



NUTRITIONIST OR DIETITIAN?

A variety of different levels of training and qualification can lead to an individual calling themselves a nutrition professional. This is because in Australia, professional nutritional practice is not regulated by the government, and there is no legal protection over the terms 'Nutritionist' and 'Dietitian' – anyone can call themselves a Nutritionist or Dietitian, no matter their level of training. This situation opens the possibility for misinformation to the public.

When seeking the advice of a nutrition professional, it is therefore important to ensure that you consult with someone who has a credential which is provided and governed by either the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) or the Nutrition Society of Australia (NSA). If you are a student, or a potential student wishing to one day work in the field of nutrition, it is important to choose a course that will qualify you to apply for accreditation or registration with one of the above two organisations.

Nutrition Society of Australia – voluntary Register of Nutritionists

The Nutrition Society of Australia (NSA) has developed a voluntary Register of Nutritionists in Australia (who may have Associate Nutritionist, Registered Nutritionist, or Registered Public Health Nutritionist status) to help support those in the field of nutrition, and the development of the field into the future. These Nutritionists may design, coordinate, implement and evaluate a range of population health interventions to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the population as a whole, through better food and nutrition. Nutritionists may work in a number of other roles, including research, nutrition consultants and advisors, public health and health promotion officers, community development officers, quality and nutrition coordinators, food technologists, media spokespeople and more.

The key purpose of the NSA Register of Nutritionists is to protect the public by establishing a list of appropriately qualified persons, and in doing so, to distinguish individuals who have received an approved level of training and experience from others who have not. The Register therefore presents a source of information on suitably qualified individuals for those seeking advice on nutrition or offering employment in the field of nutrition. The Register also promotes professional development in nutrition, facilitates creation of formal links between registrants and stakeholders and promotes wider appreciation of the roles fulfilled by Registered Nutritionists of all kinds.

Those who register with the NSA may have a range of qualifications, including a Bachelor level degree with majors in nutrition or a postgraduate degree such as Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters degree or even a PhD specialising in nutrition. There is no course that will guarantee registration.

There are currently no Medicare health fund rebates for clients of Nutritionists, and there is only limited private health insurance fund rebates for Nutritionists with a small proportion of private health insurers.

Dietitians Association of Australia – Accredited Practising Dietitian and Accredited Nutritionist

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) has developed credentialing systems for the credentials 'Accredited Practising Dietitian' (APD) and 'Accredited Nutritionist' (AN) which are protected by law, and only qualified practitioners who have met certain requirements can use these titles. To become an APD one must complete a tertiary level course accredited by the Dietitians Association of Australia. These courses vary depending on the university, and may include: a one to two year post-graduate Diploma or Masters degree following a Bachelor of Science degree (including physiology and biochemistry), or a four year integrated undergraduate course. Courses cover food, nutrition, health and diet-related medical conditions, and skills in communication, counselling, education, health promotion, management, research and critical analysis of literature. A list of accredited courses can be found on the DAA website.

APDs are tertiary qualified in food, nutrition and dietetics. They provide expert nutrition advice for people of all ages and prescribe dietary treatments for many conditions such as diabetes, food allergies, cancers, gastro-intestinal diseases, and overweight and obesity. APDs work in hospitals and private practice, government, research and teaching, public health and community nutrition, the food and medical nutrition industries, and nutrition marketing and communications. All APDs are automatically able to use the AN credential, because as part of their qualification in human nutrition, an APD has undertaken a course of study that has included supervised and assessed professional practice in public health nutrition, medical nutrition therapy and food service management.

Accredited Practising Dietitian is the only credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. APDs are committed to the Dietitians Association of Australia *Code of Professional Conduct*, continuing professional development and providing quality services. A register of all current APDs can be found on the DAA website.

DAA's AN program provides registration for Nutritionists with suitable tertiary education and expertise in public health nutrition, community health and general nutrition education. ANs may have expertise in a range of nutrition services including public health nutrition, community health and tertiary education related to nutrition, but are different to APDs as they are not qualified to provide medical nutrition therapy which includes individual and group dietary interventions. ANs without a dietetics qualification cannot take on the specialised role of a Dietitian. This is because an AN does not require training in individual or group nutrition therapy (for example, prescribing nutrition care in a hospital or private practice).

To maintain APD and AN status, nutrition and dietetic professionals are required to undertake a specified level of continuing education and professional development to ensure currency of practice. APD and AN status is reviewed annually by DAA.

For more information, please visit:

The Nutrition Society of Australia: www.nsa.asn.au

Dietitians Association of Australia: www.daa.asn.au

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