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## DIETITIANS BOARD

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### **NEWSLETTER - AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2004**

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#### **Accreditation - Summary Report**

The Dietitians Board nominated an Accreditation Panel to undertake the accreditation process for the two qualifications, BSc/ BCAPS and PG Dip Diet Course, which lead to dietetic registration. The purpose of the accreditation was to determine that students undertaking the training are prepared for entry-level dietetic practice in New Zealand. Students should be competent in the seven learning outcomes prescribed by the New Zealand Dietitians Board in its 1998 statement of registration Competency Requirements. The Dietitians Board, New Zealand nominated eleven criteria for the purposes of accreditation of the Postgraduate Diploma in Dietetics for the Accreditation Panel. Dr Brita Karlstrom Associate Professor, Department of Public Health and Caring Sciences/ Unit for Clinical Research, Uppsala, Sweden assisted with the onsite visit and contributed to the full report.

Members of the Dietitians Board Accreditation Panel who prepared the summary report were Wendy Dodunski, Manager Nutrition Food Service, Waikato Hospital, Jim Mann, Professor of Human Nutrition, Otago University, Kerry Mclroy, Senior Clinical Dietitian, Auckland District Health and Moira Styles, Community Dietitian Healthcare Otago.

The Department of Human Nutrition University of Otago provided the panel with a detailed self-review document addressing the 11 criteria set by the Board. An onsite visit provided the panel with the opportunity to view course material, listen to presentations from paper co-ordinator and access to paper content and interview students.

Feedback questionnaires were also sent to 25 senior dietitians in New Zealand.

The accreditation panel in their summary report to the Board the Accreditation Panel concluded that:

1. Overall the programme, lecture material resources and teaching are of a high standard and that the students are a very fortunate group of people who have the opportunity to go through the undergraduate nutrition degree and postgraduate programme in dietetics at the Department of Nutrition, University of Otago.
2. The core competencies have been met through achievement of the teaching and learning aims. We have some concerns with what actually is required and consider that the competency requirements may be too great for the entry-level dietitian. This will need to be considered when the entry-level competencies are reviewed. The Board released the revised ELC document in January 2004.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS and THE UNIVERSITY'S INITIAL RESPONSE.**

While acknowledging that the core competencies have been met the Panel identified several issues which members felt should also be considered when reviewing the curriculum in the light of the reviewed entry-level competencies.

- *That the programme for the PG Dip Diet explore the feasibility of modifying the course design to allow more time for practical experience so that the student is able to apply their knowledge to a continuum of practice. An important consideration in such a redesign is that the theory should precede practical assignments and experience.*

The University responded that the feasibility of more practical time will be investigated and a report prepared for the Board. However, the practical experience is dependent upon the willingness of the District Health Boards and dietitians to provide that practical dietetic exposure at a quality level and in sufficient quantity for student's learning needs to be met. The adult learning literature currently accepted in Universities argues that student learning is equivalent whether theory or practice is first. Students who have clinical placements before lectures are encouraged by their tutors to read the lecture material for that topic and prepare the self study case studies.

- *That the move to visual teleconferencing rather than audio teleconferencing be expedited as this would enhance both teaching and learning.*

The University responded that video conferencing is currently being trialled. However the lack of facilities in Hamilton and the hourly rate for links to five centers is three times that of audio conferencing. These two factors currently prevent its use by the PG Dietetics programme. Learning advantages for the students, over those currently offered by a combination of audio conferencing and internet based teaching would form a critical part of the investigation into the feasibility of video conferencing.

- *That the process involved in assessment of the student affect and the feedback be reviewed.*

The University responded the student affect process is the only feedback process in the entire programme, which addresses the development of professional attitudes. These are required by the ELC document. Receiving feedback from others on one's attitudes is a new experience for some students. The use of standardised forms and a two-way discussion on goal setting helps the value of the process become apparent. The feedback systems used in each center for the student affect process will be reviewed.

- *That students should not be in unsupervised clinical placements when not registered as a Dietitian i.e. in provincial placements and student health centres.*

The University agreed that students should not be in unsupervised clinical placements, and that this is certainly not usual practice. Tutors will be reminded of the need to require students to operate within their limits of competence.

- *That lecturers need to be peer reviewed to ascertain that they are the most suitable people to present on a particular topic and that the material is evidence based and represents best practice. Clear briefs need to be provided for external lecturers as to the level and extent of information required.*

The University responded that the PG Dietetics course makes use of expert external practitioners to cover teaching areas for which there is no expertise within the University. They are provided with a detailed brief for their teleconference session, but as they are experts in their area it is assumed that they will provide the most relevant, up to date and practical information appropriate for student learning. Lecturers are offered peer review of their session, but it is impractical to review the teaching performance of every single lecturer on every occasion.

- *That a formal process for the external review of each paper be standardised.*

The University responded that the Higher Education center within the University sets guidelines for the review of papers. Course co-ordinators are encouraged to make use of these guidelines when reviewing their papers. External examination of papers and courses is also in place following University guidelines. The programme for assessment and review of papers is outlined in the department's Teaching and Learning Plan.

- *That audits need to be introduced to review the standard of practical assessments and log books.*

The University responded that the assessment processes in the PG Dip Dietetics papers which include both formative and summative assessment, are in fact among the most advanced in the University system. As concerns have been expressed aspects of the process will be reviewed including the assessment of students practical activities.

- *That consideration is given to paper HUNT 480. The panel felt that the undergraduate exposure to research might fulfil curriculum requirements the research and practical application of many projects is acknowledged. However disparity is noted. It has been reported there is variable input from professional supervisors, it is suggested that a range of options for those students not proceeding to the Masters degree is explored.*

The University responded that the research project practicum paper HUNT 480 is included in the PG Dip Dietetics course to satisfy one of the core competencies, as the undergraduate programme does not include the opportunity for students to undertake an independent research project. As well, the University expects post-graduate students to undertake research. A review of this paper is underway noting the issues raised by the accreditation panel and will be completed within the next year.

- *That Students be informed about their scope of dietetic practice for which they are qualified at the time of graduation and that there are some aspects of dietetics in which they will need further education before they start clinical practice in these areas.*

The University responded that the Entry Level competence document prescribes the scope of practice that entry-level dietitians are equipped to perform and acknowledges that as with all health professions experience and ongoing learning is what develops the expertise to manage complex cases independently. Employers need to share some of the responsibility for ensuring that new graduates do not practice beyond their qualification and experience.

The Board is satisfied that the dietetic training programme delivers a quality educational process that ensures graduates meet the required competencies that prepares graduates for entry - level dietetic practice in New Zealand.

The Board would like to thank the Accreditation Panel and the Department of Human Nutrition staff for the considerable amount of time and energy that has been put into this first accreditation review.

## **Policy for Overseas Applicants Seeking Registration in New Zealand**

All applicants for registration who have dietetic qualifications gained in Countries other than New Zealand and who are seeking New Zealand registration in dietetics must have his/her qualifications assessed by the Board to determine whether or not the qualifications are equivalent to the New Zealand education and training required for registration in New Zealand.

Depending on the equivalency of the education and training he/she has had, the applicants will be assessed by the Board and deemed to be

- a) Ineligible to proceed for registration in New Zealand; or
- b) Required to undertake further education and training before sitting the Board's Overseas Candidates Registration Examination; or
- c) Eligible to sit the Board's Overseas Candidate's Registration Examination.

The Board will consider each application on a case-by-case basis, and will take into consideration all relevant matters.

For all applicants with overseas qualifications, passing the Overseas Candidates Registration Examination is a pre-requisite to full registration and issue of an Annual Practising Certificate by the Board.

## **Conditional Registration and Interim Practising Certificate**

Overseas trained dietitians who have been assessed as eligible to sit the Board's Overseas Candidate's Registration Examination (with or without further education and training as in (b) or (c) above) may while they are waiting to sit the examination, be registered by the Board on specified conditions and issued an Interim Practising Certificate prescribing these specified conditions. The period of issue will be in accordance with the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act 2003 (\*)

Subsequently full registration and an Annual Practising Certificate will be issued when the board is satisfied that he/she has demonstrated entry level competency by successfully completing the Overseas Candidate's Registration Examination.

(\*) Health Practitioners Competency Act Section 31 Interim Practising Certificate (1), (2), (3)

## **Training Day for Continuing Competency Programme Resource Dietitians**

Dietitians Board Continuing Competency Committee members Makuini McKerchar, Lyn Gillanders, Carole Gibb and NZDA Regional Representatives:

Gaye Philpott, Central Districts,  
Helen Norrish, Northern South Island,  
Julian Jensen, Christchurch,  
Barbara Randall, Wellington,  
Vicki Paulin, Auckland,  
Helen Stockman, Northern Districts  
Sue McDonnell, Southern District

met for a day to discuss the role of the resource dietitians and CC issues and have agreed to the following:

- The NZDA representatives will be available at Professional Development meetings whenever possible
- A Contact list of Continuing Competency resource people for the Board and NZDA is to be available on the website
- Resource Dietitians names are to be published in Branch newsletter
- Regular listing in News and Views of the names of CC resource people.
- Group emails to be used to publicise CC resource people for large geographic regions
- That long term, possible listing of frequently asked questions would be listed on the Board website.

## **Board Office**

The Board has recently appointed Jane de Lisle, initially as Deputy Registrar, with the intention that she will be appointed as Registrar. Mike Fitzgerald is acting as Registrar in the interim to assist Jane with the workload associated with the introduction of the HPCAA.

Gwenda Kingsland finished her nine-year term on the Board on the 31<sup>st</sup> August. Gwenda has been a valuable member of the Board and her fellow Board members will miss her wise counsel.

Thank you Gwenda for your contribution

Barbara Ryan  
Chair, **Dietitians Board**