Making a Complaint or Allegation
The professional conduct and competence of a Registered Nutritionist

Who can complain or make an allegation about a Registered Nutritionist?
A client, a professional colleague, or an employee or a member of the public may make a complaint or allegation about the professional conduct and competence of a Registered Nutritionist.

How do I make a complaint or allegation?
Please write to Registration Manager, Association for Nutrition, 28 Portland Place, W1B 1LY or send an email to professional@associationfornutrition.org setting out your concern clearly, stating:
- the name of the registrant and their registration number if known
- what happened or did not happen, where and when.

What happens if I make a complaint or allegation?
Within three months of receipt of the allegation or complaint the Registration Office will:
- Acknowledge the complaint or allegation, explaining what happens next and how. If required, the Registration Office asks for more information or evidence.
- Check whether the complaint or allegation was made by a competent authority or individual (under the Standard Operating Procedures).
- Checks that the person complained against is on the Register, and in which category (Nutritionist, Public Health Nutritionist) and level (Associate, Full).
- Inform the registrant, explain the next steps and invite a response to the complaint or allegation.
- Ask the registrant to be ready to be interviewed to provide evidence.
- Ask the registrant to be ready to attend to give evidence in person to a meeting that considers if there is a case to answer.
- Tell the registrant she/ he has the right to bring a ‘friend’ or representative to a meeting that considers if there is a case to answer.
- Complaints received against those dually registered with another professional body, whether statutory or voluntary may be shared with them.

What AfN does not do:
- Consider allegations against registrants on other voluntary registers or who are not on the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists;

The first task is to establish whether there is a ‘case to answer’.
A panel or subcommittee of the Registration Committee will initially consider whether there is a case to answer and ensure the case complies with Standard Operating Procedures: This initial panel shall:
- Number at least three members of the Registration Committee; i.e. nutrition professionals with relevant experience of management and a range of professional practice in nutrition.
- Be independent of the individuals concerned;
The initial panel or subcommittee of the Registration Committee may decide:
- There is no substantive case to answer OR
- There is a substantive case to answer and refers the case for consideration by a Professional Conduct Panel.
Composition of Professional Conduct Panel
The Professional Conduct Panel will normally be chaired by an AfN Honorary Officer or member of Council or a senior member of the Registration Committee who is independent of the case.
- There will normally be three members of the Panel.
- There will be an independent recorder.
- The Registration Office will advise upon procedures and process.

Members of the Panel shall include:
- A registrant from the same section of the Register as the appellant.
- A lay person (i.e. an individual who is a non-registrant, has never been registered, is not capable of becoming registered and has not studied on a course that would lead to registration) with relevant expertise.

Person specification for a panel member:
- Relevant experience, for example, of the regulation of another profession, or of adjudication or membership of a tribunal within their employment in higher education or research management or industry.
- Familiarity with the procedures.
- Independence of the appellant, to be identified through declaration of interest.

Declaration of interest will exclude any individuals who are or were:
- Related to the registrant through kinship or current or past marriage or civil partnership or equivalent.
- An employer or employee or colleague of the appellant and whose involvement in the case may therefore affect the member’s ability to work.
- For any other reason directly interested in the outcome of the case.

The Professional Conduct Panel will proceed provided that:
- The meeting is quorate;
- The complaint falls within remit of the Association i.e. can be judged against the AfN’s Standards of Ethics, Performance and Conduct and Standards of Competency.

After considering all the evidence in the case the Panel may:
- Find that the case is not proven
- Find that there is evidence of competence or conduct below professional standards in nutrition required for registration and / or that poses a risk to the public.

The Panel may then:
- Advise the registrant how to change to remedy shortcoming(s); or
- Recommend that the registrant is suspended from the register altogether or the category of registration changed. These changes will last for a defined and agreed period, to be followed by evidence of professional development; or
- Recommend removal from the register.
- The Registrant is informed about the outcome of the case, their right to appeal and how to make an appeal.
- The complainant is informed about the outcome of case.
- A summary of the case may be published on the Association website
- The Association may revise its guidance to registrants and course leaders of accredited courses to enable existing and future professional nutritionists in order to raise professional standards.
- All the standard operating procedures and competency requirements are periodically revised.