

Complaints about Training Accredited, Endorsed or Certified by Association for Nutrition

AfN Guidance on Raising and Escalating Concerns

Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This guidance document sets out how the Association for Nutrition will deal with complaints in relation to trainings which it accredits, certifies or endorses, as outlined below (1.2 -1.4).
- 1.2 AfN Accreditation - undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes offered by Universities that lead to registration as an Associate Nutritionist by direct entry. Programmes have been assessed against defined standards for nutrition education. Accreditation is overseen by the Accreditation Committee.
- 1.3 AfN CPD Endorsement – learning activities provided by organisations to maintain or enhance the competence of registered nutritionists. These activities have been evaluated against our Standards of Endorsement. CPD Endorsement is overseen by the Quality Assurance (non-degree) Committee.
- 1.4 AfN Course Certification - training courses which deliver nutrition training to the wider workforce at levels 1 to 5+ on the Public Health and Skills Careers Framework and Quality and Credit Framework across Health and Social Care, Fitness and Leisure and Catering sectors. The trainings have been evaluated against our standards of certification and the sector framework they have applied under. Course Certification is overseen by the Quality Assurance (non-degree) Committee.
- 1.5 All accredited, endorsed and certified activities meet AfN’s established standards and are subject to regular reassessment. Occasionally training providers may fall short of the high standards we expect. All training providers approved by AfN must have a complaints policy which is fair and objective, and gives the right of appeal.
- 1.6 This guidance document outlines how we will manage complaints reported to us regarding a training activity which we accredit, endorse or certify.

- 1.7 Concerns about conduct or performance of a UKVRN Registrant may be pursued using AfN Fitness to Practise procedures. Such complaints may or may not affect the status of a training activity. A training provider may investigate a matter and discipline or remove a member of staff and not have compromised the capacity and competence of the training activity itself.
- 1.8 Concerns about the conduct, health or performance of another registered professional will be forwarded to that profession's regulatory body.

What type of concerns can the AfN investigate?

- 2.1 We will investigate if there is evidence a training provision we accredit, endorse or certify is failing to meet our AfN Standards for, accreditation, CPD endorsement or certification. This could include but is not limited to:
 - Accredited degree programmes not teaching AfN core competences
 - Inadequate staffing levels or teaching quality
 - Ethical concerns
 - Lack of scientific rigour in relation to training content
 - Discriminatory or offensive language
- 2.2 We may also investigate concerns about the quality of an accredited programme where the concern may link with a graduate registrant's knowledge and understanding of the core competencies and their eligibility to apply to enter the UKVRN. This will include concerns regarding risks recent graduates may pose to the public upon completing an accredited programme and joining the UKVRN as a Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr).
- 2.3 If at any stage a concern is raised about a matter which involves:
 - a vulnerable adult or child;
 - issues around safeguarding;
 - systematic or sustained failure of care;
 - compliance with equal opportunity,
 - bribery,
 - health and safety or any other form of legislation,or
 - which indicates the involvement of the police or any other statutory authority

The authority will be notified immediately and without delay.

- 2.4 We will not investigate training provisions that we do not accredit, endorse or certify.
- 2.5 In addition, we **will not** consider concerns about the following:
- matters of academic judgment, such as results or requests for re-marking, etc.
 - issues regarding fees, payments, value for money, discounts or award of bursaries
 - complaints about individual staff members or other students (unless a UKVRN registrant and a complaint regarding their fitness to practice)
- or
- are vexatious in nature

Who may raise a concern?

- 3.1 Anyone may raise a concern about a training provision we accredit, endorse or certify: this may be a member of the public; a current or former training participant; an employer or sponsor who may have supported a participant; a current or former examiner, teacher or training provider; an AfN Trustee, Assessor, member of staff or registrant. If the person has a potential conflict of interest (e.g. competitor training provider) they must declare this when raising their concern.
- 3.2 All concerns will be investigated according to the guidance set out in this policy document. Individuals raising a concern will be asked to provide their contact details so that we may seek additional information if necessary and keep them informed of progress.
- 3.3 A concern may be raised anonymously. However, doing so may mean there is insufficient information or evidence provided for us to be able to investigate and/or take further action. All concerns will be considered in the strictest confidence in the first instance.

Raising a Concern

- 4.1 All training providers must have a complaints policy which is fair and objective, and (if there is assessment/confirmation of competition) gives the right of appeal. Thus, in the first instance a concern about a training provision which we accredit, endorse or certify it must be raised with the training provider directly. If you can't find your training provider's complaints policy, or don't understand who to talk to, ask your tutor or the training provider's enquiries team. In larger organisations, such as universities or further education colleges, you may also be able to seek advice from your student's union, head of quality assurance or student services.

- 4.2 Should a training provider fail to consider your complaint under its complaints process it may be in breach of AfN terms and conditions in relation to the awarding of accreditation, certification of CPD endorsement. Breaches of terms and conditions are dealt with outside of this complaints policy.
- 4.3 In exceptional circumstances you may be unable to raise your complaint directly with your training provider, or you may wish to draw our attention to specific concerns regarding a training; in these cases, please contact the AfN Executive. Please remember we are only able to take action about trainings we accredit, endorse or certify. For a full list of trainings we accredit, endorse or certify, please see our website, www.associationfornutrition.org
- 4.4 Concerns about a training we accredit, endorse or certify will be managed by the AfN Executive. The Executive reports to the Accreditation or QA (non-degree) Committees as appropriate, which in turn report to AfN Council.
- 4.5 The AfN will manage concerns reported to it in a fair and consistent manner and take proportionate action. If appropriate, we may advise you to attempt to resolve your concern directly with the training provider and/or refer you to another organisation, such as Trading Standards, ASA, QAA, ICO or Police.
- 4.6 Should you wish to continue with your complaint to AfN, please submit your concern through the online concerns and complaints form on the AfN website, providing as much detail as possible including:
- the name of the training provider
 - the name of the accredited, endorsed or certified training
 - a summary of your concern, with any supporting evidence available
 - dates of any incidents and any supporting documentation
 - the outcome of the training providers complaints process including copies of complaint made and decision
 - your written consent for AfN to progress your concern with the training provider. Your personal information (contact details) will not be forwarded to the provider.

Please be aware, if you do not provide all of the above information, we may not be able to fully consider your concern.

- 4.7 Upon receipt, an initial assessment will be made by AfN Executive to determine the scope and type of concern raised. We aim to acknowledge initial correspondence within ten working days. We will normally undertake an initial assessment within fifteen working days of receipt.

- 4.8 At this stage the AfN Executive may request additional information, or seek advice as necessary, from the person or group raising the concern.
- 4.9 The AfN Executive may also determine that the complaint does not fall within the remit of the Association for Nutrition and the complaint is closed.
- 4.10 If the AfN Executive believes there are reasonable grounds to conduct an investigation, a summary of the concern and request for further information/ questions to answer will be forwarded to the training provider. We will ask the training provider to respond to us, usually within one month. At this stage we may also request additional information from a third party such as an External Examiner or an AfN Assessor.
- 4.11 Where possible, AfN will seek to resolve a concern amenable rather than through an adversarial route.

What happens next?

- 5.1 The response from the training provider, alongside evidence of the concern raised, will be considered by three members of the relevant Committee (Accreditation, or QA (non-degree)), and will include at least one lay member – if a lay committee member is not available, a lay member from another committee will be requested to consider the concern. The three Committee members considering the concern will have declared all potential conflicts of interest in advance of their selection; they will not have acted as an Assessor in relation to the training in question, or have any connection either with the person raising the concern, with the training provider or a competitor of the training provider.
- 5.2 Upon review of the submission, the three members of the relevant Committee will recommend one of the following options to the Chair of the relevant Committee (Accreditation or QA (non-degree));
- There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the concern. No further action required and case is closed
 - The response from the training provider is sufficient to resolve the matter. No further action is required and the case is closed.
 - There may have been minor failings on the part of the training provider. AfN to review the issues in detail again during the Annual Monitoring/Evaluation process.

- d) Concerns are serious enough to warrant referral to the full Committee with oversight for the training. See below, 'Full Committee Review' for further details.
- e) The training provider may be required to meet with the Committee Chair and in the case of an accredited degree a site visit may be required (please see SOPs for site visits.)

5.3 The AfN Executive will provide regular updates to the person raising the concern on the progress and outcome of the investigation.

Full Committee Review

6.1 If a full review by the Committee responsible for approving the training activity is required the following options are available to the Committee;

- a) The concern(s) are not upheld and reasons are provided to both the person making the complaint and the training provider.
- b) The concern(s) demonstrate a minor failing. Advice will be provided and AfN will continue to review the issues in detail again during the Annual Monitoring/ Evaluation process until they are satisfied that all issues are resolved. If failing remains persistent and/or the training provider does not engage in improvement activities, accreditation/ certification/CPD endorsement may be withdrawn.
- c) The Training Provider may be required to meet with the Committee and in the case of an accredited degree a site visit may be required (please see SOPs for site visits.). If the training provider fails to engage and participate in meetings/visits, accreditation/ certification/CPD endorsement may be withdrawn.
- d) The concern(s) are upheld in full or in part and are of sufficient concern to trigger immediate withdrawal of accreditation/ certification/CPD endorsement, with recommendations to the training provider for rectification if the provider wishes to make a new application for Accreditation, CPD Endorsement or Certification.

6.2 The Committee in the conduct of its full review may ask the person raising the concern, the training provider and any other attendees it may need to make a decision to attend part of the Committee meeting, so that the Committee may form a balanced, fair and objective outcome.

- 6.3 The outcome of a concern may require public notification (for example, immediate withdrawal of Accreditation, CPD Endorsement or Certification) in which case the personal details of the person raising the concern will not be made public. However, the grounds for the decision may be published, and will be done so in such a way as limit any risk of identifying the person making the concern.

Appeals

- 7.1 All decisions may be open to an appeal by any party to the complaint.
- 7.2 AfN Appeals process is documented in a separate document.

Limits to this Guidance

- 8.1 AfN does not have the power to make a training provider amend results, grades or degree classifications or to award financial refunds, compensation, costs or expenses in relation to raising a concern/complaint.