

## SELF ASSESSED AND EMPIRICALLY ASSESSED NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE

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The aim of this study was to obtain a preliminary measure of nutrition knowledge among a small representative group of students in the NSW Department of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and to investigate the relationship between this knowledge and the respondents' level of formal nutrition education. Further, to investigate whether there was a significant relationship between the respondents' nutrition knowledge and their self perception of their nutrition, their level of general education, and their age.

A questionnaire, based on the US Food and Drug Administration, 1974 questionnaire, was administered to 27 homemakers attending enrichment classes held in the School of Home Science at a TAFE college and 23 full time students in the 2nd year of the Home Economics Certificate course held in the same school at the same TAFE college. The homemakers had undertaken no formal nutrition education as part of their course and the full time students had had formal nutrition education as part of their course. In the present study, it was found that the full time students had a higher level of nutrition knowledge than the homemakers (Table 1).

Table 1: Nutrition Knowledge Scores of the Homemakers and Full Time Students

	Mean Score (Max poss 92)	% Mean of Score	Range of Scores	% Range of Score
Homemakers (n=27)	62	67	31 - 81	35 - 88
Full Time Students (n=23)	65	71	43 - 82	47 - 89

One result which contravenes some commonly held beliefs was that the homemakers thought they had a higher level of nutrition knowledge (mean rating = 7) than did the full time students (mean rating = 6). In fact, the homemakers had a lower level of actual nutrition knowledge than the full time students (see Table 1).

The full time students had a better understanding than did the homemakers of some of the concepts used in nutrition education. However, there was no significant relationship between the full time students' nutrition knowledge and their self perception of their nutrition knowledge, their level of general education, and their age, and this was also the case for the homemakers.

The results of this present study imply that a need exists to develop specialised programmes in nutrition education for homemakers which impart both nutrition facts and an understanding of the principles of nutrition and nutrition terms. A need also appears to exist for a change in the way in which nutrition information is presented and taught in formal nutrition education programmes.

US Food and Drug Administration, 1974. Food and nutrition knowledge and beliefs. Response Analysis Corp, New Jersey

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