

# Providing culturally responsive dietetic services: A self assessment tool for clinicians

# Providing culturally responsive dietetic services: A self assessment tool for clinicians

## Background

The Cambridge Dictionary defines culture as '*the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time*'. Everyone has a cultural background and participates in a range of different cultural settings such as work, home and social groups. There are also cultural differences between people belonging to different regions, religions and social groups, as well as between individuals within any culture. Although culture is broader than ethnicity, this document focuses on cultural difference relating to ethnicity.

Dietitians experience unique challenges in providing dietetic services to clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Over one fifth (20.5%) of Queensland's total resident population were born overseas, so demonstrating culturally responsive practice is not a choice but a necessity for all dietitians.



To be culturally intelligent, dietitians need to understand and reflect on their own culture and its practices around food. They also need to recognise and take action against activities that intentionally or unintentionally privilege some cultural groups and marginalise others. Dietitians also require skills in communicating complex messages, often through the use of an interpreter, they need knowledge of the food of other countries and the cultural and religious practices around its intake. As well as providing dietary advice, dietitians are well placed to address the misconceptions many migrants have around the 'typical' Australian diet, to assist clients to access their traditional foods, and to increase people's understanding of how to choose and prepare unfamiliar foods, especially fruit and vegetables.

## How this tool can help

The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to encourage greater awareness of effective ways to provide culturally responsive services. Key indicators provide practical examples of the attitudes, values and practices required for safe, culturally appropriate and effective dietetic services. Indicators you mark as 'no' or 'unsure' may be used to identify areas for self-reflection or training.

## After completing this tool

- Include a learning goal on improving your cultural intelligence within your CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Plan for the DAA APD credential. Time spent completing this self-assessment could be included in your CPD log as a professional education activity.
- Improving knowledge, skills or performance in this area and leading quality improvement activities may be incorporated into your annual work performance appraisal and development process.
- As a manager, you could encourage team members to include improving cultural intelligence into their performance appraisal and development processes. You can also explore ways to make your service more culturally safe and appropriate by using the [organisational assessment tool](#).



<b>Section 1 – Values, attitudes and awareness</b>	
<b>Answer (please circle)</b>	<b>Key indicator</b>
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that I have culture and this influences how I behave and interact with others.
Yes/No/Unsure	I explore my own values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes about cultural diversity and how this may impact my work practices.
Yes/No/Unsure	I explore the cultural and social significance of my own food intake, food practices and attitudes to health and diet and body image.
Yes/No/Unsure	I reflect on my experiences with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and change my work practices.
Yes/No/Unsure	I take an active interest in the food practices of other cultures.
Yes/No/Unsure	I create opportunities to try the traditional foods of other cultures.
Yes/No/Unsure	I believe it is important that all my clients receive culturally appropriate dietary advice.
Yes/No/Unsure	I am accepting of the foods and food practices of other cultures e.g. traditional food taboos, fasting, celebrations, gender roles.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may require longer appointments and greater preparation time to provide the services needed to produce equitable health outcomes.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that factors such as gender, class and age have different significance in different cultures and these may affect dietary preferences and behaviours.
Yes/No/Unsure	I am aware of the influence that religion can play in determining dietary intake and that individuals may observe different religious practices even within the same community.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that different cultures may have different understandings of what constitutes a healthy body weight, across the lifecycle.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that people are not defined by their culture and that the differences between individuals within a culture can be significant.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand the effects of migration on meal patterns and that these effects vary across generations e.g. children may be highly motivated to adopt an 'Australian' diet.
Yes/No/Unsure	I take appropriate action when the behaviour of other staff or service users is

	culturally insensitive.
Yes/No/Unsure	I feel responsible for ensuring that my service's policies and procedures consider the needs of different cultural groups (e.g. intake practices and any food provided to clients).

### Suggested activities to improve your performance

- Reflect on your own experiences, beliefs and values and identify areas of your practice that may be affected by these.
- For general information on cultural competence go to the Queensland Health Website at [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health\\_workers/train-evaluate.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health_workers/train-evaluate.asp).
- Complete general cultural competence training and engage in professional development opportunities that provide specific training for dietitians and nutritionists e.g. sessions in DAA and other nutrition conferences.
- Attend local food festivals and sample foods from other cultures. Ask the vendors about ingredients and food preparation.
- Consider voluntary work for an organisation that assists refugees, asylum seekers or other migrant groups.

## Section 2 – Work practices

Answer (please circle)	Key indicator
Yes/No/Unsure	I am aware of the main cultural groups within my area from reviewing current demographic data.
Yes/No/Unsure	I am aware of the nutrition-related disease risk profiles of the main cultural groups residing in my service's catchment area.
Yes/No/Unsure	I have a sound knowledge of the food and food practices of the main cultural groups in my area and know where to seek information.
Yes/No/Unsure	Before a dietetic or community consultation with people from different cultural background, I investigate their traditional foods and food practices.
Yes/No/Unsure	I spend time developing rapport and the relationship with the client and understand this may take more than one appointment.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that the routine method of taking a diet history may not be appropriate for some cultural groups and modify my approach.(e.g.
Yes/No/Unsure	I do not assume Western meal patterns or descriptions of meals are relevant to all members of all cultural groups.
Yes/No/Unsure	I am careful to identify infant feeding practices, knowing that these may be very different from those of my own cultural group.
Yes/No/Unsure	I ask about migration history when determining the cultural influences on the diet of individual clients, knowing that many migrants have resided in a number of

	other countries before settling in Australia.
Yes/No/Unsure	I ask about the influence of religion on a client's food choices and practices, including fasting and celebrations, knowing that food practices vary between individuals.
Yes/No/Unsure	I check gender roles around food acquisition and preparation.
Yes/No/Unsure	I actively explore the motivating factors for behaviour change of clients from different cultural backgrounds, understanding that these may be different from those generally accepted within my own culture.
Yes/No/Unsure	I use a strengths-based approach when providing dietary advice knowing that many traditional diets and meal patterns are more nutritious than the food adopted in Australia ('Healthy migrant effect').
Yes/No/Unsure	I provide dietary advice that takes into account the traditional food preferences of the client.
Yes/No/Unsure	I use appropriate resources (e.g. pictures of traditional foods, culturally appropriate healthy weight charts) in the assessment phase of dietetic consultations and for education sessions.
Yes/No/Unsure	I have a good knowledge of where to access the traditional foods of the main cultural groups who live locally.
Yes/No/Unsure	I provide food safety advice to members of migrant communities who have little experience of new technology e.g. the use of refrigerators, safe thawing techniques.
Yes/No/Unsure	I advocate for my workplace to display materials (e.g. posters, pictures, reading materials) that reflect the cultural diversity of the local community.
Yes/No/Unsure	Before visiting a client at their home, I am aware of relevant cultural protocols (e.g. taking off shoes, eating food and beverages offered).
Yes/No/Unsure	I actively recognise and take action against activities that intentionally or unintentionally privilege some and marginalise others. (e.g. not including people requiring an interpreter to be part of research or consumer satisfaction surveys).

### **Suggested activities to improve your performance**

- Take steps to establish a partnership with individuals/ organisations who are experienced in working with culturally diverse populations and compile a list of contacts. These contacts could include community health workers, nutrition and dietetic professionals and staff of Primary Health Networks who specialise in this area. Community organisations working with different cultural groups may also provide support.
- Set aside time each year to research new cultural populations settling in your local area. You can access this information on various government websites including the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Government census data.
- Ensure your workplace is welcoming to those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background - source and display posters, pictures and other materials (e.g. culturally appropriate waiting room music, art work and reading materials) that reflect local cultural groups.
- Compile a collection of multicultural resources that are appropriate and relevant to your service.
- Join the DAA's CALD discussion group (if applicable).

### Section 3 – Communication

Answer (please circle)	Key indicator
Yes/No/Unsure	I am aware of my own communication style and how this may impact on my ability communicate effectively
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that clients may wish to include family or community members at their appointments and it may be appropriate for them to be part of the decision making process.
Yes/No/Unsure	I ensure that before a consultation, I am aware of the client's preferred language.
Yes/No/Unsure	I ensure that before a consultation, an accredited interpreter is booked for clients requiring interpreter services.
Yes/No/Unsure	I ensure that gender, ethnicity and religion of the client are considered before booking an accredited interpreter (e.g. it may be inappropriate to provide a male interpreter for a female client and vice versa).
Yes/No/Unsure	I am aware that using family members or non accredited interpreters can negatively impact on communication with individuals and affect family dynamics.
Yes/No/Unsure	I use a telephone interpreter service, when a face-to-face service is unavailable.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that people may not be literate in their preferred spoken language.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand that learning to be proficient in a new language is difficult, especially for adults, regardless of their education level.
Yes/No/Unsure	When appropriate, I use basic greetings in languages other than English.
Yes/No/Unsure	I know where to locate resources customised for various cultural groups relating to nutrition and dietetics.
Yes/No/Unsure	I provide culturally relevant nutrition resources in languages other than English to my clients from different cultural backgrounds.
Yes/No/Unsure	I include community members in the development and piloting of culturally and linguistically appropriate education materials and in developing culturally safe and accessible dietetic services.

#### **Suggested activities to improve your performance**

- Before seeing a client from a different linguistic background, ask the interpreter about the most culturally appropriate way to welcome them. If it includes greeting someone in their own language, check your pronunciation before you see the client. You could add this to a list of cultural protocols and greetings in languages common to your client group.
- Consider whether the process for booking outpatients provides the information you need to provide culturally responsive services (e.g. Are interpreters booked based on clients' language preferences? Are clients' religion and ethnicity recorded?). If not, develop strategies to remedy this problem.

- Complete training that involves acquiring/ using an interpreter. Also access the Queensland Health document; [Working with Interpreters: Guidelines](#).
- Complete professional development/ cultural competence training to enhance communication skills with individuals who have low literacy levels.
- Compile a collection of multicultural resources that are appropriate and relevant to your service. The resource, *How to choose culturally appropriate education resources: a guide for dietitians and nutritionists* has been developed to assist.
- Read the *Food and cultural profiles* of different cultural groups that have been created specifically for dietitians and those for nutritionists working directly with local communities.

### Section 4 – Training

Answer (please circle)	Key indicator
Yes/No/Unsure	I have completed training/ professional development activities to build skills in working effectively with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the past two years.
Yes/No/Unsure	I have completed training in accessing and using accredited interpreters.
Yes/No/Unsure	I have attended professional development sessions, specifically on food and culture, and understand how this can be applied to nutrition and dietetic practice.

### Suggested activities to improve your performance

- Complete training that involves booking an interpreter and best practice in working with one.
- Complete general cultural competence training and engage in professional development opportunities that provide specific training for dietitians and nutritionists e.g. sessions in DAA and other nutrition conferences, training activities organised by DAA's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Nutrition Discussion Group.

### Section 5 – Quality improvement and research

Answer (please circle)	Key indicator
Yes/No/Unsure	I am involved in activities to gather and analyse demographic data to determine which cultural groups are accessing my service and the reasons for this.
Yes/No/Unsure	I participate in developing and implementing strategies to minimise barriers to accessing services for clients of different cultural backgrounds and actively improve services.
Yes/No/Unsure	I participate in implementing client satisfaction surveys that actively include clients from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Yes/No/Unsure	I participate in developing and implementing strategies to increase client satisfaction of dietetic services to clients of different cultural backgrounds.
Yes/No/Unsure	I understand the need for clients of different cultural backgrounds to be represented in research, especially where the prevalence of nutrition-related disease is higher when compared to other groups within Australia.
<p><b>Suggested activities to improve your performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for your team/unit to explore its capacity to provide culturally safe and appropriate services using the <a href="#">organisational assessment tool</a></li> <li>• Check whether your dietetic service is accessible based on demographic and attendance data.</li> <li>• Consider advocating for strategies to ensure that client satisfaction surveys are completed by clients from all cultural backgrounds.</li> <li>• Consider advocating for quality improvement or research activities to improve services to clients from different cultural backgrounds e.g. on the use of interpreters.</li> </ul>	

This tool was developed by the Access and Capacity-building Team of the Health Equity and Access Unit, Metro South Hospital & Health Service, Queensland Health, Australia.

A number of generic cultural competence tools informed its development. These are shown in Appendix 1. A reference group of dietitians and nutritionists assisted in customising key indicators to the field of nutrition and dietetics.

## Appendix 1. Generic tools for assessing organisational cultural competence

Name of Tool	Organisation	Description	Web Address
Cultural Competence – Supporting Physicians’ Professionalism and Performance (SPPP)	The Royal Australasian College of Physicians	This tool was developed to support physicians to meet the cultural competency domains in the SPPP framework	<a href="https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/pdfs/cultural-competency-questionnaire.pdf?sfvrsn=2">https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/pdfs/cultural-competency-questionnaire.pdf?sfvrsn=2</a>
Checklist for ongoing cultural competence development	eCALD	A checklist designed as a self-assessment tool to determine the cultural competence of health staff.	<a href="http://www.ecald.com/Portals/49/Docs/Resources/Cultural%20Competence%20Checklist%202010.pdf">http://www.ecald.com/Portals/49/Docs/Resources/Cultural%20Competence%20Checklist%202010.pdf</a>
National Cultural Competency Tool (NCCT) For Mental Health Services	Multicultural Mental Health Australia	Includes organisational cultural competency check list linked to a set of Cultural Competency Standards for mental health services	<a href="http://www.mhima.org.au">www.mhima.org.au</a>
Cultural Competence Checklist for workers	Multicultural and Disability Advocacy Association	This fact sheet also includes checklists for workers in agencies regarding their cultural competence.	<a href="http://www.mhcc.org.au/media/10541/wfdg-pathway-6-cultural-competency-factsheets.pdf">http://www.mhcc.org.au/media/10541/wfdg-pathway-6-cultural-competency-factsheets.pdf</a>
Cultural Competence Checklist	Avert Family Violence – Australian Institute of Social Relations	This fact sheet includes a checklist that focuses on self-awareness, communication and new learning.	<a href="http://www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Cultural_Compentence_Checklist.pdf">http://www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Cultural_Compentence_Checklist.pdf</a>
Cultural Competence Self-assessment Checklist	Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society	This checklist focuses on skills, knowledge and self-awareness of anyone working and living in a culturally diverse environment.	<a href="http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/cultural-competence-self-assessment-checklist.pdf">http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/cultural-competence-self-assessment-checklist.pdf</a>
Cultural & Linguistic Competence Health Practitioner Assessment	National Centre for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University	Self-guided learning activity designed to enhance the delivery of high quality services for culturally diverse patient/client populations.	<a href="https://www.clchpa.org/">https://www.clchpa.org/</a>
Cultural Competence Awareness Tool	American Speech-Language-Hearing Association	An interactive web-based tool designed to assist individuals to evaluate their own cultural competence.	<a href="http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/self.htm">http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/self.htm</a>
Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports to Children and their Families	National Association of School Psychologists	This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural diversity and cultural competence in human service settings.	<a href="https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/diversity/cultural-competence/self-assessment-checklist">https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/diversity/cultural-competence/self-assessment-checklist</a>

**Please note:** the web links in this document were current as at May 2016. Use of search engines is recommended if the page is not found.

Published by the State of Queensland (Metro South Health), 2018



This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit [creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au)

© State of Queensland (Metro South Hospital and Health Service) 2018

You are free to copy, communicate and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the State of Queensland (Metro South Hospital and Health Service).

For more information, contact:

Access and Capacity-building Team,

Metro South Health:

[access&capacity@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:access&capacity@health.qld.gov.au),

An electronic version of this document is available at:

[www.metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural-nutrition-resources](http://www.metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural-nutrition-resources)

Disclaimer:

The content presented in this publication is distributed by the Queensland Government as an information source only. The State of Queensland makes no statements, representations or warranties about the accuracy, completeness or reliability of any information contained in this publication. The State of Queensland disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation for liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs you might incur as a result of the information being inaccurate or incomplete in any way, and for any reason reliance was placed on such information.