

## **RCN Accreditation Unit (AU) Guidance, information and terms and conditions - February 2010**

Thank you for your interest in RCN accreditation. The purpose of RCN accreditation is to promote best practice and to contribute to public and patient safety by ensuring access to quality-assured resources that support nursing and healthcare delivery. Evaluation of accreditation has demonstrated why so many organisers from NHS Trusts and Charities, private training organisations and pharmaceutical companies are applying for RCN accreditation. By seeking RCN Accreditation you will be associating your organisation with the RCN's high standards and commitment to professional development; your event will appeal directly to nurses, other health professionals and managers who need to choose the most effective use of time and resources. Any events or courses that receive RCN Accreditation can be promoted on our website free of charge – providing access to around 400,000 members.

In this guidance document you will find information about the accreditation process, accreditation fees, completing the application form, the RCN Accreditation standards used to assess applications and our terms and conditions.

### **RCN Accreditation**

The accreditation process requires that applicants complete an application form and provide evidence as to how they meet the RCN AU standards.

### **Principles of accreditation**

The principles used to determine whether applications proceed through the accreditation process include the following:

1. Applications for accreditation are directly or indirectly relevant to nursing practice and other health care groups practising within UK legislation and working in health and social care.
2. The AU has access to relevant and appropriate independent reviewers who are able to judge applications, and there is a consensus from these reviewers as to the granting of accreditation.
3. The AU's service is not compromised because of the resource intensiveness of the topic requiring accreditation
4. The applicant has incorporated policies, professional standards and evidence relevant to the topic
5. The application does not conflict with RCN policy, professional or ethical positions or compromise any issues which are commercially sensitive

### **Applications indirectly relevant to nursing practice**

If your application is for a course, which is indirectly relevant to nursing and other health care groups (e.g. complementary/holistic therapies, counselling, hypnotherapy), you are asked to describe how your course would benefit nurses and health care professionals.

### **Accreditation by other professional bodies**

You are also asked to identify whether or not the course is accredited by other Professional Bodies (e.g. UKCP, BACP) and whether students who complete the course will be able to register with those bodies. Information should be provided to potential students about the value and use of the qualifications they may gain.

### **When applications cannot be considered for accreditation**

Applicants will be informed if the RCN is unable to consider applications for accreditation.

### **The following areas are not being considered at present for accreditation:**

- Manual handling
- Control and restraint
- The use of dermal fillers and medical aesthetics

- Applications for dissemination within the UK that do not comply with recognised UK practice and/or language style.

### **Categories and duration of accreditation**

There are two categories of application:

- **events and courses** (these include conferences, study days, workshops etc) – accreditation can be granted for either one occurrence (e.g. a one day conference), or for a year if it is intended to deliver multiple events. This can be renewed for a further two years totalling three years in all.
- **resources and e-learning** – (these include learning packs, USB sticks, DVDs e-learning packages etc) where accreditation is granted for three years

The accreditation cycle is complete after 3 years. To ensure rigour in our quality-assurance processes, we will invite you to submit a new application for accreditation to ensure that your training materials are up-to-date.

### **Renewal of accreditation**

In order to renew accreditation the following information is required:

- Events - a summary of evaluations for the previous period and information including any update in content
- Courses - a brief report containing a summary of evaluations from the past year and information about how any concerns have been addressed. This should include any update in content (e.g. due to government publications) and an overview of any changes made to ensure that the content is current and represents contemporary practice.
- Resources and e-learning – accreditation is valid for three years and does not need to be renewed. However the AU should be informed if the content of the resource changes or there are any concerns or complaints

### **The Accreditation process:**

1. Applications should be submitted for accreditation at least four weeks before an event or course is due to take place and if possible at draft stage for resources/ e-learning. Please allow up to three months when submitting large resources.
2. **Accreditation Fees - Details of fees can be found on the current fee sheet.**
  - The accreditation fee or a purchase order is due on application
  - Once work has commenced on an application the accreditation fee becomes payable. If applicants decide not to proceed with this or accreditation is refused any refund - less an administration fee - will be made at the discretion of the RCN Accreditation Unit depending on the amount of work that has been undertaken on the application.
  - Late applications are subject to a 50% surcharge.
  - Fees are not refunded once an event has taken place.
  - There is an additional charge for use of the RCN logo
  - Cheques should be made payable to The Royal College Of Nursing - or contact the RCN AU if you wish to pay by credit card or via BACS
3. Once an application is received, we will acknowledge it and allocate a unique reference number for this application.
4. Applications for accreditation are normally acknowledged by email within ten working days. If you have not received an acknowledgement within that time, please contact the Accreditation Unit.

Once applications have been acknowledged formally, you may state 'RCN accreditation has been sought' – although accreditation will not be confirmed until

applications have been through the complete review process. If we are unable to progress your application to full accreditation you will be informed, and all reference to RCN accreditation must be removed.

5. Applications are reviewed, normally by both an educational and a subject reviewer, against the accreditation standards. If the reviewers require any additional information or clarification we will contact you to request this information.
6. **Confirmation of accreditation letter**  
Once the criteria for accreditation have been demonstrated you will receive a confirmation of accreditation letter with details of our terms and conditions and fees in duplicate. We ask that you sign and return one copy to us. This letter will provide information about the statements that can be used in respect of accreditation, details of study hours and the duration of accreditation.
7. If you have paid to use the logo, a logo agreement will be sent to you once accreditation has been confirmed.
8. **Certificates** – If you have requested certificates these will be sent to you on confirmation of accreditation. It is possible to purchase the RCN certificate template if this is preferred.  
Certificates are only offered for resources that are used in a structured way, when it is clear how many hours on average it is anticipated a user will take to complete the learning.
  - Certificates contain a unique reference number for applicants to issue to participants
  - A record should be kept of certificates, including the name of the individual to whom a numbered certificate has been issued, for a minimum of one year, and be made available to the RCN AU on request for audit purposes. It is not necessary to submit this information to the RCN AU unless requested to do so.
  - Unused or spoiled certificates should be returned to the RCN Accreditation Unit as soon as possible.
9. **Study hours**  
Once full accreditation is granted, delegates are entitled to a certificate of attendance showing the number of study hours that they have completed. Study hours are estimated on the basis of 6 hours per day (3 hours per half-day).
10. **Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme Points (CATS)**  
The RCN Accreditation Unit offers professional accreditation and does not award CATS points which are awarded by Universities authorised to do so.. If delegates include a reflection on their learning within a portfolio of evidence, this can be submitted to a University/College in order to make a CATS claim via AP(E)L (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning).
11. **Promoting accredited initiatives on the RCN Website** - Once accreditation has been granted events and courses can be promoted free of charge on the Accreditation Unit web pages.
12. **RCN Audit** - the RCN AU reserves the right to send a representative to evaluate any initiative that has received accreditation or that is run in association with a resource. If this is the case the AU will arrange this with you prior to the event.

### **Completing the Application form**

There are notes and examples to guide you on the application forms. Some additional information is provided below:

### **The evidence-base (see Standard 3 in Appendix 1)**

Where appropriate applications for accreditation should contain underpinning evidence to support the application. The evidence-base should focus clearly on the topic and include robust, relevant and contemporary research. It is accepted that not all activities are underpinned with published research, and thus other types of legitimate evidence can be submitted to determine the rigour and relevance of the content of the application as appropriate.

In order to illustrate this, please provide three key references, or sources of evidence to demonstrate the evidence-base. The criteria to consider when choosing key references are:

- The scope and purpose of the research/evidence and its validity
- The rigour - i.e. the way in which the research was conducted and its reliability or the provenance of the evidence
- The conclusions it reached
- Dates of when the research was carried out
- its applicability to the application
- the independence (there is an acknowledgement of any possible conflict of interest from the applicant linked to any underpinning research)

### **Use of the RCN Trademarks**

The initials **RCN**, the words **Royal College of Nursing** and the current **RCN 'hands' logo** are all registered trademarks, and may only be used with **written consent**.

Once accreditation has been confirmed you will be informed how you can use these trademarks.

### **Promotion, marketing, advertising**

Our reviewers will consider the overall purpose of the training and may require specific information so that the boundary is clear between education (provision of information) and marketing/advertising. For example this might be the case in applications which seek to inform a selected (usually specialist) audience about the latest data in drug trials for a specific product.

- The current NMC Code of Practice states that nurses must ensure that any advice they give is evidence-based if they are suggesting healthcare products or services (NMC 2008, p4). Pharmaceutical companies are required to abide by the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) Code of Practice.
- Device and Equipment providers have a similar body, the Association of British Healthcare Industries (ABHI) and are required to work within their Code of Practice.
- Other relevant codes of practice (eg AHP/HPC) must be adhered to as appropriate.

The ABPI and ABHI Codes go into detail about sponsorship and any mention of a drug must include prescribing information (PI). These educational meetings typically include a 'scientific session' on the drug in development and a second more generic session, perhaps about clinical management in general, or communication or service development, e.g. nurse-led clinics.

### **Device training**

An area which can blur the marketing/education boundaries is device training (e.g. infusion devices, or airway management systems).

- The ABHI requires its members to provide training on their equipment, and indeed there is an educational need for all staff to use equipment safely and effectively.
- The RCN AU cannot endorse specific drugs or devices, but acknowledges that education in these areas is essential. The way forward with this is to be very clear about what is being accredited. In these instances commercial organisations may use a strapline which states - **'RCN Accreditation applies to the educational content of the resource and does not apply to any product'**

- RCN can only accredit device training where the device is already in use; i.e. the Trust or Employer is offering training to employees on the device/medical equipment already purchased.
- The existence of RCN-accredited training cannot be used as a marketing device when selling the product.

### **Assessment (see standard 30 in Appendix 1)**

If there is a assessment process contained within your learning initiative please provide details of this below. You may wish to include a **formative** assessment within your initiative as well as the **summative** assessment.

- **Formative assessment** is the process by which participants receive structured and focussed feedback on their work as a developmental opportunity, but does not contribute to the final outcome (eg pass/fail).
- **Summative assessment** is the process by which a participant's work is assessed, and the outcome of that assessment informs a mark or pass/fail award.

Please describe the assessment processes, both formative (if used) and summative, using the bullet points below as a guide. Please note that we require this information for the purposes of accreditation **in the format in which it is given to the participants, as we are evaluating the quality of your materials from a user perspective.**

For both assessment processes you should state clearly:

- The methodology used in the assessment (e.g. case study, MCQ, skills based practical)
- At what stage the assessment(s) take place, and the arrangements for the participants to receive feedback and the outcomes of the assessment;
- Detailed guidance to be given to the participants about the assessment, which should include:
  - Guidelines for the specific question
  - Behavioural elements which must be observed (e.g. competences for use of equipment)
  - The knowledge that underpins the question
  - The weighting of each part of the question if there is more than one part/element
  - For a written assessment, please state a maximum word count;
  - Examples of previous assessments; for example, this might be a question, portfolio guidance or an outline of the requirements for a skills-based assessment. This helps the candidate to prepare for the assessment task.
  - Pass/fail criteria – to include statement that any unsafe practice in a practical assessment will be deemed an automatic fail;
  - Clear information, including contact details, of where the candidate may seek learning support
  - Details of resubmission of work in the event of unsuccessful first attempt
  - Details of Appeals Procedures if these are in place
  - Any other information specific to the assessment

## **E- learning and information about the web**

### **W3C Content accessibility guidelines**

All web related materials including CD ROMs submitted for accreditation must be compliant with all 'W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines priority 1 checkpoints' (*single-A compliant*), and that they should be working towards compliance with all *priority level 2 checkpoints (AA compliant)*. This also applies even if it is just part of the application i.e. workbook, assessment etc. 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. Any instances of non-compliance with priority level 1 checkpoints should be clearly stated in all submissions to the RCN AU

### **PREP (CPD REQUIREMENTS FOR NURSES)**

The Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) post-registration education and practice (PREP) requires that when nurses re-register they must have undertaken at least five days (35 hours) of learning in the previous three years. This learning can be completed in a variety of ways as long as it maintains and develops their professional competence.

#### **Practice standard**

Nurses must also complete a minimum of 450 hours of practice during the three years prior to renewal of registration. For more information about this please read the [PREP Handbook](#) [PDF]

Details of professional development, with suitable reflective narrative, can be included in practitioners' portfolios to provide evidence of learning. There are a number of frameworks available that meet this requirement. Probably the one most widely used is by Johns\* (2006) which has been adapted for many courses.

The RCN provide a 'framework for reflection form' with accreditation certificates.

\*Johns C. (2006) Engaging reflection in practice, A narrative approach. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

#### **Disclaimer**

It should be noted that whilst the RCN Accreditation Unit has made every effort to ensure that each learning and development initiative meets its standards and criteria, it cannot be held responsible for delivery of individual training or any problems that might ensue.

## Appendix 1

### RCN AU STANDARDS

These are the standards that our reviewers assess applications against:

#### Section A – (all applications must meet these standards)

1. The application is relevant to nursing and health/social care
2. Applicants have considered equality, diversity, human rights and health and safety legislation including World-Wide Web consortium standards (W3C).
3. The evidence-base supporting the content of the application has been considered and the relevance to the application is clearly defined.
4. Products and services have been considered for UK-wide involvement (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) and development where applicable
5. Applications adhere to the RCN Code of Practice, and abide by (inter alia) the NMC Nursing and Midwifery Council code of practice (NMC 2008) and the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) code of Practice ( 2008). Association of British Healthcare Industries (ABHI) Code of practice and any other relevant Health and Social care codes of practice.
6. The target audience is clearly described with reference (if appropriate) to required professional and/or educational qualifications and practice experience.
7. There is a rationale/explanation for offering the initiative, which is relevant to nurses, nursing and other health care workers in order to enhance practice. (Attention should be paid to RCN specialist competences / Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF), NICE, SIGN etc where appropriate).
8. There is a clearly stated aim, which reflects the overall purpose of the event, course or resource.
9. Key learning outcomes for the event/course/resource are explicitly articulated in behavioural terms.
10. The planning group/steering committee has relevant professional and/or educational qualifications and clinical/work experience.
11. The relevant internal and external stakeholders, including users, have been detailed in the development of the application.
12. The application includes a programme which details key dates and/or the time required to engage in resources/e-learning.
13. Structured reflection is promoted.
14. Evaluation is undertaken (if appropriate) and informs future planning and relevant stakeholders.
15. Copyright ownership and authorship are specified and intellectual property rights are acknowledged.
16. Applicants provide a copy of any certificate they plan to issue in association with the accredited initiative.

#### Section B (In addition all events and courses must meet these standards)

17. Applications regarding large/ international conferences may provide details of the selection process for papers, posters, workshops etc.

#### For others (without scientific committees):

18. Additional learning outcomes are written for major topic areas within events and courses (if applicable)
19. An outline of content for each session is provided.
20. Content (breadth, depth and volume) is suitable for the level of the target audience (i.e. is comprehensive with no serious omissions) and is contemporaneous and supported by a referenced evidence-base and links to national guidelines where they exist
21. The content of the learning and development initiative matches the aims and learning outcomes.
22. A speaker profile is provided for each session. The presenters/contributors/ writers/facilitators are suitably qualified to contribute in their specific area.
23. Learning strategies are identified.
24. Participant guidance includes the timetable for the overall course, indicating speakers, content and any preparatory/ private study/workplace facilitation work required.

#### Section C (in addition all resources and e-learning applications must meet these standards)

25. User guidance clearly indicates how to use/work through the resource, likely time required and details of any additional resources required to use the resource effectively.

26. User guidance clearly states whether photocopies/downloads may be made for local use e.g. teaching/with patients.
27. Content (breadth, depth and volume) is suitable for the level of the target audience (i.e. is comprehensive with no serious omissions) and is contemporaneous and supported by a referenced evidence-base
28. Resource material affords the opportunity for engagement by users.

**Section D - APPLICATIONS THAT INCLUDE ASSESSMENT**

29. Participant guidance on assessment clearly states the type of assessment, the date/time of the assessment, sample questions, pass/fail criteria and any opportunity to re-submit.
30. Assessors are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake that role and are supported by relevant training/education where appropriate.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Terms and conditions - RCN Accreditation**

All applications for accreditation must adhere to the RCN AU Code of Practice, and abide by (inter alia) the Nursing and Midwifery Council Code of Practice (NMC 2008) the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries code of Practice (2008) and the Association of British Healthcare Industries (ABHI) Code of practice and any other relevant Health and Social care codes of practice..

Applications must meet current data protection legislation, equality, diversity, human rights and health and safety legislation including World-Wide Web consortium standards (W3C).

Applications must acknowledge authorship, copyright ownership and intellectual property rights.

#### **Fees**

Once an application for accreditation has been formally acknowledged and assigned an event reference number the organisation applying for accreditation is normally liable for the accreditation fee.

- The accreditation fee or a purchase order is due on application
- Once work has commenced on an application the accreditation fee becomes payable. If applicants decide not to proceed with this, or accreditation is refused, any refund - less an administration fee - will be made at the discretion of the RCN Accreditation Unit dependant on the amount of work that has been undertaken on the application.
- Late applications are subject to a 50% surcharge.
- Fees are not refunded once an event has taken place.
- There is an additional charge for use of the RCN logo

#### **Third Party Accreditation**

RCN accreditation is not transferable: Where an organisation is awarded RCN accreditation for a learning initiative and then franchises this out, the franchisee cannot state that the learning initiative is accredited. The franchisee must themselves apply for RCN accreditation.

**RCN accreditation applies to the training and not to any individual who participates in it.**

#### **Statements regarding accreditation**

1. Once accreditation has been acknowledged and an event reference number has been issued for events and courses you may state  
***Accreditation has been sought from the RCN Accreditation Unit'***
2. Once applicants have received a letter stating that their event has been accredited, and full payment has been received the following statements can be made  
For an **event/short course**: **“Accredited by the RCN Accreditation Unit”**  
For a **resource e-learning**: **“This resource has been accredited by the RCN Accreditation Unit as at month and year of accreditation**
3. To ensure adherence to the relevant professional codes of practice; particularly in relation to educational material, generic and named products, prescribing information, and non-promotional material, the following statement must be used  
**“RCN Accreditation applies only to the educational content of the resource and does not apply to any product.**

#### **Use of the RCN Logo and Trademarks**

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 AU. The RCN AU requires that applicants submit copies of all promotional material (including electronic

and digital media), which carry the RCN name. The RCN AU reserves the right to amend this to protect the RCN name.

- Once a learning and development initiative has been accredited this can be promoted by using the RCN logo providing affiliation with our internationally recognised brand.
- Once accreditation is granted we will send you a contract for use of the logo and when this has been signed, and payment received, you will be provided with the RCN accreditation logo
- There is no additional charge to use the words 'RCN' or 'Royal College of Nursing'
- RCN Certificates contain RCN trademarks and are subject to the same conditions. The person or organisation seeking **accreditation** must ensure that no RCN certificate, logo or report is used in a misleading manner.
- Once accreditation has ceased all reference to RCN accreditation must be removed from websites, literature and any other materials containing the RCN trademarks.

### **Web material - W3C Content Accessibility Guidelines**

The RCN AU requires that all web related materials including CD ROMs submitted for accreditation should be compliant with all W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines priority 1 checkpoints (single-A compliant), and that they should be working towards compliance with all priority level 2 checkpoints (AA compliant).

We can accredit e-learning but **do not accredit websites.**

### **Certificates of attendance**

Once full accreditation is granted, delegates are entitled to a **certificate of attendance** (not normally for resources). The RCN AU will issue applicants with the required number of RCN certificates for organisers to issue to participants. Each certificate contains a unique reference number. A record should be kept for a minimum of one year of certificates that are issued and the name of the delegate to whom they are issued, and this information must be made available to the RCN AU on request.

Organisers should inform delegates that they are collecting this personal data and that they will share this information with the RCN, subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. Unused or spoiled certificates should be returned to the RCN AU as soon as possible.

### **Attendance records**

Attendance records should be kept by applicants for a minimum of one year, and be made available to the RCN AU on request. Organisers should inform delegates that they are collecting this personal data and that they may share this information with the RCN, subject to the Data Protection Act. It is not necessary to submit delegate lists to the RCN AU unless requested to do so.

### **Evaluation**

The RCN AU requires that evaluation of learning and development initiatives is undertaken (if appropriate). Evaluation informs the applicants and the RCN AU of the relevance and experience of the training initiative. The RCN AU reserves the right to see evaluation forms and requires a summary of evaluations from previous periods prior to offering renewal of accreditation.

The RCN AU is committed to evaluation and asks all applicants to evaluate the accreditation service. All such feedback is collated and used to inform the accreditation process.

### **Framework for Reflection**

The RCN AU requires that all participants of accredited learning and development initiatives are provided with a framework for reflection and encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt. These are provided with the RCN certificate of attendance, can be obtained from the RCN AU or downloaded from our website.

### **RCN Audit**

The RCN AU reserves the right to send a representative to evaluate any learning and development initiative that has received accreditation or that is run in association with a resource.

### **Archiving of documentation**

The RCN AU does not have the facilities to archive applications once accreditation has been granted. Applicants are required to keep a copy of the final agreed submission including all documentation, during the accreditation period, as this may be required for audit purposes.

### **Limitation of accreditation**

The RCN AU retains the right to withdraw accreditation for learning and development initiatives at any time for one or more of the following reasons:

- Significant changes to educational content
- Significant changes to the presentation format
- Failure to disclose significant changes/additions to presenters
- Failure to disclose to us any conflict of interest on the part of the organiser, provider or speakers
- Non-adherence to the RCN Code of Practice
- Misuse of RCN certificates or any other RCN documentation
- Misuse of RCN logo

### **Complaints**

The RCN AU should be informed immediately of any complaints received about accredited learning and development initiatives and any action taken to address this.

### **RCN AU - Appeals and Complaints Procedures**

Please contact the RCN AU for a copy of the Appeals and Complaints Procedures if there is any complaint relating to the services provided by the RCN AU and actions, or lack of actions, by the RCN AU and/or its staff. Please note that the complaints procedure does **not** cover

- matters where other separate policies apply, e.g. equal opportunities.
- matters relating to the **delivery** of RCN accredited events, workshops, courses etc.
- disagreement about outcomes based on the professional judgement of any reviewer working on behalf of the RCN AU.