



COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS  
COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE

Benchmarking document

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Nutrition

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**The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine is issuing this Benchmarking Document for Nutrition in the performance of its functions as defined by Article 27 of the Health Care Professions Act, Chapter 464 of the Laws of Malta and in terms of Article 28 Health Care Professions Act, Chapter 464 of the Laws of Malta and Subsidiary Legislation 454.16 Professions Complimentary to Medicine (Licence to Practice) Regulations.**

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## **Introduction**

This document outlines Malta's Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine (CPCM) standards of proficiency for Nutritionists. Via this document the CPCM is setting the minimum registration requirements for Nutritionists in Malta. These standards are the threshold standards considered necessary to protect members of the public and via which qualified Nutritionists can apply for registration in the Nutrition register kept by the CPCM.

This benchmarking document has been adopted by the CPCM to evaluate and assess applications to be registered as Nutritionists and practise within the jurisdiction of Malta. They also serve as guidance to the CPCM on how to address substantive differences from these standards.

## **Description and Scope of Practice**

### **Occupational Description**

Registered Nutritionists provide scientific evidence-based information and guidance about the impacts of food and nutrition on the health and wellbeing of humans, at both individual and population level. Nutritionists undertake studies about nutritional sciences including biochemistry and physiology, nutritional epidemiology, and the principles regulating the impact of diet on overall health and disease.

### **Scope of practice**

Registered Nutritionists provide nutritional advice and educational talks at both individual and population level. Most jobs are in public health and nutrition science within the health service, academia, nutrition research and in commercial sectors. Registered Nutritionists perform a variety of anthropometric and dietary assessment using food analysis software, assessment of nutritional status and dietary assessment in groups or individuals across all the lifecycle.

## **Level of Qualification**

The CPCM considers applications from applicants who have undergone recognised education and training in Nutrition. There are two routes for qualification, where both options need to be recognised by the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

The main route for students of nutrition is to successfully complete a course in Human Nutrition with a total of 180 ECTS credits at MQF/EQF (Malta/European Qualification Framework) level 6. The second option is available for students who first enrol in a related Health Science course at 180 ECTS credits, and then study nutrition as second cycle at either Postgraduate or Master level.

Professional Supervised Practice is expected to be of a minimum of 400 hours, which focus on the Core Competencies as highlighted in this document. Such practice needs to be carried under professional supervision of a CPCM Registered Nutritionist and presented in a student portfolio/logbook for it to be reviewed.

### **The applicant needs to:**

- Provide a detailed transcript of **Theoretical and Practical** Training and Studies **in hours** associated with the Nutrition Qualification and in relation with the syllabus performed by the accredited institution. This must be endorsed in the original format by the Institution's Head/Registrar of the University/College;
- Provide the course description, including study unit details and assessment weightings;
- Have carried out a minimum of 400 hours supervised practice.

Kindly note that courses delivered entirely via distance learning do not meet CPCM requirements for registration.

## **Language Proficiency**

The CPCM requires those applicants who wish to enter the Nutrition register, to provide proof of language proficiency as defined in Annex A.

## **Evaluation of Application**

On Evaluation of the application the Council may choose to do one of the following:

- Grant registration;
- Ask for further clarification when required;
- Ask the applicant to sit for an interview;
- Ask the applicant to undertake supervised practice should the required hours be lacking;
- Reject the application if the qualification is not adequate and in line with this benchmark.

## **Minimum Curriculum Requirements**

This standard ensures that the curriculum meets the standards for professional knowledge, skills and attitudes as expected by CPCM and therefore the applicant would be considered fit to practise in Malta.

The CPCM is aware that standards are continuously being updated over time. This document refers to the minimum general subject areas (but not restricted to) that the course needs to offer for the applicant to be successfully considered as a Registered Nutritionist. In turn, this will ensure that an applicant, once registered, is able to work independently and will provide best practice for their clients. Different courses offer different specialisations and these need to be considered on a case by case basis.

The main competencies are (these may be covered in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree for applicants presenting a Postgraduate or Master's in Human Nutrition or equivalent title):

## **1. Fundamentals of Nutrition and nutritional sciences**

The knowledge of the basics of human nutrition; the basic concepts of physiology; and, the biochemical and metabolic processes essential to human health.

Subjects include:

- The macro & micronutrients and their deficiencies;
- General biochemistry including the digestion, absorption and metabolism of nutrients;
- The study of human nutrition including endocrinology, immunology and metabolic pathways;
- The basic principles of general pharmacology in relation to food issues.

## **2. Food studies and policy**

The knowledge of the supply chain from farm to fork which includes nutritional considerations and food safety issues.

Subjects include:

- Food science and technology and food microbiology;
- Food law;
- Food chain studies;
- Lifecycle nutrition;
- Nutrition policy.

### **3. Food and dietary behaviour**

The knowledge of the complex interaction between diet, dietary behaviour and food choices based on psychosocial, economic, anthropological, and cultural contexts.

Subjects include:

- Communication skills;
- Social policy and health systems;
- Understanding of key issues of social, cultural and behavioural aspects of eating.

### **4. Professional studies in Nutrition**

The knowledge of standards, requirements and professionalism requirements as a Registered Nutritionist. (applicable as from 2018)

Subjects Include:

- Core competencies for nutrition (including critical literature appraisal);
- Key skills required for registered nutritionists including IT, numeracy, academic integrity, presentations, time management; organisational and management principles;
- Code of ethics conduct and practice; moral and legal requirements for CPCM registered nutritionists.

### **5. Health research methods:**

The knowledge of the main scientific research methods utilised in nutrition-based research (including ethical rigour of research); the undertaking of appropriate scientific dissemination; critical review and conducting research using various research methodologies and their correct application in statistical terms. Subjects include:

- Basic laboratory skills relating to food and nutrition;
- Preparation, processing, interpretation and data presentation;
- Use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation;

- Understanding of the research process including the evaluation of results;
- Scientific report writing and literature reviewing in nutrition related areas;
- The correct use of statistical packages and management of data processing.

## 6. Diet, health and wellbeing:

The understanding and impact of food and nutrients on health; application of the scientific principles of nutrition for the promotion of health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and populations (including the benefits vs. risks in different settings).

Subjects may include:

- The links between diet and disease prevention and management, health promotion and disease prevention;
- Public health nutrition (including socioeconomic aspects of health promotion);
- Nutritional epidemiology.

## Practice and Training

### **Professional supervised practice in Nutrition (400 hours)**

Applicants seeking registration will be required to submit documentary evidence of the supervised/mentored training in the form of either a student portfolio or a logbook duly dated and signed by the supervisor. These will include the practical sessions undertaken showing the key defined learning objectives

Subjects include:

- Practical training in food composition data with the use of computer software (**minimum of 50 hours**);
- Dietary and nutritional assessment techniques (**minimum of 100 hours**);
- Nutrition in practice such as field visits/placements in nutrition (**minimum of 250 hours**).

*Food composition data* as well as the *dietary and nutritional assessment techniques* presented as part of the field visits or placements will be considered as long as the total supervised practice carried out is of a minimum of **400 hours** and the minimum hours for each of these elements is presented.

Nutrition in practice should hold a minimum of 250 hours and must include field visits and/or placements. During these placements, students should be exposed to different scenarios to gain full competency in conducting a Nutrition session.

For those carrying out the training after graduation, the mentioned practice must be carried out under the direct supervision of a CPCM registered Nutritionist and the logbook duly completed.

Hours of practice included as part of Research Projects will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Other CPCM documents to be considered in conjunction with this Benchmarking Document

1. Codes of Professional and Ethical Conduct

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/regcounc/cpcm/Documents/Codes%20of%20Professional%20and%20Ethical%20Conduct%20-%20March%202019.pdf>

2. Code of Practice (Nutrition)

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/regcounc/cpcm/Documents/Nutrition%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

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This document has been prepared by the CPCM Nutrition Subcommittee in consultation with the Department of Food Sciences and Nutrition, University of Malta – March 2020.

Reviewed May 2021.

## ANNEXE A

### Language Proficiency Requirements by The Council for The Professions

#### Complementary to Medicine

The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine requires applicants to meet the Council's level of Proficiency in the English or the Maltese Language.

All professionals seeking registration are requested to present either one of the following:

1. A Maltese language certificate; **OR**
  - (i) An Ordinary Level MATSEC certificate (MQF level 3); **OR**  
<https://myexams.gov.mt/matsec-examinations/>
  - (ii) An Advanced/Intermediate Level MATSEC certificate (MQF level 4); **OR**  
<https://myexams.gov.mt/matsec-examinations/>
  - (iii) A Medical Maltese Proficiency Certificate.  
<https://www.um.edu.mt/arts/malti/korsijiet/medicalmaltesecourse>
2. The applicant can provide evidence that his/her professional qualification(s) (on the basis of which he/she is applying for registration) was/were acquired through the medium of English or Maltese and that practice placements in that/those qualification(s) were undertaken and supervised through the medium of English or Maltese; **OR**
3. The applicant can provide evidence that s/he has **lived in and practised** his/her profession through the medium of English or Maltese in a country that has English or Maltese recognised as the official language of that country for a period **of not less than 2 years in the past five-year period; OR**

4. Any other proof of English or Maltese language Proficiency.

Additionally, should the applicant choose to opt for other forms of proving language proficiency, the applicant can opt for either one of the following Secure English Language Tests.

Should the applicant opt for this, the below is the list of Examining Boards recognized by the Council and the minimum required standards accepted by the Council in terms of the table below (or equivalent);

<b>Examining Board</b>	<b>TOEFL Internet-Based (iBT)</b>	<b>IELTS (Academic)</b>	<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>Occupational English Test (OET)</b>
<b>Required Level</b>	95	6.5	Advanced Certificate	B
<b>Remarks</b>	A writing score of at least 24 is required.	Required with a minimum of 6.0 in all elements.	A pass at a grade C or better is required.	A grade B or better is required in all components.

Any other Secure English Language Tests which are equivalent to those mentioned in the table above will also be considered.