

STUDENT INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Contributing to the next revision of the Choices criteria

June 2022

Background

- » The Choices International Foundation (Choices) aims to help governments and food companies to shape their nutrition strategy in order to reduce the double burden of malnutrition globally.
- » The Choices criteria are the cornerstone of the Choices way of working. The International Scientific Committee is the custodian of these criteria. The International Scientific Committee (ISC) is formed by a group of leading independent scientists in nutrition, food science and consumer behaviour. The committee is independent and autonomous.¹
- » The Choices criteria² describe the healthiness of products per product group, by setting thresholds for saturated fatty acids, trans fat, sodium, sugar, energy and fiber. The criteria are determined such that approximately 20% of products in basic food groups, and 10% in non-basic food groups, comply, using large international product-specific food composition databases of the George Institute³.
- » The Choices criteria are used as input for national criteria to support national endorsement front-of-pack labelling (FOPL) programs, i.e. products that comply with these criteria may use an endorsement front-of-pack logo.
- » The Choices criteria are regularly revised³ to cater for new developments in consumer habits, food science and product reformulation.
- » In 2021 Choices extended its logo criteria to a 5-level nutrient profiling system (NPS), which can be used for multiple purposes, not only for endorsement FOPL.⁴
- » The next revision of the Choices criteria needs to be published in 2024. There are a number of topics that need to be considered as part of this revision.
 - Further validation against indicator foods for basic food groups as is mentioned by Tognon et al. ⁴
 - Validation against indicator foods for non-basic food groups as is mentioned by Tognon et al. ⁴
 - Investigate whether there are (better) alternative databases available to the George Institute database and if so, what the compliance levels would be against these databases
 - Consider the classification of animal product replacements, such as milk and meat replacements as discussed by Tognon et al. ⁴

¹ <https://www.choicesprogramme.org/about-us/the-international-scientific-committee/>

² Roodenburg, A., Popkin, B., & Seidell, J. (2011). Development of international criteria for a front of package food labelling system: the International Choices programme. *Eur.J.Clin.Nutr.*, 1190-1200. <https://www.nature.com/articles/ejcn2011101>

³ VandenAssum, S. et al. , Schilpzand, R., Lissner, L., Don, R., Nair, K., Nnam, N., . . . Roodenburg, A. (2020). Periodic Revisions of the International Choices Criteria: Process and Results. *Nutrients*, 2774. <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/9/2774>

⁴ Tognon, G.; Beltramo, B.; Schilpzand, R.; Lissner, L.; Roodenburg, A.J.C.; Don, R.; Nair, K.M.; Nnam, N.; Hamaker, B.; Smorenburg, H. Development of the Choices 5-Level Criteria to Support Multiple Food System Actions. *Nutrients* **2021**, *13*, 4509. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13124509>

- How the Choices International Criteria (or national / regional criteria based on these) can be extended with the inclusion of positive nutrients (micronutrients, whole grain). For example Zambia and Malaysia have included micronutrient criteria in their national criteria, which are based on Choices.
- Review the position on artificial sweeteners. So far the ISC has judged that there should be no restrictions set for the use of artificial sweeteners, as evidence of possible adverse effects was considered inconclusive, but the ISC committed to re-evaluate its position again with the next revision.³
- Comparison of alignment with other national Food based dietary guidelines
- Comparison with other NPSs (Keyhole, Nutri-Score, Health Star Rating)

Assignment

Choices seeks students (or teams of students) from renowned universities from all over the world as interns to contribute to the revision process of the Choices criteria. The student(s) may select one or more topic(s) from the list mentioned before, in consultation with Choices and their academic supervisor(s).

Activities include, among others:

- » Elaborate and scope the research question(s) and develop a work plan.
- » Develop a methodology how the research question(s) will be addressed. E.g. in the case of a comparison with national food based dietary guidelines or validation against indicator foods, you need to think of which countries, which food groups, which foods, where you obtain the nutrition composition data and how you organise these data for the analysis (most likely you need to develop an excel sheet to perform the analysis).
- » Collect the necessary data
- » Perform the qualitative and/or quantitative analyses
- » Present your results in written and presentation formats to the ISC.

Internships last normally 3-4 months and should start any time from 1 July 2022 until 1 April 2023 and should finish by 30 June 2023 latest. The internship is entirely online and remotely, as Choices does not have offices. The candidate is expected to arrange its own work place and laptop. There will be no remuneration or internship fee paid. The intern will be mentored by the Managing Director of Choices on a weekly basis and will also be regularly in contact with at least one ISC member. Communication will take place online (most communication via MS teams, WhatsApp calls or email). The working language is English.

The candidate(s) will gain scientific insights in the field of nutrient profiling systems. He/she will gather relevant experience in working in an international multi-stakeholder organization. The intern will operate as full-time staff member of Choices and participate in online team meetings. In this way, the candidate will learn about Choices strategy and how it applies science in its advocacy and collaboration at national level and with companies.

Qualifications

- » BSc / MSc student in nutrition, food science or related topic
- » Knowledge on or interest in nutrient profiling systems
- » Interested to work in an international context
- » Excellent writing skills (English)
- » Competencies: Pro-active, flexible, able to work independently, communicative, self-starter

Application procedure

- » Discuss with your academic supervisor whether you would qualify and what topic you would like to focus on and what support you may expect from your academic supervisor.
- » Send Dr. Herbert Smorenburg, Managing Director Choices International Foundation, info@choicesprogramme.org the following documents in one email with subject: *application internship*
 - motivation letter indicating your motivation, preferred internship period, and if applicable, and specific requirements you (or your university) would have;
 - a short (max. one A4) proposal outlining the topic you propose to work on;
 - your CV;
 - letter of recommendation by your academic supervisor
- » Internship applications will be considered continuously from 1 June 2022 until 28 February 2023 (the latest internship period is 1 April – 30 June 2023).
- » Applications will be considered based on motivation and qualifications, and the quality and value of your proposal in the context of Choices revision process.
- » Choices will let you know within three weeks after submitting your application whether your application has been successful.