



# Human Nutrition

Feed your mind

**"I've gone from athlete and sports nutritionist to community nutritionist, to research study co-ordinator and consultant, to science communicator. All thanks to a solid base of knowledge and support from Otago, and continued curiosity and persistence."**

Hannah Gentle BAppSc(Hons) MSc  
Communications and Multimedia Research  
Fellow, Bioersivity International, Rome, Italy

We all eat, and what we eat impacts on our health and well-being. It is the energy, carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals within these foods that influence our health. Human nutrition is the study of how the foods we eat impact on our growth and development, disease risk, and physical performance.

Nutrition impacts on the health of individuals and populations, here in New Zealand and worldwide, from birth to old age. You will learn about the nutrients within foods, their importance for health, as well as the cultural and social influences on our diet.

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## Why study human nutrition?

Nutrition affects everyone, making human nutrition relevant to all. With new knowledge and skills, you will be able to make a real difference at the global, national, community and whānau levels. You will also learn about yourself while you study.

Studying human nutrition opens doors to career opportunities in a variety of disciplines, both in New Zealand and worldwide. It also provides all the background required to enter our postgraduate programmes to become a registered nutritionist or dietitian.

You'll learn from world-leading experts who will provide you with the most up-to-date information in their specialist areas.

## Career opportunities

We will equip you with skills that can be used in a number of careers. Our graduates work in the health sector, government organisations, corporations, research, teaching, high-performance sport, private practice, and the food industry. Māori and Pacific graduates are often sought after, particularly by health providers across the country.

## What will I be learning about?

In the first year, you will study the basic health sciences, including introductory human nutrition, population health (recommended), physiology, chemistry and biochemistry.

The degree covers:

- the function of nutrients and human requirements
- the digestion and absorption of food and the metabolism of nutrients
- nutrition through the lifecycle

- the interaction between nutrition and disease
- applied counselling and behaviour change
- community and public health nutrition.

There are also options to study:

- sports nutrition
- international nutrition and global health
- foodservice management.

It is possible to combine a major in nutrition with other subject areas. It can provide an excellent foundation or supplement to studies such as medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, public health, food science, physical education and science communication.

## How will I study?

Throughout your human nutrition degree, there is a combination of lectures, small group laboratory classes, and tutorials. Your assignments may be individual or group-based and will aim to develop communication skills for both a scientific and lay audience.

One of the best things about studying nutrition is you get to practise on yourself with practical laboratory classes where you assess your own diet, try foods and monitor your body's response.

The department is friendly, welcoming and supportive. The smaller group classes allow greater interaction with lecturers and postgraduate students who are always willing to discuss any issues with you.

## Background required

Secondary school students are highly recommended to take chemistry to Year 13 and biology, statistics and English to Year 12, preferably Year 13.

## Not studied chemistry?

The Department of Chemistry offers two catch-up papers to prepare students for the CHEM 111 and 191 courses:

- Introductory Chemistry is a distance-taught paper you can begin at any time during the year.
- CHEM 150 is partially taught online then studied for two weeks at Summer School.

More information can be found at [otago.ac.nz/chemistry](http://otago.ac.nz/chemistry)

Information about our sports nutrition qualification and postgraduate options (e.g. research master's, Master of Applied Science, and Master of Dietetics) can be found at [otago.ac.nz/humannutrition](http://otago.ac.nz/humannutrition)

## PROFILE

### Kate Underwood

Bachelor of Science (Human Nutrition) | Chip Group Training and Education Manager

Kate Underwood came from Te Puke to Otago for several reasons:

"The human nutrition degree from Otago is really well regarded and it's given me a solid foundation for my work. I came looking for lifestyle and independence, a great education from world-class researchers – and Otago really delivered on all of those expectations."

Kate started working for Potatoes NZ during her final year of study – writing nutritional blogs as part of the Education and Marketing team. Part way through 2012 she began work at The Chip Group. Her current role is training fish and chip shop owners to cook healthier hot chips. The non-profit organisation is funded by the Ministry of Health and industry suppliers.

Kate says once takeaway shop owners get on board, they find their profits increase (due to less wastage), they are empowered to make changes, and customer satisfaction goes up due to a healthier, tastier product.

"The programme aims to reduce both total and saturated fat and sodium in takeaway

foods. I travel around New Zealand four days a week, promoting healthier hot chips. A lot of my work is based in the wider Auckland area, but with our online training, takeaway shops from all over the country can complete it."

The training and resources are free to shop owners, and there's also a National Best Chip Shop competition – which helps to reward those participants who work hard to provide the best chips. Each year, an increased number of participants engage with the training and Kate says the response has been positive.

"My human nutrition study gives me the underlying knowledge in nutrition and working in the community. It means I can simplify messages and communicate effectively with participants in the programme."

"As Kiwis, we love our hot chips and eat millions of servings every week. Through educating operators to reduce fat and improve quality, this role allows me to take an innovative approach to improve the health of New Zealanders."



For questions about  
Human Nutrition  
[otago.ac.nz/humannutrition](http://otago.ac.nz/humannutrition)

