

## **RESEARCH WITHIN DIETETICS TRAINING: WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?**

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The need to embed research training within a dietetics curriculum has been mandated by research criteria within the National Competency Standards for Entry Level Dietitians. In order to prepare a dietetic workforce for higher level research practice, in 2008 the Griffith University (GU) Master of Nutrition and Dietetics (MND) program was modified to provide the option of a 6 month research dissertation within the degree. The aim of this follow-up investigation was to explore research and student-related outcomes generated from the new research major. In 2 years, 45 of 78 (57%) students completed the MND (Research major). 41 research students (those with available contact details) were invited to participate. Twenty two (54% response) graduates consented to a semi-structured interview conducted by a current MND student. Interviews were subsequently transcribed and thematically analysed. Results suggest that the strengths of the major were the support available from the project supervisors, the ability to develop professional research skills (eg. critically reviewing literature) and enhanced personal attributes (such as time management and self-confidence). The majority of students (>80%) were able to produce a national-level conference abstract as a direct outcome of their project. Thirteen peer-reviewed journal manuscripts have been submitted with two successful publications to date. Respondents also reported positive benefits such as the facilitation of professional networks and enhanced employment opportunities (particularly for research focussed positions). These results indicate that modifying the MND program has had positive outcomes with respect to research outputs and the personal and professional development of students.

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