standards² (**NCS**). The NCS determine the level of acceptable performance of a graduate Dietitian, and are available via the [DAA website](#).²

There are three documents relating to Dietetics Education Program Accreditation:

1. **Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (this document)**

Details the minimum requirements that Universities need to demonstrate to gain accreditation for their Dietetics education program(s) and that Universities must continue to meet to maintain their accreditation.

2. **Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs**

Sets out the processes for the accreditation application stages, the Non-Domestic Placement Site Approval Process, a decisions review procedure, the rights of termination and withdrawal of an Accreditation Status, and the timing and procedural requirements for both the DAA and the University.

3. **Evidence Guide for Dietetics Education Program Providers**

This is designed to assist Universities applying for accreditation in submitting sufficient evidence for meeting the Standards.

DAA also provides a process for new programs to have their program “qualified”. This is outlined in the *Process for Qualification of New Dietetics Education Programs*

Whilst the above accreditation documents contain all relevant information required to inform the accreditation process, Universities are encouraged to maintain ongoing contact with the DAA National Office via the Accreditation Manager (phone 02 6189 1200, or email accreditation@daa.asn.au).

Using the DAA Accreditation Standards

Universities are required to demonstrate compliance with each element of the Standards in order for their Dietetics education program(s) to be eligible for Accreditation, and once

accredited must continue to meet each element of the Standards at all times to maintain an Accreditation Status.

Universities must be able to demonstrate, to the reasonable satisfaction of the DAA, adherence to the Standards upon written request by the DAA.

DAA may seek evidence of adherence to the Standards at any time during a University's Accreditation period.

Universities must notify, and discuss with DAA, planned and significant changes to an accredited Dietetics education program(s) prior to an Accreditation Application, and accurately complete the Annual Report (as per clause 1.4 of the *Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs*).

If a Dietetics education program is unable to meet the Standards (or any part of the Standards), an Accreditation Status will not be granted, or may be suspended or withdrawn as per Section 6 of the *Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs*.

Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Governance

- 1.1 The University must establish a Program Advisory Committee (**PAC**) to provide expert advisory opinion to the University in areas including, but not limited to, curriculum planning, workforce issues, and professional placements. The committee should include independent Accredited Practising Dietitians (**APDs**), external to the University, sufficient to provide advice across the main areas of Dietetic practice.
 - 1.1.1 The University should, but is not required to, appoint other expert representatives to the PAC, such as education experts for curriculum planning.
 - 1.1.2 APDs appointed pursuant to paragraph 1.1 must:
 - a. have full APD status;
 - b. have experience relevant to their current role;
 - c. be clearly identified to key stakeholders of the University; and
 - d. be available to provide an informed contribution to the PAC based on feedback from key stakeholders external to the University.
 - 1.1.3 PACs must meet at least once every twelve months.
- 1.2 The University must demonstrate evidence of internal and external evaluation of the intended program outcomes.
- 1.3 The University must provide evidence of mapping of the various routes of entry into the Dietetics education program(s), including the routes of entry for international students.

Standard 2: Staffing

- 2.1 The University must employ a Discipline Lead who holds the APD credential and who currently meets the following criteria:
 - 2.1.1 Original and innovative contributions to their field of research or study, which are recognised as outstanding nationally or internationally OR original contributions to teaching, such as contributions to national efforts to enhance curriculum and providing high quality learning and experiences in their discipline.
 - 2.1.2 A sustained record of effective leadership in teaching teams (curriculum design, implementation and innovations leading to improvements in student learning).
 - 2.1.3 Capability to lead developments in education quality, which enhance major aspects of the faculty/school/college's operations through program management, curriculum development, faculty and institutional teaching roles (such as Associate Dean, Academic Board, Senior Executive Group Education Committee).
 - 2.1.4 Major contributions to development of curriculum, which enhance the University's standing as a national leader in education within their discipline.
 - 2.1.5 Capacity to provide leadership with a significant impact on the faculty or school in teaching, teaching innovation or curriculum development.
- 2.2 The University must provide sufficient staffing to deliver expert teaching that meets the educational, academic, research direction, and administrative needs of students appropriate to student load.
- 2.3 APDs must be employed for leadership in curriculum, teaching and assessment in the core areas of Dietetic practice.
- 2.4 A staff member of the University pursuant to paragraph 2.1 or 2.2 with significant research experience in the nutrition and Dietetics field must be appointed to lead the University's Dietetics education program's research development, including the supervision of PhD students.
- 2.5 All teaching staff must demonstrate content knowledge and expertise in their teaching area.

Standard 3: Resources

- 3.1 The University must provide well-maintained physical and electronic resources for its Dietetics education program(s) including but not limited to:
- a. library facilities available to staff and students including key nutrition texts, e-journals and databases;
 - b. Information and Communication Technologies facilities that provide access to terminals and dietary analysis and statistics software;
 - c. facilities for food skills development and delivery of food service management training; and
 - d. laboratory facilities.

Standard 4: Curriculum

- 4.1 The University must demonstrate that the curriculum of the Dietetics education program includes teaching and learning that enables students to meet the National Competency Standards (**NCS**) in an integrated manner.
- 4.2 Human Biosciences and Food and Nutrition Science content must underpin the application of science in nutrition and Dietetic practice, taught within an evidence-based paradigm in the University's Dietetics education program.
- 4.3 The award of a dietetic qualification at any level must enable the student to demonstrate learning in Human Biosciences and Food and Nutrition Science as described below:
 - a. Biochemistry content with Chemistry (0.25 EFTSL) followed by Biochemistry (0.25 EFTSL);
 - b. Human Physiology content with Human Biology (0.25 EFTSL) followed by Human Physiology (0.25 EFTSL); and
 - c. Food and Nutrition Science content (0.25 EFTSL) that appropriately scaffolds to final integrated assessment against the NCS.
- 4.4 The University must ensure that students enrolling into postgraduate dietetics education programs have completed the requirements pursuant to paragraph 4.3a and 4.3b.
- 4.5 The University is ultimately responsible for each student's assessment and ensuring that graduates are competent. Final assessment of learning outcomes must be determined by an APD employed by the University.

Standard 5: Professional Placement Program

- 5.1 The University must ensure the dietetics education program includes a Professional Placement Program (**the placement**), the duration of which must be a minimum of 100 equivalent working days.
- 5.2 The University must ensure the placement includes appropriate depth and breadth of experience to enable students to acquire and demonstrate competence, including opportunities to demonstrate an approach that recognises the multiple factors influencing nutrition and health, and assumes that changes to this environment will bring about health changes. This should include, but is not limited to:
 - a. the role of Medical Nutrition Therapy (**MNT**) in a range of co-morbidities in both acute and ambulatory settings to enable exposure to a variety of presentations affecting different body systems;
 - b. delivery of food service systems to nutritionally dependent and/or vulnerable populations where MNT underpins the delivery; and
 - c. public health nutrition experience in a setting that allows students to apply understanding of the interrelationship and socio-ecological issues between food, nutrition and health at the population level in order to assess priorities and plan and evaluate interventions.
- 5.3 The University must ensure that an appropriate governance structure is in place at placement sites to ensure adequate arrangements in support, supervision facilitation and assessment.
- 5.4 All persons involved in the placement experience must be adequately prepared for their role.
- 5.5 The University must ensure that dietetic supervisors responsible for assessment have full APD status.
- 5.6 The University must demonstrate engagement between the University and placement sites to ensure quality management of supervision and assessment, including a clear protocol for escalation of issues when they arise.
- 5.7 The University must ensure documented procedures for professional practice are in place between the University educator/s and the placement educators/supervisors.
- 5.8 The University must be responsible for setting the standards, learning outcomes and verifying the final assessment of the competence of individual students against the NCS.

- 5.9 Should the University wish to offer non-domestic placements the Board shall require the University to successfully complete the Non-Domestic Placement Site Approval Process and meet all the requirements pursuant to paragraph 5.10 (and the Processes) prior to utilising the site(s) for the Professional Placement Program.
- 5.10 Where the University offers non-domestic placements, in addition to the requirements set out in paragraph 5.1 to 5.8 inclusive, the University must also ensure that placement sites provide an environment equivalent to **Australian sites** with respect to technology, protocols of healthcare and dietetic practices, supervision, counselling skills, and resource access.
- 5.11 The University must ensure that for students who complete Board approved non-domestic placements, pursuant to paragraph 5.10, the final 25 percent (or greater) of their placement is undertaken in an Australian acute or ambulatory care setting.
- 5.12 The University must ensure that for students who complete non-domestic placements pursuant to paragraph 5.10 that assessment of final competency against the NCS is in English and conducted in Australia.

Standard 6: International Students

- 6.1 The University must ensure that international students enrolled in a graduate Dietetics education program have their previous tertiary study assessed against the Australian Qualifications Framework pursuant to “Assessment of overseas qualifications” of Australian Education International (through the Department of Education).³
- 6.2 The University must ensure that the English language proficiency of international students who enrol in the Dietetics education program is of a sufficient level to achieve competency.

Glossary of terms

Terms not otherwise defined below are defined in the *Processes for the Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs*

Accreditation: The process through which a University's Dietetics education program demonstrates that it produces or will produce competent Dietitians

Accredited Practising Dietitian (or APD): A dietitian who has successfully completed a tertiary Dietetics education program (which holds an Accreditation Status) who is awarded the credential of APD by the DAA through its Accredited Practising Dietitian program (**APD Program**).

AHPRA: Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Attributes: The knowledge, skills and attitudes that together underlie competent professional performance.

Australian Qualifications Framework (or AQF): The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework (see <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>).

Australian sites: sites that are geographically located within Australia.

Board: means the board of directors of the DAA, which ultimately determines whether or not a Dietetic education program offered by a University satisfies the requirements of a particular Accreditation Status.

Business Day: means a day on which trading banks are open for ordinary business in the Australian Capital Territory.

Competence: The attribute of a person's practice in context.

Competency: A combination of skills underlying some aspect of successful dietetic performance.

Curriculum: Detailed outline of areas of study in dietetics education.

Dietetics: The profession that contributes to the promotion of health and the treatment of illness by optimising the nutrition of communities and individuals. It utilises scientific principles and methods in the study of nutrition and applies these to influence the wider environment affecting food intakes and eating behaviours.

Dietitian: A scientist who applies nutrition knowledge to the promotion of health and the primary prevention and the treatment of disease in accordance with stated scientific principles.

Discipline: A body of knowledge in an academic setting.

Discipline Lead: The senior person responsible for providing leadership, and mentoring, but not necessarily managing, the other academics in the discipline.

EFTSL: Equivalent Full Time Study Load for a program year (not semester).

Evidence Guide: Is a document prepared by the DAA with input from Universities to assist Universities applying for accreditation in submitting sufficient evidence for meeting the Standards. It encompasses contexts for assessment, how units may be linked and particular aspects of knowledge and skill required for competency.

Evidence-based practice: Is the complex and conscientious decision-making which is based not only on the best available evidence but also on clinical expertise, and patient characteristics, situations, and preferences. It recognises that care is individualised and ever-changing and involves uncertainties and probabilities.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes: The attributes underpinning units and elements.

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT): The use of food to manage health conditions.

NASRHP: National Agency of Self-Regulating Health Professions.

National Competency Standards (or NCS): Statements that describe the function of a dietitian in Australia.

Non-domestic: sites that are not geographically located within Australia.

Nutritionally dependent: A client or population that is reliant on food provided by a food service facility which meets all (e.g. hospitals, prisons, boarding schools) or a significant proportion (e.g. Meals on Wheels) of their nutrients needs for an acute or extended period of time.

Professional Placement Program: A supervised period of a minimum of 100 days in a range of practical settings which provide opportunity for students to demonstrate dietetic competency.

Standards: The Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (this document).

University: means a university that intends to offer, or currently offers, a Dietetic education program which seeks an Accreditation Status.

References

1. Dietitians Association of Australia. Definition of a Dietitian. 2015. (Available from <https://daa.asn.au/what-dietitians-do/definition-of-a-dietitian/>, accessed 26 April 2016)
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