

National Competency Standards for Dietitians in Australia

Introduction

The National Competency Standards for Dietitians are statements that describe the function of a dietitian in Australia. They comprise domains, elements (key tasks) and performance criteria (measurable and observable actions).

Acknowledgement and respect of traditional owners and country

As dietitians, we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.

The history of colonisation and its adverse effects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as the breakdown of culture, experiences of racism and the impacts of past government, must be acknowledged to ensure the delivery of safe, accessible and responsive dietetic services.

Cultural safety and responsiveness

Culturally safe and responsive practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples assists to support self-determination and quality of life. These competency standards specifically acknowledge the need for dietitians to enhance their cultural safety and responsiveness competencies for practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These competency standards have evolved within a particular cultural and social timeframe in Australia and they recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the traditional custodians of this country and hold cultural values and beliefs that are diverse, complex and evolving.

Use of the National Competency Standards

The National Competency Standards for Dietitians in Australia are used to facilitate a shared understanding of competence. More specifically, they may be used by:

Students to:

- identify the relationship between their program of learning, assessment and program outcomes
- determine what they are expected to do on entry to the profession
- guide their plans for professional development as part of the Accredited Practising Dietitian program

Practitioners to:

- provide a framework for student assessment
- guide professional development plans for the Accredited Practising Dietitian mentoring program
- describe minimum performance in the workplace

Universities to:

- design and implement dietetic education programs that are compliant with accreditation standards*
- develop curriculums and assessment strategies that are aligned with the National Competency Standards
- graduate entry-level dietetic practitioners who are competent against the National Competency Standards

Dietitians Australia to:

- inform standards for the accreditation of university programs
- guide the assessment processes of dietitians whose qualifications are not from Australia
- guide the assessment processes of Australian-trained dietitians returning to practice
- describe safe and effective practice in the workplace

By clients to:**

- establish the expected knowledge, skills and behaviours of dietitians

*Accreditation standards for the education of health professionals are used to determine whether a program of study produces graduates who have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the profession in Australia.¹ The National Competency Standards should be used in conjunction with the Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (version 2.0, 2017), associated processes and the Evidence Guide for universities seeking accreditation.

**For the purpose of this document, *client* refers to a person, group of people, patients (and their families and/or carers where relevant), consumers, communities, organisations, institutions, businesses and any other entity for which a dietitian may normally provide services (within the dietitian's scope of practice) who has entered into a therapeutic or professional relationship with a dietitian.

Domain 1. Professional Practice

Elements	Performance criteria
1.1 Demonstrates safe practice	<p>1.1.1 Operates within the individual's and the profession's scope of practice, seeks assistance and refers to other services as necessary</p> <p>1.1.2 Shows a commitment to professional development and lifelong learning</p> <p>1.1.3 Consistently demonstrates reflective practice in collaboration with supervisors, peers and mentors</p> <p>1.1.4 Demonstrates professional conduct and accepts responsibility for own actions</p> <p>1.1.5 Accepts responsibility for and manages, implements and evaluates own emotions, personal health and wellbeing</p> <p>1.1.6 Demonstrates flexibility, adaptability and resilience</p>
1.2 Demonstrates ethical and legal practice	<p>1.2.1 Exercises professional duty of care in accordance with relevant codes of conduct, ethical requirements, and other accepted protocols</p> <p>1.2.2 Demonstrates integrity, honesty and fairness</p> <p>1.2.3 Prepares, stores and transmits accurate and timely documentation according to accepted standards</p>
1.3 Demonstrates leadership	<p>1.3.1 Uses negotiation and conflict-resolution skills when required</p> <p>1.3.2 Develops and maintains a credible professional role by commitment to excellence of practice</p> <p>1.3.3 Seeks, responds to and provides effective feedback</p> <p>1.3.4 Participates in supervision, teaching and mentoring processes with peers, students and colleagues</p> <p>1.3.5 Demonstrates initiative by being proactive and developing solutions to problems</p> <p>1.3.6 Advocates for the contribution that nutrition and dietetics can make to improve health, and for the value dietitians bring to organisations and society</p> <p>1.3.7 Identifies opportunities and advocates for change to the wider social, cultural and political environment to improve nutrition, food standards and the food system</p> <p>1.3.8 Recognises that whole systems — including health and education — are responsible for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and collaborates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities to advocate for social justice and health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</p>
1.4 Demonstrates management	<p>1.4.1 Applies organisational, business and management skills in the practice of nutrition and dietetics</p> <p>1.4.2 Utilises outcomes-based systems and tools to evaluate and assure quality of practice based on agreed goals, and revises practice accordingly</p> <p>1.4.3 Identifies and assesses risks, incidents and errors, follows relevant protocols, and develops basic risk, incident and error management strategies for services</p> <p>1.4.4 Utilises relevant technology and equipment efficiently, effectively and safely</p>
1.5 Demonstrates cultural safety and responsiveness	<p>1.5.1 Acknowledges, reflects on and understands own culture, values, beliefs, attitudes, biases, assumptions, privilege and power at the individual and systems level, and their influence on practice</p> <p>1.5.2 Works respectfully with diverse clients in choosing culturally safe and responsive strategies to suit the goals, lived experiences and environment of clients</p> <p>1.5.3 Applies evidence- and strengths-based best practice approaches in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care, valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing</p> <p>1.5.4 Acknowledge colonisation and systemic racism, social, cultural, behavioural, and economic factors which impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health outcomes and how this might influence dietetic practice and outcomes</p>

Domain 2. Expert Practice

Elements	Performance criteria
2.1 Adopts an evidence-based approach to dietetic practice	<p>2.1.1 Adopts a questioning and critical approach in all aspects of practice</p> <p>2.1.2 Applies a highly developed knowledge of nutrition science, social science, behavioural science, health, disease, food, food preparation methods, food systems, and sustainability to tailor recommendations to improve health of clients</p> <p>2.1.3 Systematically searches for, evaluates, interprets and applies findings from food, nutrition, dietetic, social, behavioural and education sciences into dietetic practice</p> <p>2.1.4 Applies problem-solving skills to create realistic solutions to nutrition problems or issues</p>
2.2 Applies the nutrition care process based on the expectations and priorities of clients	<p>2.2.1 Collects, analyses and interprets relevant health, medical, cultural, social, psychological, economic, personal, environmental, dietary intake, and food systems and sustainability data when assessing nutritional issues of clients</p> <p>In collaboration with clients, other professionals, key stakeholders, and partners:</p> <p>2.2.2 Makes appropriate nutrition diagnoses and identifies priority nutrition issues based on all available information</p> <p>2.2.3 Prioritises key issues, formulates goals and objectives, and prepares individualised, realistic goal- oriented plans</p> <p>2.2.4 Uses client-centred counselling skills to negotiate and facilitate nutrition, behaviour and lifestyle change and empower clients with self-management skills</p> <p>2.2.5 Systematically implements, evaluates and adapts nutrition care plans, programs and services</p> <p>2.2.6 Facilitates advanced-care planning, discharge planning and referral to other services where appropriate, in accordance with jurisdictional legislation, policy or standards</p>
2.3 Influences food systems to improve the nutritional status of clients	<p>2.3.1 Applies an approach to practice that recognises the multi-factorial and interconnected determinants influencing nutrition and health</p> <p>2.3.2 Uses food legislation, regulations and standards to develop, implement and evaluate food systems and sustainability to maintain food safety</p> <p>2.3.3 Applies a socio-ecological approach to the development of strategies to improve nutrition and health</p>

Domain 3. Research Practice

Elements	Performance criteria
3.1 Conducts research, evaluation, and quality-management processes	<p>3.1.1 Identifies and selects appropriate research, evaluation and quality-management methods to advance the practice of dietetics</p> <p>3.1.2 Applies ethical processes to research, evaluation, and quality management</p> <p>3.1.3 Collects, analyses and interprets qualitative and quantitative research, evaluation, and quality-management data</p> <p>3.1.4 Accurately documents and disseminates research, evaluation, and quality-management findings</p> <p>3.1.5 Translates the implications of research findings for dietetic practice, advocacy and key stakeholders</p>

Domain 4. Collaborative Practice

Elements	Performance criteria
4.1 Communicates appropriately with people from various cultural, socioeconomic, organisational and professional backgrounds	<p>4.1.1 Demonstrates empathy and establishes trust and rapport to build effective partnerships with clients, other professionals, key stakeholders and partners</p> <p>4.1.2 Uses a range of communication methods to communicate clearly and concisely to a range of audiences, adapting or co-creating communication messages for specific audiences where appropriate</p> <p>4.1.3 Engages in culturally appropriate, safe and sensitive communication that facilitates trust and the building of respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</p> <p>4.1.4 Translates technical information into practical messaging that can be easily understood and used by clients, other professionals, key stakeholders, partners, and members of the public</p>
4.2 Builds capacity of and collaborates with others to improve nutrition and health outcomes	<p>4.2.1 Shares information with and acts as a resource person for colleagues, community and other agencies</p> <p>4.2.2 Identifies, builds partnerships with, and assists in implementing plans with key stakeholders who have the capacity to influence food intake and food systems</p> <p>4.2.3 Displays effective active listening, interviewing and interpersonal skills to better understand perspectives of clients, other professionals, key stakeholders and partners to inform approaches and influence change</p> <p>4.2.4 Applies the principles of marketing to promote healthy eating and influence dietary change</p> <p>4.2.5 Empowers clients to improve their own health through engagement, facilitation, education and collaboration</p>
4.3 Collaborates within and across teams effectively	<p>4.3.1 Recognises and respects the diversity of other professionals' roles, responsibilities and competencies</p> <p>4.3.2 Participates in collaborative decision-making, shared responsibility, and shared vision within teams at an individual, organisational and systems level</p> <p>4.3.3 Guides and supports team members and peers</p>

REFERENCE

1. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. Accreditation Standards. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-standards.aspx>. Published 2020. Accessed August 16, 2021.