

Acknowledgement of Country

LaTrobe University proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands our campuses are located on.

We recognise that Indigenous Australians have an ongoing connection to the land and the University values their unique contribution both to the University and the wider Australian society.

We are committed to providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians, both as individuals and communities through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all our campuses and online.

We pay our respects to Indigenous Elders, past, present and emerging.

Indigenous art by Dixon Patten of Bayila Creative





OUR VISION

To advance food and nutrition science and dietetic practice through innovative, collaborative, high-impact and translatable research, with the aim of improving the health, wellbeing and performance of individuals and communities.

OUR FOCUS

Our research uses food and dietary changes to promote health, prevent disease, manage nutrition-related health conditions and optimise performance.

Our research encompasses the full spectrum - from farm to fork to function - to understand how food impacts on the functions of the human body in relation to health, disease and performance. We work collaboratively with interdisciplinary teams, as well as industry partners to solve real world problems, from preventing disease and improving quality of life of patients, to optimising performance of elite athletes.



RESEARCH CAPABILITY

OUR OBJECTIVES

- To work with industry in cross-disciplinary collaborations and have a high societal impact in solving food, nutrition, and health challenges, and improving the health, wellbeing and performance of individuals and communities.
- To lead research in scholarship of learning and teaching focussed on producing diverse, socially conscious, work-ready nutrition and dietetics professionals.
- To train future nutrition research leaders.

OUR STAFF

Our staff includes internationally recognised researchers who specialise in: metabolic health, cancer, dietary supplementation, novel functional foods, gastro-intestinal health, digital health, nutritional epidemiology, public health nutrition, scholarship of learning and teaching, employability and precision, sport and performance nutrition.

We have expertise in a variety of mixed methods research approaches, from food design, through to clinical trials, and implementation science.

OUR HDR STUDENTS

Our higher degree by research (HDR) students, including those enrolled in Masters by research and PhD degrees, undertake highly impactful applied research projects.

Their work spans the whole breadth of our farm to form to function research scope. Current PhD students are engaged in collaborative projects with a variety of organisations/groups:

- Defence Force
- Refugee Groups
- CSIRO
- Defeat Diabetes

With a breadth of research topics spanning:

- Nutrition for sport performance
- Diversity in dietetics
- Healthy ageing
- Prevention and management of chronic disease
- Microbiome
- Nutritional management in oncology.



STAFF PROFILES



Matthew Cooke

Professor Matthew Cooke is the Discipline Lead for Food, Nutrition and Dietetics at La Trobe University and a leading researcher in the Discipline. He is a Registered Nutritionist and as an integrative physiologist and nutrition researcher, his work is grounded in real world situations, to provide evidence-based information for the recommendation of nutrition and/or dietary supplementation to improve health, performance and/or recovery in a variety of populations. He is also a passionate teacher and has been course director at both undergraduate and graduate level. Professor Cooke has previously served as project director within the Australian Institute for Musculoskeletal Science (AIMSS) and Academic Chair for the Human Performance Research Network within the Australian Defence Force.

Key research interests:

- Understanding the link between diet and exercise, gut microbiota and health and performance
- Optimising human performance (physical and psychologically) and health and well-being through modulation of the gut microbiome
- Exploring new dietary practices in the prevention of chronic diseases.



Regina Belski

Professor Regina Belski is a Professor of Food, Nutrition and Dietetics at La Trobe University, and Associate Dean, Partnerships for the School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport. She is an Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian (AdvAPD) and Advanced Sports Dietitian (AdvSD). Professor Belski is a highly regarded researcher and experienced clinician in sports dietetics and functional food. Her research is multi-dimensional, cross disciplinary and collaborative and she leads significant work in four distinct, yet complimentary areas. She has extensive experience with working with industry, defence, and high performance and elite athletes, including Australian Football League (AFL) clubs in practice based and applied research.

Key research interests:

- Nutrition for sport and performance and for improving metabolic health, reducing inflammation
- Functional food and microbiome
- Teaching and learning, creating work ready nutrition and dietetic professionals.



Deanna Horvath

Associate Professor Deanna Horvath is an Associate Professor at La Trobe University and has over 18 years' experience in higher education and currently holds the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning role in the School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport. She holds a Bachelor in Biomedical Science with Honours, with a focus on musculoskeletal injury (lower limb) and rehabilitation and post graduate qualifications in human nutrition and teaching in higher education. Her past research has focused on protein supplementation and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, including both animal (mouse, rat, dunnart) and human studies. Dr Horvath also has an extensive track record in scholarship of learning and teaching, with a focus on student transition and equity and has won an Australian Government Citation for Outstanding Contribution to student learning in 2023.

Key research interests:

- Student transition and equity in higher education
- Skeletal muscle pathophysiology and treatments
- Nutritional supplementation.



Robyn Delbridge

Robyn Delbridge is a Senior Lecturer at La Trobe University, she is an Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian (AdvAPD) and PhD Scholar. Her research interests span across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, critical dietetics, and scholarship of teaching and learning. Robyn's PhD is engaging with critical and qualitative approaches exploring how social power and privilege influences the diversity and representation in the dietetics profession.

Key research interests:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- Critical dietetics
- Scholarship of teaching and learning.



Damian Espinase Nandorfy

Dr Damian Espinase Nandorfy is a Senior Lecturer and Course Coordinator of the Bachelor of Food and Nutrition. Damian has extensive experience as a senior sensory scientist at CSIRO and the Australian Wine Research Institute, with over fifteen years of experience in the wine industry. His research focuses on linking food and beverage chemical composition with sensory properties and consumer response. By incorporating aspects of sensory psychology into his research, he aims to uncover fundamental mechanisms of perception and identify key food compounds of sensory significance. Damian holds an Honours degree in Viticulture & Oenology from Brock University in Canada, a post-graduate certificate in Sensory & Consumer Science from UC Davis, and has completed a PhD at Deakin University's CASS Food Research Centre.

Key research interests:

- Sensory science
- Understand the basis of sensory phenomena such as the astringency and refreshment.



Kate Furness

Dr Kate Furness is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher in the Food, Nutrition and Dietetics team. She has an extensive background as a clinical dietitian in the nutrition management of general, upper gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary surgery with a cancer focus. Kate is currently the Chief Investigator and research trial manager on an MRFF funded study 'Supplemental Jejunal Feeding to Improve Quality of Life – SuperQoL' to determine whether the provision of supplementary jejunal feeding and intensive nutrition counselling via telehealth during pancreatic cancer treatment can improve quality of life and other outcomes.

Key research interests:

- Cancer malnutrition and upper gastrointestinal cancer
- Digital health (eHealth)
- Patient experience and quality of life in cancer nutrition care.



Stephen Keenan

Dr Stephen Keenan is a Senior Lecturer in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics and is qualified as a dietitian and sports dietitian. His research investigates how nutritional strategies and exercise can be used to improve cardiometabolic health and skeletal muscle function. He has conducted work comparing the impact of intermittent fasting and continuous energy restriction on body composition and strength, particularly when combined with resistance training.

Stephen's current research focuses on the microbiota–gut–muscle axis and the role of different protein sources and eating patterns in supporting muscle health. He is particularly interested in identifying optimal protein patterns and sources to maintain muscle mass and physical function in older adults. This work includes exploring how various dietary patterns, such as plant-based diets, influence protein metabolism and muscle remodelling across the lifespan.

Key research interests:

- Intermittent fasting and energy restriction for metabolic and muscle health
- The microbiota–gut–muscle axis and its influence on skeletal muscle
- Protein sources and intake patterns for optimal muscle health in older adults
- Protein metabolism and muscle maintenance in plant-based (e.g. vegan and vegetarian) diets.



Annie Lassemillante

Dr Annie Lassemillante is a Senior Lecturer in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics with over 10 years of experience in academia. She is an Accredited Practicing Dietitian (APD) with extensive expertise in dietetic practice and research. Her research experience is in end-users engagement to support them in achieving their desired health outcomes. She works closely with industry in curriculum design and to co-design projects to solve some of their challenges. She has supervised and is supervising graduate research students from diverse areas (psychology, nutrition, and sports). Annie is currently collaborating with CSIRO and industry on various research projects. She is also currently leading the food service management portfolio at La Trobe University.

Key research interests:

- User-centred design in nutrition and dietetics
- Food service management
- Scholarship of teaching and learning.



Vini Fernandes Cruzat

Dr Vini Fernandes Cruzat is a Lecturer in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics, specialising in metabolic health, immunometabolism and evidence-based nutritional interventions. With a background in Nutrition and Dietetics and Sport Science, he has an interdisciplinary profile spanning applied nutrition and dietetics, biomedical science and clinical research. His research investigates the role of specific nutrients in modulating oxidative stress, inflammation and cellular function, with applications in metabolic disease and human performance. With over 20 years of experience, he has an established track record of high-quality research publications and research funding. He collaborates with national and international partners, contributes to graduate research supervision, and serves as a Board Director of the Nutrition Society of Australia.

Key research interests:

- Investigating metabolic health and immunometabolism, with a focus on the role of inflammation and oxidative stress in chronic disease development and progression
- Exploring the effects of nutritional interventions such as bioactive compounds, amino acids and molecular hydrogen, on cellular function, redox balance and metabolic regulation
- Advancing translational nutrition approaches that bridge laboratory, clinical and applied settings to improve health outcomes and human performance.



Susan McLeod

Susan McLeod is a Registered Nutritionist and Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics. After a 15 year career in the food industry working on food product development, food safety and compliance Susan moved to La Trobe University where she focusses her teaching and research in food science and employability. Additionally, Susan researches and publishes in the scholarship of learning and teaching on topics related to employability in nutrition and using technology to enhance online learning. Susan is currently undertaking her PhD and is researching strategies to enhance employability in undergraduate students. Susan is also actively involved in shining a light on science in the community through National Science week events such as the Taste Tomorrow Project.

Key research interests:

- Employability in nutrition
- Addressing real world problems in nutrition and the food industry
- Using technology to enhance online learning.



Gina Trakman

Dr Gina Trakman is a Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics and the Course Coordinator for the Master of Dietetics. Gina's PhD focused on the development of the Nutrition for Sports Knowledge Questionnaire and Abridged Nutrition for Sports Knowledge Questionnaire (ANSKQ), which have been used internationally and translated into over 10 languages. Gina has held a research position with a renowned gastroenterology research group, conducting multi-national research on diet and Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). She is currently working on adapting the ANSKQ for use in elite, adolescent UK football players and elite American football players, and is collaborating on projects on the incorporation of evidence-based practical dietary therapy into IBD care, personalised nutrition in IBD and optimisation of diet for therapeutic faecal transplants in patients with Crohn's disease.

Key research interests:

- Nutrition for IBD, including diet and microbiota
- Nutrition for sports performance
- Survey development and validation.



Mark Bradbury

Dr Mark Bradbury is a Lecturer in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics. Mark is a food scientist and microbiologist, with extensive experience in food safety and the application of novel technologies in food processing. He has over 15 years' experience in applied food science research and held positions across both academic and government research institutes, including over a decade with CSIRO Agriculture and Food and most recently the University of Sydney in the ITTC ARC Centre for Food Safety in the Fresh Produce Industry. He is a passionate proponent of participatory and multi-disciplinary research approaches, he has been actively involved in a range of recent and ongoing collaborative projects, undertaken in Australia and internationally (including New Zealand, the Philippines, Tanzania and Sri Lanka). These projects have encompassed horticultural food safety, monitoring irrigation water quality, genomic surveillance of pathogens, and the validation of novel technologies within the food industry.

Key research interests:

- Technologies, management practices, social dimensions and regulatory interventions that contribute to sustainable, healthy and diverse food production systems.



Tina Cao

Dr Tina Cao is a Lecturer in Dietetics and Human Nutrition. She is a registered Public Health Nutritionist and public health researcher with a strong interest in cardiometabolic disease prevention at the population level. Her background includes a medical degree (MBBS) followed by training in Public Health (MMedSc), and Nutritional Epidemiology (PhD). Dr Cao is currently leading two projects collaborating with Northern Health and Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes on health literacy and diabetes and other condition management, including in vulnerable populations.

Key research interests:

- Nutrition/dietary intake and chronic diseases (cardiometabolic) across populations
- Diabetes prevention and intervention, including involving new technology and consumer-led research in diabetes and other chronic disease management
- Health literacy and its role in diabetes/other chronic conditions management among vulnerable populations/culturally and linguistically diverse groups.



Sarah Hart

Sarah Hart is a Senior Lecturer in Food Nutrition and Dietetics, and currently holds the Placement Coordinator role for the Master of Dietetics. She is an Accredited Practising Dietitian with extensive experience in clinical and community dietetics. She currently leads the School working group in interprofessional practice.

Key research interests:

- Scholarship of learning and teaching
- Professional development of health professionals
- Interprofessional Practice.



Georgina Latimer

Georgina Latimer (BA, BSc, MNutDiet) is a Lecturer in Dietetics and Human Nutrition. Georgina is an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) and trained at the University of Sydney. Through dietetic practice she developed a passion for community nutrition, nutrition care for people experiencing mental health concerns and other vulnerable population groups in the community and supporting positive lifestyle changes in these groups.

Key research interests:

- Mental health nutrition
- Addressing the needs of the dietetic profession for working in mental health
- Motivational interviewing training in dietetics.



Lauren Manning

Lauren Manning is a Lecturer and researcher in Nutrition and Dietetics. She is an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) and has worked primarily in chronic health, gastrointestinal disorders and sports nutrition. In 2017, Lauren completed her Honours focussing on the interaction between fatty acid metabolism genes, metabolic parameters and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. She has gone on to pursue a PhD in Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) focused on psychological predictors response to dietary treatment. Lauren is currently involved in two longitudinal trials on dietary treatment in IBS and subsequent qualitative research on participant experience and a dietetic service review. She has skills in mixed method research and statistical analysis of longitudinal data sets. Lauren has published with leading international researchers in the field of gastroenterology–psychiatry that challenges the current paradigms of care in IBS.

Key research interests:

- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Sports nutrition
- Chronic disease management.



Katerina Sarapis

Dr Katerina Sarapis is a Public Health Nutritionist, a Lecturer and a Researcher in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics. As a researcher, her main area of interest is the development and implementation of clinical trials focusing on bioactive food compounds and chronic disease prevention. In addition, her public health skills extend to the design and development of evidence based public health promotion programs and disease prevention strategies that can be applied at multiple levels of influence across the social ecological framework.

Key research interests:

- Implementation and assessment of the effect of bioactive nutrients in functional foods and dietary supplements on chronic disease prevention (i.e., cardiovascular disease/diabetes) and mental health
- Use of digital tools for the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes and hypertension
- Design, implementation, and evaluation of the effectiveness of nutrition and lifestyle interventions on obesity and related co-morbidities.



Sara Smilevska

Sara Smilevska is a Lecturer in the discipline of Nutrition and Dietetics. Sara holds an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) status, with experience working in nutrition research, private practice and clinical dietetics. Her continued practice as a clinical dietitian in speciality medicine, paediatrics and surgical streams is complimentary to both her role as a lecturer and academic placement supervisor through the integration of authentic and work integrated learning design. Sara is leading and developing the discipline's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoLT) working group party, which aims to facilitate opportunity for higher education research in the discipline and SoLT outputs and publications.

Key research interests:

- Clinical nutrition research (therapeutic diets in eating disorders, nutrition support in acute care, paediatrics; improving long term health outcomes for preterm infants)
- Higher education research (engagement models and student experience)
- Interprofessional practice and education (integrating pedagogical frameworks in structuring expert nutrition and dietetic education delivery).



Barnaby Frankish

Dr Barnaby Frankish is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics and holds a PhD in Biochemistry and Muscle Physiology. He is experienced in skeletal muscle health, exercise physiology, and cellular biochemistry. He has an interest and expertise in both human and equine populations. Barney is passionate about the prescription of exercise as a form of medicine for healthier living, primarily focused on the expression and regulation of proteins within skeletal muscle in response to age, exercise, disease and/or nutrition in a muscle fibre type-dependent manner.

Key research interests:

- Applying biochemistry and molecular biology techniques to enhance our understanding of physiology and metabolism
- Exercise and nutrition's roles in medicine/healthcare, employing natural interventions to improve overall health and well-being
- Exploring how training, aging, disease, and sex differences impact physiological and metabolic functions.

WHY CHOOSE FOOD, NUTRITION AND DIETETICS AT LA TROBE?



Top-rated nationally

Our research in nutrition and dietetics is rated 'well above world standard'.

Australian Research Council, 2019, *Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Outcomes 2018*



Top 200 globally

La Trobe's clinical, pre-clinical and health subjects are ranked in the world's top 200.

Times Higher Education (THE), 2022, *World University Rankings 2023 by subject: clinical, pre-clinical and health*



1st in Victoria

We're the best in Victoria and third in Australia for employer satisfaction, with a rating of 88.1 per cent.

Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), 2023, *2022 Employer Satisfaction Survey* [PDF, 812 KB]



Top 20 worldwide

We're ranked in the top 20 universities worldwide for our research on key diseases and conditions, our support for healthcare professions, and the health of our students and staff.

Times Higher Education (THE), 2023, *Impact Rankings 2023: good health and well-being*

WORLD CLASS RESEARCH AND TRAINING FACILITIES

FOOD, NUTRITION AND DIETETICS LABORATORY

Our specialised laboratory is designed as a centre for our clinical trials. It features a dedicated body composition and anthropometric assessment area, including a dual energy X-ray absorptiometry scanner. It houses other specialised equipment used for our clinical trials of functional foods and nutritional supplements including equipment to assess metabolism (RMR) as well as phlebotomy and blood processing facilities. The laboratory also has a designated area for interviews with study participants and a shared space for research students.



METABOLIC KITCHEN

Our metabolic kitchen is used for research in food science, molecular gastronomy, sensory testing and small group teaching. In addition to traditional kitchen equipment, it houses a novel food printer, a 3D printer and a sensory evaluation space.



SPORT PERFORMANCE HUB

La Trobe University also houses the Sport Performance Hub to offer performance services, education, and training facilities for athletes, teams, schools and the wider sports community. Located within La Trobe University's world-class Sports Park precinct, the Sport Performance Hub provides elite athletes, weekend warriors and community sport groups access to state-of-the-art sport and exercise science facilities.

Complemented by world-renowned research from our leading industry experts and a comprehensive suite of education offerings, the Sport Performance Hub can help you take your performance to the next level.

Services include:

- » sport biomechanics
- » strength and conditioning
- » sport physiology and performance
- » heat and altitude acclimation
- » nutrition and recovery
- » athlete wellbeing
- » team fitness testing
- » sport camps
- » VCE physical education program



All services are delivered by leading academics and qualified members of La Trobe Sport.



INDUSTRY PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

We currently have active research projects with leading industry and clinical partners to examine the impact of diet and nutrition on: metabolic health outcomes, skeletal muscle health, obesity, diabetes, cancer, the microbiome, sports performance, cognition, and the prevention and treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH OUR RESEARCH TEAM

There are numerous opportunities to partner with us on research ideas and projects, including:

- » **Honours projects** (12 months' duration)
- » **Masters/PhD projects** (2–3 years duration, may require some funding)
- » **Dietetics research project placements** (3–5 weeks, final year dietetics students, larger project can be split over several students over a year)
- » **Internships** (100 hours of work based placement)
- » **Collaborative grant applications**
- » **Research consultancy**

CONTACT US

If you're interested in working together but don't know where to start, please just email or give us a call:

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LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

School of Allied Health,
Human Services and Sport

WANT TO KNOW MORE? GET IN TOUCH

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