



**New Zealand Dietitians Board**  
*Te Mana Mātanga Mātai Kai*

## Information for New Zealand Graduating Students

### Introduction

**To work as a dietitian, you must be registered with the Dietitians Board and hold an APC.**

Dietitians are healthcare professionals regulated under the **Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003** (HPCA Act). The HPCA Act provides a framework for the regulation of various health professions, with the principle purpose of the act being to protect the health and safety of members of the public.

The Dietitians Board is one of 16 Regulatory Authorities established under the HPCA Act. The Board's major functions are to:

- set standards
- prescribe qualifications for scopes of practice by dietitians
- accredit and monitor educational institutions and programmes
- grant registration of dietitians and issue (annual) practising certificates
- review and promote the competence of dietitians
- deal with cases of dietitians who may be unable to perform professionally

To practice as a Dietitian in New Zealand, you must:

1. Be registered with the Dietitians Board, **and**
2. Hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC).

The registration process is therefore in two parts:

1. Apply for registration
2. Once registered, apply for a practising certificate or make a non-practising declaration.

You must be registered and hold a current APC if you intend to practice dietetics in New Zealand. This applies even if you intend to practice for only part of the year, or to work part-time – even if you are only practising for one day of the year. It also applies to voluntary or other unpaid work.

**The requirement to hold an Annual Practising Certificate is not restricted to provision of direct clinical care.** This is outlined in the:

- [Scope of Practice: Dietitians](#)
- [Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians](#)

The Dietitians Board has a number of resources to help new graduates understand registration on its website; [www.dietitiansboard.org.nz](http://www.dietitiansboard.org.nz). Please take the time to read through these as it is important you understand the implications of being registered and the need for an APC; you do not want be practising in breach of the HPCA Act at the start of your dietetic career.

## Scope of Practice: Dietitian

**The Scope of Practice outlines a number of areas where dietitians use their dietetic skills.**

Once entered onto the Register of dietitians by the Dietitians Board, a practitioner who is working within the [Scope of Practice: Dietitians](#), must hold an APC.

### Scope of Practice: Dietitians:

*Dietitians are registered health practitioners who evaluate scientific evidence about food and nutrition and translate it into practical strategies. Dietitians work in partnership with individuals, whānau, communities and populations, in states of health and disease, to support optimal health and well-being.*

*Dietitians use their dietetic knowledge, skills, and judgement in a variety of contexts, which includes promoting and protecting public health, directing and delivering medical nutrition therapy services, and managing food and health systems. They may perform a variety of functions, including policy development, leadership, management, research, education, and communication roles.*

*Dietitians with a prescribing endorsement are able to prescribe [Special Foods](#) and approved nutrition-related medicines.*

*Dietitians are accountable for ensuring that their practice is consistent with the Dietitians Board's competency requirements, Code of Ethics and Conduct, and relevant legislation.*

The Scope of Practice outlines many areas where dietitians can use their dietetic knowledge and skills.

Traditionally, 'dietetics' and 'working as a dietitian' was thought to only be within a clinical setting on a one on one capacity with patients or in a hospital-based food service environment. The field of dietetics, and dietetic practice, has expanded significantly over the years, seeing dietitians moving from a hospital-based, clinical setting, to many other areas.

## Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians (PSCD)

**The PSCD describes the characteristics of a competent Registered Dietitian.**

Before beginning your career as a dietitian, it is important that you are aware of the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians](#) (PSCD). Your accredited course will have prepared you to meet these Standards and Competencies.

The PSCD outlines the five integrated themes which collectively describe the characteristics of a competent Registered Dietitian and the abilities to be demonstrated in practice. These include:

- Food, Nutrition, and Health Expertise
- Communication and Collaboration
- Management and Leadership
- Professionalism
- Scholarship

Being familiar with these PSCD will allow you to better understand where and how a dietitian can utilise their skills.

## Registration

**To call yourself a dietitian, you must be registered with the Dietitians Board.**

You can apply for registration once you have completed your course of study and handed in your thesis for:

- **Masters of Dietetics** from the University of Otago
- **Master of Science (Nutrition and Dietetics)** from Massey University
- **Master of Health Sciences in Nutrition and Dietetics** from The University of Auckland

The **NZ Graduate Registration Application Form** can be found on the Board's website under *Fees & Forms*. Before submitting your registration application form, please carefully read the application form, so you are aware of what the required documents are, including a filled Criminal Conviction Check form, which will be referred on by the Board to the Ministry of Justice.

### Reference of Character and Fitness

Please do not ask your head of programme to provide a character reference as they will automatically provide a fitness to practice reference when they confirm successful course completion.

### Certification Requirements

As stated on the Registration application form, certified copies must be certified or notarised 'as a true copy of the original' by a **Solicitor, Notary Public or Justice of the Peace** (not by the Police, Post Office, or other person). It must be obvious who the certifying person is and include a stamp or seal.

For more information, see [Certification Requirements and Translation of Documents](#).

### Course Completion Letter

The Board's Secretariat will receive a notification from the Head of Dietetic Training Programme that you have completed all the course requirements of the Master's degree. This will be sent to the Board **directly** by your University. The Secretariat cannot complete the Registration until it has received this notification. Sometimes, this notification is not received until March/April (or later in some cases).

### Completed Registration

The Board's Secretariat will notify you of any outstanding application documentation and keep you updated on the process of your application. Once you are registered, you will be invited to activate your Practitioner Portal and apply for an Annual Practising Certificate (APC) or make a Non-Practising Declaration (NPD).

### Timelines for registration application

The Board recognises that there is a delay between students finishing their degree studies and formal confirmation of successful completion. Applications for registration can be submitted as soon as you have submitted your thesis to ensure that references and criminal record checks can be obtained (third party criminal record checks for New Zealand can take up to a month to be processed). The Board's Secretariat cannot complete your application for registration until we have confirmation that you have successfully completed your course, but by applying early we will have been able to process your preliminary information. You will also receive Board Newsletters and any other important notices once you have made an application for registration.

Please keep in mind that during March, all current practitioners must renew their APC. This is an extremely busy period for the Board's Secretariat and the application processing times may take longer as a result.

### Working after course completion but before registration

Please note the correct use of dietetic titles by those who work in a dietetic related role before they are registered and hold an APC.

'Dietitian' is a protected term under the HPCA Act. A person may not use the title of "dietitian", be known as a dietitian, refer to themselves as a dietitian, or portray themselves as one if they are not registered with the Dietitians Board **and** hold a current APC. The term 'dietetic assistant' or 'nutritionist' can be used however.

Until you are registered with the Board you are not under its jurisdiction. As such, you should discuss with your employer the mechanisms and checks needed to keep patients or clients, and you, safe during this interim period and be **very careful** not to infer you are a dietitian. You can, however, refer to the title of your qualification.

Once registered, the HPCA Act applies to you in full and you must hold an APC if you are working within the [Scope of Practice: Dietitian](#). Therefore, if you have been working as above you must, **WITHOUT ANY DELAY**, apply and pay for an APC once you have received confirmation of your registration to ensure you do not work in breach of the HPCA Act – see below for further information about APCs.

It is **always** an individual's responsibility to pay for and obtain an APC, not an employers.

**Being a Registered Dietitian and holding a current Annual Practising Certificate provides credibility and status as a registered health professional.**

### Annual Practising Certificate (APC)

***Once registered, you must either hold an APC or make a non-practising declaration every year.***

Upon registration you will receive a letter from the Board's Secretariat detailing how to apply for your first APC through the Practitioners Portal online. Your first APC will run until 31 March following your application.

There is provision for part payment of APC fees for the period 1 December to 31 March, when the cost of an APC is reduced. No other part payments at any other time are applicable.

Please do not pay your APC fee at the same time as you pay for registration – the two processes are separate and the APC fee should be paid at the relevant stage, not in advance.

### **Non-Practising Declaration**

If you are not intending to practice immediately following registration, then you must make a **Non-Practising Declaration**.

If you are in any doubt about whether to apply for an APC or make a Non-Practising Declaration, please contact the Board's Secretariat for advice.

### **APC Renewal Period**

Once registered, you will be required to make a practising declaration each year. The renewal period begins on 1 March and ends on 31 March each year.

Even if your employer will be paying for your APC, it is **always your responsibility**, not theirs, to ensure that a declaration and payment is made correctly and on time. Please remember this, especially at the time of annual APC renewals when the Board does not have the time to chase individuals for any late or missing payments. Failure to pay on time could delay your APC or mean that you could be practising illegally.

All practitioners who complete a late APC **renewal** (i.e. from 1 April onwards) and who practice on or after 1 April before the approval of a new APC, do so unlawfully. Please refer to the [Late Renewal of Annual Practising Certificates Policy](#) on the Board's website for further information regarding this.

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

**Annual CPD must be undertaken by all practitioners while they are holding an APC.**

Under the HPCA Act, the Medicines Act, and other legislation, Registered Dietitians are obligated to maintain and enhance their competence as Registered Health Professionals.

The Board provides a Continuing Competence Programme (MyCCP) to enable practitioners to meet the annual recertification requirements. This is done by providing a formalised procedure for dietitians to demonstrate their participation in professional development activities.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should be carried out through the duration of the practice year to ensure dietitians maintain and enhance their practice.

In March, each practitioner applying for an APC, makes a legal declaration for the upcoming practising year, that they will meet their minimum annual CPD requirements. This is done by declaring they will accept the following statement:

*"I will meet the minimum requirements of the Dietitians Board MyCCP during this period"*

Practitioners must log all of their learning goals and activities, and upload evidence on the MyCCP platform, through the Practitioner Portal. There are a number of helpful resources available to practitioners providing guidance for CPD in the Practitioner Portal.

## Practice Supervision

**Practice supervision is mandatory for all newly graduated dietitians.**

It is the Board's policy that newly graduated dietitians receive practice supervision for the first year of working in New Zealand. This requirement is recorded as a Board condition under the HPCA Act and applicants for registration will be given an opportunity to comment on this during the registration process if they so wish.

Practice supervision is a formal relationship between the supervisory partners, which **begins when the supervisee starts work.**

Please familiarise yourself with the Board's [Practice Supervision Policy](#) and the [Guidelines for Practice Supervision](#), which can be found on the Practitioners Portal. The *Guidelines for Practice Supervision* document also outlines your practice supervisor's responsibilities. You will also benefit from understanding the role of the supervisor.

Once you begin work, you are required to:

1. **Notify the Board** of your Practice Supervisor's name.
  - If possible, you can notify the Board of your practice supervisor before starting work or at the same time as applying for your APC
2. Select your supervisor within the Practitioner Portal, requesting them to **Sign On** as soon as possible after you begin dietetic practice.
  - Your minimum of 12 months of supervision commences at that Sign On
  - The Board's recommendation is that formal supervision is undertaken at least initially, for an hour weekly
3. Upload your **practice supervision logs**, which includes a brief description of the session and a brief reflection.
4. At the end of practice supervision period, ensure that your supervisor completes their **Sign Off** to formally conclude your supervision.
  - The Board can then remove the supervision condition from your APC
  - 12 months is the minimum requirement; your practice supervisor may deem a little longer is required

If you change or add supervisors at any time in the year, you must ensure that they complete the Sign On and Sign Off processes through their own Portal promptly to keep your supervision history updated.

If you are still under practice supervision at APC renewal time, your practice supervisor must approve your APC application. The practice supervisor will review your learning goals, make comment about your progress, and confirm that your credits accurately reflect the value of learning activities.

For further information on the **Sign On, Sign Off, and Approve APC** process, please read the [Supervision Online User Guide](#).

If you will be working in a situation where there is no readily available practice supervisor, it remains your responsibility to find a practice supervisor.

### **Dietitian Prescribing Endorsement and Annual Obligations**

***If you have the Dietitian Prescriber endorsement, you must have a Prescribing Supervisor and complete annual CPD specific to prescribing.***

If you have the Prescribing Endorsement on your APC, you must undergo continued prescribing supervision, and complete annual CPD requirements which includes the annual prescriber update through [MOODLE](#).

#### **Prescribing Supervision**

As outlined in the [Dietitian Prescriber Policy](#), a practitioner with the Prescribing Endorsement must have a prescribing supervisor. You can select one through the drop down list within your Practitioner Portal.

#### **Annual CPD Obligations**

In order to meet recertification requirements and renew your APC each year, you are required to complete and log the following CPD activities within your Practitioner Portal:

- **At least two** prescribing 'continuing education' activities, including the Annual Prescriber Update completed via MOODLE, and
- **At least one** 'peer review' of your prescribing practice (e.g. a case study including your prescription, monitoring and evaluation, **OR** an update of a prescribing resource or relevant standards of care).

Please see the [Dietitian Prescriber Policy](#) for further information.

### **Updating Your Information with the Board**

***It is your legal obligation to inform the Board's Secretariat if your contact information has changed.***

The HPCA Act requires practitioners to provide the Board with accurate postal, residential, work, and email addresses. It also requires that you keep these addresses up-to-date by making any changes through the Practitioners Portal.

#### **Contact Details**

You can update any of your contact details through your Practitioner Portal once registered with the Board. If you are still in the process of being registered with the Board, please email the Board's Secretariat of any changes.

As email is the primary channel of communication used by the Board for newsletters and notices of importance, it is your responsibility to swiftly notify the Board's Secretariat of any changes to your email addresses.

**Name Change**

You are also obliged by law to notify the Board's Registrar of any change of your name within one month of the change being officially confirmed. You must supply a copy of the document changing your name (e.g. a marriage certificate) as evidence of your name change.

**Workplace**

As with your other contact details, you are able to update this information within your Practitioner Portal.

**Area of Practice**

If you have changed your area of practice, you may be required to undergo additional practice supervision. This is outlined within the Board's [Practice Supervision Policy](#). If you have changed your area of practice, email the Board's Secretariat right away to discuss.

**Taking Leave**

If you are taking leave, you are required to inform the Board. Taking leave may include:

- Traveling or working overseas
- Parental leave
- Changing your practising status

You should contact the Board's Secretariat as soon as possible if you are intending to take leave. This will allow the Secretariat to inform you of your obligations. If any of your contact details change while you are on leave, for example you have an overseas address or email address, please ensure that this is kept updated within your Practitioner Portal.

For more information, read the [Taking Leave](#) webpage.

**Understanding the difference between Dietitians Board and Dietitians New Zealand**

***The Dietitians Board is a Regulatory Authority, while Dietitians New Zealand is a professional membership association.***

Even the most senior practitioners sometimes confuse the two organisations.

The **Dietitians Board** is the Regulatory Authority and is charged with the duty to ensure that dietitians are qualified, competent, and fit to practice dietetics, in order to ensure public safety. Board members are appointed by the Minister of Health.

**Dietitians NZ** is a professional membership association for dietitians in New Zealand that supports and promotes the profession of dietetics.

See the [Know the Difference](#) publication, also found under *News & Publications* on the website to find out more.

**Secretariat Contact Information**

If you have any questions or require any assistance please email the Board at [administration@dietitiansboard.org.nz](mailto:administration@dietitiansboard.org.nz) or telephone (04) 474 0746.

**Postal Address:**

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Dietitians Board  
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New Zealand

**Courier Address:**

The Registrar  
Dietitians Board  
Level 5  
22 Willeston Street  
WELLINGTON 6041  
New Zealand

**Website:** [www.dietitiansboard.org.nz](http://www.dietitiansboard.org.nz)

## Useful Links

### Webpages

- [New Zealand Graduates](#)
- [How is “practice” defined?](#)
- [Registered Dietitian Obligations](#)
- [Continuing Professional Development](#)
- [Taking Leave](#)
- [Return to Practice](#)
- [FAQs](#)

### Policy Documents

- [NZ Graduate Deadlines: Registration and first APC](#)
- [English Language Requirements](#)
- [Requirement to hold an APC](#)

### Publications

- [Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians](#)
- [Code of Ethics and Conduct for Dietitians](#)
- [How do I practice dietetics legally in NZ?](#)
- [Registration as a Dietitian](#)
- [Know the Difference: Dietitians Board vs Dietitians NZ](#)