

AUT

A FUTURE IN  
**PODIATRY**





## WHAT IS PODIATRY?

Podiatry is the specialised diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injury, disease and conditions to the foot, ankle and lower leg. An essential part of people's overall health, podiatrists work with people of all ages to manage conditions ranging from sports injuries, orthotic therapy and improvement of walking and running style, to diabetic complications, arthritic problems and general foot conditions. Nail and skin surgery is also part of podiatry.

If you have a strong interest in health, movement and non-surgical and surgical treatment of the leg and foot, are a problem solver and a good listener with the ability to communicate with a diverse range of people, then podiatry may be a great career for you. There are approximately 400 qualified, registered podiatrists in New Zealand with annual practising certificates. AUT offers the only podiatry degree in New Zealand, supplying 30-40 graduates a year.

## OUTLOOK AND TRENDS IN PODIATRY

As our aged population continues to rapidly increase, so does the incidence of foot problems particularly in those with diabetes and arthritis. A growth area in podiatry includes the assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of long-term foot conditions.

Increasingly, podiatrists are working within multidisciplinary teams rather than as stand alone practitioners, which means they are integrating more with other health professionals such as GPs and physiotherapists.

The general population's growing interest in living a more active lifestyle has emphasised the importance of foot health needs and education.

There is a shortage of podiatrists in the South Island and rural areas.

Two thirds of podiatrists are self-employed. Many start up their own business once they have had some experience.

There is an increase in students and practitioners undertaking postgraduate study to research and specialise in a specific aspect of podiatry. Postgraduate study opens up opportunities to enter tertiary educator and/or research roles.

A number of podiatrist graduates find work with large private podiatry businesses and in the public health sector in Australia, the UK and Singapore.

Gaining overseas experience is an important part of growth and development for podiatrists. Australia has an abundance of large private practices wanting to employ New Zealand podiatry graduates, providing many opportunities for advancement of skills and knowledge.



## CAREER EXAMPLES

**Private Practice Podiatrist:** Help people with any health issues involving pain from hip to foot, including injuries of heels, shins, knees and hips. Do minor surgery, such as ingrown nail and wart removal. Advise on footwear and provide gait re-training, improving walking and running styles. Use orthotics to alter how the foot functions, with the goal of reducing injuries. Work with a range of people, from elite athletes to older people.

**Diabetes Podiatrist:** Work in a team to provide comprehensive podiatry screening and treatment, education and advice for people with diabetes, particularly those with visual and mobility problems preventing self-care of their feet. Use skills in diabetes podiatry and infection control practice. Includes education of clients, families and health professionals of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

**Sport Podiatrist:** Work with other podiatrists or health professionals, or on you own, assessing and managing a range of musculoskeletal conditions affecting the lower limb. Develop individual treatment and rehabilitation plans to get sports people back onto the sports field as soon as possible.

## UNIQUE TO AUT

AUT is the only university offering podiatry in New Zealand. AUT graduates can register with the Podiatrists Board of NZ under the general scope of podiatrist because they complete 1,000 clinical hours during their degree.

The degree is also Australia New Zealand Podiatry Accreditation Council (ANZPAC) accredited.



## WORK SETTINGS

Graduate podiatrists usually start working for someone in private practice, set up their own private practice, or work for a District Health Board team.

### Private practice as an employee

You may start within a general practice employed by a more experienced podiatrist. You would work with clients of all ages, dealing with a range of conditions affecting the lower foot and limb.

### Self employed private practice

You can buy into a pre-existing practice or set up your own practice alongside other health professionals. Typically, to set up practice, a podiatrist needs to purchase assessment equipment (e.g. for vascular, neurological and musculoskeletal conditions), instruments for nail and skin conditions and an autoclave for infection control. You also need to develop strong communication and marketing skills with other health professionals in the area to pick up referrals. It usually takes three to four years to get established to a point where you are able to employ others. At that point you may start to specialise.

### Public health podiatrist

You are employed through the District Health Board which is government funded. A common role would be diabetes management, including health promotion and wellbeing, formulating and implementing self-management plans and assisting in health navigation. You could also be involved in rheumatology clinics where you work within a multidisciplinary team monitoring the health status, wound care management and plantar pressure analysis of patients.

## SALARIES

### Private practice

Podiatrist degree graduates – approx \$48,300 pa.  
Podiatrists with established practices can earn in excess of \$100,000 in the private sector.

### District Health Boards

Podiatrist degree graduates – approx \$48,300 pa.  
Experienced podiatrists with extra clinical or managerial responsibilities may earn \$72,000 – \$99,200.

Salary sources: [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz), 2016, Auckland region HB/PSA Applied Health Collective Agreement, expires 2017

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

- Podiatrists Board of New Zealand (professional registration)
- Podiatry New Zealand (professional association)

## SKILLS REQUIRED

Podiatrists combine their ability to communicate and interact well with all age groups with their clinical knowledge of the foot and lower leg. Skills include:

- The effective use of orthotic and prosthetic devices for the foot and leg
- Conducting routine minor surgical procedures such as nail wedge resections and blunt dissection of verrucae
- Administration of local anaesthetic for minor surgical procedures
- Musculoskeletal techniques, including assessment and management of foot, ankle and knee injuries, and advice regarding footwear and the prescription of foot orthoses
- Palliative treatment skills, including nail care, treatment of dermatological conditions affecting the foot and removal of excessive callus
- Medical and surgical history documentation and clinical examination
- Use of effective problem solving and ability, based on research and clinical evidence, to identify the health needs of clients and find potential resources to meet those needs
- Ability to plan rehabilitation programmes that meet client needs and deliver safe, effective and ethical client management
- Confidence to actively contribute to health promotion and health education activities in the wider community

## PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Dexterous with fine motor skills
- Interested in delivering non-surgical and surgical treatment
- Effective listener and communicator in a variety of situations with people from a range of backgrounds
- Good at problem solving
- Strong time management skills
- Strong decision making ability

## FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Students may apply for the Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) at the completion of the third year. The Honours programme is an additional one year of study in which students study a distinct area of research within podiatry. Previous students who have completed the programme have found clinical positions in private practice or have continued on the research pathway through master's and doctoral study. Annually, three to four students progress into the Honours programme.



## Lauren Peet

Podiatrist and owner of Hobsonville Podiatry  
Bachelor of Health Science (Podiatry)

"Every day I am challenged to think outside the square. Two patients may have the same injury or problem, but everyone responds differently to treatment and what may work for one person may not necessarily work for another.

My practice is a general podiatry practice so I work with my clients on their gait (the way they walk), their muscle strength, foot positioning and shoe selection as well as referring clients to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, back to their GP or to orthopaedic surgeons if necessary.

Podiatry is a relatively young profession and many people still don't know what podiatrists do and how we can help them. We are not just about orthotics!

Footwear is one of the most common things I need to educate clients about, discussing how shoes impact on achilles injury, bunions, forefoot pain, corns, ingrown toenails, etc.

I set up Hobsonville Podiatry 18 months ago after working at Big Foot Podiatry for 4.5 years after graduating from AUT. I decided to start my own practice so I could shape it exactly how I wanted. Owning my own business is a new exciting learning experience.

I also enjoy learning from the other health professionals at the clinic. We have four physiotherapists, one massage therapist and a visiting sports doctor. Each practitioner brings a slightly different view to the practice, as well as their own life experiences. It is great to be working amongst such a variety of people.

Until recently, I was the sole person involved in the day to day running of the practice - and that was sometimes a little overwhelming because there are so many tasks to juggle! I've now taken on some help with the behind the scenes work and that is making all the difference."



## USEFUL WEBSITES

**Podiatrists Board of New Zealand**

[www.podiatristsboard.org.nz](http://www.podiatristsboard.org.nz)

**Podiatry New Zealand**


[www.podiatry.org.nz/c/Podiatrists-Board](http://www.podiatry.org.nz/c/Podiatrists-Board)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date podiatry information visit our website: [www.aut.ac.nz/podiatry-study](http://www.aut.ac.nz/podiatry-study)

### FUTURE STUDENTS


Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: [www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire)  
[futurestudents@aut.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@aut.ac.nz)

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### CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

[www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire) | [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz)

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### EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS


For other Future Career Sheets visit:  
[www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets](http://www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets)

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through <https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

