



RCN Accreditation Unit

Code of Practice

The Code of Practice exists to lay down principles of good practice to inform and guide the work of the RCN Accreditation Unit (RCN AU) in its relationship with anyone seeking accreditation for educational initiatives.

It is informed by (*inter alia*) the NMC Code of Professional Conduct, the RCN AU's mission and purpose, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) (2001) *Code of Practice – quality and standards in HE* - and the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) Code of Practice (2006).

Terms of Reference

- All those seeking accreditation, or working on behalf of the RCN AU are required to comply with this Code of Practice.
- If there are any changes to RCN local or national policy we reserve the right to terminate any pertinent accreditation. Every effort will be made to continue accreditation until the current period ends.

The document is presented in three parts:

1. The RCN AU's commitment to its users
2. What the RCN AU expects from the people and organisations who use its service.
3. General guidance

Part One - Our commitment to you.

The RCN AU's **mission** is: - RCN Accreditation – promoting quality

The **purpose** of the RCN Accreditation Unit is to impact on nurses, nursing and other health care professionals in developing their knowledge and skills.

RCN Accreditation adds value to an educational initiative by:

- Providing a nursing, health professionals and/or social care perspective
- It is applied to the work setting
- It is quality assured and relevant
- It provides recognised continuing professional development (cpd).

Values

The RCN Accreditation Unit is guided by a defined set of values, which characterise our relationship with clients and our responses to them. These values encompass courtesy, respect, professionalism, accountability and efficiency, clear and transparent communications, valuing of diversity and ensuring equal opportunities in our dealings.

Material submitted for accreditation must:

- fit with our mission and purpose
- fit with RCN corporate strategy, equal opportunities policy and ethical stance
- must be clearly focused on quality provision
- be patient/client and nursing/ health care focused
- be evidence-based
- avoid bias
- meet RCN AU designated standards

In our processes we endeavour to

- be responsive, open, fair, honest and accountable for our decisions
- be developmental in our approach and add value to that which is to be accredited
- be consistent in our dealings with customers
- ensure that, as far as possible, our processes ultimately add benefit to our end-users, that is patients/clients
- periodically evaluate the maintenance and development of the professional standards/competencies used for assessment
- design, approve, supervise and review our assessment strategies which underpin the processes of accreditation
- be consistent in the implementation of rigorous assessment practices which ensure that the professional standard for everything that is accredited is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that all applications are properly measured against this.
- ensure that information and guidance on accreditation is clear, accurate and consistent, and accessible to all staff, applicants and reviewers.
- require assessors/reviewers to declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with any organisation or practitioner seeking accreditation.
- ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and backed up electronically as appropriate, with due regard to confidentiality.
- ensure effective mechanisms to deal with breaches of accreditation criteria and the resolution of appeals against any decisions

All staff associated with the Accreditation Unit strive to:

- respect the rights and dignity of all persons with whom there is contact
- respect the confidentiality of all information obtained during the accreditation process
- identify and communicate areas of potential conflict of interest promptly
- refrain from using their position for financial or personal gain
- refrain from either giving or receiving gifts which may be perceived as influencing the RCN Accreditation Unit's decisions

Part Two - Your commitment to us

Signing an RCN Accreditation Unit application form for accreditation signifies acceptance of this Code of Practice. It is required that:

- i. The person or organisation seeking *accreditation* is responsible for upholding the integrity and values of the RCN Accreditation Unit.
- ii. When an organisation is seeking accreditation, the RCN AU requires a named individual to be identified as the point of contact.
- iii. Applicants seeking accreditation are responsible for ensuring good practice and must not engage in plagiarism, collusion, cheating, impersonation or using inadmissible material including that downloaded from electronic sources such as the Internet.

Part Three - General Guidance

Use of RCN Trademarks

- i. The person or organisation seeking *accreditation* must ensure that no RCN certificate, logo or report is used in a misleading manner. Please note that the initials '**RCN**', the words, '**Royal College of Nursing**', and the RCN '**hands**' logo are all registered trademarks and may not be used without written consent from the RCN Accreditation Unit.
- ii. The person or organisation seeking accreditation acknowledges RCN accreditation in its documents, brochures or advertising in compliance with the requirements of the RCN Accreditation Unit.

In the following section we have highlighted the particular clauses that apply to the work of the RCN AU, both from ABPI and the NMC's codes of professional conduct.

Advertising and product promotion

Commercial companies must be alert to the following:

When providing advice regarding any product or service relating to [his/her] professional role or area of practice, [the nurse] must be aware of the risk that, on account of [his/her] professional title or qualification, [he/she] could be perceived by the patient or client as endorsing the product.

*[The nurse] should fully explain the advantages and disadvantages of alternative products so that **the patient or client** can make an informed choice. Where [the nurse] recommends a specific product, [he/she] must ensure that [his/her] advice is based on evidence and is not for [his/her] own commercial gain. (NMC Code of professional conduct 7.3).*

The RCN AU endorses ABPI guidance that:

- *Information claims and comparisons must be accurate, balanced, fair objective and unambiguous and must be based on up-to-date evaluation of all the evidence and reflect that evidence clearly. They must not mislead either directly or by implication, by distortion exaggeration or undue emphasis. (ABPI clause 7.1)*
- *Any hospitality offered during an approved educational event/course or resource training must be secondary to the educational nature of the event and not out of proportion to the occasion (ABPI clauses 15.3, 19.1).*

The medicines, products and activities of other pharmaceutical companies must not be disparaged". "Health professionals, and the clinical and scientific opinions of health professionals must not be disparaged. (ABPI clauses 8.1, 8.2).

- *Any resource for use with **patients** (e.g. flip charts, training aids) must not bear the name of a specific product. A corporate name is acceptable. Product advertising, or undue placement, is not to be undertaken in conjunction with any approved event, course or resource. (ABPI clause 18.2).*
- *The use of competitions, quizzes and suchlike, and the giving of prizes, are unacceptable methods of promotion (ABPI clause 18.2)*

Sponsorship

- *Material relating to medicines and their uses, whether promotional in nature or not, which is sponsored by a pharmaceutical company must clearly indicate that it has been sponsored by that company (ABPI clause 9.10).*
- *When meetings are sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, that fact must be disclosed in all of the papers relating to the meetings and in any published proceedings. The declaration of sponsorship must be sufficiently prominent to ensure that readers are aware of it at the outset (ABPI clause 19.3).*
- **Any individuals sponsored by a company should make that clear on any application for accreditation.**
- **Any reviewer who acts as a subject expert or attends to evaluate events on behalf of the RCN Accreditation Unit should identify themselves to the organiser of the event, but should not use their position for personal gain.**

Copyright

Where previously published material is used and distributed as part of an event, course or resource, it is entirely the responsibility of the person or organisation seeking accreditation to comply with copyright legislation. The person or organisation must confirm in writing to the RCN Accreditation Unit that official permission to reproduce material has been received.

The RCN AU reserves the right to contact an appropriate third party (e.g employer, NMC professional conduct committee).

Diversity and Health and Safety

Persons or organisations seeking accreditation must operate policies in accordance with current relevant equal opportunities and discrimination legislation. All events, courses and resource training must be accessible to people with disabilities, and take into consideration current relevant disability discrimination legislation. All venues must meet official Health and Safety standards.

Confidentiality

All staff of the RCN AU and those acting for them, and all users or potential users of accreditation processes should treat any information or relevant documentation as confidential. It is incumbent on all participants in all aspects of accreditation to disclose where there is any interest or potential conflict of interest between themselves and any application for accreditation. All materials remain the copyright of the original provider.

Internet

Access to promotional material directed to a UK audience provided on the Internet in relation to prescription only medicines should generally be limited to restricted to health professionals and appropriate administrative staff. - If access restriction is not applied a pharmaceutical company website or a company sponsored website must provide information for the public as well as health professionals with the sections for each target audience clearly separated and the intended audience identified. (APBI clause 21.1).

The RCN AU requires that all web related materials including CD ROMs submitted for approval **should be working towards** the Priority 1 standard of the W3C Content Accessibility Guidelines. The RCN AU cannot enter into any discussions about these criteria and it is the responsibility of the organisations submitting materials for accreditation to ensure that these are met.

Data Protection

Organisations seeking accreditation must operate policies congruent with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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