



# Professional accreditation requirements for entry-level employment as a dietitian

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The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 6000 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier nations. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Masters by Coursework Programs Review by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

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## DAA interest in this consultation

Dietetics is a self-regulated profession. As the peak body of dietetic and nutrition professionals, DAA sets the minimum standards<sup>1</sup> to which Universities must comply to achieve and maintain accreditation status, and provides an accreditation process that ensures that graduate dietitians have demonstrated competence as described in the National Competency Standards.<sup>2</sup> DAA also administers the credentialing program for dietitians, the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program.<sup>3</sup> Graduates that have completed an accredited dietetics education program are eligible to apply for APD status. Overseas trained dietitians are required to complete a Dietetics Skills Recognition (DSR) process administered by the DAA to be eligible to apply for the APD credential. APD is the only credential for dietitians recognised by the Australian Government (for Medicare and Department of Veterans' Affairs purposes), many state governments and many private health insurers.

## Response to consultation questions

- *What are the accreditation/registration requirements for a person to be employed in an entry-level position as a dietitian? (i.e. Does the person need to have completed a specific course or units of study? Does the person need to have completed a certain number of years study?)*

To qualify as a dietitian in Australia and be eligible to join the APD program, a person must complete a DAA-accredited dietetics education program. In the majority of cases this will be a three-year undergraduate science degree majoring in nutrition, followed by a graduate entry Master degree in dietetics. A small number of universities offer an accredited four-year undergraduate nutrition and dietetics program that also provides graduates with eligibility to join the APD program.

- *Is a person legally required to be registered to be employed in an entry-level position as a dietitian?*

Dietetics is a self-regulated profession and therefore there is no legal requirement to be registered for employment as a dietitian. It would be very difficult for a person to gain entry-level employment as a dietitian without having completed an accredited dietetics education program. The APD credential is required for a dietitian to provide services via Medicare and DVA, and most employers of dietitians will require either eligibility to join the APD program, or current APD status.

- *Is a person professionally required to be registered to be employed in an entry-level position as a dietitian? (i.e. professional registration is essential to employment and the person is unable to be employed in an entry-level position in the profession without registration)*

Membership of the APD program is essential for an entry-level dietitian to work in any practice setting where they provide services to Medicare and DVA clients.

Employers will generally require eligibility to join the APD program, or current APD status. There is no professional requirement for a dietitian to hold APD status.

- *What level of study is required for a person to be employed in an entry-level position as a dietitian? (i.e. is a bachelor degree sufficient or is a masters by coursework degree required? Or is either level of study equivalent for professional entry purposes?)*

To be eligible to join the APD program, a dietitian needs to have completed an accredited university degree. A small number of universities offer an accredited undergraduate nutrition and dietetics program that provides graduates with eligibility to join the APD program. The majority of accredited dietetics education programs, however, are at Masters level.

- *Who determines the professional entry accreditation/registration requirements? (i.e. does your organisation determine the requirements or are they legislated, and if so, what is the legislation?)*

DAA determines the professional accreditation and credentialing requirements according to high level strategic advice received from independent Councils – the Australian Dietetics Council (ADC) for accreditation and DSR and the Dietetic Credentialing Council (DCC) for credentialing. ADC has a continuous quality improvement role ensuring that DAA delivers accreditation and recognition services that are efficient, effective, equitable, accountable and transparent, and framed in a best practice model. Similarly, DCC ensures that the APD program meets safety and quality requirements for consumers, DAA members and other stakeholders. DAA is a member of the National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP)<sup>4</sup> that benchmark against the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)<sup>5</sup> requirements for accreditation and credentialing.

## References

1. Dietitians Association of Australia. Accreditation Standards and Processes. Available from <https://daa.asn.au/becoming-a-dietitian-in-australia/accreditation-of-dietetics-education-programs/accreditation-standards-and-processes/>, accessed 18 July 2017.
2. Dietitians Association of Australia. National Competency Standards for Dietitians. Available from <https://daa.asn.au/maintaining-professional-standards/ncs/>, accessed 18 July 2017.
3. Dietitians Association of Australia. Accredited Practising Dietitian Program. Available from <https://daa.asn.au/apd-program/>, accessed 18 July 2017.
4. National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP). NASRHP home page. Available from <http://nasrhp.org.au/>, accessed 18 July 2017.
5. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). AHPRA home page. Available from <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/>, accessed 18 July 2017.