



IACP's response to Covid19 pandemic – Academic year 2021/2022

Board decision from October 2021:

The Board agreed to extend the current flexible arrangements for students and course providers in line with IACP guidelines issued in August 2020 and to review the situation again in January 2022.

Guidelines issued in August 2020:

The IACP is aware that the situation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic is having a detrimental impact on our education, training providers and students.

In recognition of the urgency of the situation and in order to adhere to the public health measures, in March 2020 the IACP issued guidance on its website in relation to contingency planning around course delivery and continuity of the placement work for students during Covid19 outbreak. IACP stated that it is at the course provider's discretion to organise alternative temporary arrangements for course provision and client work if necessary.

Regarding the clinical placement, IACP decided that it is the course provider's responsibility and at their discretion to see if it is in the best interest of the client to continue sessions by temporary remote arrangements, subject to the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice and the IACP guidelines on working remotely.

(<https://iacp.ie/onlinecounselling>).

Academic year 2020/ 2021:

Based on the publication of Return to Work Safely Protocol on reopening and also following the publication by the Department of Education and Skills: Practical Guidance for Further and Higher Education for Returning to On-site Activity in 2020, the IACP approves a blended approach for the Counselling and Psychotherapy programmes for the academic year 2020-2021, which should be in line with the governmental publications but also taking into account a necessary redesign of the course content meeting below conditions:

1. The redesign must take into account all the learning aims, as well as the proposed learning outcomes, and demonstrate how these would be achieved. The redesign has to include any anticipated difficulties or barriers.
2. Where it is not possible to achieve learning outcomes remotely, additional contingency plans must be put forward for when and how they may be achieved.
3. The redesign is required to show ongoing consideration of safety, ethical and legal requirements of remote pedagogical methods for the video communication platforms used, as well as the trainers and students who use them.
4. The redesign should aim at as many hours of class contact as possible to be completed within the classroom setting (skills training must be delivered in the classroom setting where possible / safe to do so), but as it is difficult to predict at this point what proportion of hours will be possible to be delivered within the classroom, IACP does not set a minimum percentage of hours to be delivered in the classroom vs hours delivered online. Where it is not possible to deliver classes in a physical settings, colleges must outline how they intend to safely and robustly conduct skills classes and meet learning outcomes, including a plan for physical provision of this work where it is safe to do so.

Client work, personal therapy and supervision

While IACP is making allowances for remote contact counting towards qualifying hours, including client work, personal therapy and supervision during the academic year 2020/ 2021, it is up to the individual training institution as to whether they feel this aligns with their protocols and standards. If the Course Provider decides to allow the students to conduct such practice remotely, the IACP Code of Ethics, and Guidelines and Criteria for online work must be followed:

<https://iacp.ie/onlinecounselling>

Please note that both remote and face-to-face client work refers here to counselling/psychotherapy relationships with individual clients over 18 years of age.

Online Training Module

If remote counselling is approved by a course provider at any stage of the training, the IACP requests that the course must include a module or specific training on working remotely. This should be in advance of the student's clinical placement. Such additional training would not be seen as a qualification but may be recognised as contributing to a qualification and an additional support for students to assist them in adapting to the challenges and changes in relation to client practice hours during the current Covid19 pandemic.

Useful links:

Practical Guidance for Further and Higher Education for Returning to On-site Activity in 2020
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a7d05-practical-guidance-for-further-and-higher-education-for-returning-to-on-site-activity-in-2020/>

To be reviewed in January 2022.