



# Sport and Exercise Nutrition

## Kai Tōtika ā-Hākinakina, ā-Korikori Tinana

"I focussed on the thing I loved best, which was sports nutrition. There's more and more work available in sports nutrition, as people's awareness of the importance of it increases."

Fiona Simpson HPSNZ  
Sports Dietitian

From health and wellbeing to elite performance

There is growing interest in the relationship between nutrition, physical activity and sporting performance, with two major areas of focus:

- physical activity and health
- sporting performance.

The Bachelor of Science in Sport and Exercise Nutrition is the only degree programme in New Zealand that combines nutrition and physical education. This degree will allow you to study the role nutrition plays in both health and sporting performance.

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## What is Sport and Exercise Nutrition?

Sport and exercise nutrition is a rapidly expanding area requiring a combined knowledge of the roles of human nutrition and physical activity in health.

The Sport and Exercise Nutrition (SPNU) programme combines human nutrition, sports science and physical education. In addition, several minor programme options are available, broadening the career opportunities upon completion of your degree.

## Some reasons for studying Sport and Exercise Nutrition

This is the first qualification in New Zealand that focuses on sport and exercise nutrition, giving a thorough grounding in all aspects of human nutrition and relevant areas of exercise and sport science. The degree requires a second major or a minor from a list of approved options. These will give you a set of complementary skills, making your Sport and Exercise Nutrition degree even more relevant to today's working world.

## Background required

High school students are recommended to take biology, chemistry, maths and English in Year 12 and preferably chemistry in Year 13.

## Career opportunities

There is a growing need for individuals with a combined understanding of the principles of nutrition, health and physical activity.

This means there are many career paths available, depending on the minor chosen to complement SPNU, and the individual's areas of interest. Some examples include:

- sports nutrition consultancy
- roles in public health, physical activity and nutrition
- research
- product development
- dietetics.

## What will I be learning about?

A broad understanding of the principles of nutrition and exercise science will be obtained from human nutrition and physical education papers in the first, second and third years.

### First Year

In your first year of study you will be required to take papers in nutrition, human body systems, biochemistry and chemistry.

### Second Year

In your second year, human nutrition and physical education become the mainstay of your study.

### Third Year

The third year sees further specialisation in the selection of human nutrition and physical education papers.

## Teaching Style

As well as lectures to learn the theory of human nutrition and sport and exercise science, there is a large practical component in both the physical education and human nutrition papers. Labs and practical sessions give you hands-on experience and regular tutorials provide excellent small group learning opportunities.

For questions about  
Sport and Exercise Nutrition  
[otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/spnu](https://otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/spnu)



## PROFILE

### Alice Sharples BAppSc, Sport and Exercise Nutrition

"I grew up with a passion for playing sport and cooking, and thought that combining the two in a degree in Sport and Exercise Nutrition would make for an interesting career.

"I chose Otago because it was the only place that combined sports science and nutrition. The academic staff also had a large connective network of sports nutrition professionals. I really enjoyed the practical hands-on experience. In the labs we exercised and tested how our bodies responded to different foods and fluids. We also got to speak to athletes, visit high performance venues and speak to nutritionists working at the top of their fields.

"The degree taught me a wide range of important skills, including the ability to evaluate evidence and communicate it effectively and persuasively. The ability to

adapt to any situation and problem solve were also really important skills that I use in my everyday working life. It was the perfect degree really.

"After graduating, I worked at the Chiefs Super Rugby franchise, and I'm now working as the Head Nutritionist for the New Zealand Warriors and Counties Manukau Rugby Union where I'm tasked with tailoring each player's nutrition to optimise their performance.

"The best part of my job is helping to educate my clients to reach their goals.

"I also completed an International Olympic Committee Diploma in Sports Nutrition, a programme that acknowledges prior learning credit at the University of Otago. My next goal is to support athletes at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games."

