



# PERSATUAN PEMAKANAN MALAYSIA (NUTRITION SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA)

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## Important Note for Nutritionists

### **Agreement on Scope of Practice of Nutritionists and Dietitians In preparation for the implementation of the Allied Health Professions Act (Act 774)**

#### **1. Background**

In preparation for the implementation of the Allied Health Professions Act (Act 774), a meeting was held on 24 May 2019 to discuss the scope of practice of nutritionists and dietitians. Chaired by Puan Hajah Che Ruhani Binti Che Jaáfar, Director of Allied Health Sciences Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia, the meeting was attended by the President and selected Council members from the two professional societies, namely Malaysian Dietitians' Association and the Nutrition Society of Malaysia as well as the Head and Deputy Head of both professions from the Ministry of Health. The meeting aims to arrive at an agreed understanding of the scopes of practice of these two professions. It is hoped that a clear definition and scope of practice will reduce the occurrence of overlapping of main scopes of practice which thereby minimising confusion among practitioners of the two professions, as well as among the public. Clarity in the scopes of practice is important to facilitate a smooth implementation of the Act and associated regulations of these professions. The meeting also discussed the consequential amended in the standard curricula for the training of these professions, in line with the agreed scopes of practice.

This document is an excerpt from the minutes of the afore said meeting. Members of NSM and individuals intending to register as a practising Nutritionist are required to be fully familiar and abide by the agreed scope of practice. Registered Nutritionists are expected to practise ethically and professionally.

#### **2. Definition and Scope of Practice**

The scopes of practice of the Nutritionists and Dietitians are given in Appendix 1 and 2. Both professions agreed to provide their services in line with their respective stated scopes although they may be working in different settings.

It was agreed that the scope of practice of Dietitians focuses on providing Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) to patients. On the other hand, Nutritionists provide their services to healthy individuals or community groups or individuals who are at risk of nutritional diseases/disorders.

#### **3. Responsibilities of Professions**

Both groups of professionals agreed that each profession has its own role and responsibility under the Allied Health Act (Act 774) in providing their respective services. In this regard, the two professions need to respect and complement each other and not perform any activities or actions that could jeopardize and degrade the other professions. Both groups of professionals are also responsible for communicating the scope of practice and fields of professional practice to practitioners and prospective practitioners at all levels, in all work settings, including universities and the general public.

#### 4. Use of Specific Functional Terms for each Profession

Both professions agreed to use the generic name of the respective professions and refrain from using misleading specific functional terms. For example, use of the term *Community Dietitian* is to be avoided because the word 'community' is associated with the main functions of the Nutritionist which focuses on the general (healthy) community. Similarly, the word *MNT* (for patients) is a specific term for the functions of Dietitians.

#### 5. Standard Curriculum for Nutritionist and Dietetic Training Programmes

It was agreed that students in both fields may study the subjects Medical Nutrition Therapy or Community Nutrition to increase their knowledge. However, in the execution of their tasks, it is necessary to follow the respective scope of practice, as described in section 2 above.

In line with the agreed scopes of practice, the following are the amendments to the standard curricula to be undertaken by both professions:

Programme name	Current Subject title	Amended subject title	Explanation
<i>Nutrition Programme</i>	<i>Medical Nutrition Therapy</i>	<i>Nutrition Management in selected disease conditions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic teaching involves diseases and nutritional management of specific diseases.</li><li>• Does not include teaching of details in Nutrition Care Process such as in MNT.</li></ul>
<i>Dietetics Programme</i>	<i>Community Dietetic Placement</i>	<i>Dietetics in the Community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As the use of the term Community Dietetics may be misleading, the name of the subject shall be changed to Dietetics in the Community, in line with the scope of practice of these professionals.</li><li>• Teaching courses or projects involving the community shall only be involving groups of individuals with diseases.</li></ul>

Other important information (download from Nutrition Society of Malaysia website):

1. Allied Health Professions Act, Act 774  
(<http://nutriweb.org.my/pdf/ahp/Allied%20Health%20Professions%20Act%20774%202016.pdf>)
2. Summary of Allied Health Professions Act  
(<http://nutriweb.org.my/pdf/ahp/Malaysian%20Allied%20Health%20Profession%20Act%202016%20summary.pdf>)

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