

## DEGREES THAT ARE RECOGNISED FOR REGISTRATION AS A NUTRITIONIST UNDER THE PROPOSED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSION ACT

Recommendations by

**Nutrition Society of Malaysia**  
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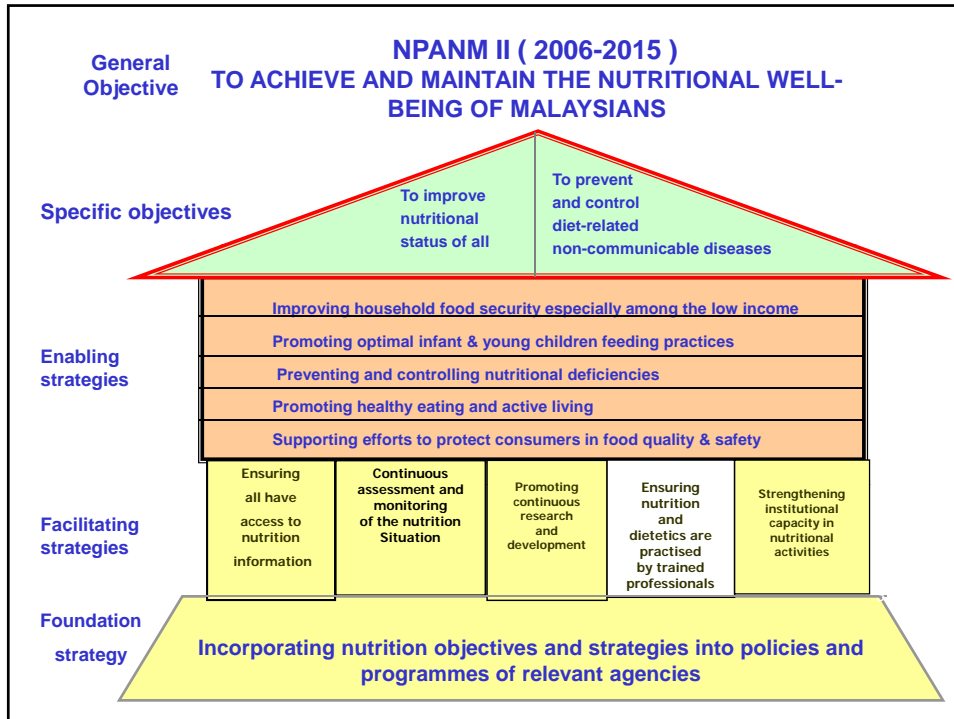
## Background

- NSM welcomes the long-awaited proposed Allied Health Professional Act (AHP) Act to be passed and implemented to ensure that Nutrition Science be practised by qualified professionals. This is in line with the facilitating strategies of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition Malaysia II (NPANM II) 2006 – 2015 (see next slide for overview of NPAN II objectives and strategies)
- It is therefore essential that only graduates from programmes that provide adequate training to enable them to carry out the required roles be recognised for registration as a Nutritionist under the proposed AHP.
- In view that Nutritionists and Dietitians have been classified under two different categories of Professionals under the AHP Act, it is essential that the registration and governance of these two closely related professionals be clearly defined.

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➤ In Malaysia, BSc Nutrition degree programme was initiated by UKM in 1991 (BSc Food Science and Nutrition since 1982), followed by UPM (BSc Nutrition & Community Health) in 1992 and USM (B Health Sc Nutrition) in 2008.

➤ Currently, several other local institutions are introducing “dual-major” graduates namely, UMS (BSc Food Science & Nutrition), and more recently, IMU (BSc Nutrition & Dietetics), UiTM (BSc Nutrition & Dietetics) and UMT (BSc Food Service & Nutrition).

➤ In view of these recent developments and the implications of having several groups of graduates with varied training in nutrition science, it is absolutely necessary that the different “Nutrition” programmes offered in local Universities be critically reviewed to determine if they can be recognised for registration as a Nutritionist under the AHP Act.

Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), the professional body for Nutritionists established in 1985, has been requested by the Ministry of Health Malaysia to look into, for the first time, similarities and differences between the Nutrition Degree Programmes offered in Public and Private Universities/Colleges in Malaysia and to recommend university degrees that can be recognised for registration (i.e. the registrable qualifications) as a Nutritionist under the proposed AHP Act.

## Outline

- Definition of a Nutritionist
- Registration of Nutritionists
- Code of Professional Conduct
- Role of a Registered Nutritionist
- Competency required for a Registered Nutritionist
- Registrable Qualification for Nutritionists

## Definition of A Registered Nutritionist (RNutr)

(draft by NSM)



A nutritionist is trained in nutritional sciences for the promotion of human health and prevention of diseases. The nutritionist is equipped with knowledge and skills to conduct nutrition-related research, provide consultancy, as well as assessing and monitoring the nutritional status of individuals and communities. He/she is responsible for formulating, implementing and monitoring of nutritional policies, standards, guidelines, and protocols.



## Registration of Nutritionists



## Types of Registration for Nutritionists

- **Provisional Registration**
- **Full Registration**

**(Common criteria and registration process will be developed for use by the various allied health professions under the AHP Act)**



## **Code Of Professional Conduct**

**(Drafted by NSM )**

[A set of common Code of Conduct will be developed for use by the various allied health professions under the AHP Act]



- **The Code of Professional Conduct for Nutritionists is intended to provide guidelines for all Registered Nutritionists (RNutr) to conduct him / herself professionally.**
- **Breach of the Code could lead to disciplinary action being taken against the practising Nutritionists**



Registered Nutritionists (RNutr) should : 13

1. **Promote the advancement of the science of nutrition; the application of that science to human well being; and education in all aspects of pure and applied nutrition.**
2. **At all times, maintain a high level of competency and a high degree of professional integrity in his / her work.**
3. **Seek to extend the usefulness and sphere of influence of the profession.**
4. **Respect any confidence gained in the course of any professional activity or relating to the profession or its members.**

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5. **Be objective, fair, balanced and proportionate in any professional statements or recommendations.**
6. **Recognize a responsibility for the professional guidance of direct subordinates, students and trainees.**
7. **Seek to maintain and enhance their professional competence by updating and improving their personal knowledge of a proficiency in the field.**

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8. **Avoid undertaking invasive procedures without appropriate and recognized training.**
9. **Avoid maliciously injuring or attempting to injure, whether directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, prospect or business of an associate.**
10. **Avoid unwarranted comment on the character, competence or integrity of other members of the profession.**
11. **All nutrition research undertaken should have prior approval of relevant Research and Ethics Committee**

## **Role of a Registered Nutritionist**

**(Drafted by NSM)**



## Role of a Registered Nutritionist

A Registered Nutritionist (RNutr) may be involved in one or more of the following areas of work:

1. Public Health
2. Research
3. Academia
4. Food Industry
5. Communication and media



## Role of a Registered Nutritionist (2)

- The role of a **Public Health Nutritionist / Community Nutritionist** include the following:
  1. Work with communities/groups/population in nutrition related health promotion and health services
  2. Work with consumer organizations, food industry
  3. Work in tertiary education
  4. Work with professional vocational training
  5. Carry out research in public health nutrition
  6. Participate in developing policies and programmes of government agencies



## Role of a Registered Nutritionist (3)

- The role of a **Research Nutritionist** include the following:
  1. Carry out research in nutrition (including epidemiology, experimental, food composition, clinical)
  2. Publish and present research findings in scientific meetings
  3. Assist in policies and programmes of government agencies
  4. Contribute expertise to tertiary education
  5. Work with consumer organisations and industry



## Role of a Registered Nutritionist (4)

- The role of a **nutritionist in the academia** include the following:
  1. Carry out teaching of nutrition at the tertiary level
  2. Carry out research in nutrition (including epidemiology, experimental, food composition, clinical)
  3. Publish and present research findings in scientific conferences
  4. Assist in policies and programmes of government agencies
  5. Work with consumer organisations and industry



## Role of a Registered Nutritionist (5)

- The role of a **nutritionist in the food industry** include the following:
  1. Work in the nutritional aspects of product formulation and development
  2. Work with quality assurance professionals to ensure nutritional quality of products
  3. Educate the consumers on nutrition and products
  4. Carry out product-related research

## Role of a Registered Nutritionist (6)

- The role of a **nutritionist in communication and media** include the following:
  1. Write and communicate nutrition knowledge to the community, public, policy makers, politicians through the media and other means
  2. Carry out nutrition education and promotion
  3. Carry out literature research on nutrition

## Competency required for a Registered Nutritionist



## Competency required for a Registered Nutritionist (RNutr)

- **A competent Registered Nutritionist must be able to :**
  - understand and apply the principles of nutrition and its importance in health and disease
  - evaluate nutritional status of individual and communities using anthropometric, biochemical, dietary, clinical and ecological approaches
  - identify the relationship between nutritional status and disease occurrence
  - translate nutritional knowledge into food-based advice and guidelines which are socio-culturally appropriate for the targeted communities



## Competency required for a Registered Nutritionist (2)

- **A competent Registered Nutritionist must be able to :**
  - actively promote healthy nutrition amongst the community
  - provide evidence-based nutrition advice
  - plan, implement, monitor and evaluate nutrition policies and programmes
  - carry out nutrition-related research including nutritional problems and health in community, experimental and clinical settings in accordance with the prevailing code of conduct of research in the country



## Competency required for a Registered Nutritionist (3)

- **A competent Registered Nutritionist must be able to :**
  - prepare comprehensive nutrition reports
  - analyse and interpret research findings critically and utilise them appropriately in various settings
  - apply the principles of information technology and communication (ICT) in nutrition promotion programmes
  - communicate the science of nutrition effectively both to the scientific community and the public



## Registrable Qualifications for Nutritionists



## The task to NSM

- The Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) was registered as a professional body with the Registrar of Societies in 1985. It is the only officially recognized professional body formed by nutritionists, for nutritionists in the country.
- The main objectives of NSM include:
  - To promote, advance and disseminate the scientific knowledge of food and nutrition
  - To protect and promote the interest of nutrition scientists in the country
  - To facilitate communication and foster friendship between nutrition scientists
- It is therefore most appropriate that NSM was requested by MOH (Allied Health) to recommend a list of degrees that can be recognized for registration as nutritionists



## The approach taken by NSM

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- The Council of the NSM undertook to prepare the list of registrable degrees through a series of meetings
- NSM Council has 9 members:
  - Dr Tee E Siong (Nutrition Consultant), President
  - Prof Dr Mohd Ismail Noor (UKM), Vice-President
  - Assoc Prof Dr Norimah A Karim (UKM), Hon. Secretary
  - Assoc Prof Dr Zaitun Yassin (UPM), Hon. Treasurer
  - Mahenderan Appukutty (UiTM), Assist. Hon. Secretary
  - Dr Mohd Nasir Mohd Taib (UPM), Council member
  - Assoc Prof Dr Tony Ng Kock Wai (IMU), Council member
  - Assoc Prof Datin Dr Safiah Mohd Yusof (UiTM), Council member
  - Dr Hazizi Abu Saad (UPM), Council member
- The series of meetings have been Chaired by President of NSM

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## The approach .... (2)

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- NSM Council undertook a systematic approach to arrive at a list of recommended registrable degrees
  - Recommendations are based on the minimum number of credit hours that must be offered in the respective programme so that the undergraduate is adequately trained to be able to effectively carry out the duties required of a registered nutritionist

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## The approach .... (3)

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1. The first step was to refer to the definition of a nutritionist (please refer to Slides No 7 & 8 - Definition)
2. Step 2 was to determine what are the duties or roles as a registered nutritionist in Malaysia (please refer to Slides No 16-22) Role of a Registered Nutritionist)
3. Following on that, Council determined what are the competencies required to enable a registered nutritionist to carry out the duties identified (please refer to Slides No 23-26 Competencies required for a Registered Nutritionist).

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## The approach .... (4)

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4. The next step was to determine and list down the types of courses that must be taught in a university to equip the graduate with the required training (competencies) to undertake the job description identified in Step 2.
5. The total number of credit hours for the above mentioned courses that must be taken (identified in 4 above) was obtained from local Universities where Nutrition courses are known to be offered.

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## The process taken by NSM

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1. Courses and credit hours offered by various programmes in local universities were entered into a master table (in slide 36) and compared.
  - All the local universities (IPTA & IPTS) offering courses that include nutrition were invited to submit details of their curriculum
  - Responses were obtained from UKM (KL), UKM (Bangi), UPM, USM, UiTM, IMU, UMS, UCSI. UMT did not respond.
  - NSM Council members slotted the courses contained in the various programmes into two groups, either in rows 1-5 (Nutrition courses) or rows 7-10 (Other courses) in the Table- Slide 36.
  - The recommendations of MQA were also similarly entered into the Table for comparison

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## The process .... (2)

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2. The recommendation of the NSM Council on courses that must be taken by a graduate to be adequately equipped for registration as a nutritionist are as follows (rows 1-5 in the Table in slide 36):
  - Core nutrition courses
  - Research project
  - Nutrition-related courses
  - Health-related courses
  - Practical training
3. The sub-total number of credit hours for these “must have” courses in each of the programmes offered by local universities were then determined (row 6 in the Table)

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## The process .... (3)

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4. The Council proposes that the minimum of credit hours required for the “must have” courses is two-thirds (67%) of the total credit hours (130 hours) (row 12 in the Table) for a 4-year programme, i.e. 87 credit hours. It is felt that this will enable the undergraduate to be appropriately trained for the tasks of a registered nutritionist.
5. Universities with programmes that meet this minimum number of credit hours for the “must have” courses will be recommended for registration.
6. The Table in the next slide summarizes the information obtained from 8 local universities as well as that from MQA.

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CLASSIFICATION OF COURSES	UKM-KL	UPM	USM	UITM	IMU	UKM-BANGI	UMS	UCSI	MQA
Name of degree	BSc (Hons) Nutrition Sciences	BSc (Hons) Nutrition & Community Health	Bach of Health Sciences (Nutrition)	BSc (Hons) in Nutrition & Dietetics	BSc (Hons) in Nutrition & Dietetics	BSc (Hons) Food Science & Nutrition	BSc (Hons) Food Science & Nutrition	BSc (Hons) Food Science & Nutrition	BSc (Hons) Nutrition
DURATION (YEARS)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	
1 CORE NUTRITION	51	47	25	26	27	12	16	10	38
2 RESEARCH PROJECT	12	6	6	6	6	10	9	6	12
3 NUTRITION RELATED COURSES	26	12	28	20	15	17	16	10	18
4 HEALTH RELATED COURSES	18	19	21	9	11	8	3	3	11
5 PRACTICAL TRAINING	4	6	6	3	5	12	12	9	4
6 SUB-TOTAL NUTRITION COURSES	111	90	86	64	64	59	56	38	83
7 DIETETICS COURSES	0	0	0	21	24	0	0	0	0
8 FOOD SCIENCE COURSES	0	0	0	3	0	42	18	23	0
9 OTHER COURSES	29	16	19	22	27	37	26	43	33
10 UNIVERSITY COURSES	24	26	17	19	12	24	25	18	20
11 SUB-TOTAL	53	42	36	65	63	103	69	84	53
12 TOTAL CREDIT HOURS	164	132	122	129	127	162	125	122	136

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- **NSM Council recommends that courses that must be taken by a graduate to be adequately equipped for registration as a nutritionist must make up a minimum of 67% or 2/3 of the total number hours/units in a programme**
- **In other words, the NSM recommends that these “must have” courses should make up a total of 67% of 130 or 87 hours/units**
- **The NSM Council notes that the MQA recommendations for the minimum of credit hours/units for the “must have” courses was based on 60% of a total of 136 units in the programme or 83 units**
- **It is to be noted that the review undertaken by NSM has been undertaken independently. It can be noted however that NSM’s recommendation for the minimum of required hours/units closely matches the MQA recommendation.**

## Conclusions and Recommendations (2)

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- **The NSM Council takes note of the differences in the 2 types of credit hours entered in the master table, namely the traditional credit hours vs the notional credit hours (the latter used by UKM KL)**
- **Based on the current exercise undertaken by NSM Council, only 3 programmes meet the stipulated requirement and can be recommended for registration under the proposed APH Act namely,**
  - **BSc Hons Nutrition Sciences (UKM, KL),**
  - **BSc Hons Nutrition & Community Health (UPM) &**
  - **B of Health Sciences (Nutrition), USM.**

## Conclusions and Recommendations (3)

- **Recognition for registration of other local and foreign universities offering “nutrition” programmes shall not be automatic nor will it be based on the name of the degree alone**
- **NSM recommends that similar criteria should be used to evaluate other local and foreign universities offering “nutrition” programmes, upon application by the university or the individual**

## Conclusions and Recommendations (4)

- **NSM propose that the AHP Council accepts our recommendations as they have been made based on an independent systematic approach in which:**
  - **we have considered the role of a registered nutritionist and the competency required**
  - **we have determined the types of courses that must be taken to achieve the required competency**
  - **the minimum number of credit hours required for a course to be accepted for registration as a qualified nutritionist is then determined based on the above considerations**

**November 2009**