



MEMO

To: Community Stakeholders

From: Tamara Cohen, PhD, RD, Director of Dietetics, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Land and Food Systems | Food, Nutrition and Health

Date: October 5, 2020 (Revised October 20, 2020)

RE: Substantial changes to UBC's Dietetics Major | Proposed Master of Nutrition and Dietetics Program

Dear Colleagues,

The UBC Dietetics Program is proposing substantial changes to the undergraduate Bachelor of Science (Food, Nutrition and Health – *Dietetics Major*) curriculum. Consistent feedback from program graduates and alumni, an advisory committee, as well as direction from the Ministry of Health, have informed these changes.

A summary of the proposed changes are as follows:

- 1) Expose students to Practice Education Placements (PEP) earlier (starting after 3rd year),
- 2) Include more nutrition care and counselling skills,
- 3) Support more equitable exposure to rural and Indigenous-health focused placements for all students,
- 4) Meet the most updated Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice (ICDEP, v3.0) requirements for all nationally accredited dietetics training programs in Canada by September 2023, and
- 5) Increase the number of dietitians graduating from the Dietetics Program at UBC.

It is our hope that with these changes, program graduates will be more confident in their clinical and counselling skills; graduates will have improved exposure, context, and understanding of rural and Indigenous health; and the province will have increased dietitians to meet workload shortages. We are aiming to transition to our program model for the incoming class of **September 2021**.

At the same time, UBC Dietetics is proposing a new self-funded 28-month **Master of Nutrition and Dietetics** (MND) Program. This program will be an alternative credentialing route to becoming a dietitian in BC, and will enroll applicants who already hold a bachelor's degree. Approximately 40% of applicants to the current Dietetics

Major have a pre-existing undergraduate degree. The MND program is not intended for current dietitians with a BSc (a Master's program targeting RDs specifically will be developed at a later date). This new graduate program will provide a more efficient educational pathway for applicants who already hold an undergraduate degree. Our goal is to **launch the Master's program in 2022** and successfully accredit (accreditation renewal for BSc program at the same time) in 2023. In total, the MND will admit approximately 15 students, eventually increasing the total number of dietitian trainees to approximately **50 each year in total** (i.e., 35 students in the BSc, 15 students in the MND). An expansion in total dietetic students will not take place until successful implementation of the restructured curriculum.

Therefore, we are proposing the following changes:

- 1) **Timing of PEP:** In our restructured framework, PEP will be offered after each year of study in the program, with the total remaining at 37-39 weeks of PEP.
 - a. **Undergraduate program:** 4-5 weeks after Year 3, 4-5 weeks after Year 4, and 30 weeks in Year 5. Program graduates would finish in April (instead of the current June end date), allowing graduates to write the May CDRE and obtain temporary registration earlier.
 - b. **Graduate program:** 13 weeks after Year 1 and 26 weeks after Year 2. Program graduates would finish in December of their second year.
- 2) **Curriculum changes:** To ensure students are well prepared for PEP, we are proposing curriculum changes.
 - a. **Adding a dietetics-focused counselling course:** program graduates have consistently requested more counselling training prior to entering PEP and the workforce.
 - b. **Adding more clinical coursework:** program graduates have requested earlier exposure to Nutrition Care concepts. This course will be taken prior to the first PEP.
 - c. **Merging food theory and food theory applications, and reducing electives:** Considering student workload, we are also proposing to merge two courses (*FNH 340 and 341*) to one 4.5 credit course, and removing one restricted elective course to make space for the above two courses.
- 3) **PEP settings:** In the spirit of equity and diversifying student experiences, UBC Dietetics is also proposing a new model of PEP whereby more (if not all) students will have the opportunity to be placed in rural/remote and Indigenous-health focused placements to enrich their learning experiences and develop an appreciation for the complexities of these diverse populations. The UBC Dietetics team will work to increase placement opportunities within

health authorities, as there are currently many underutilized preceptor resources. Concurrently, there will be an emphasis on obtaining placement experiences not currently housed within health authorities (e.g., industry, private practice, community and institutional settings) to help meet capacity challenges within health authorities. This will be a more sustainable model for training purposes and alleviating the current preceptor workload.

- 4) **Align program objectives and outcomes to new ICDEP requirements:** The newly released 2020 ICDEP have changed entry-level practice requirements for dietetics training. It is currently proposed that all institutions will need to align dietetics programs to these new competencies by Fall 2023. There is a framework of seven competencies, which dietetic trainees will meet by the completion of their training: Food and Nutrition Expertise, Professionalism and Ethics, Communication and Collaboration, Management and Leadership, Nutrition Care, Population Health Promotion, and Food Provision. The changes in the undergraduate program and the newly proposed master's program aims to meet these new accreditation requirements.
- 5) **Increase overall dietetics program graduates:** The 2019 BC Labour Market Outlook classifies dietitians as a “high opportunity occupation” and projects an average of 82 job openings each year over the next ten years. To meet projected workforce needs in the province, the UBC Dietetics program plans an eventual expansion of dietetic trainees. Expansion will likely take place after successful implementation of the restructured curriculum and PEP. After expansion, the existing undergraduate program will continue to graduate approximately 35 students per year, and the proposed graduate program will enrol an estimated 15 students per year at steady state. This will total approximately 50 graduates each year. The BC Ministry of Health has supporting increasing RD trainees.

With these proposed changes in mind, UBC Dietetics hopes to secure funding for additional staff to support the increased program support needed for increased student coordination and program management. The current model of PEP heavily emphasizes Health Authorities, and specifically Core Site Coordinators, to support, monitor, and coordinate, students during practice education placements. The new model would see UBC Dietetics Education Coordinators (DECs) providing education and support to students and preceptors across the province, with Core Site Coordinators continuing to coordinate schedules in collaboration with the DECs as needed for health authority placements.

The proposed MND program has ongoing consultations with multiple stakeholder groups pending, and reiterations will continue to manifest as feedback is received. Major stakeholders include the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Advanced Education (MoAE). The MoH has specifically indicated support for training more dietitians in leadership skills to eventually take on more leadership positions in healthcare, thereby diversifying leadership candidates, which are typically dominated by physicians and nurses.

While one goal is to eventually expand the number of dietitian trainees to 50 graduates per year, we appreciate the complexities that come with a transition of this nature. For these reasons, we are proposing a gradual expansion plan by way of decreasing the undergraduate dietetics cohort temporarily while the Master's program begins accepting students to maintain total graduates around 36-39 students/year until program changes continue to revise and improve. This will ensure appropriate distribution of preceptor resources as the program transitions. The required ICDEP competencies will also need to be incorporated appropriately to ensure accreditation standards are met before full expansion will take place. Here is the suggested plan for expansion (all numbers are approximate/estimate):

- For 2022 Intake (MND program start): 36-39 students (with at least 8 students in MND program)
- 2027: Increase student admissions by 3-4 students/year
- By 2030 Intake: 50 students total (35 BSc, 15 MND)

Moving forward, UBC Dietetics will continue to engage with community stakeholders to incorporate feedback on best implementation strategies. The Dietetics Program also plans to create a Master's program for RDs with undergraduate degrees who wish to obtain a graduate-level degree and train in specific specialties such as leadership, research, or clinical areas. There is also possibility of creating Continuing Education Certificates for focus areas dietitians may be interested in, which could also lead into a Master's degree should the learner choose to continue with further education.

The Dietetics Program at UBC welcomes dialogue and feedback as we move forward with these visions of improving dietetic education and practice in BC. As such we are hosting a series of "Q & A" sessions with myself and Gordon Ly, Project Manager, Dietetics Education Coordinator. The schedule and meeting link are below.

Schedule of Discussion Meetings:

- Thursday, October 15 – 2:00-3:00pm
- Tuesday, October 20 – 1:00-2:00pm

- Wednesday, October 21 – 9:30-10:30am
- Monday, October 26 – 12:00-1:00pm

Zoom Link:

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/68071208176?pwd=cmJTT1JnNUVHQLFuWUQrMm85QTlsUT09>

Meeting ID: 680 7120 8176

Passcode: 906297

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'T' and 'C'.

Tamara R. Cohen, PhD, RD

Assistant Professor, Director of Dietetics

Email: tamara.cohen@ubc.ca