



Association  
for Nutrition

Regulating Professionals – Raising Standards – Improving Health



# Consultation Document IV




Accreditation Standards for the quality assurance  
of nutrition degree programmes



## 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 registration competencies and degree accreditation 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.



# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

The AfN accredits degree programmes which can demonstrate that they meet our standards and deliver our core competencies, so that we can be confident that graduates of those programmes have the knowledge and skills to be a Registered Associate Nutritionist.

We have reviewed our standards in light of changes in the higher education landscape, feedback from programmes and our experiences of accrediting programmes. The proposed changes simplify our standards and focus on what we need to know about programmes in order to protect the public by ensuring that graduates are able to practice safely and effectively as Registered Associate Nutritionists.

This document sets out the proposed standards for accreditation. We have some specific questions about our standards. In most cases you will be asked to choose an answer, but will also be able to provide comments if you wish to do so. Before answering the questions in this section you should also read the section of our consultation about the ANutr competencies.

Once you have read the consultation paper you will be able to submit your views to us by completing the consultation questionnaire.

## Number of Standards

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.



# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

## Proposed Standard 1 - Professionalism and Ethics

*S1a - There must be transparent, robust and effective systems embedded within the institution to ensure compliance with AfN professional ethics, codes of academic conduct and health and safety guidelines. A fitness to practice policy is required.*

*S1b - Students must have effective support for wellbeing, academic conduct and employability.*

### **Rationale and questions**

We have amended standard S1a to explicitly state that a fitness to practice policy is required. This is because students are registered on accredited programmes that lead directly to the right to practice in a profession where clients may be given advice. Students should not engage in behaviours which render them unfit to be admitted to the profession. Therefore we are proposing that Institutions should have a fitness to practice policy in place for students on accredited programmes.

*Q. Do you agree or disagree that institutions should have a fitness to practice policy in place for students?*

We have added employability as a requirement to Standard S1b. This is to support students in developing a range of knowledge, skills and behaviours, which will help them to be successful in future employment. As nutrition is a diverse profession, AfN believes that employability should be embedded within an accredited programme.

*Q. Do you agree or disagree that employability should be added to the standard?*



# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

## Proposed Standard 2 – Admission of Students

*S2a - Recruitment, selection and admission of students for entry to undergraduate or postgraduate programmes must be clear and appropriate to the programme.*

*S2b - Students must demonstrate sufficient capability to study in the language used for delivery and assessment of the programme. For International students studying in English, this must be not less than 6.5 IELTS (or equivalent), with no individual section less than 6.0.*

### ***Rationale and questions***

The proposed standard 2a reflects a change to our requirements about admission. We recognise that programmes may wish to accept students from a range of backgrounds in order to improve diversity, and that this has benefits to the profession and the public. However, entry criteria should be appropriate to the programme, which must ensure that students are supported to achieve all of the required core competencies. We are proposing that institutions be required to set entry criteria which are appropriate to the programme

*Q. Do you agree or disagree that programmes should set entry criteria which are appropriate to the programme?*

A record number of over 605,000 international students were enrolled in UK Universities during the 2020/21 academic year, particularly on postgraduate courses. The recently created UK post-study work visa allows International students to remain in the UK for a period of two years after they finish their studies, to find employment. To facilitate International students in fully achieving their academic potential, AfN believes that the minimum English language requirement of 6.5 IELTS (or equivalent), with no individual section less than 6.0, should be maintained.

*Q. Do you agree or disagree that the minimum IELTS standard should be retained?*





# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

## Proposed Standard 3 – Curriculum Delivery and Assessment

*S3a - Core Competencies must be delivered and assessed within validated programme modules. The Core Competencies should be fully embedded within modules and be delivered and assessed in an integrated and progressive manner, demonstrating good pedagogy.*

*S3b - Students must pass every formal component of summative assessment in the core modules containing assessments of Core Competencies. The core modules containing assessments of Core Competencies must not be subject to compensation, trailing or extended resit opportunities.*


*S3c - An AfN Accredited programme must be delivered in an environment which is informed by appropriate research and evidence-based nutrition practice. Students should experience a balance of taught components, directed study and independent learning, with a strong focus on critical analysis, evaluation and evidence-based practice.*

*S3d - Where core competencies are gained by students through study at another institution, the programme provider must provide evidence to demonstrate how those competencies are delivered and assessed to the same standards as for the rest of their programme.*

### **Rationale and questions**

Higher Education Institutions have robust quality assurance processes in place and the AfN accreditation is designed to complement these existing structures. Our proposed Standard 3 is designed to ensure that accredited programmes are delivering and assessing core competencies within an environment which meets accepted quality assurance standards and is informed by research and evidence based nutrition practice. The programme must ensure that all of the core competencies are covered and students must pass all of the assessments designed to test achievement of the core competencies.

*Q. Do you agree that the proposed Standard 3 will ensure that graduates of accredited programmes have achieved the core competencies?*



# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

## Proposed Standard 4 – Management of Quality and Resources

*S4a - There must be policies and systems in place to ensure the quality of education and assessment is monitored and evaluated, and action taken to address concerns.*

*S4b - There must be a minimum of two FTE AfN Registered Nutritionists involved in delivering and assessing the Core Competencies for each programme. Staff who are leading or teaching substantial parts of modules which deliver core competencies should be Registered Nutritionists or Registered Associate Nutritionists. One external examiner must be an AfN Registered Nutritionist.*

*S4c - There must be sufficient and relevant teaching and learning resources in place to deliver and assess the programme in its entirety.*

### ***Rationale and questions***

Standard 4 focuses on how an institution ensures it monitors and evaluates the quality of the programme, and how we can be confident that there are sufficient appropriate resources in place to ensure the delivery and assessment of the core competencies. The proposed standards clarify our expectation that a minimum of 2 FTE R Nutr registrants are involved in the delivery and assessment of core competencies across the programme, and that staff who lead or teach substantial parts of modules which deliver core competencies should be AfN registrants. This is to ensure that accredited programmes are delivered by staff who themselves have the knowledge and skills required to register.

*Q. Are the requirements for management of quality and resources set out in the proposed standards clear, unambiguous and proportionate?*

*Q. Should AfN set more specific requirements for teaching and learning resources? If so, what should be included?*



# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

## Proposed Standard 5 – Leadership and Staffing

*S5a - There must be AfN Registered Nutritionists involved in the leadership of the programme, who should take a role in ensuring that staff delivering the programme maintain their knowledge and skills in respect of the Core Competencies.*

*S5b - There must be sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff from relevant disciplines to deliver and assess the Core Competency requirements.*

### ***Rationale and questions***

We recognise that staff from a variety of disciplines are able to contribute to delivery of core competencies and that this variety can enrich accredited programmes. We believe it is important that there are Registered Nutritionists involved in the leadership of the programme, and that all staff should maintain their knowledge and skills in respect of the core competencies.

*Q. Do you agree that there must be an AfN Registered Nutritionist involved in the leadership of accredited programmes?*

### **General Questions about the Proposed Standards**


Our accreditation standards apply to degree programmes at level 6 (BSc degree programmes) and level 7 (Masters degree programmes).

*Q. Do you think we should have different standards for Level 6 and Level 7 programmes?*

Once published, the revised accreditation standards are expected to be in place for five years.

*Q. Do you consider that the revised Accreditation Standards for Degree Programmes will be fit for purpose for the next five years?*





# Standards for the Accreditation of Degree Programmes

*Q. How much time do you think will be needed for accredited programmes to incorporate the revised core competencies and make any changes necessary to meet our revised standards?*

*Q. Do you have any other comments on the Accreditation Standards for Degree Programmes?*

## **Accreditation Procedures**

Before implementing revised standards we will also review and revise our procedures in order to ensure they properly support the revised standards whilst being proportionate and clear. We are interested in hearing your views about our accreditation procedures and any changes or improvements you would like us to consider.

*Q. Is there anything you would like to tell us about our current procedures or any improvements you would like to see?*

We are considering a two-stage application process, where some standards are initially assessed by screening questions prior to a full submission. This would apply to those standards which have clear evidence requirements which can be checked prior to a full assessment, such as a Fitness to practice policy or the registration status of programme staff. This would allow programmes to check these criteria have been met prior to making a full submission for assessment. We are also considering how the process could be revised to be completed as an online application and assessment process.

*Q. Would a two-stage process which checks that some essential criteria have been met, prior to a full submission, be helpful?*

*Q. Would an online application and assessment process be helpful?*