



CORE COMPETENCIES REFERENCE MANUAL FOR DIETICIANS TO PRACTISE IN ZAMBIA

CORE COMPETENCIES AND MINIMUM STANDARDS

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QUALIFICATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Title of the programme: Bachelor of Science Human Nutrition OR BSc Nutrition and Dietetics or equivalent.

Key accountability for the job: This cadre has contact with patients at secondary and tertiary level of care.

Primary roles and responsibilities:

- Provision of preventive and curative nutrition care services
- Refer patient to appropriate level of health care

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Health Professions Council of Zambia (HPCZ) is a statutory body that was established by the Health Professions Act No. 24 of 2009. The Act renames and continues the existence of the Medical Council of Zambia established by the Medical and Allied Professions Act of 1977. The Health Professions Act No. 24 provides for the registration of health practitioners and regulation of their professional conduct; provides for the licensing of health facilities and the accreditation of health care services provided by health facilities; and provides for the recognition and approval of training programmes for health practitioners.

Following the issuance of the guidelines for introduction of licensing examinations for health professionals to be registered with the Health Professions Council of Zambia, this bulletin provides an outline of the core competencies and minimum standards for registrants who have completed the Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition or its equivalent seeking non-specialist registration as a nutritionist in Zambia.

2.0 EXIT EXAMINATIONS AND AWARD OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN A NUTRITIONAL SCIENCE BY TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Training institutions, private or public, (local and foreign) approved by the Health Professions Council of Zambia are mandated to examine and graduate their students under their own seal and authority as prescribed by the HPCZ act number 24 of 2009. The Bachelor of Science holder of this qualification will be required to take and pass the HPCZ licensing examination to qualify for registration with the Council as a Nutritionist. The Nutritionists trained for the health sector are able to function in a health facility.

3.0 LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS BY THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF ZAMBIA

A person shall not practise as a health practitioner, unless that person is registered as a health practitioner in accordance with the Health Professions Act No. 24 of 2009. In the exercise of its functions under this Act, the 2nd Council and the 3rd Council of the Health Professions Council of Zambia instituted Licensure Examinations to help maintain standards given the emergence of multiple private and public training institutions. This bulletin of information on the “Core Competencies and Minimum Standards for the Licensing Examinations for Nutritionists to Work in Zambia” binds all parties regulated under this Act. Examination fees for licensure examinations, as prescribed by the Council, are payable to the Health Professions Council of Zambia as part of the eligibility to sit licensure examinations.

The HPCZ Licensure Examination assesses a Nutritionist’s ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles, and to demonstrate fundamental patient-centred skills, that are important in nutrition and health and that constitute the basis of safe and effective patient care. The HPCZ Licensure Examination includes, but is not limited to, theoretical and clinical

examinations which complement each and the other components. No component is a stand-alone in the assessment of readiness for Nutrition practice in Zambia.

The candidate will be assessed under three domains, namely:-

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Attitude

The above domains will be assessed by means of a theory exam comprising of multiple choice questions followed by a composite objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). The six **subject areas** (assessed under all three learning domains) for Nutritionists in Zambia are:

1. Human Nutrition
2. Nutrition Communication
3. Food science
4. Public Health and Nutrition
5. Dietetics
6. Food Service systems management

Other subject areas prescribed by the curriculum such anatomy and physiology will only be assessed as cognitive domain in the theory paper. The overall expected outcomes of the Nutritionist licensure examination is to ensure that the candidate will meet the minimum standards for the role in providing nutrition care service at all levels of health care.

4.0 COMPETENCE OUTCOME GUIDELINES

The curriculum must have identified attributes in each educational domain (knowledge, skills and attitude) and present them to guide student learning and assessment by examiners. HPCZ directs Nutritionists to be compassionate and empathetic in caring for patients and to be trustworthy and respectful in all their professional dealings. Nutritionists have a responsibility to provide nutritional care that enhances the lives and health that are entrusted to them by patients. The competencies and outcome guidelines are a minimum requirements for entrance into the profession at the point of qualification. Below are the overall outcomes the graduate nutrition technologist is expected to exhibit:

- a. **Knowledge:** demonstrates knowledge sufficient to ensure safe practice
- b. **Communication:** demonstrates effective and appropriate skills in listening and communicating information, advice, education and professional opinion to individual's groups and communities
- c. **Collection, analysis and assessment of nutrition/health data:** Collects organises and assesses data relating to the health and nutritional status of individuals, groups and populations

- d. **Individual Case Management:** Manages client-centred nutrition care for individuals
- e. **Community and Public Health Nutrition and Advocacy for Food Supply:** Plans, implements and evaluates nutrition programs with groups, communities and populations as part of a team
- f. **Food Service Management:** Manages components of a food service to provide safe and nutritious food
- g. **Research and Evaluation:** Integrates research and evaluation principles into practice
- h. **Management and organisation:** Applies management principles in the provision of nutrition services, programs and products
- i. **Professionalism, advocacy, innovation and leadership:** Demonstrates a professional ethical and entrepreneurial approach advocating for excellence in nutrition and dietetics

5.0 CORE COMPETENCIES: GRADUATE NUTRITIONIST

The basic structure of the competency standards presented highlights three important attributes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) required to perform core nutrition functions. Knowledge is essential in the practice of dietetics in the health sector. The practice involves the integration of knowledge from different subject areas. The integration allows for the nutrition practitioner to be able to do a comprehensive nutrition assessment and to come up with realistic nutrition interventions with the client. To be able to come up with realistic interventions, nutrition professionals should have the skill to analyse the information collected and be able to communicate with the patient and other medical team members. Skill is concentrated on the actions or activities that can be performed. Attitude focuses on acting in an expected manner.

Outcome 1. Knowledge

Competence	Outcome
1. Biomedical Scientific Principles	1. Understand the normal anatomy, physiology, biochemistry of human nutrition and dietetics science 2. Explain the pathophysiological processes that affect

	<p>nutritional and dietetic practice</p> <p>3. To explain the interaction between drugs and diet in a patient</p>
2. Behaviour and Sociological Principles	<p>1. Describes personal, social, cultural, psychological,</p> <p>2. Explain the impact of the environment, economic and political factors in influencing food and food use, food habits, diet and lifestyle</p>
3. Case Management	<p>1. Collect, analyse and interpret relevant demographic and clinical factors in dietary intake and food supply data in determining the health and nutritional status of individuals.</p> <p>2. Identify barriers to change for the client drawing upon relevant counselling methods and devise strategies to address these in collaboration with the client</p>
4. Community and Public Health Nutrition and Advocacy for Food Supply	<p>1. Demonstrates knowledge of foods and food preparation methods used in the practice community</p> <p>2. Describes and compares theories of health promotion, program planning, and management and public health</p> <p>3. Utilise latest evidence in behaviour change theory, education theory and nutrition science to design a nutrition education program (including an educational resource) for a specific group of participants</p>
5. Food Service Management	<p>1. Describes and compares food service systems</p> <p>2. Describes food systems, food use, and food and nutrition policy</p> <p>3. Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of food and nutrition service management in a variety of settings.</p> <p>4. Assess food and nutrition services using a variety of evaluation methods, including quality management, best practice, benchmarking, quality improvement and satisfaction tools and processes.</p>
6. Research	<p>1. Critically appraise and translate scientific knowledge and principles related to nutrition into practical information for health professionals, clients and the general public.</p>

Outcome 2. Skills

Competence	Outcome
1. Communication	1. Communicate effectively with patients, their family, peers, seniors and other medical teams

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Be able to use verbal, written and electronic modes of communication 3. To develop and deliver educational sessions for small groups
2. Individual Case Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect relevant dietary information 2. Analyse and interpret the collected data to determine the health and nutritional status of individuals 3. Assesses and assigns priorities to all data 4. Make a nutritional diagnosis 5. Create realistic solutions to nutrition problems or life style related issues.
3. Community Advocacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build capacity of, and collaborate with others to improve nutrition and health outcomes. 2. Assesses opportunities to improve nutrition and food supply in a community or population group 3. Plans and implement nutrition programs with the population group 4. Makes recommendations on food and nutrition policy
4. Food Service Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assesses opportunities to improve nutrition and food standards within a food service institution 2. Develops plans to provide safe and nutritious foods in a food service institution 3. Implements activities to support delivery of quality nutrition and food standards within a food service 4. Applies organisational, business and management skills in the practice of nutrition and dietetics.

Outcome 3. Attitude

Competence	Outcome
1. Professionalism and Ethical Conduct	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrates awareness of local, regional and international ethical codes 2. Maintain confidentiality 3. Treat patients with respect and maintain their dignity 4. Obtain consent 5. Develops and maintains a credible professional role by commitment to excellence of practice 6. Demonstrates cultural competency

2. Self Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Be a team player and understand own role in the team2. Understand expertise of other team members3. Demonstrate leadership4. Demonstrate efficiency and punctuality5. Prioritize work and implement innovative ideas
6. Continuous Professional Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Participate in appraisals, performance reviews and assessments2. Identify own limitations and act upon them3. Engage in CPD activities4. Be an effective mentor and teacher to dietetic students and colleagues

6.0 BLUE PRINT FOR WEIGHTING

Competency Domain	Percentage
Theory Exam (50%)	50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dietetics and the nutrition care process 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition communication 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and public health and nutrition 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research methods and nutritional epidemiology Food service system management 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Nutrition 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Science 	5
Total	50
Practical Exam (50%)	50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History taking 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical/biochemical, anthropometry, and dietary assessment 	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Management and intervention 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach to client 	10
Total	50

8.0 CORE PROCEDURES

For Nutritionist and dietician alike, the process they have to be conversant with is the nutrition care process. Knowledge and skill of performing this process allows for the professional to collect the subjective and objective information efficiently, analyze the data, provide a nutrition diagnosis and come up with realistic interventions. The intervention will allow the nutritionist develop a monitoring and evaluation plan.

9.0 Reference Materials

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