



Competency Requirements for Registered Associate Nutritionists (ANutr)

UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN)



Introduction

The UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionist (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). The UKVRN is governed and maintained by the Association for Nutrition.

This document describes the competency requirements for registration with the UKVRN as a Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr). Only individuals who meet the required standards expected in evidence-based science and professional practice can be admitted to and remain on the UKVRN.

All registrants (ANutr and RNutr) who wish to be registered on the UKVRN must be able to demonstrate achievement of all sub-competencies of the five Core Competencies set out in this document for nutrition practice at the required level (equivalent to the attainment of a BSc Honours or MSc degree).

Competence Levels

Throughout this document, we use an adapted version of Miller's Pyramid¹ to help individuals visualise the level of each sub-competency.

Key:



Knows what
Accumulation
of expert
knowledge



Knows how
Knowledge
about
theoretical
application



Shows how
Application
of knowledge
in practical
scenarios



Does
Application of
knowledge in
real practice
situations



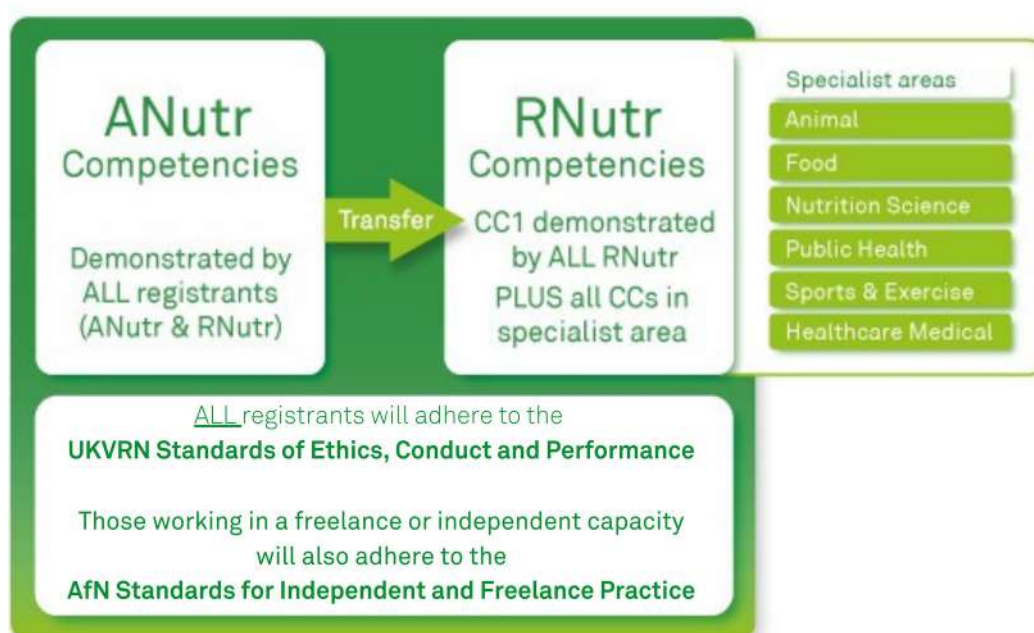
Core Competencies in Nutrition

The following core competencies in nutrition apply to all UKVRN registrants (ANutr and RNutr). Core Competency 1 is overarching and underpinned by Core Competencies 2-5:



This document should be read in conjunction with:

- UKVRN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance
- AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice
- Core Competencies Guidance Notes for Applicants



Core Competency 1: Professional Conduct and Practice

As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should:



CC1a – Demonstrate ethical and professional practice through upholding the UKVRN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, including, but not limited to:

- Identifying and applying the principles of equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) that should be fully considered, assessed and applied throughout all areas of practice and activities
- Working within your own scope of practice, appreciating the limits of your skills and knowledge, being aware of AfN Standards for Independent and Freelance Practice, referral pathways and in compliance with legal requirements
- Applying the scientific principles learnt through your education and continuing professional development (CPD) to your practice and public activities



CC1b – Apply appropriate communication skills throughout all areas of practice, by:

- Establishing appropriate professional relationships, collaborating effectively and ethically, including, but not limited to, with health/medical professionals and in brand, sponsorship and influencer activities
- Respecting and reflecting the current scientific evidence which underpins your practice and activities, enabling informed choices about nutrition
- Presenting nutritional science information to a range of audiences in a suitable format across different communication media
- Checking that the information you have provided is accurate and has been understood correctly, including when communicated in different languages



CC1c – Demonstrate development of professional practice and competence, by:

- Planning, undertaking, and keeping records of relevant CPD, demonstrating learning through reflective practice
- Identifying opportunities to access evidence, understanding the importance of keeping up to date with relevant developments in your field of practice
- Identifying and upholding best practice standards, legislation, official guidelines, policies and protocols, assessing risk, evaluating and adapting own practice
- Understanding and describing the importance of mentorship to the development of your practice and the profession, including peer-to-peer and RNutr-to-ANutr

Core Competency 2: Science and Research Skills

As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Use your knowledge and understanding to:



CC2a – List and outline the human/animal body functions pertinent to nutritional science



CC2b – Discuss the process of digestion, absorption, transportation and storage of nutrients and non-nutrient components of foods or feeds



CC2c – Define what nutrients are and how they are used by the body, explaining how to assess nutritional status and the consequences of nutrient deficiency



CC2d – Explain the relationship between different metabolic pathways, how they work together to meet the bodies demand for nutrients, and how nutritional needs change with, for example, age, sex, physical activity and lifestyle in human or animal systems



CC2e – Explain the nature of common conditions that require dietary manipulation or can affect physical activity, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer



CC2f – Summarise the general principles underpinning, and strengths and limitations of, common methods of assessment of nutritional status including clinical, anthropometric, dietary, biochemical, physiological, and functional methods



As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Practically apply your knowledge and understanding to:



CC2g – Discuss and apply appropriate methods required to accurately assess, measure and/or report on estimation of energy balance; energy expenditure; body mass; body composition; how body mass and energy balance are controlled



CC2h – Explain the hierarchy of evidence, recognising strengths, weaknesses and limitations of different study designs and research methods to critically analyse research outcomes and evaluations, including emerging and developing areas of research



CC2i – Plan, conduct, analyse and report on nutrition research, carrying out sample selection in accordance with the basic principles of good research practice



CC2j – Obtain and report nutrition-related data using qualitative, quantitative and statistical research methods using appropriate study design

Core Competency 3: Food Systems

As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Use your knowledge and understanding to:



CC3a – Identify staple foods, main sources of key nutrients and novel foods for different population groups



CC3b – Explain how the following affect the chemical composition and nutritional quality of food/feed and diet:

- Agricultural, production and transportation methods
- Methods of cooking, such as boiling, steaming, frying, etc., and storage
- Preparation, preservation, additives, fortification
- Sources of food or feed supply
- The food matrix



CC3c – Discuss the links between nutrition and sustainability, recognising national and international frameworks and terminology, and outlining associated issues, including environmental, societal, educational, financial and political challenges to sustainable diets, food systems and supply chains



CC3d – Identify and explain the role nutrients and non-nutrient components of foods/feeds and drinks can have on diet and health, including drug-nutrient and nutrient-nutrient interactions



CC3e – Locate and access official guidance on the regulation of nutrition and health claims and understand how these apply in practice to labelling, communications/marketing and nutrition professionals



As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Practically apply your knowledge and understanding to:



CC3f – Explain, and develop practical skills in, the methods used to analyse and modify food composition



CC3g – Analyse and calculate the nutrient content of foods/feeds and diets of an individual or group, justifying your chosen method of dietary assessment

Core Competency 4: Social and Behaviour

As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Use your knowledge and understanding to:



CC4a – Discuss the factors that affect diet and nutritional needs, intake and practices, including the importance of religious and cultural beliefs, socio-economic, geographical, and environmental factors



CC4b – Explain the importance of large nutrition-related data sets and big data, and how it can be used to reveal patterns, trends and associations, and drive change



CC4c – Discuss how individual and population dietary patterns and preferences can change over time, identifying the difference between dietary trends and requirements



As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Practically apply your knowledge and understanding to:



CC4d - Understand behaviour change theories and how they can be used to improve health, applying this to the design, implementation and evaluation of a nutritional intervention



CC4e – Apply theories of nutrition health education and promotion to public health messages



CC4f – Design a diet that meets the specific needs of an individual, or group, considering factors such as age, sex, physical activity, lifestyle, religion, culture, and socio-economic background



CC4g – Discuss the methods used to measure dietary, nutrient and activity patterns of individuals, the general population, and population sub-groups, and be able to extract and report on data that can be collected from these

Core Competency 5: Health and Wellbeing

As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Use your knowledge and understanding to:



CC5a – Discuss the scientific basis for the measurement and estimation of nutritional requirements and identify and report dietary reference values for the general population and population sub-groups



CC5b – Summarise the general principles and methods associated with determining the efficacy, health attributes, health claims, safety, and legal aspects of foods/feeds, drinks and supplements



CC5c – Explain the relationship between diet and:

- Disease
- Life stage
- Mental health
- Physical activity



As a UKVRN Registered Associate Nutritionist, you should be able to:

Practically apply your knowledge and understanding to:



CC5d – Identify and apply methods to review population intakes, interventions or policies, explaining the significance of evaluation in relation to setting, maintaining and driving public health agendas



CC5e – Combine information from a variety of sources to identify or propose solutions to improve human health, diet quality, animal welfare, productivity, food production or sustainability



CC5f – Explain and promote the role and importance of food and nutrition literacy at an individual and population level



Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
AfN	Association for Nutrition
Appropriate communication skills	Conveying relevant information, at an appropriate time and in a way which suits the audience.
Appropriate professional relationships	Relationships that maintain professional boundaries, in accordance with the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance, whether with brands, service users or colleagues.
Bias	A disproportionate preference towards one idea, thing or person, often in a way that is closed-minded, prejudicial, or unfair. In scientific research this could include selection bias, information bias or confounding.
Communication media	Any channel, tool or means used to communicate messages or information, whether verbal, written, graphic, face-to-face, social media or via blogs or websites.
Competence	Level of skill, knowledge and ability to do something successfully.
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	The undertaking of activities to continually learn in order to develop, maintain and enhance knowledge and skills.



Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDEI)	EDEI ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all. It aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of an individual or group of individual's protected characteristics. Equality is ensuring everybody has equal rights and access to opportunities. Diversity is recognising, respecting and valuing the differences between people and groups of people. Equity is ensuring a level playing field for everyone, being fair and impartial and ensuring people are not treated less favourably because of their characteristics, by providing support and assistance depending on specific needs or abilities. Inclusion is creating an environment where everyone is, and feels, welcome and valued.
Evidence/evidence-base/current scientific evidence	Body of information drawn from published studies, statistical analyses and grey literature to determine a consensus on what is known about the topic/subject.
Evidence-based/evidence-informed practice	The conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best (high quality) evidence combined with individual expertise to make decisions about practice for the audience of the message and/or activity.
Food matrix	The physical structure of food and how its molecules interact and impact on the way we digest and absorb the nutrients within food.
Food & nutrition literacy	Having the skills and knowledge to understand the impact of food and nutrition choices, preparation and consumption, on our health, community, environment and economy.



Health claims	Any statement about a relationship between food and health. Nutrition and health claims used in commercial communications must be evidence-based and authorised for use following scientific assessment of the evidence, overseen by the UK Government. A register of nutrition and health claims that may be made in commercial communications in Great Britain can be found on the UK Government website.
Large nutrition-related data sets/ big data	Large data sets, often used by nutritionists in research, policy, activities and programmes. Examples include, National Diet & Nutrition Survey (NDNS), Kantar Worldpanel, Agriculture and Horticultural Development Board (AHDB), Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA), Office for National Statistics (ONS). Big data includes Google Trends.
Mentor - ANutr	An ANutr mentor is a person with subject-specific knowledge, normally a Registered Nutritionist (RNutr), who is willing to act as a trusted adviser for a less experienced ANutr registrant (the mentee).
Methods of assessment	Any means of evaluating, estimating or determining e.g., nutritional status, dietary requirements or body composition, such as tests, tools and calculations.
Non-nutrient components	Food components that do not contribute to energy intake and are not considered to be nutrients, such as phytochemicals, probiotics, fibre, colourings, flavourings and food additives. Some non-nutrient components of food may be beneficial, while others may be harmful to the body.



Nutrition/Nutritional Science	The science of food, nutrients, other substances, intake and biochemical processing of food substances, relationship to health and disease, and the application of this to policy and practice (frequently drawing on social sciences to understand factors influencing food choice and health status).
Peer-peer	Mentorship and support from those at a similar career stage. AfN encourages peer mentoring, providing facilitated Zoom sessions to allow RNutr to benefit from each other's different experiences and expertise developed during careers.
Practice	Activities in which you apply your knowledge and skill in a paid or unpaid capacity.
Professional Conduct and Practice	How you behave and act in settings where you are seen to have a professional role (this includes when working, volunteering and on social media).
Reflective practice	Reflective practice can be defined as “learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice” (Finlay, 2008). Following any CPD, you should reflect on the activity, considering whether it aligned with your aims, what you learnt, and how you will use it in future practice.
Scope of practice	The areas of nutrition in which a registrant is trained, has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practice safely and effectively.
Socioeconomic	The interaction of social and economic factors. Can be used to describe differences between groups relating to a combination of their social class and financial situation.



Societal	Related to or involving society.
Standards	The ethical principles by which all UKVRN registrants must abide.
Sustainability/Sustainable diets	Dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals' health and wellbeing; have low environmental pressure and impact; are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable; and are culturally acceptable (FAO and WHO, 2019).
UKVRN	United Kingdom Voluntary Register of Nutritionists
UKVRN-registrants	Registered Associate Nutritionist (ANutr), Registered Nutritionist (RNutr) and Registered Nutritionist & Fellow of Association for Nutrition (RNutr FAFN).

References

- 1 Miller, G (1990) The assessment of clinical skills/competence/performance. *Academic Medicine*, 65(9):S63-7.



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Version	Details	Date
1.0	First version implemented	July 2012
1.1	Reviewed - minor amendments	February 2014
2.0	2019 (updated) Registration Competencies approved and published	October 2019
3.0	2025 (updated) Registration Competencies approved and published	April 2023