



***A Guide for
New Graduate
Dietitians***

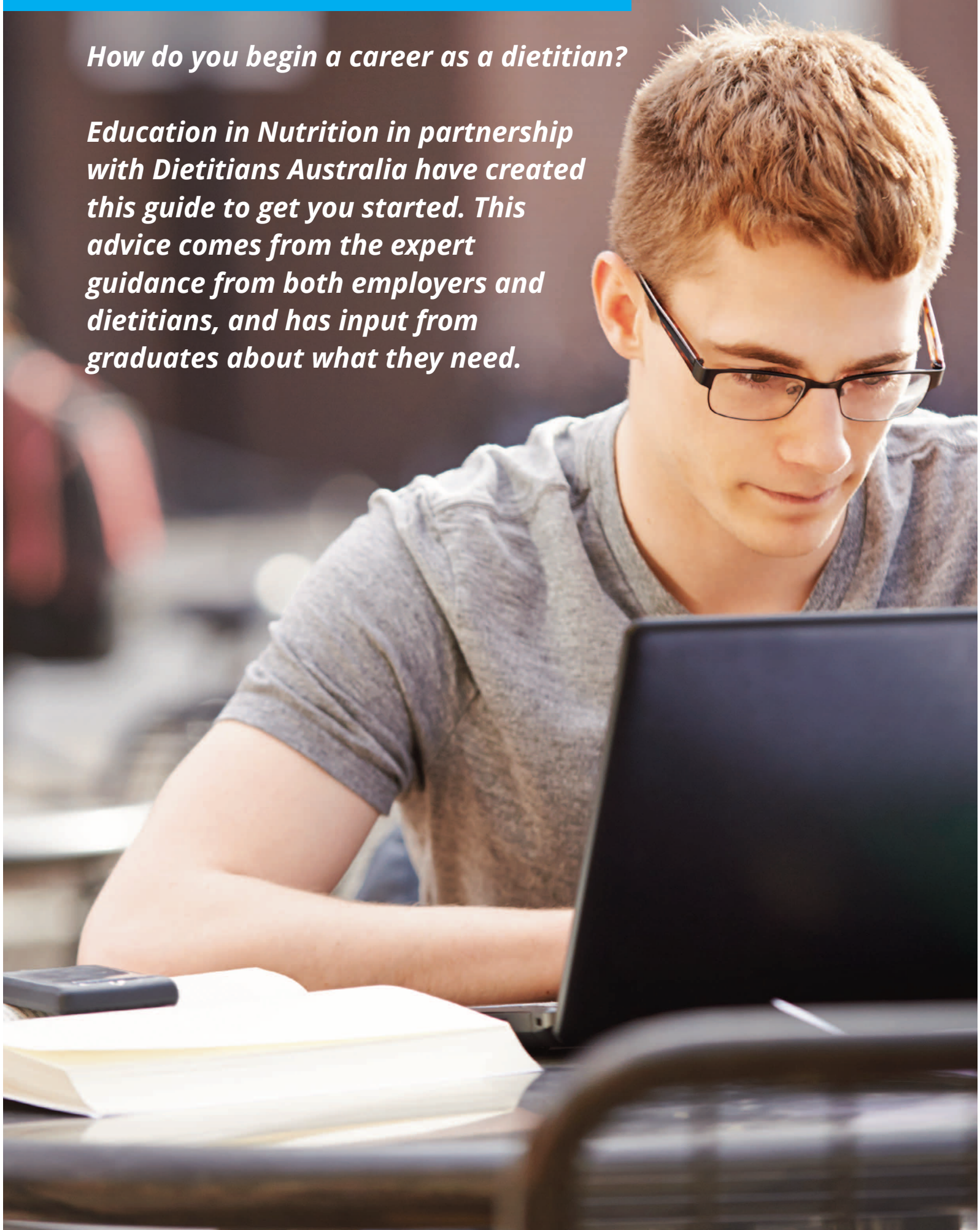
2021

Compiled by Education in Nutrition in partnership with Dietitians Australia

A Guide for New Graduate Dietitians

How do you begin a career as a dietitian?

Education in Nutrition in partnership with Dietitians Australia have created this guide to get you started. This advice comes from the expert guidance from both employers and dietitians, and has input from graduates about what they need.



Professional Information - How do I become an APD?

What to know about Dietitians Australia and becoming an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD)

Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and also the peak body for dietetic and nutrition professionals, representing more than 7,500 members around Australia and overseas. Dietitians Australia is also the registering body for dietitians. To become an APD, you must be a member of Dietitians Australia and complete the APD credentialing program. APD status is the only credential recognised by the Australian Government for Medicare and the Department of Veterans' Affairs and is required by most health insurance funds. Many employers will ask if you are a current APD.

Membership with Dietitians Australia also offers a place to connect with colleagues, develop your practice and learn from experts. To become a member you must complete an accredited nutrition and dietetics course or complete the Dietetic Skills Recognition exam for overseas trained dietitians.

[Learn about becoming a dietitian in Australia.](#)

There are many membership options with different fee rates depending on your life, employment or study situation, including a discounted rate for dietitians seeking work or doing unpaid work.

APDs can list themselves on the Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian search tool, which is available to the public and can be used by people looking for a dietitian in their area, or a dietitian working in a specific clinical area. You can also list yourself in the 'Find a Locum' section of the Dietitians Australia website showing that you're available to work as a locum contractor. Many dietetic jobs are not listed on mainstream employment websites, but can be found in the Jobs section of the Dietitians Australia website.

[Visit Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian for more information.](#)

Moving from Provisional APD to Full APD: mentoring and professional development

When you graduate and upgrade from your free student membership or join Dietitians Australia, you can enrol in the Provisional APD Program. You have two years to complete the Provisional APD Program

which involves a minimum 12 month mentoring partnership with a full status APD mentor of your choice. As a full member of Dietitians Australia, you can utilise Mentor Match to search for a mentor on Share Plate, Dietitians Australia's online member community.

[Visit Mentor Match.](#)

Tips for finding a mentor

- Think about what you need from a mentor, e.g. what areas of dietetics are you interested in?
- You may also need to consider the location of your potential mentor, although many mentoring relationships use video communication technology e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangouts.
- Do your research before contacting your potential mentor via Mentor Match so you are aware of the area they work in and their interests.
- Mentoring is a mutual relationship. You might want to ask how you may be able to help your mentor.
- Examples of potential mentors include your current employer, past supervisor, lecturer, colleague or an APD listed in Mentor Match whose profile looks like a good match. All mentors must be registered in Mentor Match so that your relationship is officially recorded. If your preferred mentor isn't registered yet, don't worry, it doesn't take long for them to set up their mentor profile.
- Having a mentor outside your workplace can often be beneficial. They can help give a different perspective. Don't wait until you're employed to find a mentor, mentors can give you valuable advice for job applications and potentially be a referee.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

As an APD you need to complete a minimum of 30 hours of CPD every year. You can talk to your mentor about developing learning goals, activities and outcomes.

[See the APD Handbook for further information.](#)

*“ I like the independence.
I was surprised I knew
a lot more than I thought.
My advice to new graduates
would be don't doubt
yourself. ”*



Getting down to business

Registering for an Australian Business Number (ABN)

If you develop your own nutrition business or are an independent contract dietitian you will be required to get an ABN. This is free. Once your application is approved (it can take up to 14 days) you will receive an 11 digit ABN to use when you create an invoice.

[Learn more about applying for an ABN here.](#)

Dietitians Australia Small Business Manual

A Small Business Manual is available for Dietitians Australia members. The resource was developed to help dietitians considering the move to a career in private practice and consultancy. The manual is a unique publication, created by dietitians in private practice, especially for dietitians.

[Visit the Dietitians Australia Resource Library for access.](#)

Invoicing

An invoice should include your name, address, ABN, date of service, what the service was for and the amount you are charging and if GST is payable.

[The Australian Taxation Office has information on creating an invoice.](#)

Registering for Professional Indemnity Insurance

Because you work in a self-regulated profession, you will need professional indemnity insurance. This protects you and your business against claims of alleged negligence in your dietetic work. This can be arranged through your employer or by researching and purchasing your own insurance from a registered insurance company.

Medicare Provider Number Registration

If you work in private practice you will need to register for a Medicare provider number to claim Medicare benefits and private health insurance rebates for the dietetic services you provide in your practice location. It's important to get your application in early because it can be a lengthy application process. (December to April is peak processing time so applications may take longer during this period).

[Visit Human Services for more information.](#)

Joining Dietetic and Nutrition Associations and Groups

Membership of dietetic and nutrition associations can increase your professional learning, your professional profile and connect you with like-minded colleagues both in Australia and overseas.

Dietitians Australia Emerging Dietitians Interest Group

An online support group for student and new graduate dietitians with access to a discussion forum, peer support, informal mentoring, ongoing professional development opportunities and a base network to advocate within the Dietitians Australia or externally. Only Dietitians Australia members can access this group via Share Plate, an online community for members.

[Visit Share Plate to learn more.](#)

Nutrition Society of Australia (NSA)

A group of qualified educators, practitioners and research scientists with an interest in nutrition. Membership can give you access to new nutrition research, free NSA events, conferences and webinars as well as job advertisements.

An online group that connects you with other dietitians, as well as events, webinars, podcasts, resources and books. There is career advice, tips for new graduates and job listings. You can also create a profile and advertise yourself as a new graduate looking for work for future employers.

[Visit Nutrition Society of Australia to learn more.](#)

Sports Dietitians Australia (SDA)

SDA is Australia's professional body for dietitians specialising in sports nutrition. To become an accredited sports dietitian you must complete the SDA sports nutrition online course at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. However, you don't have to be an accredited sports dietitian to be an SDA member. The SDA offers a range of conferences, events and sports nutrition resources.

[Visit Sports Dietitians of Australia to learn more.](#)

Dietitians NZ

Dietitians NZ is New Zealand's professional body for dietitians. Dietitians NZ offers a range of conferences, events and nutrition resources.

Visit [Dietitians NZ](#) to learn more.

International Confederation of Dietetic Associations (ICDA)

An organisation that represents dietetics associations (including Dietitians Australia) at an international level.

Visit [ICDA](#) for more information.

Staying up to date

Where to find nutrition information and keep up with your CPD

Education in Nutrition

Education in Nutrition gives you access to a library of over 300 evidence-based on-demand recordings, lecture notes and case studies that are released weekly on a wide range of nutrition topics presented by expert dietitians. This is a perfect opportunity for professional development.

You can also subscribe to the free weekly newsletter for weekly nutrition updates and view the many complimentary on-demand recordings.

Education in Nutrition on-demand recordings will support you in your practice as a dietitian by:

- Offering practical clinical tips and strategies from dietitians who are expert in their fields.
- Helping you stay abreast of the latest evidenced nutrition information.

Education in Nutrition have several complimentary recordings you can view and if you and your cohort team up together you can join as a group of 10. A subscription gives you access to a library of over 300 topics and all our upcoming presentations.

Visit [Education in Nutrition](#) to learn more.

Education in Nutrition Listen App

Education in Nutrition Listen app connects you to our library of evidence-based webinars and case studies so you can create your own play list and download to listen offline on mobile, tablet or in your car. Available in the App Store or on Google Play.

[Download the Education in Nutrition Listen App.](#)

Practice Based Evidence in Nutrition (PEN)

An online database of evidence-based nutrition research summaries, studies, guidelines and resources. You have free access to PEN as a full member of Dietitians Australia.

[Learn more about PEN.](#)

Dietitians Australia Learning

Under the Learning tab in the Dietitians Australia members portal you will find continuing professional development opportunities including events via the Education Centre, courses via the Centre for Advanced Learning and evidence based, professional resources in the Resource Library. Dietitians Australia members receive discounts on all events and courses.

[Log in to the Dietitians Australia member portal for more information.](#)

Dietitians Australia Research

Under the Research tab in the Dietitians Australia members portal you will find access to global resources that support your learning and professional development. Members of Dietitians Australia receive access to the Dietitians Australia journal *Nutrition & Dietetics*, Practice-based Evidence in Nutrition (full members only) and ProQuest.

[Log in to the Dietitians Australia member portal for more information.](#)

Emerging Dietitians Hub

The 'Starting out' section under 'Your Career' in the Dietitians Australia members portal gives students, new graduates and dietitians in the first five years of their career the tools to navigate and build a dietetic career. This is a free benefit for Dietitians

Australia members, offering tailor made resources to suit students and new graduates.

Log in to the [Dietitians Australia member portal](#) for more information.

Nutrition Education Materials Online (NEMO)


Developed by Queensland Health dietitians, this free online database provides access to evidence-based nutrition education materials and resources for patients and clinicians on a wide range of nutrition topics.

Visit [NEMO](#) for more information.

List of events to look out for:

- Annual Dietitians Australia Conference
- Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine (ASLM) Conference
- Nutrition Society of Australia (NSA) Annual Scientific Meeting
- National Eating Disorder Association/Australia and New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders Conference
- International Congress of Dietetics
- Dietitians Week and Dietitians Day
- NZ Dietitians Conference

You can also search 'Other events' under 'Classifieds' at [Dietitians Australia member portal](#) to find events providing professional development opportunities for dietitians that are hosted by external organisations.



“ Being a graduate dietitian was terrifying to start with. It was the sharpest learning curve compared to being a student. It’s not more stressful, it’s just different. There’s no supervisor, no assessment, it’s just you. ”

10 top tips for new graduate dietitians

1. Upgrade your student membership or join Dietitians Australia and start your Provisional APD Program.
2. Find a mentor sooner rather than later. Mentors can open many doors and help with work opportunities. Don't feel compelled to have a job before securing a mentor. You need to be part of the Provisional APD program before applying.
3. Apply for your Medicare provider number ASAP if you're going into private practice. You need to be part of the Provisional APD program before applying.
4. Sign up for professional insurance and an ABN.
5. Know the client groups you're likely to work with. Grow your knowledge of them and build client resources.
6. Support your network and they will support you. Keep in touch with university colleagues, lecturers and dietitians you meet at events. Peers who work in both similar and different fields to you can help you grow your knowledge. Share Plate is Dietitians Australia's professional online community for collaboration and communication. This exclusive platform is tailor made to help you keep in touch with your Dietetic colleagues.
7. Have a finger in every pie. Be involved in lots of different things and jump on every opportunity that arises - you can always cull later if you need to.
8. Volunteer, but be choosy. Do something that will benefit you as much as the organisation. Don't just volunteer because everyone says you should.
9. Arrange to sit in with experienced dietitians consulting in a speciality area. There is much to learn from observation.
10. Your job situation may not be perfect at first. Do what you need to do, until you can do what you want to do!

Job applications

Tips for writing a CV and cover letter

We asked dietitians who employ other dietitians in hospitals, private practice and community health for their tips on writing an application letter and CV. Here are their suggestions:

Before you apply

- Research both the organisation and the person hiring you.
- If there is an 'enquiries' contact given - get in touch if you have genuine questions about the job/organisation.
- Be sure to return phone calls and respond to emails from the prospective employer promptly (within 24 - 48 hrs) and with enthusiasm.
- Follow any specific instructions outlined in the job advertisement. If they say the application letter should be a maximum of one page, for instance, stick to it. Employers may discard applications that don't follow the instructions provided.

Your CV

- Provide your CV as a PDF, unless otherwise specified.
- Limit your CV to two pages (no one reads a six-page resume). Stick to the highlights. If you are unsure if they do want a CV or resume contact them and ask.
- Mention student placement (location and type) in a couple of lines. No need for additional detail about what you did unless it is unique.
- Add any relevant voluntary or work experience. List it immediately below your university qualifications near the top of your resume.
- 'Relevant' means not only work experience related to work as a dietitian (e.g. voluntary and work experience with dietitians) but also experience which could set you apart from others e.g. working in IT suggests you're likely to be good with tech, for example, while managing a retail store could indicate you understand budgets, admin and managing staff. Working in hospitality shows you've worked with food and people.

Application letter

- Use the person's name not sir/madam.
- Provide your application letter as a PDF unless otherwise specified.
- Stick to one page if possible, don't submit more than two.
- Your CV is where a potential employer reads details of your education/work experience but the letter should give a sense of who you are, what makes you suitable for the job and make the organisation want to meet you. Include four or five lines about yourself that give an idea of why you want to work in the job advertised e.g. if you have a passion for a particular area of nutrition related to the job; what qualities you have that make you suitable and what you hope to contribute. Avoid saying you're good at building rapport and translating science into recommendations - it doesn't set you apart and may sound like a cliché.
- Use your written communication skills to clearly demonstrate your passion/enthusiasm for dietetics and the job on offer. Really tell the potential employer **why** you're so keen to get this job. What is it about food service/working in a hospital setting/private practice/community health that interests you? Does it relate to a personal experience? What aspects of this setting did you find most rewarding on placement? If you don't include this your cover letter may come across as dry, or as if you're not particularly interested in the job.
- List any recent professional development you have done e.g. attended conferences, workshops, watched webinars.
- If there are key selection criteria, answer them succinctly. Address **all** of the selection criteria/required skills and experience outlined in the job description. You may need to do this concisely to fit within the word limit, but it's important.
- When addressing key selection criteria, ensure you back up your skills and experience using evidence. For example: 'I have excellent written and verbal communication skills' does not actually demonstrate your skills in this area.

Instead, 'I have excellent written and verbal communication skills, developed through weekly patient group education sessions and the creation of supporting handouts' substantiates your claims.

Finally

- Do **not** alter any specified formatting - being able to edit what you write is an important skill and one you will need for professional practice.
- Do **not** come up with your own selection criteria or re-use a letter written for a different job. Your letter should read as if it's tailored for that individual job rather than a 'generic' letter.
- Send a 'thank you' email after your phone screen or interview.

How to get your first job

- Do what you love – follow your passions!
- Volunteer or gain experience working in the area you are interested in, in whichever way you can.
- Join professional groups (see Joining Dietetic Nutrition Associations and Groups).
- Attend in person events – conferences, seminars, workshops.
- Aim to meet one new person at every event, follow up afterwards.
- Relationships are everything – have a coffee!
- Use professional social media sites, particularly LinkedIn to stay in touch with your connections and build your brand.
- Branch out and develop new skills – think outside the square.
- Don't try to build Rome in a day – take it one step at a time and build from opportunities that arise.
- Find a good mentor and surround yourself with a good support network.
- Develop your interpersonal and leadership skills.
- Think about what you can do to for a future employee, not what they can do for you. Solve their problem!
- Stay positive.

Where to look for work

When looking for work you could search and network a whole variety of areas which employ dietitians and nutritionists, for example:

- Community health centres
- Fitness centres
- Food industry
- Food standards
- Food industry
- Healthcare businesses
- Health insurance
- Media and communications
- Medical clinics
- Multidisciplinary health practices
- Private dietetic practices
- Public and private hospitals
- Public health
- Sporting organisations
- Research and education

Keep in touch with previous volunteer or student placement workplaces for opportunities arising there.

Job listings

Job listings can be found through normal employment sites, social media and employment agencies, hospital and local health district websites along with many dietetic organisations who also promote job opportunities and communities including:

- Dietitians Australia
- Dietitian Connection
- Dietitian Life
- Dietitians NZ
- Education in Nutrition
- Sports Dietitians Australia

Dietetic Graduate Outcomes Survey

Keep an eye out for your invitation to complete the Dietetic Graduate Outcomes Survey at four months and then again at 12 months after you finish your dietetic degree. Participate and help collect important information about where graduates are being employed and how long it takes.

For further information please contact Merran.Blair@monash.edu



Education in Nutrition

Online professional development for dietitians and nutritionists

www.educationinnutrition.com.au

Facebook @educationinnutrition

Twitter @eduinnutrition

Linkedin www.linkedin.com/in/jo-and-sophie-education-in-nutrition-820b6779

Instagram education_in_nutrition



Dietitians Australia

Supporting members, advocating for our profession, and building healthier communities

www.dietitiansaustralia.org.au

Facebook @dietitiansaus

Twitter @dietitiansaus

Instagram @dietitiansaus

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/dietitians-australia

This guide will be updated annually.

Please forward any feedback to info@educationinnutrition.com.au.