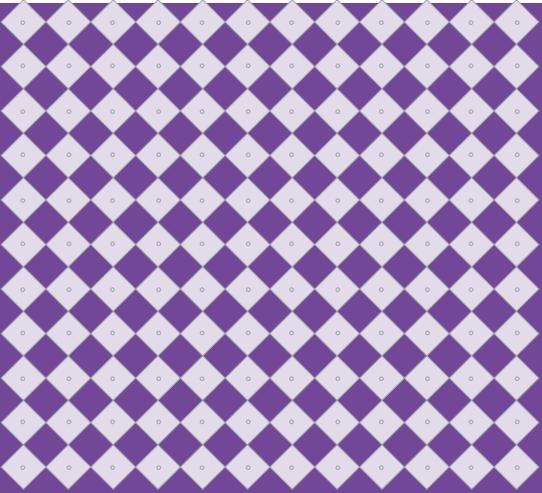
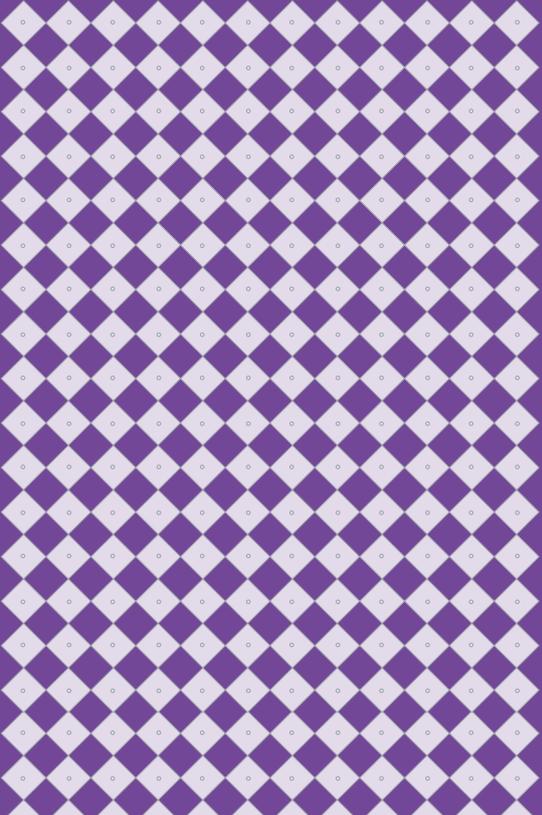


Psychotherapy and
Counselling Federation
of Australia



PACFA

Training Standards



Effective 8 October 2020

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Correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to:

PACFA CEO, email: admin@pacfa.org.au

Preface

The PACFA Training Standards (2020) provide some important updates to the PACFA Training Standards (2018).

While the 2020 changes are not substantive in terms of the requirements for counselling and psychotherapy training programs, they are important changes that make the Training Standards more inclusive of psychotherapy training and smaller training providers. The changes made in 2020 redress an imbalance in the Training Standards 2018 which emphasised counselling training and did not articulate some of core features of psychotherapy training.

The PACFA Training Standards (2018) were developed by the PACFA Professional – Standards Committee, Chaired by Professor Denis O’Hara, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, and ratified by the PACFA Board and Council. These standards are based on the previous 2014 Training Standards and developed with recognition of the need to:

1. clarify the essential learning content, levels and volume of learning, consistent with Australian Qualifications Framework, that is required for entry into the counselling and psychotherapy professions;
2. adjust learning delivery in keeping with developments in digital learning platforms and pedagogies;
3. respond to the changing social and mental health and wellness needs of the Australian community.

The counselling and psychotherapy professions draw on various theoretical and practice modalities, and consequently, these Training Standards were established to provide a minimum entry level into the professions rather than entry to specific modalities. Different training providers and modalities may well place additional requirements on students reflective of their training priorities. The minimum level of education and training for the counselling and psychotherapy professions is a Bachelor’s degree or Post Graduate Diploma with additional supervised practice experience as outlined in the following document.

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Accredited Programs

1 Australian Qualifications Framework

The PACFA Training Standards are based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) standards and levels of learning. A key principle of the AQF is volume of learning which is the “... duration of all activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified for a particular AQF qualification type” (p. 11). The requirements outlined in this document reflect the AQF recommended volume of learning for course specialisations at AQF levels 7-9.

2 “In-Training” Requirements

The Training Standards refer to “In-Training” minimum requirements for both academic content, skill development, and supervised practice. The requirements for admission to PACFA registration are additional requirements over and above those necessary to complete a PACFA-accredited program and therefore are identified separately from the “In-Training” requirements (see Appendix 3).

3 Discipline Specific Education and Training

3.1 Training

Education and training in counselling and psychotherapy must be undertaken in a qualification approved by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) or the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) at either the undergraduate or postgraduate levels (AQF level 7 to 9). The minimum volume of learning requirements listed below apply to any program, whether undergraduate or postgraduate. Training must be completed over a minimum period of two years.

400 hours of learning (minimum) (at AQF level 7-9). This may be made up of:

- i. 200 hours direct person-to-person learning of which 60 hours may be synchronous online e.g., interactive webinars.
 - This equates to 140 hours which must be solely taught face-to-face plus 60 hours of synchronous training
 - The central focus of this person-to-person instruction is on interpersonal and/or psychotherapeutic skills development
- ii. 200 hours of learning may be conducted via online asynchronous training for theory-based studies.

3.2 Client Contact

- i. A minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face counselling or psychotherapy practice (client contact) with 10 hours of supervision (related to client contact) within or in tandem with training must be completed and assessed as successful by the training provider. Successful completion of supervised practice is required to be evidenced by a log signed by the responsible supervisor(s).
- ii. Details of the client work must be included in a professional log which the student maintains and presents at assessment as evidence of competence to practice. (Client confidentiality must be maintained in the log).
- iii. In addition to the 40 hours of client contact, students generally undertake other activities that may include writing case notes, attending staff meetings, and debriefings.
- iv. If more than the minimum of 40 hours of supervised client contact is completed during course, any additional client contact hours over and above the minimum requirements may be completed via synchronous video conferencing or telephone hours.
- v. Client contact generally includes other activities in addition to the 40 hours of face-to-face supervised client contact (e.g., writing case notes, attending staff meetings, counselling observations, and administration).

4 Admission

4.1 Principles

- i. Prospective students need to demonstrate the presence of some fundamental human capacities as a pre-requisite for acceptance into counselling and/or psychotherapy programs. Accepted methods for assessing these capacities are interviews, questionnaires, and references from employers, past academic staff, etc.
- ii. Prospective students need to have demonstrated self-awareness and a relational capacity, including the capacity to relate in a facilitative way with others and to reflect on and examine the impact of these actions.
- iii. Prospective students need to demonstrate a capacity to understand and practice ethical behaviour and be prepared to follow the PACFA Code of Ethics as an integrated requirement of the program.
- iv. The above qualities presume a certain level of mature life experience on the part of the applicant as shown by the capacity to reflect on and learn from experience, including being open to positive and challenging feedback.
- v. Applicants must be aware that they will need to be available to participate in a planned and structured client contact setting (placement) in person with clients face-to-face.

4.2 Process

- i. The process of selection should be non-discriminatory on the grounds of gender, class, cultural background, sexual identity, religion, disability or beliefs.
- ii. Academic Credit for admission to a counselling or psychotherapy training program may be awarded as long as it meets the following requirements:
 - No academic credit is allowed for the client contact and clinical supervision requirements which takes place during training.
 - When academic credit is awarded, the total length of the training, including the academic credit, must meet the minimum requirements of the Training Standards in terms of the length of the training.
- iii. Admission to a counselling or psychotherapy training program may be granted on the grounds of advanced standing equivalent to the requisite academic entry requirements of the training institution.

5 Learning and Teaching

5.1 Philosophy of Training

Each training program should make a clear statement of the philosophy of training underpinning the course and give evidence that respective program structures meet the current PACFA Training Standards.

5.2 Core Curriculum

i. Subject Knowledge

Graduates should have a range of knowledge related to:

- Program Philosophy
- Human development
- Counselling & Psychotherapy theories
- Ethics and law
- Different conceptualizations of mental health
- Mental health conditions
- Cultural and social diversity
- The functioning of groups and organisations
- Research design

ii. Skills

Graduates should have a range of skills related to:

- Relationship building and attunement
- Communication
- Assessment (including mental health and suicide risk assessment)
- Case formulation
- Psychotherapeutic strategies and interventions
- Reflective practice
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Research

iii. Application of Knowledge and Skills

Graduates should be able to apply knowledge and skills to:

- Personal and professional development
- An integration of theory and practice
- Reflection on the nature of the therapeutic process
- Alternative modes of working with clients, including via video conference and telephone
- Interpretation and application of research

6 Assessment

6.1 Trainers should provide transparency and accountability in their assessment processes.

6.2 Assessment Processes

Trainees should demonstrate not only knowledge of the model-specific theory but also an ability to apply this theory in competent clinical practice.

Assessments must include:

- demonstration of knowledge of theory for example through written assignments, examinations, oral presentations, case studies and contribution to class discussion; and
- clinical skills via methods such as live supervision, recorded interviews (audio or audiovisual) and rigorous frequent one-to-one supervision.

6.3 Assessment Feedback

Trainees should receive timely, relevant and detailed feedback on all assessment tasks.

7 Personal and Professional Development

As counselling and psychotherapy prioritise the importance of “therapist factors” in particular, the use of self in therapy, importance is placed on personal and professional development within the training program.

7.1 Trainees must have completed a component of self-awareness as part of their training. This must be a minimum of 20 hours duration and may include individual or family therapy, group therapy or self-awareness experiences.

7.2 An understanding of how one may use one’s self in the therapeutic relationship should be integrated within the training program according to the particular modality. In addition, trainees are encouraged to have experiences as a client in a modality compatible to the one in which they are training.

7.3 Where a trainee has need of psychotherapy/counselling, it should be encouraged as a way of deepening personal congruence and self-awareness. It should be sought in a way which does not disadvantage either the psychotherapy/counselling itself or the trainee’s participation in the training program. It is understood that psychotherapy trainees will be engaged in their own psychotherapy.

8 Staffing

8.1 Any training program in psychotherapy/counselling involves educators with varying levels of qualifications and experience. Besides those who have primary responsibility for the training program, other educators with less or different training may enrich the learning environment with particular contributions. These contributions may be from a graduate trainee who has a particular role with the students, or a trainer who is working towards full faculty membership, or from visiting consultants.

8.2 The number of staff required to resource the teaching and learning within a program will vary depending on the size and structure of course. However, it is a requirement that the course is adequately resourced with a minimum of two appropriately trained staff dedicated to the program for programs with small student cohorts. Courses in university and RTO settings need to be resourced by a sufficient combination of full-time and sessional staff and must, no matter their size, have at least one staff member at the level of Senior Lecturer or equivalent. The range of qualifications and experience of academic staff should reflect the needs of the program.

8.3 The following guidelines apply directly to those who have the primary responsibility for a training program, in particular to the course coordinator. It is the responsibility of the course coordinator, in conjunction with the other faculty members, to monitor the standards of those additional training staff identified above.

8.4 Course Coordinators

- i. Course coordinators must have qualifications in psychotherapy/counselling or a related discipline at least one level higher than the training being conducted by them. Course coordinators must be psychotherapists/counsellors or professionals from a related discipline of at least five years' experience who are eligible for clinical or full membership of the professional body relevant to their qualification.
- ii. Course coordinators must be concurrently engaged in practice in psychotherapy/counselling relevant to the course they are teaching or have had extensive clinical experience sufficient for their role.
- iii. Course coordinators must demonstrate competence in facilitating adult learning, with some training or equivalent work experience in in-training delivery.
- iv. Course coordinators must be willing to disclose to trainees their own training experience, philosophy of training and theoretical preferences.
- v. Course coordinators must be conscious of their own ongoing professional development and give evidence of such development when required.
- vi. Course coordinators must not be in breach of professional ethical practice and should make sure that the same principle applies to trainees.
- vii. Course coordinators must not discriminate between trainees on the basis of gender, class, cultural background, sexual identity, religion, or any disability or belief that does not directly interfere with the competent fulfilment of their training role.
- viii. Course coordinators must make sure that all courses are assessed by the participants, and that the feedback is made known to the director and the appropriate trainers.

9 Clinical Supervision

9.1 Supervision is a formal, collaborative process between supervisor and supervisee, which monitors, develops and supports supervisees in their clinical role. Supervision is an essential component of any training program.

9.2 Supervisors must play more than an administrative role during supervision and seek evidence of supervisee's clinical competence.

9.3 Methods of supervision: Supervision may be conducted in either one-to-one or small group settings.

9.4 Supervision group size. Groups should not normally be larger than six participants. Although 6 participants are deemed the maximum size for optimal supervision learning, in training circumstances the first 20 hours can be conducted within a group of up to 12 members. All subsequent hours must be conducted in groups of no more than 6. In groups of more than 12 members, no hours will be counted towards supervision.

9.5 Modes of supervision presentation. These may include live interviews, audio or audiovisual recordings, formal case presentations, process and/or case notes. Client consent should be sought as a precondition for recorded or live interviews.

9.6 Supervision should include a clear supervisory contract with an approved supervisor.

9.7 The level of supervision should be appropriate to the level of complexity of the course being offered. [See Appendix 2 for definition of terms relating to Clinical Supervision]

9.8 As supervision presumes a level of competence beyond the most basic, supervisors must have been or been eligible to be clinical members of a relevant professional association for at least 3 years. Where supervisors do not meet this requirement, they must currently hold the required membership and must have been eligible to be clinical members of a relevant professional association for at least 3 years, i.e. they have a minimum total of 5 years clinical experience. Supervisors are expected to meet the PACFA Supervision Training Standards.

APPENDIX 1

Definition of Terms Relating to Client Contact

Client

The term client is used in the context of the PACFA Professional Training Standards to refer to either client or patient. A client may be an individual, a couple, a family or a group in the context of psychotherapy and /counselling provision.

Client Contact

Client contact, for the purposes of PACFA's Professional Training Standards, involves a range of experiences of the trainee working directly with clients (as defined above) where if possible and appropriate there are no dual relationships between the client and trainee.

Client contact hours, first and foremost, comprise face-to-face, in the same room or place, contact with the client. This may include up to 50% of the first 40 client contact hours being co-therapy where a student is providing group therapy. After the initial 40 face-to-face client hours, other methods of client contact such as telephone counselling, online counselling using web technology such as Skype, or additional co-therapy are allowable.

The following items are not part of client contact hours for the purposes of the Training Standards: Case presentation, supervision, reflective teams, note taking, role plays, practice sessions and client observation. These components are regarded as preparation for client work within the training context.

Co-therapy

Co-therapy involves a trainee working with a trainer or qualified practitioner or another trainee in a dual capacity to provide psychotherapy or counselling at the same time with the same client or client group. For the purposes of the Training Standards, co-therapy only counts towards the required 40 client contact hours when provided by trainees and not when it is also provided by a trainer or qualified practitioner.

APPENDIX 2

Definition of Terms Relating to Supervision

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is a contractual, collaborative process which monitors, develops and supports supervisees in their clinical role. Clinical supervision can be undertaken as Individual Supervision and Group Supervision (see definitions below).

In clinical supervision, the central focus is on both the optimum outcome for the client and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.

The process of clinical supervision is seen to encompass a number of significant components, including a formal agreement between the supervisor and supervisee.

It is an opportunity for supervisees to present relevant material regarding their clinical practice via case discussion, recordings of client sessions, role plays, etc., allowing a space for reflective review by the supervisee and feedback by the supervisor. The supervisory relationship and process of supervision should be congruent with the developmental needs of the supervisee.

Individual Supervision

Individual supervision refers to clinical supervision undertaken by an individual supervisee with a designated supervisor.

Group Supervision

Group supervision is facilitated by a designated supervisor who simultaneously provides supervision and facilitates the group supervision process. Group supervision can be comprised of two to six supervisee members.

An exception to this recommended optimal group size exists for training situations where a proportion of group supervision provided in groups of between seven and 12 trainee members will count towards meeting PACFA Professional Training Standards supervision requirements (see 9.4).

Supervisor

A supervisor is a practitioner with a minimum of five years clinical experience who has supervision competencies which are equivalent to the requirements of the PACFA Supervision Training Standards. The supervisor is generally seen to have more experience than the supervisee with regard to professional seniority, skill development and possibly within a particular specialty.

Group Supervisor

A group supervisor who facilitates a group of supervisees, has developed specific skills to conduct the group process and to manage any group dynamics that arise. Group facilitation skills are needed in addition to the requirements for supervisors.

APPENDIX 3

PACFA Membership / Registration Requirements

Membership/Registration Requirements

Entry requirements to PACFA Membership or listing on the PACFA Register may be additional to the Training Standards.

Provisional Membership or Registration

i) Accredited Training Pathway

Applicants must have completed an AQF (7-9) qualification of 400 hours of person-to-person counselling and/or psychotherapy training incorporating a minimum of 200 hours of direct instruction including a supervised practice placement which includes a minimum of 40 hours of client contact with 10 hours of related clinical supervision within the training program.

The full details of the Accredited Training Pathways are covered by these Training Standards.

ii) Equivalent Training Pathway

The requirements for the Equivalent training Pathway are the same as the requirements above, except that the training program is not accredited by TEQSA, ASQA or PACFA. Applicants under this Pathway can demonstrate completion of training that is equivalent to PACFA Training Standards. As the program is not accredited by PACFA, the program must be assessed by PACFA against the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards in terms of curriculum, volume of learning and supervised practice requirements.

Applicants who may apply under this Pathway may include but are not limited to:

- Graduates of psychotherapy training programs, whose training is assessed by PACFA as equivalent to the PACFA Training Standards and also assessed by the College of Psychotherapy as meeting the Entry Requirements for the College of Psychotherapy; (to meet the College of Psychotherapy's Entry Requirements, applicants are expected to demonstrate their formation as a psychotherapist through their training, supervised practice and personal therapy);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practitioners, whose training is assessed by PACFA's College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices (CATSIHP) as having training or formation as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practitioner that is equivalent to PACFA Training Standards; and
- Graduates of counselling training programs, whose training is assessed by PACFA as being equivalent to the PACFA Training Standards.

iii) Recognition of Prior Learning

Where an applicant's professional training, supervision and development do not fit the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards or equivalent, they may apply to PACFA for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for Provisional or Clinical membership or registration.

Applicants who may apply via RPL may include but are not limited to:

- Psychotherapists or counsellors whose training in psychotherapy or counselling does not meet all of the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards but who have other relevant training and/or substantial, relevant supervised practice experience, as assessed by the College of Psychotherapy;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing practitioners whose training as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Healing Practitioner does not meet all of the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards but who have other relevant training and/or substantial, relevant supervised practice experience, as assessed by the College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices (CATSIHP); and
- Graduates from cognate fields (psychology, social work or occupational therapy) whose training is accredited by TEQSA or ASQA at AQF level 7 to 9 and who complete additional training in psychotherapy or counselling that does not meet all of the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards but who have other relevant training and/or substantial, relevant supervised practice experience.

RPL applicants must demonstrate how the totality of their training and experience is equivalent to the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards. Refer to the Guidelines for RPL Applications for more details of the evidence required to demonstrate equivalence.

Clinical Membership or Registration

In addition to the requirements for Provisional membership or registration as detailed above, applicants for Clinical membership or registration must have completed 750 hours of client contact post training and 75 hours of clinical supervision over a minimum of 2 years. Hours of supervised client contact that are completed post-training may be undertaken via synchronous video conferencing or telephone.

References

Australian Qualifications Framework Council, Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013.