



Nutrition

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There are ideas that only flourish when they find common ground

The university, when it is recognized as a community of communities, ceases to be just a repository of knowledge to become a neighbourhood of care: in the knowledge that is shared, in the hands that are extended, in the partnerships that develop over time. To envision the University is to think of it as a living entity, which learns from, for and through the people around it, attentive to the needs of the present and committed to creating fairer futures.

At the Escola Superior de Biotecnologia (ESB), Nutrition is a language of belonging and inclusion. Through Nutrition, scientific evidence is transformed into real and everyday choices which are reflected in shared health. This language is built in an ecosystem where teaching, research and outreach are not separate dimensions, but rather complementary ways of caring: for food, for people and for the environments where they live.

To train in Nutrition is to prepare to engage with complexity. From the hospital to the school, from contract catering to community intervention, from industry to research, contexts multiply and require professionals who can interpret different realities, dialoguing with different stakeholders and designing tailored responses. Throughout the Nutrition Sciences degree, attention is placed on the interaction with the community and is formalized in the Community Nutrition course, understood as a bridge between scientific knowledge and everyday life: diagnosing needs, planning and evaluating programmes, working with groups at different stages of the life cycle, while consistently considering the social, cultural and environmental determinants influencing health. Along this journey,

training and education also progresses to postgraduate levels, reinforcing the technical, scientific and human capacity of future professionals and promoting integrated approaches that articulate eating behaviour, health and innovation. Simultaneously, the bridges established with other areas of knowledge – including Psychology (within the postgraduate program in Nutrition, Psychology and Health), as well as with the Católica Porto Business School and the Espregueira Academy, in the area of Nutrition, Endocrinology and Management – reflect the conviction that current challenges require interdisciplinary, collaborative and systemic solutions. Acquiring knowledge in Nutrition is learning to listen, to adapt, to intervene with responsibility and humility. It is not just about applying knowledge; it is about building and co-creating it with others in the community.

Throughout the life cycle, Nutrition also reveals its deepest ethical dimension. Working with older people, for example, presents the university with challenges related to fragility, dependence, and human dignity, serving as a reminder that science is not impartial when it intersects with life. In contexts of proximity, such as those developed with residential facilities and nutritional intervention projects for the elderly (e.g., the NUTRIAGE project), knowledge is no longer just an instrument of evaluation to become an act of care and co-responsibility. In these environments, Nutrition establishes itself as a profoundly human practice, recognizing ageing as an essential component of the community that requires nurturing rather than being viewed as a marginal reality.

However, learning is not limited to the classroom and institutions. The city also becomes a pedagogical space and a living laboratory. Initiatives such as the *Inventing the Food of the Future* (Inventar a Alimentação do Futuro) contest invite young people to think of food as an act of citizenship, challenging them to create solutions that combine health, sustainability and accessibility. By preparing meals with nutritional balance, seasonality, cost, and ecological footprint in mind, they learn that the future is built on concrete choices – and that nutrition can serve as a tool for social transformation. Other initiatives such as the *Nutribrinca* project use accessible, participatory and creative experimentation to empower primary school children not only in terms of food education but also in the development of a more conscious relationship with food and science itself.

This same spirit encompasses opportunities for community engagement, including workshops, debates and hands-on experiences aimed at

maximising food utilisation and minimising waste. In these environments, literacies are fine-tuned, academic and grassroots knowledge are compared and integrated, autonomy and critical thinking are fostered, and the idea that food health is a shared benefit, built together, is reinforced.

Nutrition Research, in turn, assumes a pivotal role of interface with society and the real economy. Through laboratories and structures that engage with industry and consumers, Nutrition translates into applied solutions: reformulating foods to enhance safety and have a more balanced nutritional profile; developing biologically active functional foods; creating more sustainable packaging; preserving nutritional quality, or implementing more responsible technological processes. These actions imply a broad understanding of Nutrition, integrating human health, environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Nutrition science protects and serves, generates shared value and strengthens public trust in the knowledge produced by the university. In this context, internationalisation emerges as a natural extension of the community. Scientific networks, collaborative projects and the diversity of teachers and students create pluralistic learning environments, where different perspectives enrich the way of thinking about food, nutrition, health and innovation.

Consequently, Nutrition has evolved from being just a discipline to becoming a place of encounter: connecting the plate with the planet, the person with the city, and evidence with experience. In a university that identifies itself as a community of communities, Nutrition is a bridge – between science and care, between knowledge and action, and between individuals and collectives. By co-creating with schools, local authorities and companies; by providing access to data and results for scrutiny and by listening to families and health professionals, we strengthen the community bonds that support healthier choices.

At ESB, we learn daily that each person's health is connected to the health of the plate, the land, and the public square where we meet. Hence, the importance of doing Nutrition science that sits at the table, enters the classroom, visits the market, engages with industry and ultimately returns to each household. A science for all, because it is born with, for, and through the community: Nutrition is rigour that cares, proximity that educates and partnerships that multiply.