

DIETITIAN

WHAT DOES A DIETITIAN DO?

Dietitians use their knowledge to help people make decisions about their lifestyle and food choices. They assess and treat people with a wide range of medical problems.

They also promote wellbeing by giving information and advice about the connection between food and physical and mental health. Dietitians motivate people to change their eating habits and explain complicated issues.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Dietetics courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- an interest in nutrition, and in people's health and wellbeing
- an aptitude for science
- the ability to explain complicated issues to people without a science background
- a non-judgemental and understanding attitude about alternative lifestyles
- tact, patience, and the ability to motivate people to change their eating habits
- excellent spoken and written communication skills

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- An undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification in Dietetics, Nutrition & Dietetics or Human Nutrition & Dietetics that has been approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- Full-time undergraduate degrees require 4 years of study and usually ask applicants to have 5 GCSEs (A*-C), including Maths and English, plus A levels or an Access to Higher Education Diploma. Check with individual course providers for exact entry requirements.
- Postgraduate courses normally require 2 years of study. Applicants should have an undergraduate degree in a life science subject covering topics such as Human Physiology and Biochemistry. Course providers will advise applicants on the relevance of their degree.
- Check the British Dietetic Association website (<https://www.bda.uk.com/careers/education/study>) or the Health and Care Professions Council website (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/programmes/register/>) for a list of universities offering approved degrees and postgraduate courses.
- It may help to have some paid or voluntary experience that demonstrates an interest and understanding of this area of work.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

There is 1 HCPC-approved undergraduate course in the West Midlands.

BSc (Hons) Dietetics: Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 4 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C including English Language and Mathematics, or specified equivalents. The entry requirements for applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* or *BTECs* were not available at the time of writing this leaflet so please check with Coventry University if you are interested in this course.

Entry requirements - work experience: A minimum of one day's observation of a hospital dietitian.

NHS FINANCIAL SUPPORT WHILST STUDYING

Candidates can apply for NHS funding for an approved course. Where this is available, tuition fees will be met in full and successful applicants will receive a non-means tested bursary to help towards living expenses. For details, check with individual universities and the NHS Business Services Authority:

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Many Dietitians are employed within the National Health Service (NHS): their role may focus on specialist areas such as diabetes or children's health, and they may also work in community settings. Dietitians also work in advertising, education, food and drink manufacturers, government organisations, international relief agencies, marketing, pharmaceutical companies, professional sports clubs, public relations, research, supermarket chains, the media, trade associations, and the voluntary sector.

Some dietitians are self-employed.

WORKING CONDITIONS

NHS Dietitians work in hospitals or in the community, and are usually based in a consulting room attached to a clinic, health centre or hospital. They typically work 37.5 hours a week, which could include weekends. Part-time work may also be available.

SALARY

NHS salaries range from £21,692 - £41,000. Salaries in the private sector can be higher.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA

Most jobs are in the NHS, but an increasing number of opportunities exist in the private sector (see areas of private sector work listed above under Working Conditions). With experience, a Dietitian can work on a freelance or self-employed basis, in the UK or overseas. Part-time work is sometimes available.

PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE (Figures are for the whole healthcare sector)

Full-time: 54%; Part-time: 31%; Self-employed: 15%

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Business Services Authority: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- The British Dietetic Association: <https://www.bda.uk.com> (The BDA has also produced a useful booklet: https://www.bda.uk.com/publications/dietitian_nutritionist.pdf)
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/dietitian>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6DQP9CnZus>

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