

Programme Rules

1. Introduction

The Consumer Trusted Accreditation programme is designed to deliver new levels of customer service and consumer confidence. The programme recognises businesses delivering to the Consumer Trusted Code of Conduct.

2. Scope

All consumer-facing businesses operating in New Zealand are eligible to apply for accreditation.

Businesses applying for accreditation must be in a position that all retail or service providers with the same names and/or branding can be included in the accreditation process.

Businesses are assessed against the Consumer Trusted Code of Conduct. The Code is based on nine key principles:

1. Customer Service – Exceptional customer service
2. Returns, Refunds and Complaints – Putting it right
3. Online Presence – Up to date and informative
4. Contracts – Fair, robust and easy to understand
5. Pricing and payment – Clear pricing and responsible payment options
6. Privacy and personal data – Safe and secure
7. Advertising and promotion – Accurate
8. Industry standards – Met or exceeded
9. Over and above the law – individual business commitment

Once accredited, businesses commit to maintaining the standards of the Consumer Trusted Code of Conduct. Ongoing compliance is monitored via a mixture of annual review, mystery shopping and feedback received via the Consumer NZ Advisory Service.

3. Assessment

The types of assessment included in the accreditation process are as follows.

3.1 Expression of Interest

Assessment starts on receipt of an Expression of Interest and includes a review of information provided by the business, information available via the Consumer NZ Advisory Service and other publically available information. Where relevant results of Consumer NZ member surveys will also be taken into account.

3.2 Initial Assessment

The business is assessed against the standards of the Consumer Trusted Code of Conduct via the following means:

- assessment at Head Offices where records are retained centrally
- onsite assessments at retail/service outlets and customer service centres as appropriate (the number of these is determined using Section 4.0 below)

3.3 On-going Assessment

Ongoing assessment is conducted by Consumer NZ to support businesses to maintain their standards and to ensure ongoing compliance with and commitment to the Consumer Trusted Code of Conduct and includes the following:

3.3.1 Mystery Shopping

Mystery shopping is undertaken throughout each 12 month accreditation period. The number of mystery shops completed is determined using Section 4 below.

3.3.2 Feedback via the Consumer NZ Advisory Service

Feedback about accredited businesses may be received through the Consumer NZ Advisory Service. Where relevant, this will be taken into consideration as part of the on-going assessment.

3.3.3 Annual Review

A review will take place annually. The review will address any changes to the business and issues raised from mystery shopping or via the CNZ Advisory Service. Where necessary, a more detailed review of specific standards will be held at the discretion of the Business Programme Standards Manager.

3.3.4 Monitoring of Breaches

Consumer NZ will monitor any breaches or investigation into a breach of consumer law or codes of practice (e.g. the Fair Trading Act 1986, the Consumer Guarantees Act 1993, Advertising Standards Authority Codes of Practice, etc.). Businesses are required to notify Consumer NZ if they become aware of an investigation into a breach as outlined in section 2.5 of the Terms and Conditions.

4. Number of Retail Outlet and Communication Centres to be assessed

4.1 Communication Centre

10% of the number of staff dealing with customer communications (a minimum of 10) will be assessed throughout an accreditation year. In the first year, half of these will be completed during initial assessment while the other half will be assessed via mystery shopping during the remainder of the year.

4.2 Multiple Retail/Service Outlets

10% of the total number of retail/service outlets (a minimum of 4) will be assessed throughout an accreditation year. In the first year, half of these will be completed during the initial assessment, while the other half will be assessed via mystery shopping during the remainder of the year.

Where managers operate and make decisions independently every location will be assessed, but this may vary on a case by case basis.

The number of communication and retail/service centre assessments is at the discretion of the Consumer Trusted Assessor.

4.5 Assessment Summary

	Communication Centre*		Retail Outlet#	
	At Initial Assessment	Throughout the Year (Mystery)	At Initial Assessment	Throughout the Year (Mystery)
First year	5%	5%	5%	5%
Ongoing		10%		10%

* Minimum of 10

Minimum of 4

5. Timeframes for Corrective Actions

The timeframes allowed to address areas Not Met for the different types of assessment are detailed below.

6.1 Initial Assessment

All standards not met must be addressed prior to the initial accreditation of the business within 3 months of the initial assessment. If not completed within 3 months another full assessment may be required.

6.2 Ongoing Assessment

As detailed in 3.3 above; ongoing assessment comprises of an annual review, mystery shopping and feedback from the Consumer NZ Advisory Service.

Any standards identified as not met during an accreditation period must be corrected within an agreed timeframe not usually exceeding 10 working days from the date of identification. If corrective timeframes are not met suspension may occur as specified in 8.1.

When 4 or more standards are identified the accredited business will have 2 working days to develop a plan to address these issues. Consumer NZ will then determine if the plan and timeframes are acceptable or whether the business' accreditation will be suspended.

Summary of timeframes for addressing standards not met.

Number	Timeframe to Correct
≤ 3	10 working days
≥ 4	2 working days to develop a plan to address

Any exceptions to the timeframes above will be on a case by case basis and at the discretion of Consumer NZ.

7. Corrective Actions Not Addressed Within Timeframes

In situations where areas identified as not met are not addressed within the agreed timeframes the businesses accreditation will be suspended. The business accreditation will remain suspended until Consumer NZ has approved any actions taken. If suspension carries on for longer than 3 months business accreditation will be terminated as specified in 8.2.

8. Suspension and Termination

Suspension and/or termination may result from any of the circumstances detailed in 8.1 and 8.2 below. In situations where business suspension or termination does occur Section 8 of the Consumer Trusted Accreditation Programme Terms and Conditions apply.

8.1 Suspension

Suspension will occur if

- corrective action timeframes are not adhered to as specified in 6.2

8.2 Termination

Termination will occur if

- any suspension carries on for longer than 3 months without prior agreement with Consumer NZ
- satisfactory information cannot be provided to resolve a suspension
- there is evidence of fraud and/or lack of trust
- there is a contractual non-compliance e.g. non-payment of accreditation assessment or license fees

9. Advice, Complaints and Disputes

Customers of Consumer Trusted Accredited Businesses have access to the Consumer NZ Advisory Service should they wish to ask for advice or discuss a complaint in regards to an accredited business.

Where an accredited business belongs to a Consumer NZ recognised disputes resolution service the role of Consumer NZ advisors is to provide advice to consumers on their rights under the CGA and/or on how to present their issue to the business. Where necessary, Consumer NZ advisors may contact the business directly to discuss the complaint on behalf of the consumer and/or advise the consumer to take the complaint/dispute to the relevant disputes resolution service should a satisfactory solution not be reached.

Where an accredited business does not belong to a Consumer NZ recognised disputes resolution service Consumer NZ will make a recommendation on the complaint/dispute which the business agrees to abide by.

10. Reporting by Consumer NZ

An assessment report will be provided within 20 working days for the initial assessment and annual reviews. These will detail the results of the assessment/review including

- areas not met
- any observations (areas that meet the standard but might be improved by modification)

Reports may also be provided for mystery shopping and feedback received via the Consumer NZ Advisory Service.

11. Period of Accreditation

The period of accreditation is in perpetuity. An annual review will be conducted every 12 months from the date of a successful initial assessment to maintain accreditation.

12. Transfer of Accreditation

In situations where there is a change in control (either management or ownership) Consumer Trusted accreditation will not automatically be transferred to the new manager/owners.

If new retail outlets or service providers are acquired by an accredited business, accreditation will not automatically apply to these businesses.

Consumer NZ must be notified prior to any change in control taking place and decisions regarding how to deal with each situation will be made on a case by case basis.

13. Fees

Assessment fees allow for a degree of non-compliance and liaison re corrective action.

However, in circumstances where it is deemed non-compliance is excessive, liaison re corrective action will be charged out separately.

Also, in situations where there is recurring non-compliance Consumer NZ reserves the right to increase the assessment sampling rate (with the costs being charged out separately), in order to regain confidence in the Consumer Trusted Business.