# Guidelines for Continuing Competency of

# Registered Nutritionists

# The Nutrition Society of New Zealand

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The Nutrition Society New Zealand

<http://www.nutritionsociety.ac.nz>

## Introduction: Guidelines for Continuing Competency

The Nutrition Society of New Zealand (NSNZ) is a non-profit organisation of qualified, practicing health professionals, scientists and educators with a range of backgrounds dedicated to the support and advancement of nutrition as a scientific field.

NSNZ has established a trusted structure for the registration of Nutritionists to ensure credibility of the profession within New Zealand, part of which Registered Nutritionists must provide evidence of continuing competency on re-registration every 3 years.

The aim of continuing competency is to ensure Registered Nutritionists maintain their professional competency. The following Nutrition Society rule pertains to continuing competency:

(g) Continuing Competency: All members of the Society who obtain admission as Registered Nutritionists shall on each 3rd anniversary of their admission, submit their completed application form before the Nutrition Registration Panel to remain as Registered Nutritionists. The application form will include the following information:

- qualifications and employment during the previous three years

- details of continuing competency

- the names of two referees

Registered Nutritionists are registered in a field of expertise: Scientific Research (Academic or Industry), Practice, Public Health, Nutrition Communication, Education, or Food Industry, Food-service. For each field of expertise, there are four areas of core competencies, along with Professional Conduct. These core competencies reflect the expectations of the NSNZ for a Registered Nutritionist to be able to fulfil their role. As evidence of continuing competency, a Registered Nutritionist demonstrates that knowledge, understanding and application of each of the four core competencies, along with Professional Conduct, are maintained and integrated into day-to-day work by linking each competency to activities, or evidence examples. Continuing competency is not measured by points or hours, as each individual has unique competency requirements. The Registration Panel will assess that each applicant has undertaken sufficient activities to remain competent. The four core competencies are: Science, Food Systems, Social/Behaviour, Health/Wellbeing along with Professional Conduct.

## Fields of Expertise for Registered Nutritionists

Each Registered Nutritionists is registered in at least one field of expertise, as determined by the Registration Panel of the NSNZ.

| **Fields of expertise** | | |
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| **Field of expertise used for continuing competency** | **Field of expertise**  **on Registration certificate** | **Definition** |
| Scientific Research | Scientific Research: Academic | Generally working in academia or a scientific institute, regularly publishing peer-reviewed research.  For example, Scientist at Plant and Food Research, scientist at a university. |
|  | Scientific Research Industry | Generally working in a scientific institute or food-related company, regularly publishing peer-reviewed research.  For example, Scientist at Fonterra. |
| Practice | Practice | Working with individuals or small groups offering nutrition advice.  Mentored or undertaking professional supervision with a Registered Nutritionist or Dietitian  For example, medical practice, sports organization, primary health organisation, Mãori or Pacific health provider |
| Public Health | Public Health | Working in health promotion, policy, advocacy, resource development, nutrition communication, community education.  For example, Health Promotion Agency, Heart Foundation, DHB Public Health Unit |
| Nutrition Communication | Nutrition Communication | Nutrition and health journalism and media work, marketing, public relations, food-writing, and other communication of nutrition-related messages.  For example, Food-writer, food industry board, public relations company |
| Education | Education | Working in an educational institute, planning courses, delivering lectures/seminars/classes, assessment of work.  For example, university, institute of technology, school. |
| Food Industry | Food Industry | Provide advice to industry clients, technical and nutrition information, marketing.  For example, Fonterra, Beef and Lamb, Nestle, Wyeth, infant feeding. |
|  | Food-service | Working in a food-service setting providing nutrition expertise for menu-planning, recipe development etc.  For example, Hospital food-service, catering company. |

Please refer to the document ‘Detailed Core Competencies for each Field of Expertise’ for examples of continuing competency for each field of expertise.

## Core Competencies for Registered Nutritionists

The five core competencies below are applicable to all Registered Nutritionists through demonstration of knowledge and understanding (for Associate Registration) and through demonstration of knowledge, understanding and practical application (for Registered Nutritionists). These competencies are focused on human nutritionists rather than animal or plant nutritionists.

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| **Core competencies (Human Nutritionist)** | |
| CC1 - Science | Knowledge and understanding of the scientific basis of nutrition. Understanding nutritional requirements from the molecular through to the population level – for either human or animal systems. |
| CC2 - Food Systems | Knowledge and understanding of food systems and its impact on food choice. Integrating the food supply with dietary intake. |
| CC3 - Social/Behaviour | Knowledge and understanding of food in a social or behavioural context, at all stages of the life-course. |
| CC4 - Health/Wellbeing | Application of the scientific principles of nutrition for the promotion of health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and populations; recognising benefits and risks. |
| PC - Professional Conduct | Understanding of professional conduct and the Nutrition Society’s *Code of Professional Standards and Ethics* with evidence of good character. |

Registered Nutritionists provide evidence of continuing competency for all of these four core competencies for each field of expertise for which they are registered, along with Professional Conduct. These core competencies can help the applicant to focus and structure their professional development to ensure all competencies are met.

The document ‘Detailed Core Competencies for Each Field of Expertise’ describes detailed examples of areas of knowledge and skills required for each of the core competencies per field of expertise.

**Education**

If your field of expertise is education, there is no need to link the core competencies for this field, only for the other field you are registered in. There is no separate core competency for the area of expertise of education as the majority of Registered Nutritionists with education as a field of expertise are also registered in a second field of expertise. These nutritionists would complete the core competencies related to this second field or would choose the field of expertise closest to their work which is likely to be public health, scientific research (academic), or practice. Core competency related to teaching practice outside the scope of registration of the Nutrition Society.

**Food-service**

As there are only a few people registered under food-service, there is not a separate detailed list of core competency examples. Please use practice or food industry examples depending on whether you are working in a clinical situation (hospital) or production of meals (e.g. catering business).

# Documenting Continuing Competency

Registered Nutritionists are required to re-register every 3 years and provide evidence of continuing competency in their field of expertise. Each Registered Nutritionist is responsible for determining their continuing competency requirements. There are no set criteria. Nutrition is an extremely varied profession and Registered Nutritionists are from a wide range of backgrounds, therefore undertake a wide range of activities to show how their level of professional knowledge, skills and experience meets each of the required core competencies. Each application will be considered on its own merits by the Registration Panel. The actual evidence of undertaking an activity (e.g. final report, certificate of attendance) does not have to be provided, but the Registration Panel may request this information if re-registration is under doubt.

## Part 1: Recording activities on the Continuing Competency Record sheet

Registered Nutritionists provide a record of activities demonstrating areas of knowledge, understanding and practical skills for continued competency. These activities are grouped by type:

* Improving knowledge
* Teaching, presentations, publications
* Work-related/report writing/community service
* Contact with Nutritionists

The separate ‘Continuing Competency Record Sheet’ can help with the recording of activities. The approximate time and duration of each activity are recorded to assist the Registration Panel in determining the overall amount of continuing competency undertaken. If the work is collaborative, a note may explain everyone’s contribution. Indicate where work has been peer-reviewed.

Separate documents outline a list of possible activities for each field of expertise (Detailed Core Competencies for each field of expertise) and provide examples (Continuing Competency Record Example Record Sheet) are provided but activities are not limited to these suggestions.

When a nutritionist applies for registration for the first time, they will complete a specific form ‘Application for Registration - Registered Nutritionist’ to show how they meet the core competencies through knowledge and recent work experience. New applicants are not expected to have recorded three years of continuing competency activities.

## Part 2: Linking activities to core competencies

It is likely that a Registered Nutritionist covers all core competency areas in their professional daily life but may not have thought about how the recorded activities and skills link to maintaining competency. The nature of the work or study a Registered Nutritionist undertakes may also mean that particular core competencies, directly related to the applicant’s work or study, are stronger than others. It is expected, however, that professional development does extend to all the core competencies in some way. For example, if the work of a nutrition health promoter is mainly focused on the core competency of ‘Social/Behaviour’ then this competency is easily maintained, however to maintain knowledge in the core competency of ‘Food Systems, additional reading, seminar or conference attendance may be required. Likewise, a nutrition researcher may have a specialist area under the core competency of ‘Science’ but would be expected to maintain knowledge in other areas, even if not directly applied to their work. The applicant is not expected to be an expert in all areas.

Applicants provide at least one evidence example (activity) for each of the core competencies (CC) 1-4 (1. Science, 2. Food Systems, 3. Social/Behaviour and 4. Health/Wellbeing). Evidence must also be provided to address specific points listed under core competency 5, Professional Conduct (see PC1-PC6 under heading ‘Core Competency 5: Professional Conduct (PC)’ in the document ‘Detailed Core Competencies for Each Field of Expertise’).

The applicant briefly states how the activity listed in their record is linked with the core competency. This should not be over-analysed, a brief explanation only is required.

*For example:*

* Conducting a tutorial on nutrient reference values required familiarisation with Nutrient Reference Values, ensuring I knew the most up-to-date values, and having to understand the application of each type of Nutrient Reference Value.
* Developing a meal pack to sell at a supermarket required a focus group with households to understand the influences on planning meals to ensure the meal pack was acceptable.

Not every activity that has been recorded needs to be linked to a core competency, as long all four core competencies are linked to at least one activity. However, it is the intention that the Continuing Competency Record sheet will show the Registration Panel the breadth of the applicant’s continuing competency. Some of the competencies may be similar and allow for one activity to be linked to several core competencies.

For example:

* Designing a workshop on cooking for seniors required familiarization with Eating and Activity Guidelines for older adults (CC4), and understanding of the social influences of eating choices of older adults in the local area (CC3)
* Undertaking a literature review on hydration needs (CC1) and translating the information into a fact sheet for athletes (CC4)

## Part 3: Professional Conduct (PC)

A Registered Nutritionist needs to show how they maintain the selected professional standards (see page 19 of the document ‘Detailed Core Competencies for Each Field of Expertise’ for detailed examples). Not every aspect of the professional standards has been included as some areas are inherent in the way individual nutritionists work, or it is difficult to provide evidence.

### **Professional Conduct Section PC1-PC4**

For the listed standards, the applicant provides an example of how they adhere to the code. Although some examples may appear obvious, they help inform the Registration Panel on how the applicant has reflected on their adheres to the code. Depending on the nature of work, the applicant may not be able to provide examples for every standard, but at least one example for each section (PC1-PC4) should be provided.

*For example:*

PC3. Respect for colleagues. Standard: ‘Support professional conduct and development of colleagues and provide feedback in a constructive manner’.

* Peer reviewed a report for a colleague.
* Attended the first workshop that a colleague delivered to provide support and feedback.

**Professional Conduct Section PC5: Working with clients providing dietary advice.**

This section is only for those working in practice with individual clients.

**Professional Conduct Section PC6: Regular contact with other nutritionists.**

The Registration Panel considers it important that Registered Nutritionists have regular contact with other nutritionists for knowledge and support, hence the request to list the ways contact has been maintained. Include the purpose of the contact, for example, working group, networking, peer review, update knowledge etc. Limited opportunities may exist in smaller regions, and contact can take place in a variety of ways.

### Examples of types of activities

**1. Improving knowledge**

Keep up-to-date with literature (self-directed)

Conference attendance

Seminar attendance

Workshop attendance

Online course

Journal club

Practice visit

Gain qualification

**2. Teaching/presentations/publication**

Prepare lesson plans

Deliver practical activities, seminars, lectures, tutorials, workshops

Assess of assignments, exams etc

Prepare/produce/develop/deliver educational material

Publish scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals

Produce internal or public reports

**3. Work-related/report writing/community service**

Produce strategy or policy development reports

Advise on and/or deliver nutrition/dietary policy issues

Participate in policy development groups

Involvement with advisory, advocacy or other working and guidance development groups

Write grant proposals

Conduct and analyse research

Commission of research

Organise and contribute to stakeholder events

Respond to media enquiries

Regular client interaction

Marketing materials produced

Advocacy, prepare submissions, input into consultation documents

Product development

Publish consumer resources

Write a blog

**4. Contact with Nutritionists**

Membership of professional association

Membership of advisory bodies

Membership of networking groups

Professional relationships with nutritionists

Nutrition colleagues

Receive or provide professional supervision, peer review or mentoring

Active participation in nutrition-related social media

Practice visit