



NFP Registration of Human Nutritionists

web:nutrition.org.pk email:nutrition.pakistan@gmail.com

written by Rubina Hakeem Chairperson NFP

Background:

As the principal of RLAK College of Home economics Karachi, from around 2006, I initiated the steps for the Development of Dietetics in Pakistan. My efforts are based on structuring of internship programs for BS students, training of preceptors, liaison with international colleagues to receive viewpoints and support, offering several refresher courses specially to introduce the Standardized Nutrition Care Process and use relevant terminologies, and determination of eligibility and scope of practice for Human Nutrition Professionals. Pakistan Nutrition and Dietetics Society collaborated in reviewing and finalizing the criteria and was given entrusted to register the Dietitians according to the criteria established. First batch of RDs was registered in August 2010. Now as a senior professional and nutrition educator NFP I realized a need for update and restructuring of registration system for further development of the profession. Most of the national and international colleagues contacted agreed to the idea and very kindly consented to provide support.

NFP registration is not just a registration scheme, rather it is part of Dietitian-Nutritionists Empowerment Project based on inclusion, acceptance of diversity and zero tolerance for negligence of professional integrity.

Objective:

Considering the developments in the field and upgrade in international standards for nutrition professionals, NFP Expert panel feels that there is a dire need to make robust efforts to raise the standards of dietetics education and practices in Pakistan.

Justification:

The task is crucial and more challenging than it was a decade ago, due to indeterminate variation in nutrition focused degree programs, being offered by various institutions. The situation also leads to inefficient recruitment of graduates for various positions and consequent frustration among more befitting graduates. The circumstances may also reduce respect and advocacy for the profession. Measures from public stakeholders for accreditation of degree programs and licensing of Human Nutrition Professionals (HNPs) is the ideal solution to such challenges. However, in many countries, facing similar challenges which affects the quality of dietetics education, the practice is being monitored by other agencies successfully.

Plan:

a. Registration of Nutritionists:

NFP has developed a plan to enhance quality of the dietetics practice in Pakistan by accepting a wide variety of nutrition graduates who can be potentially hired by employers on account of their degrees. We aim to motivate and facilitate them to amplify their level of competence. Establishing a register of Human Nutrition Professionals (HNPs) is the first step in this regard.

Among Human Nutrition Professionals (HNPs) three categories are presently being registered: *Dietitian-Nutritionists*, and *Public health & Academic nutritionists*

Dietitian-Nutritionists are the professionals who have the most comprehensive training in Nutrition care of humans and have a good understanding of the Nutrition Care Process and are trained to work in any of the three main areas of practice i.e. community setting, clinical setting and food service settings.

Public Health Nutritionists and Academic Nutritionists have a four-year degree in nutrition that does not include education and training to serve in clinical and/or food service settings.

As per the practice followed for the other health professionals in Pakistan, NFP will register professionals on the basis of reported qualification, experience/supervised practice as mentioned in table below, and standards generally accepted by local employers. Educational programs that have internships/supervised practice integrated in the programs, will not need additional certification of supervised practice. At present, assessing the quality of university programs is not within the domain of NFP thus certificate from employer will be used to assess acceptability of graduates of any university for the relevant profession.

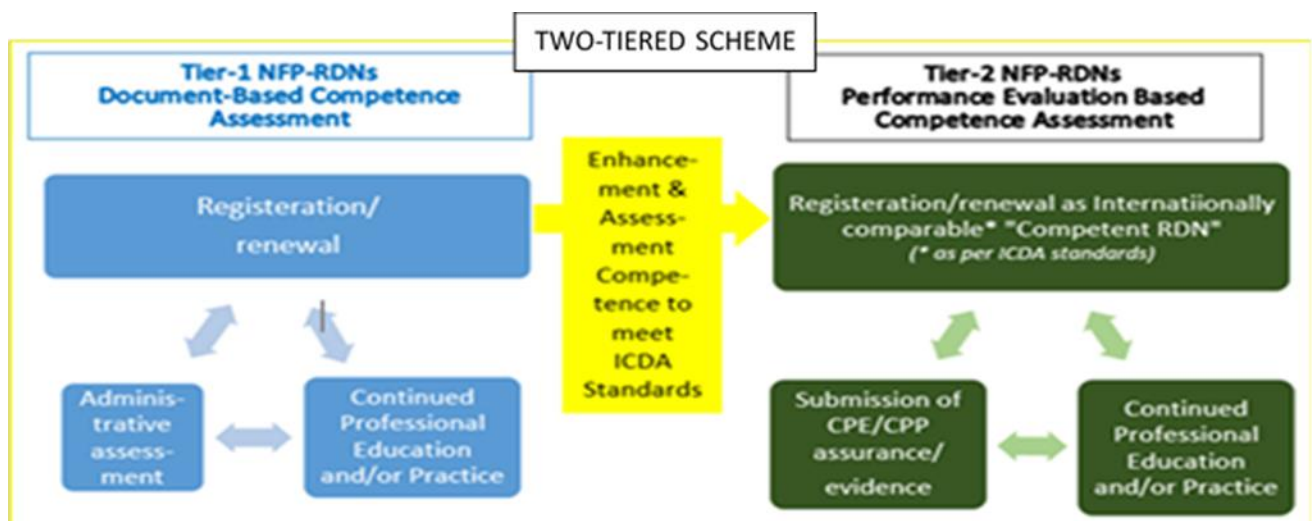
b. Enriching the Competence Nutritionists:

Our vision is to help the majority of Pakistani dietitians to attain all the competencies suggested by ICDA for Dietitians. The goals are planned to be accomplished by providing opportunities to identify and fill the gaps in proficiency by continuous assessments and education of NFP RDNs. For those registered DNs who wish to get an internationally comparable certification, a system of competence assessment will be introduced. It may include case studies from registrants’ practice; standardized tests and OSCI type assessments. A panel of national and international experts will participate in the development of the competence assessment system. To develop the standardized test, a variety of trained experts will participate in item writing. The test will be designed and administered in an internationally accepted manner. Results will be given in the form of scores in various domains. Participants scoring sufficient scores in all domains will be given certificate of competence as an RDN.

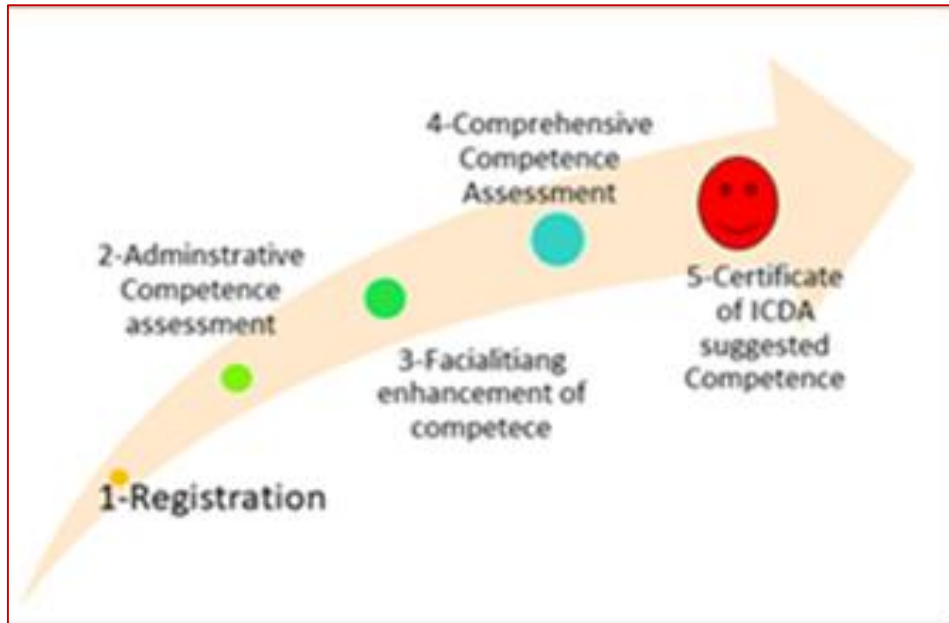
Undertaking the test of competence will only be feasible for NFP registered Dietitian-Nutritionists aspiring to get internationally comparable certification. They will be assessed and guided about enhancement of their professional efficiency to fulfil the gaps. Hopefully within a period of 12-18 months’ period, standardized system of competence assessment will be ready and NFP registrant would be eligible to take the test of competence.

Applicants who are not initially registered as RDN but are willing to get further education and training, to be able to get registered as an RDN, will be guided about relevant diplomas and degree programs.

Attainment of all the competencies suggested by international professional groups for PHNs by majority of Pakistani PHNs is the vision. This is planned to be accomplished by providing opportunities for identify and fill the gaps in professional proficiency by repeated assessments and professional education of NFP RPHNs.



It is a two-tiered plan for enhancing competence i.e. registered PHNs not interested in taking test of competence, will also be encouraged and facilitated to enhancing their level of efficiency as required to fulfil their career plan.



For registered PHNs, who wish to get an internationally comparable certification, a system of competence assessment will be introduced. It may include case studies from registrants' practice; standardized tests and OSCI type assessments.

NFP PANEL OF EXPERTS

Dr. Rezzan Khan PhD (USA)

Senior Clinical Nutritionist, Shifa International hospital Islamabad Pakistan

Dr. Hajra Ahmad Ph.D,

Dean Home & Health Sciences Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad Pakistan

Dr. Muzaffar Khatak PhD,

Professor International Islamic University Malaysia

Ms. Rashida Farid RD (USA)

Dietitian at Swedish Covenant Hospital, Chicago USA

Ms. Aziza Hashmi RD (UK)

Department of Clinical Nutrition Services, King Abdulaziz Medical City-Jeddah, Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Ms Nadia Malik

Registered Dietitian at Arbour Creek Long Term Care
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada