

# Guidelines for Professional Supervision



## Background

The Nutrition Society expects those applying for registration or re-registration as a Registered Nutritionist with the field of expertise in 'practice' to receive professional supervision. This document is most useful to those working with individual clients and small groups. It is recommended that all Registered Nutritionists receive professional supervision. Those registered in other fields of expertise, particularly those in a large workplace, may receive professional supervision according to the policies and procedures of their workplace. Applicants must provide information about professional supervision on the application forms for registration and re-registration.

Professional registration originated from social work and is common practice in many professions who work with clients and consumers. Professional supervision allows space and time on a regular basis for facilitated, in-depth reflection on practice from an experienced practitioner. Professional supervision empowers the supervisee to achieve, sustain and creatively develop a high quality of practice through means of focused support and development.

Professional supervision promotes safe and competent practice, supports professional development and new learning, extends expertise, improves professional identity, and enables reflection on practice. Professional supervision benefits the Registered Nutritionist, the reputation of the profession and the clients and community through providing quality assurance.

This document intends to guide current and potential Registered Nutritionists who do not have professional supervision in place through their workplace.

## Description

The definitions of mentor, professional supervision, and peer supervision can vary with professions and publications. The term 'professional supervision' is internationally recognised. For the purposes of the Nutrition Society the terms are used in the following ways.

**Professional supervision:** Regular, in-depth self-reflection on practice facilitated by an experienced practitioner of choice to discuss and receive feedback on all aspects of professional practice and professional development.

**Mentoring:** An experienced nutrition professional guides and advises a new graduate during their first year post-graduation as they work towards Associate Registration. The graduate may be seeking employment, in employment or

undertaking further study. The 'guide for mentors' outlines the role of mentor for Associate Registration.

**Peer supervision:** This is effective for experienced practitioners who take a turn as supervisor and then supervisee.

### **Professional Supervision**

- Ensures safe and effective practice. Develops innovative and creative practice.
- Is facilitated and structured.
- Supports professional competence and development, expands knowledge.
- Uses critical reflection on all aspects of practice. Develops self-reflection.
- Has a clear purpose and is strengths-based with a focus on finding solutions to problems.
- Is an open and transparent relationship between supervisor and supervisee.
- The supervisee sets the direction.
- Has a supervision contract or agreement.
- Is confidential except in the case of unsafe, unethical or illegal practice.
- Professional supervision may occur within a workplace or externally, or both. External professional supervision can encourage greater disclosure and confidentiality.

### **Structure**

Professional supervision takes place within a defined structure and should remain formal.

- Regular meetings of one hour a month (or six-weekly if part-time).
- Contact may be face-to-face, via skype, video conference or phone with email contact where required in between meetings. It is preferable that an early meeting takes place face-to-face.

Possible format:

- Preparation prior to professional supervision
- Greeting and rapport building
- Agenda setting
- Describing the issue
- Setting a goal for the discussion
- Exploring the issue (impact and implication)
- Coming to an understanding or decision
- Selecting the best plan
- Evaluating the process

Content

Any topic relating to the supervisee's professional role is appropriate for discussion, reflection and feedback. For example:

- Clinical challenges, review of work, review of cases, effective practice, communication challenges, referral process.
- Professional and ethical considerations.
- Professional relationships, workload issues, time management, supervision of others, managing others.
- Professional development, identifying knowledge or skill gaps, future career.
- Support, stress management, well-being.

#### Record keeping

- Notes can be recorded by the supervisor or supervisee, depending on the individual situation.
- Agenda items
- Brief detail of issues or cases discussed (people not identified)
- Actions
- Developmental needs of supervisee
- Next session time and agenda items

#### **Relationship between Supervisor and Supervisee**

Trust, rapport, honesty, openness to feedback and emotional safety is essential for the success of professional supervision. An introductory meeting is beneficial to share professional history, goals, strengths and weaknesses. It is preferable if the supervisor and supervisee do not have other relationships such work colleague, friend or manager. If this does occur, the purpose and boundaries of the supervision meetings need to be clear. Any potential conflict of interest should be declared, for example competing for clients in private practice.

#### **Confidentiality and disclosure**

The content of discussion remains confidential. An exception is if the supervisor takes issues from the supervision to seek the support of their own supervisor, who also agrees to maintain confidentiality.

If the supervisor is very concerned about unsafe, unethical or illegal behaviour, risk of harm to clients or community, breaches of the Code of Professional Standards, or observations of inappropriate behaviour then the supervisor should seek the supervisee's agreement to take the concern further. If the supervisee does not agree then the supervisor must inform the supervisee of their intended action.

#### **Contract or Agreement**

Include the following:

- Purpose, boundaries, limitations.
- Supervisee's goals for supervision.

- Process of supervision.
- Form, location and timing of contact, procedure for cancellation.
- Emergency supervision.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Documentation of meetings and outcomes.
- Evaluation process.
- Link to management or Registration Panel.
- Confidentiality.
- Problem resolution.
- Payment of fees.

## **Responsibilities**

Supervisors:

- Prepare for supervision sessions.
- Provide a safe haven.
- Provide clear and constructive feedback
- Discuss issues and concerns without judgment or criticism.
- Challenge when appropriate.
- Be aware of the organisational context if applicable.
- Make supervision a priority and provide regular, undisturbed supervision.
- Be committed to the process.
- Be free to put an item on the agenda if considered important.
- Be trained, competent and receive supervision themselves.
- Receive professional supervision themselves.

Supervisees:

- Prepare for supervision and determine the agenda.
- Share practice openly and honestly.
- Identify issues for which help is needed.
- Be responsible for ongoing learning.
- Be open to constructive feedback and reflection.
- Seek personal therapy/counselling, if required, outside the supervision relationship.

Both supervisors and supervisees have rights to:

- Be respected and listened to.
- Have uninterrupted time/ space.
- Have confidentiality kept.
- Evaluate the other.
- Be culturally safe.
- Have supervision as a priority, attending regularly and on time.
- Discuss discontinuing the relationship if, after effort, it is not effective.

## **Evaluation**

A quick review of the process of each session is useful with a brief review of professional supervision conducted after the first few sessions, and an annual evaluation.

## **Ending a supervisory relationship**

It is important to have a final session and review the professional supervision experience. The supervisor should destroy all notes, though the supervisee may wish to retain notes from sessions. It can be useful to change supervisors to avoid complacency or if roles or practice changes.

## **Relationship with Registration Panel**

The supervisee may ask the supervisor to act as a referee for an application for registration (written report) or re-registration (referee only contacted if required).

## **Finding a supervisor**

A supervisor should be an experienced Registered Nutritionist, Registered Dietitian or health professional with expertise in the field of the supervisee. The Nutrition Society of New Zealand and the NZ Dietetic Association do not currently have lists of possible supervisors. The Nutrition Society of NZ has a list of Registered Nutritionists on their respective websites and NZDA have lists of Registered Dietitians in private practice. The Registrar or other Registered Nutritionists may be able to recommend a supervisor.

Consider the following when choosing a supervisor to suit your needs:

- Amount and type of work experience.
- Their knowledge and skills.
- Their knowledge of the people you work with; clients, profession, workplace.
- Location
- Supervision training and experience.

## **Training for Professional Supervision**

Courses are available through some Institutes of Technology and private institutions. District Health Boards may offer courses to employees, some may be available to others. Occasional workshops may be organised by the Nutrition Society.

<https://learningcloudnz.co.nz/courses/834/professional-supervision>

<http://www.coachingmentoring.co.nz/supervision-skills> certificated courses in association with Unitec

[http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course-paper/programme.cfm?prog\\_id=93123](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course-paper/programme.cfm?prog_id=93123) post-graduate diploma via distance learning

<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/study-options/programmes/postgraduate/6863/postgraduate-certificate-in-professional-supervision-pgcertprofsup>

<https://www.nmit.ac.nz/study/programmes/postgraduate-certificate-in-professional-supervision/>

<https://www.careers.govt.nz/qualifications/view/WK2256/6019> certificated course through Wintec

## **Useful references**

Allyson Davys and Liz Beddoe – Best Practice in Professional Supervision: A guide for the Helping Professions (NZ authors)

<http://www.tepou.co.nz/resources/search/tag/supervision>  
Professional supervision guide for nursing supervisees.  
Professional supervision guide for nursing supervisors.

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