



ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES FOR DIETETIC STUDENTS

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PREAMBLE

The University of Alberta has a social responsibility to provide students who wish to enroll in the [Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization](#) degree program with opportunities to develop the qualifications (academic knowledge, professional behaviours, attitudes, and skills) necessary to enter the profession of dietetics. Students interested in pursuing the Dietetics Specialization degree are encouraged to review the following document which outlines the skills and attributes required for successful completion of the program, and registration as a dietitian. Where a student cannot exhibit the standards (which refers to their essential skills and attributes) to such an extent that it may impact the safety or well-being of patients, students, or others, the program may modify the participation of a student including, but not limited to, limiting student activities, requiring the student to take a leave of absence, or in serious instances, requiring the student to discontinue from, or not enter, the program.

An offer of admission to the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program should not be interpreted as evidence that the Faculty of Agriculture, Life, and Environmental Sciences has independently verified an applicant's skills and attributes in the domains described in this document. These skills and attributes are essential and must be demonstrated if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards and occupational expectations of the profession of dietetics. Students interested in pursuing a Dietetics Specialization degree should engage in dedicated self-reflection, considering this document and their own skills and abilities before acting on an offer of admission to the Dietetics Specialization degree program.

The competency standards for Registered Dietitians in Canada are described in [the Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice \(ICDEP, 2020\)](#). Students admitted to the Dietetics Specialization program must possess the skills and attributes described in this document in order to be able to develop the competencies required of an entry-to-practice registered dietitian. By the time of graduation and subsequent entry into practice, students must demonstrate sound clinical and professional judgment and responsible decision-making to become professionals who are cognizant of practice accountability issues, laws and regulations, professional codes of ethics, and standards of practice.

In addition to obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree, individuals who wish to enter practice as a Registered Dietitian must pass the [Canadian Dietetics Registration Examination](#). This national examination is written after a student has completed their dietetic degree program (including the internship/practicum element). Additional information about the Canadian Dietetics Registration Examination can be obtained from the [College of Dietitians of Alberta](#). It is during the final (internship/practicum) year of the program and culminating in this examination that students are evaluated on the skills and attributes that are necessary for the profession of dietetics.

Students with disabilities who anticipate that reasonable accommodation will enable them to demonstrate the Essential Skills and Abilities described in this document are responsible for articulating their requirements and for being proactive in seeking such accommodation. Requests for disability-related accommodation Dietetics Specialization degree program are considered on a case-by-case basis according to the applicable policies, regulations, and procedures of the University of Alberta.

Applicants to the Dietetics Specialization degree program are urged to review the policies, regulations, and procedures regarding student accommodations at the University of Alberta. If admitted to the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program, students will be required to comply with the codes, policies, and procedures of the University of Alberta, the Faculty of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences, and the Integrated Dietetic Internship.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES FOR STUDENTS IN THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NUTRITION AND FOOD SCIENCE – DIETETICS SPECIALIZATION DEGREE PROGRAM

Aptitude and Attitude

Students who wish to complete the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must have an interest in nutrition and a desire to support the health and wellness of individuals, groups, and populations. They must demonstrate empathy, compassion, integrity, and concern for others. Students must have the cognitive abilities to understand, develop, and apply theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to work collaboratively as part of a team with their peers, clients, and colleagues. Students must have the capacity to develop leadership, management, and supervisory skills. They must be willing to comply with the standards and requirements set by the program and the profession of dietetics to ensure patient safety (e.g., police information check with vulnerable sector check, immunizations, federal and provincial laws and regulations).

Students must have the capacity and desire to develop the high level of professionalism expected in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization

degree program and the profession of dietetics. This means having a strong work ethic, developing and maintaining a professional image and attitude, appropriate interpersonal skills, and understanding professional boundaries. They must be non-judgmental and respectful of individuality and diversity in patients, clients, colleagues, and communities. They must also be able to creatively problem solve, manage multiple, competing demands, be adaptable, and confident in their decision-making. They must have the ability to reflect on their performance, receive and provide constructive feedback, and demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and development.

Information Gathering/Sensory Skills

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must be able to participate in learning situations that require skill in gathering and remembering information about a patient, a client, a group, an organization, a community, or the population in the course of an assessment. This information is normally acquired through observing, listening, talking to others, and gathering information from charts, reports, scientific literature, and other written materials. Students must be able to observe a patient and acquire visual, auditory, and tactile information.

In all situations, the student must be able to gather information using various assessment tools. They must also be able to assess food items using visual, olfactory, taste, and tactile senses. The student must be able to function in an environment that may be crowded or noisy, or that has the potential for exposure to disease, foods, food allergens, and practice settings that may contain noxious odours.

Students who have sensory limitations (e.g., in vision, hearing, touch, and taste) or in perceptual integration of information from those senses, need to be able to seek out and use adaptive methods and/or technology to compensate for their limitations.

Communication Skills

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must be able to speak to, hear, and observe (aided or unaided) patients, clients, colleagues, healthcare professionals, and others in order to effectively and efficiently elicit information, describe mood, activity, and perceive non-verbal communication. Students must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients, families, clients, colleagues, and other healthcare professionals, in small and large groups, and to maintain confidentiality.

In the clinical setting, students must be able to coherently and systematically summarize a patient's condition and care plan, both orally and in text (handwritten or electronic) to comply with regulatory and organizational record-keeping standards, policies, and legislation.

In all settings, Dietetics Specialization students must be able to write business letters and E-mail messages, reports, proposals, and other print sources (handouts, manuals, posters, displays) in a professional manner with coherence and organization.

Students with less than full fluency in English or with learning disabilities are responsible for achieving the same high level of communication ability that is required for patient safety, informed consent, and fully independent and ethical interaction with patients, clients, colleagues, healthcare professionals, and others. Students should note that the level of communication fluency required, both oral and written, is often higher than is generally assessed in standard tests of language fluency.

Critical Thinking And Cognitive Skills

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must demonstrate the cognitive skills and memory necessary to measure, calculate, and reason in order to analyze, synthesize, and integrate/apply information. They must have the capacity to be able to understand and use complex medical, scientific, and technical information. Students must be able to accurately recognize numbers and perform relevant calculations. These comprehensive problem-solving activities must be done in an acceptable timeframe relative to their peers; proficiency in practice is determined both by accuracy and by completion of tasks within specified time frames. Students also need to be able to demonstrate the ability to accurately assess their performance to further direct their learning by engaging in self-reflection.

Effective problem-solving and judgment are necessary to address patient, client, community, or public needs, and engage them in a safe and efficient manner. Students must have critical appraisal skills in order to build a foundation for evidence-based practice. Students must demonstrate these critical thinking skills in their coursework at the University, during their internship/practicum learning, and in the work environment.

Psychomotor / Physical Skills

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must demonstrate sufficient motor function to safely perform some aspects of physical examination on a patient (e.g., anthropometric measurements). The examination must be done independently and in a timely fashion.

Dietetics students must have the necessary physical energy to be able to participate in all learning experiences of the educational program (e.g., attend classes, complete clinical skills or laboratory work) and therefore should be able to bend, reach, use their hands, and sit and/or stand or walk for most of the day. They also must demonstrate the strength and motor function needed to be able to demonstrate appropriate tools and techniques to a patient (e.g., how to read a nutrition fact label, how to use a scale, and how to inject insulin).

Fitness to Practice: Mental Health And Wellness

Students in the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program must consistently demonstrate psychological fitness to practice which includes the mental health and wellness required for full use of their intellectual and cognitive abilities, in the context of the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program. Students must demonstrate adaptability to changing environments and the ability to function and respond effectively in situations of high stress and potential conflict. They must be comfortable working in close proximity with colleagues and clients. The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, families, colleagues, and others is also required. Students must consistently demonstrate the resilience and self-control needed to manage a myriad of emotionally charged and/or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all real-world, professional practice settings.

Applicants to the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science – Dietetics Specialization degree program who have any concerns about their ability to demonstrate the Essential Skills and Abilities for Dietetics Students should consult with [Undergraduate Student Services, Faculty of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Services](#) **BEFORE** submitting the Personal Declarations For BSc. Nutrition And Food Science - Dietetics Specialization Students.