



CAREER FOCUS DIETICIAN

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Dear students

Imagine yourself in a career where you assist people to have a healthy lifestyle or to educate someone to better manage his or her diseases through eating well. Becoming a dietician, a career with endless possibilities, might be what you need to consider as your future career. Below find information and requirements on becoming a Dietician. Also see on pg. 4 the difference between a dietician and a nutritionist.
- *Martina*

BECOMING A DIETICIAN

Dieticians, also known as nutritionists, apply the science of human nutrition to influence the eating behaviour of individuals, groups and communities, and select food to promote and maintain health and to prevent and treat illness and disease. Nutritionists are usually limited to advising the general public about correct eating habits for health. Dietitians use their skills and knowledge to modify diets in order to treat medical conditions.

CAREER CHANNELS FOR DIETICIANS

Career channels for dieticians are fairly varied and include the areas of employment listed below:

HOSPITAL WORK which includes:

Administrative dieticians plan meals, train supervisors and perform administrative tasks

Therapeutic dieticians plan special diets according to the doctors' prescriptions

Clinical dieticians plan diets for outpatients

Educational dieticians instruct nurses, medical and dental students

QUANTITY CATERING: Industries, government departments, orphanages, old age homes, etc. where quantity cookery is undertaken making use of the knowledge of dieticians

Research dieticians do intensive research work at the Medical Research Institute, SABS, CSIR, universities, and Food Control Boards

TEACHING: they may be appointed as teachers, giving instructions in Home Economics

Educational dieticians lecture at universities, universities of technology, and training colleges and are also responsible for the practical training of food production personnel

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CAREER CHANNELS FOR DIETICIANS

THE MEDIA: dietitians can be employed as journalists to write articles for newspapers and magazines, perform demonstrations on radio and television or represent firms.

Health authorities formulate policies concerning nutrition and plan and monitor strategies to execute official policy.

Community nutritionists render an advisory service to state-subsidised institutions in providing the public with information on good health and the prevention of nutrition-related diseases.

Food service managers compile menus and catering services for industries, government departments, orphanages, old age homes, etc. where quantity cookery is undertaken.

CONSULTING DIETICIANS: work in private practice and are available to doctors, hospitals and the public. Some dietitians have a high level of contact with the public.

THE SOFT SKILLS YOU NEED TO SUCCEED IN THIS FIELD

This occupation requires certain soft skills, which are personal qualities that one typically acquires outside the classroom. Some of them are:

- *Reading Comprehension:* You must be able to understand written reports.
 - *Active Listening:* Your clients need your complete attention when they are talking to you about their health issues and dietary concerns.
 - *Verbal Communication:* As a dietitian or nutritionist, a significant part of your job will involve conveying information to your clients and their caregivers. Unless you have excellent speaking skills, you won't be able to do this successfully.
 - *Interpersonal Skills:* People skills will allow you to instruct and persuade your clients. They will also help you in your interactions with colleagues.
 - *Time Management and Organizational Skills:* These skills will help keep you from becoming overwhelmed by your caseload.
 - *Critical Thinking:* When making decisions and solving problems, you need the ability to weigh your options in order to choose the one you predict will have the best outcome.
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REQUIREMENTS

Secondary Education

Possession of at least a **HIGCSE** Grade 12 or equivalent qualification, with matriculation exemption is required for studies in South Africa.

Compulsory Subjects:

Mathematics, Physical Sciences

Recommended subject

Life Sciences, Home Economics

Tertiary Education & Training

The four-year B. degree in Dietetics or Nutrition includes practical training and is offered at most South African universities. Qualified dietitians must register with the **HPCSA** before being able to practice. Thereafter a **B. Sc. (Med.)** Honours degree can be completed if specialisation is desired.

The University of Cape Town offers the B. Sc. (Med.) Hons. Dietetic degree that must be preceded by a B. Sc. Degree with Physiology and/or Biochemistry.

No training is currently offered in Namibia, but dietitians who would like to practice in Namibia must register with the Allied Health Services Professions Act.

Personality

The prospective dietitian should be calm, assertive, have sound interpersonal relationships, leadership skills and managerial qualities.

Work Opportunities

- Hospitals, nursing homes, clinics and other health care facilities
- Educational institutions
- Industrial concerns
- Government departments
- Nutrition research laboratories / units
- Medical research councils
- Food industry
- Hotels
- Self-employed (consultant in private practice)

Satisfying Aspects

- a variety of jobs and specialities available
- working with people and helping others
- being part of the health care profession

Demanding aspects

- having to work with uncooperative or unpleasant people
- fairly low salaries compared to other health care professionals

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DIETITIAN AND NUTRITIONIST

DIETITIAN VS NUTRITIONIST

Qualification

- Bachelor's degree
- Completion of a Dietetic Internship
- Passed a national exam
- Maintains on-going education credits

Definition

- A qualified health professional who helps promote good health through proper nutritional habits

Legal Status

- An expert on nutrition
- Registered with the Commission of Dietetics Registration (CDR)
- Licensed to practice diet and nutritional consultation

Qualification

- None required
- Self-proclaimed title

Definition

- Someone who works with food and nutritional science, aiming to prevent diseases related to nutrient deficiencies.

Legal Status

- Not legally accepted as an expert

Every Registered Dietitian Is a Nutritionist, but Not Every Nutritionist Is a Registered Dietitian

“Your Nutrition is your medicine”

Hippocrates
Circa 400 BC



Reference: Pace Careers and NamCareers ; <http://www.thebalance.com>

Previous newsletters can be found on the TUCSIN web-site:

<http://www.tucsin.org/index.php/en/project/documents-for-students/career-prospect>.

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