NUTRITIONAL MEDICINE CAREERS
Planning your Career as a
Nutritional Medicine Practitioner

How can I gain additional practicum and field related work experience?

Volunteer opportunities are a great way to broaden your skills and learn more about the application of nutrition principles across the broader community.

Nutrition Australia has local offices in each state to contact and discuss which opportunities may best suite your interests.
Visit: [http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/volunteering-nutrition-australia](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/volunteering-nutrition-australia)

Bioceuticals offers an internship program that runs for eight weeks each year. This is a great way to gain experience across the process of regulation, formulating, and manufacturing of nutritional supplements.

Laura Sitter Nutrition offers opportunities for new nutrition graduates and current students who are looking to gain knowledge and industry experience working alongside a qualified, accredited nutritionist. The program includes clinical experience observing consultations, assisting in food plan preparation and case analysis as well as learning the logistics of starting your own business – marketing, social media, practitioner connections and the legal requirements for you as a qualified nutritionist to start practicing. Visit: [http://nxa.asn.au/nutrition-graduate-program/](http://nxa.asn.au/nutrition-graduate-program/)

Other organisations are available for volunteer opportunities. Contact your local council and find out about the local volunteer resource centre. You could also contact:

- Second Bite - [https://www.secondbite.org/volunteer/](https://www.secondbite.org/volunteer/)
- Ozharvest & NEST (Nutrition Education Sustenance Training) - [http://www.ozharvest.org/give-a-little-love/](http://www.ozharvest.org/give-a-little-love/)
- The Water Well Project - [https://www.thewaterwellproject.org/](https://www.thewaterwellproject.org/)

NUTRITIONAL MEDICINE CAREERS - 2 -
There are private clinics that offer internships for students aiming to expand their skills in a clinical setting. You may need to pay for these programs, contact a registered Nutritionist in your area for opportunities.

Some examples include:
http://www.sydneycitynutritionist.com/nutrition-student-internship

**How do I become a Registered Nutritionist?**

Successful completion of your Bachelor of Health Science (Nutritional Medicine) will allow you to apply to be an Associate Nutritionist. This a professional title, i.e. 3 year Bachelor Degree Majoring in Nutrition = ANutr. To become a Registered Nutritionist (R Nutr.) you will need a Bachelor degree majoring in Nutrition plus 3 years additional study (Masters)/experience.

There is no regulatory or professional body for Nutritionists like there is for Dietitians, for example. However, a voluntary register of Nutritionists has been developed to acknowledge and encourage high standards of competence in the profession. To become an Associate Nutritionist, you must apply for registration with the Nutrition Society of Australia (NSA). You must be a member, or become a member of the NSA before registration can be applied for. Applications must include a CV, academic transcripts and professional and academic referees. Fees apply. Registration last for three years, after which re-registration is required.

For further details on becoming an Associate Nutritionist, visit the NSA website:
http://nsa.asn.au/applying-for-registration/

**Register as a member of a professional association**

Registering as a student member with at least one professional association is recommended. Students can typically apply for membership once they have enrolled in a relevant nutritional science course.

Association memberships help students stay up to date with industry developments, and provide professional support, education and advice. Association memberships are essential for any practitioner if they wish to obtain a provider number, professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance.

Student memberships are generally free or significantly discounted and provide a number of benefits such as
• Access to the member section of the website / discussion forums
• Access to scientific research databases and journals
• Student bursary awards
• Regular industry updates via website and eNews
• Monthly mail outs of association journals and eNews
• Reduced membership fees for graduates
• Special indemnity insurance for graduates
• Free or discounted seminars and webinars

Each association offers its members a range of unique benefits. It is recommended that you contact each individual association to find out which is the most appropriate. Registering with more than 1 association is recommended so that students can decide which association is the most suitable for them. Registrations can be completed online.

There are a number of associations offering student memberships including:
• Australian Natural Therapists Association (ANTA)
• Nutrition Society of Australia
  http://nsa.asn.au/
• Australian Traditional Medicine Society (ATMS)

**Continuing Professional Development**

As a health practitioner, it is essential that you continue to grow and develop your knowledge base. In Nutrition, health protocols are constantly updated as new research papers and smarter technologies become available.

By studying with us, you will build an excellent knowledge base in Nutrition. After your studies, you will need to keep your knowledge current by attending seminars/webinars, reviewing new research, reading textbooks, journal articles and undertaking further study. As a member of an industry association, you will be required to complete a certain number of Continuing Professional Education/Development (CPE/CPD) points per year.

For association-approved events, you may be awarded up to one CPE point per hour of attendance/reading. For other activities, such as journal subscriptions, study or other research, the point-system may differ.
When choosing events or activities to continue your professional education, the best place to look is with your association; often there will be a list of approved events for CPE accreditation. Outside of this, you can investigate the events offered by other industry organisations, such as supplement or testing companies. These groups usually put on major annual events (seminars) as well as smaller events that run nationally or online. If you are working in a remote area, you can elect to complete your CPE via webinars, electronic journals, teleseminars or even staff meetings (where new research or technologies are discussed).

Your association will be the best place to investigate the best CPE options for you. Start with their website and contact the customer service team if you have further questions about accreditation.

**Develop Your Business Plan**

Having a solid business plan in place will go a long way in supporting you to create a successful practice. One of the first steps you should take however, is to visit websites such as: [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au)

Here you will find some great information on getting your business started, as well as running your business. There are also some fantastic tools and templates to help you work through all the important legalities of setting up a new business. You should also jump onto the Association websites as quite often they have some useful information relevant to your modality and starting up your practice.

When developing your business plan, it is important to present it in a way that is clear and professional – especially if you are going to take it to a bank to apply for a business loan. Most banks will also have business plan templates on their website to help ensure you cover all of the key information.

These key areas include:
- Details about your business – your experience, and the products and services you plan to offer.
- Information about your target market and your marketing strategy.
- Your long and short term goals, and the activities you plan to implement in order to meet them.
- Your finances – start-up costs; profit and loss forecast; expected cash flow etc.

The benefits of creating a good business plan include:
• Being clear in your vision and mission statement.
• Understanding what your long term goals are and being able to define the direction you are wanting to take your business/practice.
• Having strategies in place to support the growth and development of your business/practice through its various stages.
• Being clear in the financial requirements of setting up and running your business/practice.

**Market Yourself**

It is important to have a plan to market yourself to create your own client base and raise awareness of your practice and what services you can / will provide.

If you are starting your own practice, you will need to build a website and / or social media page to enable you to build an online presence.

You will need to consider marketing material you would like to use, such as business cards, leaflets, etc. Networking with local health professional colleagues is a great way to see what is already out there in the field. It can highlight where you can fit in and what opportunities are present to work collaboratively with fellow health professional to holistically support clients.

Having, and showcasing, areas of specialism can help potential clients and health professionals to remember you. Clients can self-refer, or be referred as you will be seen as a specialist in a particular area.

**Register and create an account with industry companies**

Registering as a practitioner with a natural medicine company offers a lot of benefits. The most obvious benefit is that you are able to order practitioner-only supplements direct from the company. Other benefits include access to technical product information, training and events, clinic resources, business listings, and patient-ordering systems.

As a qualified practitioner, it is relatively easy to register with a supplement or testing company. For most organisations, you will need a copy of your qualification certificate and your association membership number. It’s a good idea to apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN) if you haven’t already got one. You will need to complete an
account application form and often you will need to make your first order within a few weeks of your successful account registration.

Keep in mind that with many companies, you can also register as a student and start getting access to supplements and technical information as you study. Practitioner supplement or testing companies are a valuable resource not only for attaining products at wholesale prices, but also for education and practitioner support.

Check out these links to get you started:
- Integria Health Care: https://accounts.integria.com/
- ABN Registration: https://abnregistration.com.au

**Private Health Funds**

There are no Medicare rebates for clients that attend a consultation with a Clinical Nutritionist. There are, however, rebates available from some private health insurance funds.

For your client to be able to claim a rebate from you as a provider of nutritional advice:
- You need to be a member of a professional association
- You need to have professional indemnity and public liability insurance
- You need to have a current senior first aid certificate
- Your client may need additional ‘extras’ cover to ensure Clinical Nutrition is covered in their health insurance.

Some private health funds will not accept provider registration from Nutritionists that obtain their qualification predominantly by distance/online. Check with your chosen professional association for regular health fund provider updates.

**Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance**

Professional indemnity insurance can protect your business from the legal costs associated with claims made against you arising from breaches in your professional duty of care.
Public liability insurance can protect you from claims of personal injury that someone may have suffered because of your business activities.

If you intend to provide nutritional advice and work with members of the public, you are strongly advised to obtain professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

The professional association that you choose to register as a full member will have a policy regarding your insurance requirements and they often recommend an insurance company that can provide tailored insurance for Clinical Nutritionists.

**Increasing referrals**

If you decide to work as a clinical practitioner, you will be wanting to increase your client base. One of the ways to do this is by increasing the amount of clients referred to you by others.

It may sound too simple, but the best way to do this is to focus on the client in front of you, and help improve their health. Nothing travels faster than good news about an improved health situation.

Other ways to increase referrals is to ask for them. You may wish to offer your clients a ‘friends or family’ special, or ask them who they think will also benefit from your services. Establishing good rapport with other local health practitioners will also increase referrals; e.g. GPs, physiotherapists, massage therapists, nurses, midwives, personal trainers and the like.

If you have a specialty area for your nutrition practice, e.g. corporate health, then you can approach organisations where you can present to several people at once and increase your referral base that way.

However, it remains that one of the best ways to get referrals is to do your job well. Help to heal the person sitting in your clinic and you will no doubt increase the amount of clients in your care.

**What additional services can a Nutritionist offer?**

Determine what area you want to specialise in and offer a unique service. Some of the additional services that a Nutritionist can offer include:

- Bio-electrical impedance analysis (BIA)
- Functional Pathology testing
• Blood pressure monitoring
• Dietary analysis and therapeutic tailored meal planning using professional software programs
• Prescription of nutritional supplements and functional foods
• Group education sessions

**Build your Social Media profile**

Nutritional science and research is always evolving and so is the way we communicate. Social media has changed the way we connect and having a presence in the world of social media is not only becoming more popular, it is becoming an integral part of reaching the generation of the digitally savvy.

Putting yourself out there on social media is an excellent way to make connections and communicate with potential clients. Writing blogs and articles, such as write an article for [SourceBottle](#) or setting up social media profiles and sharing podcasts and video material is a great place to start.

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) has been effective as a virtual tool in many aspects of nutrition and health promotion, including nutritional counselling, nutrition education and health promoting campaigns.

According to the Dietitian’s Association of Australia, posting “positive, meaningful and respectful” content via social media is synonymous with success and will help to expand your reach as a practitioner.

**Build your Dispensary**

If you are considering having your own dispensary once you are in practice, it is important to consider some of the following points:

• What products am I going to be prescribing regularly?
• How much do I order initially?
• What is the expiry date on these products?
• Where will I be storing them?

Obviously, when you first begin practicing you may not know exactly what you will need on hand to prescribe; as you don’t know what your patients will be coming in for. Therefore, consider setting up accounts with wholesalers who offer an online patient ordering service.
This way you have the freedom to prescribe any of the available products to your patients without having to worry about your own stock levels (or products expiring before you have prescribed it). Once you have a better idea of products you know you would prescribe regularly, you can start by order those products and then build up your dispensary over time.

As a final year student, it is useful to open student accounts with those companies that offer TGA approved products. By doing this, you have access to their products; their website tools and resources; and often times discounted costs to attend their seminars and conferences.

Some companies you may want to consider registering an account with are:

- Integria
- Metagenics
- Nutrition Care
- Bioceuticals