



Association
for **Nutrition**

Regulating Professionals – Raising Standards – Improving Health

AfN Consultation on Core Registration Competencies and Degree Accreditation Standards



Open until 2359 on 31st July 2022



Overview

- AfN is the independent regulator for Registered Nutritionists. As a registered charity our role is to protect and benefit the public. We hold the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN), a register of competent, qualified nutrition professionals who meet our rigorously applied standards for scientifically sound evidence-based nutrition and its use in practice. Our registrants must develop, demonstrate and maintain the competencies needed to practice safely and effectively. We accredit degree programmes which meet our standards so that their graduates demonstrate the core competencies for registration as a Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr). ANutr registrants undertake further activities to develop the further competencies required for registration as a Registered Nutritionist (RNutr).
- We periodically review our competencies and standards to ensure that they reflect any developments in the environment. This consultation is about proposed amendments to our core competencies and our standards for accreditation.

Registration Competencies

Competencies can be understood as the skills, knowledge and values that help to make a professional person more effective in their position. The UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN) is a competency-based register of individual nutritionists who are qualified and competent in nutrition science and who agree to uphold professional and ethical standards through a comprehensive code of conduct (Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance). Only individuals who meet the required standards expected in evidence-based science and professional practice can be admitted to and remain on the UKVRN.

There are two categories of UKVRN registrant: Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr) and Registered Nutritionist (RNutr).

Currently, to meet the competence requirements for registration as an ANutr, individuals must be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in five Core Competencies for nutrition practice at the required level. RNutr must be able to demonstrate evidence of knowledge and understanding in the five core competencies in nutrition, plus the practical application of this within a specialist area of practice: Food, Nutrition Science, Public Health, Sports & Exercise, Animal or Healthcare-Medical. Figure 1 provides a graphical depiction of the development of skills from ANutr to RNutr.

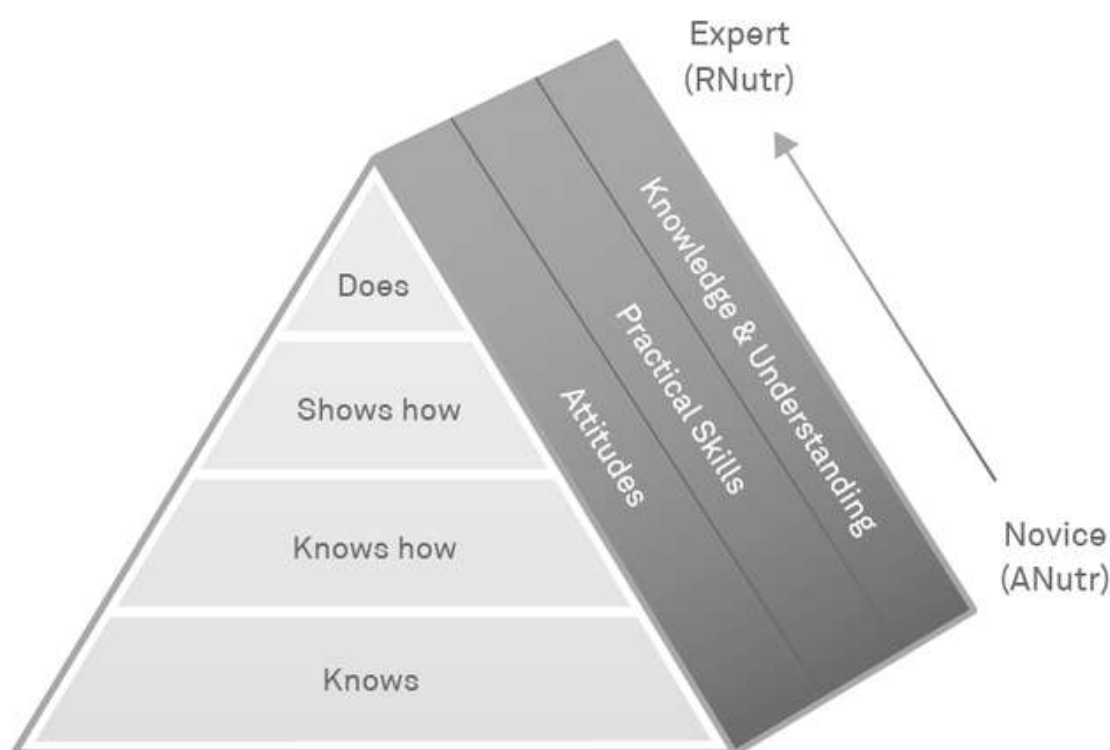


Figure 1. Visualisation of development from Novice (ANutr) to Expert (RNutr), adapted from Miller's Pyramid of Assessment



Background

Over recent months, we have conducted a review of our Core Competencies to ensure that the competency requirements for UKVRN registration remain relevant to ensure safe and competent practice of registrants, and to maintain the public and employer's trust in the profession.

Outcomes and proposals for the updated Core Competency requirements for registration

Based on our research findings and feedback received, an AfN Working Group comprising members of the Registration and Accreditation Committees has reviewed, developed and produced three drafts of our core competency requirements: ANutr Competencies, RNutr Competencies, and the newly developed AfN Independent Practice Competencies.

Changes made to ANutr/RNutr Competencies are as follows:

- Professional Conduct and Practice, formerly CC5, has moved to being CC1, demonstrating how it is overarching and underpinned by CC2-5.
- The structure of CC1 differs from the other competencies, with statements falling under three key areas:
 - Upholding AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance,
 - Communication Skills,
 - Development of professional practice and competence.
- Taxonomies of learning have been applied to position these clearly as competencies. Language further up the taxonomy has been used in the RNutr document to show a clear progression (knows how -> shows how, Figure 1).
- Sub-competency statements have been split by 'knowledge and understanding' and 'practical application' ('knows how/shows how'), to address gaps in practical skills, and to further display progression from ANutr-RNutr. At ANutr level, most statements fall under 'knowledge and understanding', whereas at RNutr level, most fall under 'practical application'.
- Three Core Competencies have been renamed:
 - Science -> Science and Research Skills,
 - Food/Feed Chain -> Food Systems,
 - Professional Conduct -> Professional Conduct and Practice

AfN Independent Practice Competencies

AfN registrants working in independent practice are currently expected to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge required to do so, while upholding the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, and working within their individual scope of practice.

As part of this review a number of additional competencies have been specifically identified as being required by those working in a freelance capacity (ANutr and RNutr) to protect the public through the underpinning of safe, ethical and effective independent practice.

Developed in the same manner as above, we are proposing that this new set of competencies sits alongside the ANutr and RNutr competencies, for all registrants working in independent practice (Figure 2). Registrants will be identified as having demonstrated they are safe and competent to practice in an independent/freelance capacity, through the achievement of the AfN Independent Practice Competencies.

We propose that applicants demonstrate achievement of these either through an AfN-accredited university degree (where this can be optionally delivered by the university and successful completion confirmed to AfN), or through AfN-endorsed CPD training, where evidence of completion and a declaration of compliance can be made, either during the initial/transfer registration process or via an administrative confirmation submission, post-initial registration/transfer.

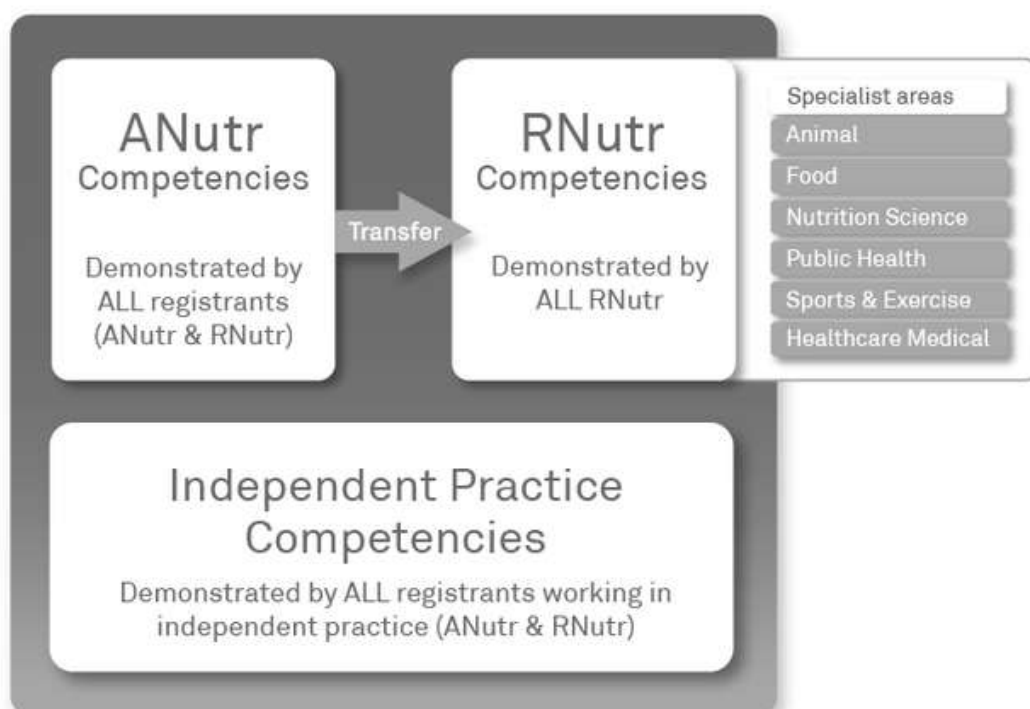


Figure 2. Figure shows how each set of competencies interacts and how they apply to each registrant, whether ANutr or RNutr.



What we are asking regarding the registration competencies in the consultation

During the consultation, we will be asking for your thoughts on our proposals for all three sets of competency requirements. We will be asking you to give feedback on the new style, structure and layout, skills gaps, implementation and assessment, and preferred terminology.

We recognise that the new and updated competency requirements will be required to be supported by clear guidance. A series of guidance documents will be produced to support the new and updated competency requirements following the consultation. While the current consultation focuses on the new core competencies themselves, we would like to hear your opinions on the areas you feel would be best supported by guidance.

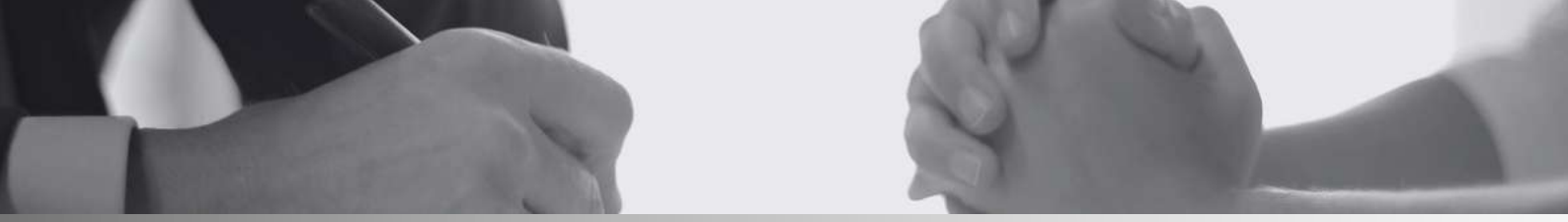
At the end of each document, we will also be providing a glossary of terms, to define what we mean by some of the terms used throughout the competency documents. To inform development, we will be asking you what specific terms you would like to see defined within the glossary.

Standards for Accreditation of Degree Programmes in Nutrition

The AfN accredits degree programmes which meet its standards. Graduates of accredited programmes are eligible to apply for Direct Entry to the UKVRN and, once registered, may use the letters ANutr after their name. Our standards must be sufficiently rigorous to ensure that programmes have the resources, skills and policies in place to deliver and assess the core competencies required for registration as a Registered Associate Nutritionist, so that graduates of these programmes will have demonstrated that they have the appropriate competence to practice safely and effectively.

Our current standards have been in place since 2016. Since that time there have been changes in the higher education landscape and in the nutrition profession. It is important to review our standards in light of these changes, and alongside the review of our core competencies, to ensure they remain up to date, robust and fit for purpose.

We are recommending that the overall number of standards can be reduced and more focused. Reflecting the proposed changes in core competencies, we aim to encourage an emphasis on professionalism and ethics, with students' understanding of evidence-based practice embedded within the programme. We recognise the need for a diverse profession, and for diversity in accredited programmes which should have freedom to design programmes which meet our standards and deliver the core competencies but are also able to meet local needs and aspirations.



What we are asking regarding the degree accreditation standards in the consultation

During this consultation, we will be asking for your thoughts on our proposals for the Accreditation Standards. We will be asking you whether you think that the proposed standards will ensure that future Nutrition graduates will be knowledgeable, skilled, employable, fit to practice and contribute to a more diverse profession. We are also interested in finding out if you consider that the standards are appropriate for the breadth of Nutrition programmes on offer and will remain relevant to the profession during the next five years.

Responding to the Consultation

Submit your responses via the online form at:

<https://afn.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/afn-consultation-2022>

Consultation closes: 2359 on 31 July 2022

Supporting documents

- I - ANutr Competencies & Questions
- II - RNutr Competencies & Questions
- III - AfN Independent Practice Competencies & Questions
- IV - Accreditation Standards & Questions
- V - All consultation questions

