



Dietitians Board
Te Mana Mātanga Mātai Kai

REGISTERED HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

Dietitian

Registration as a health practitioner in New Zealand under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) is a process unique to New Zealand and differs from registration processes in other jurisdictions, such as Australia, the UK, the USA, South Africa and Canada.

While other jurisdictions may have a single process to govern the registration and 'licensing' of persons wishing to practise as Dietitians, New Zealand has separated these into **two** distinct processes which are governed by separate statutory provisions under the HPCA Act.





ONE Registration

The first of the processes is **registration**. When a person applies to register as a Dietitian under the HPCA Act, this application is essentially for life.

Once someone has been registered, there are only a few ways in which a Dietitian's entry in the Register may be formally removed.

There is no annual renewal process attached to a person's registration. The registration process happens once only, unless for some reason a practitioner's name is removed from the Register and they make a future application to have their name restored.

TWO Maintaining a current practising certificate or 'non-practising' status

Annual Practising Certificate (APC)

The second of the two processes is obtaining, and then maintaining, a current practising certificate. Any Dietitian intending to practise dietetics in New Zealand once registered must apply for a practising certificate and must not practise until their application has been approved by the Dietitians Board.

It is crucial that all Dietitians understand what it means to be registered and how to ensure they practice legally under the law. Much like a driver's licence, the APC is the Dietitian's 'licence' to practise dietetics, and must remain current at all times. It is illegal to practise without a current practising certificate and doing so can result in referral to a Professional Conduct Committee (PCC), and ultimately to disciplinary action before the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (the Tribunal).

'Non-practising' status

Dietitians who cease practising in New Zealand for example due to parental leave, illness, or overseas travel can remain on the Register by making a Non-Practising declaration and paying a Register Maintenance fee. The online Register makes it clear to the public that the practitioner is still registered but not currently practising.

During the time they hold this non-practising status practitioners will continue to receive Board publications and communications, engage in consultations and be able to use the Board's bespoke 'MyCCP' platform for logging professional development goals and activities.

All registered practitioners must provide the Board with a current postal and email address.

All registered Dietitians must make an annual declaration to either hold an APC or advise they will be non-practising for the practising year.

Practising legally within the Scope of Practice for Dietitians

In accordance with the HPCA Act, the Board sets the Scope of Practice for Dietitians and prescribes the qualifications required for entry to the profession. In addition, the Board sets the Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians and the ethical conduct required. The Professional Standards and Competencies for Dietitians, Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics & Conduct can all be found on the Board's website at www.dietitiansboard.org.nz.



ANNUAL RENEWALS AND DECLARATIONS

The Board makes contact with all registrants at the beginning of each year to remind them that in March it is time to make their annual declaration – either to renew their APC or advise they will be ‘non-practising’ for the next practising year. Practitioners must be sure to keep the Board up to date with their current contact details so they do not miss this important reminder.

It is a practitioner’s responsibility to adhere to current Board policies and to renew their APC, or make a non-practising declaration, and pay the annual fee – it is not an employer’s responsibility.

Certain activities, which are noted for their ability to cause risk of harm to the public, are scheduled as RESTRICTED ACTIVITIES by the NZ Government under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (Restricted Activities) Order 2005, (SR 2005/182).

The Activity related to Dietetics is:

Prescribing of enteral or parenteral nutrition where the feed is administered through a tube into the gut or central venous catheter.

Under the HPCA Act the use of names, words, titles, initials, abbreviations or descriptions stating or implying that a person is a health practitioner of a particular kind (e.g. Dietitian) is prohibited if the person is not registered as that form of health practitioner.

This means that no person may practise, or state or do anything that may be construed to suggest that they practise, or are willing to practise, using the title ‘Dietitian’, unless they are registered with the Board **and** hold a current practising certificate. To do so would be an offence under the HPCA Act and would risk prosecution by the Ministry of Health.

An important distinction to note, is between those practitioners who **are registered** and those who **are not**. If a practitioner is registered with the Board, a Dietitian **MUST** use the title under which they are registered, and, if practising, **MUST** ensure they have a current practising certificate. It is an offence under the HPCA Act for a Registered Dietitian to practise within their Scope of Practice without a current practising certificate, even for one day.



Performing tasks that fall within the Scope of Practice set by the Board without a valid practising certificate and using an alternative title is **NOT** permissible under the HPCA Act. **It is illegal.** If a Registered Dietitian wishes to perform the tasks associated with dietetics **without** an annual practising certificate they cannot simply use an alternative title such as ‘food and nutrition advisor’; they must first apply to the Board to have their name removed from the Register.

Practising as a Dietitian under the supervision of a Registered Dietitian or other health practitioner whilst registered, but not holding a valid practising certificate is also illegal under the HPCA Act.

Please remember that **registered health practitioners** who use their dietetic skills and knowledge to carry out any of the activities covered in the Board’s Scope of Practice: Dietitian, **must** hold an **annual practising certificate**. This applies even if they are working part-time or volunteering.

Recertification (Return to Practice)

Recertification (Return to Practise) requirements aim to protect the quality and value of the Boards Registration policy, in accordance with the HPCA Act. The process protects the health and safety of members of the public by making sure that Dietitians possess the current knowledge and skills required to practise competently and safely.

The Recertification requirements will vary according to a practitioner’s time out of the dietetic workforce, how long they practised prior to taking a break and the individual circumstances of the Dietitian.

Practitioners should contact the Board, or refer to the Board’s website, regarding the requirements that must be met before applying for an APC and returning to dietetic practice.

cancelling an entry in the Register

A practitioner can ask (in writing or online) to have their entry in the Register cancelled. Cancelling an entry in the Register can be a big step for a registered health professional and they should consider this matter carefully taking into consideration both their professional and personal life. The correct form must be completed, and witnessed, and returned to the Board.

If an entry is cancelled on the Register, a practitioner can no longer use the title 'Dietitian' or do anything which is construed to suggest to anyone that they are a Dietitian; only registered health practitioners are permitted to use titles that are protected under the HPCA Act.

If there are any pending criminal or disciplinary proceedings against a practitioner, the Board will not agree to the request for their entry to be cancelled.

Please contact the Board office for more information – we are able to help talk through the options and implications and ensure the correct forms are completed.

Restoration of entry in Register

A practitioner can apply in writing to the Registrar to have their name restored to the Register; they may be required to complete a Registration application. In this instance the Board will consider how long it has been since their entry was cancelled and the practitioner will, in some way, have to satisfy the Board that they meet registration requirements (s15 HPCA Act) and are safe to practise (s16 HPCA Act).

Keeping connected

All Dietitians are required by law to ensure that the Board's Registrar has their current postal, residential, and (if applicable) work addresses. [Refer to s140 HPCA Act].

If the Board loses contact with a practitioner (e.g., has mail returned or unanswered), a process is triggered that may result in their entry in the Register being cancelled. [Refer to s144 HPCA Act].



Scope of Practice for Dietitians from 1 April 2017

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.



It is important that every Dietitian understands their responsibilities under the law and ensures they practise legally. If you have any questions about any of the statements made in this pamphlet, please contact the Board's Registrar for clarification.

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