

Australian College of Relationship Counsellors

Membership Requirements

1. Provisional Member

Provisional Members of the College have completed the training required in the PACFA Training Standards and must have met the College Training Standards and are practising under supervision..

To be eligible for Provisional Membership of the College, your qualifications must meet -

- i) The PACFA Training Standards; and
- ii) The requirements for Provisional registration with PACFA including at least 40 hours of client contact linked to 10 hours of supervision; and
- iii) The College's Training Standards: At least 100 hours of specialised relationship counselling as outlined in the College's Training Standards which may be included in training completed for Part (i) (above) or in post-training specialised relationship counselling course(s).

2. Clinical Member

Clinical Members have completed the training required in the PACFA Training Standards and have met the College Training Standards including the supervised practice requirements for Provisional membership and have completed an additional 750 post-qualifying hours practice of which at least 500 hours needs to be supervised couple and/or family face-to-face relationship counselling. In addition Clinical Members must have completed 75 hours of post-qualifying supervision of which 50 hours needs to be one to one supervision as described in the Supervision Standards document on the College website.

To be eligible for Clinical Membership of the College, your qualifications must meet -

- i) The PACFA Training Standards; and
- ii) The requirements for Clinical registration with PACFA including the 200 client hours and 50 hours of supervision required for Provisional Registration plus at least 750 hours of post-qualifying client contact hours linked to 75 hours of post-qualifying supervision; and
- iii) The College's Training Standards: At least 100 hours of specialised relationship counselling as out-lined in our training requirements which may be included in Part 1 (above) or in post-training specialised relationship counselling course(s).
 - Practice: At least 500 hours of the 750 post-qualifying client contact hours in Part 1 needs to be supervised couple and/or family face to face relationship counselling.
 - Supervision: At least 50 hours of the 75 hours of post-training supervision must be one to one supervision as outlined in our supervision.

3. Affiliate Member

Affiliate Membership enables retired, non-practicing members to retain a connection with the relationship counselling field and the opportunity to share knowledge and wisdom accumulated over the course of their careers. Affiliate membership provides a valuable opportunity to network with like-minded professionals and to contribute opinions, ideas and actively participate within the College.

Affiliate members of the College may also be:

- People with an interest in relationship counselling
- People whose training does not meet the PACFA or College Training Standards but who use counselling skills in client support roles
- People who have undertaken preliminary training in counselling or psychotherapy and who are interested in Affiliate membership as a pathway to further training in relationship counselling
- Retired College or AARC, members who want to maintain contact with the profession.

Affiliate members are non-practising Members of the College.

4. Student Member

Student Membership of the College is for students who are undertaking training in relationship counselling. Applicants are required to provide:

- i) Evidence of current enrolment (place of study, name of course, hours of academic training, etc.) in a course that meets the requirements of the College's Training Standards; and
- ii) A declaration certifying that they do not see clients in any capacity, except as part of their formal training.

Student membership of the College is renewed annually. Student membership is reviewed after 5 years.

5. Life Member

Life membership is an honorary membership category that may be offered to members on retirement who have made an outstanding contribution to relationship counselling in Australia.

Membership is by nomination in writing to the Leadership Group of the College and the PACFA Board.

Training Guidelines

Applicants for practising membership of the College need to have completed specialised training in relationship counselling. This should be a comprehensive training program in relationship counselling, rather than a series of professional development courses.

The College does not accredit training. Each applicant is considered fully on his or her own merits and their individual training path assessed. No one training programme can offer, or in any way advertise, that it leads to College membership.

The Applicant's relationship counselling training should enable development in the following areas:

1. Personal Awareness

The most effective tool the counsellor has is his or her own sense of self. The greater the level of self and other awareness the counsellor has, the greater will be the capacity to respond to the client(s) and to choose appropriate tools for creative intervention.

Training programmes need to emphasise moment by moment awareness of the counsellor's self in relationship and the counsellor's ability to articulate this awareness.

This involves the ability to:

- Recognise the uniqueness and experience of oneself and that of others;

- Communicate one's awareness of one's self and others to other human beings;
- Monitor events in one's own life, to make decisions for the future and to recognise this same ability in others.

2. Counselling Skills

Applicants need to be competent in a wide range of counselling skills including the ability: to make initial contact with clients; to develop rapport; to demonstrate high levels of empathy, flexibility, and the creative use of questions; to use confrontation and challenge; to facilitate communication between the couple, and to use skills within a framework of demonstrated neutrality.

The specialist training in relationship counselling must include the development of:

- A deeper level of core relationship counselling skills, including
- The ability to recognise the complexity of patterns in relationship issues and to work with these to produce change.

3. Theoretical Knowledge

Applicants need to have a theoretical understanding of human behaviour and the tools being used in the counselling room. In relationship counselling this includes knowledge of the social, legal, and ethical factors that influence relational life. Specifically, training should cover the following:

- 3.1 Individual developmental theory as it impacts on family relationships.
- 3.2 A set of theoretical models for understanding relationships, and developing a therapeutic perspective for relationship counselling. These models must allow for an appreciation of both individual, couple, family, and societal factors in relationship work e.g. systemic, behavioural, existential, humanist, somatic, psychodynamic, etc.
- 3.3 A socio-historical understanding of relationship in our society.
- 3.4 Knowledge of the counselling process plus a basic understanding of the various schools of counselling.
- 3.5 Theoretical and therapeutic models for approaching common specific relational problems e.g.:
 - i) Sexuality and sexual counselling;
 - ii) Alcohol and drug dependence;
 - iii) Psychiatric and/or physical illness in one spouse, including the role of depression in a relationship e.g. post-natal depression;
 - iv) Domestic violence, including physical and sexual abuse of spouse or children and associated legal issues;
 - v) Extra-marital and other triadic relationships;
 - vi) Developmental stages of family life and the key conflict and transition points, e.g. birth, adolescence, midlife, moving house;
 - vii) Grief and loss e.g. death, disability and effects of trauma;
 - viii) Potential relationship outcomes of long term abuse of either spouse in childhood whether sexual or otherwise.
 - xiv) Issues relating to same sex relationships and awareness of gender and other diversity in relationships

3.6 A theoretical and basic legal framework for understanding separation and divorce; associated aspects of grief and loss; issues of single lifestyle, parenting, re-partnering and step parenting.

3.7 A knowledge of professional ethics as it relates to counselling in general and the specific ethical issues of couple counselling.

3.8 Introduction to supervision, professional consultation, personal psychotherapy and on-going counsellor survival and growth.

3.9 How and when to make appropriate referrals.

4. Clinical Competence of Relationship Counsellors

The purpose of this section of the Training Guidelines is to indicate criteria for assessing a counsellor's ability to perform adequately as a relationship counsellor. The College defines relationship counselling as *counselling in which the focus is on the relationship between the clients*. Counsellors must adhere to these standards in addition to maintaining their professional growth and development.

4.1 A clinically competent counsellor is recognised by professional peers, appropriate authorities and satisfied clients and demonstrates the ability to:

- Form and maintain a therapeutic relationship
- Produce results i.e. be dependable in the assistance given and in helping clients find solutions to presenting problems
- Give appropriate reasons for counselling behaviour

4.2 Clinically competent counsellors can demonstrate creatively:

- Understanding of persons and their relationships
- An explicit knowledge of theory
- Use of personal characteristics such as intelligence, impartiality, flexibility, empathy, integrity, and openness to learning

4.3 In the process of counselling the clinically competent counsellor will:

- Respect and facilitate a partnership between counsellor and clients
- Comprehend the clients' presenting problems
- Incorporate the presenting problem and relationship difficulties within a therapeutic framework
- Recognise the limits of his/her professional competence and refer clients when appropriate
- Contract with the clients for particular and achievable goals
- Formulate methods or strategies to reach these goals
- Self-disclose and challenge appropriately
- Initiate, facilitate and monitor the process(es) required
- Modify goals and process(es) as appropriate
- Carry the process(es) through to conclusion
- Give a critical account of his/her behaviour to others including actively seeking ongoing supervision

4.4 A clinically competent counsellor will undertake ongoing professional development and supervision.