

# Complaints about Courses Accredited, Endorsed or Certified by AfN.

## AfN Guidance on Raising and Escalating Concerns

Approved; August 2015.

Review date; September 2017.

### Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This guidance document sets out how the Association for Nutrition will deal with complaints in relation to courses 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. Courses have been assessed against defined standards for nutrition education. Accreditation is overseen by the Accreditation Committee.
- 1.3 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 and are hereinafter referred to as courses. CPD Endorsement is overseen by the Accreditation Committee.
- 1.4 AfN Course Certification - training courses which teach standards defined in the Workforce Competence Model in Nutrition. AfN Certified Courses deliver nutrition information to the wider workforce at level 3, 4 or 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. Course Certification is overseen by the Certification Committee.
- 1.5 All accredited, endorsed and certified courses meet AfN’s established standards and are subject to regular reassessment. Occasionally course providers may fall short of the high standards we expect. All course 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 course 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 course. 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 course 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 course 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 course content

2.2 We may also investigate concerns about the quality of an accredited course 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 course and joining the UKVRN as an Associate Nutritionist.

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 courses 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 or award of bursaries
- complaints about individual staff members or other students

## Who may raise a concern?

3.1 Anyone may raise a concern about a course we accredit, endorse or certify: a member of the public; a current or former course participant; an employer or sponsor who may have supported a course participant; a current or former examiner, teacher or course provider; an AfN Trustee, Assessor, member of staff or registrant.

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 keep them informed of progress, and to seek additional information if necessary.

3.3 A concern may be raised anonymously. However, to do so may mean there is insufficient information or evidence provided for us to investigate further. All concerns will be considered in the strictest confidence in the first instance.

## **Raising a Concern**

4.1 All course providers must have a complaints policy which is fair and objective, and gives the right of appeal. Thus, in the first instance a concern about a course which we accredit, endorse or certify must be raised with the course provider directly. If you can't find your training provider's complaints policy, or don't understand who to talk to, ask your course tutor. 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 or 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 course provider, or you may wish to draw our attention to specific concerns regarding a course; in these cases, please contact AfN Executive. Please remember we are only able to take action about courses we accredit, endorse or certify. For a full list of courses we accredit, endorse or certify, please see our website, [www.associationfornutrition.org](http://www.associationfornutrition.org)

4.4 Concerns about a course we accredit, endorse or certify will be managed by the AfN Executive. The Executive reports to the Accreditation or Certification Committee 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 course provider.

4.6 Should you wish to continue with your complaint to AfN, please give the AfN Executive as much detail as possible including:

- the name of the course provider
- the name of the accredited, endorsed or certified course
- a summary of your concern, with supporting evidence if available
- dates of any incidents and any supporting documentation
- the outcome of the course providers complaints process including copies of complaint made and decision
- your written consent for AfN to progress your concern with the course provider. Your personal information (contact details) will not be forwarded to the provider.

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 six working days. We will normally undertake an initial assessment within twelve 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 course provider. We will ask the course 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 course provider, alongside evidence of the concern raised, will be considered by two members of the relevant Committee (Accreditation, or Certification). The two Committee members will have declared all potential conflicts of interest in advance of their selection; they will not have acted as Course Assessor in relation to the course in question, or have any connection either with the person raising the concern or the course provider.

5.2 Upon review of the submission, the two members of the relevant Committee will recommend one of the following options to the Chair of the relevant Committee (Accreditation or Certification);

- a. The response from the education or training provider is sufficient to resolve the matter. No further action is required and the complaint is closed.
- b. There may have been minor failings on the part of the course provider. AfN to review the issues in detail again during the Annual Monitoring process.
- c. Concerns are serious enough to warrant referral to the full Committee with oversight for the Course (Accreditation or Certification). See below, 'Full Committee Review' for further details.
- d. The Course Provider may be required to meet with the Committee Chair and in the case of an accredited course 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 course (Accreditation or Certification) 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 course provider.
- b. The concern(s) may be minor and AfN will continue to review the issues in detail again during the Annual Monitoring process until satisfied that all issues are resolved.
- c. The Course Provider may be required to meet with the Committee and in the case of an accredited course a site visit may be required (please see SOPs for site visits.)
- 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 course 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 course 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 not to identify 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 course provider amend results, grades or degree classifications or to award financial compensation, costs or expenses in relation to raising a complaint.