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CRITERIA  
for  
**Counselling/Psychotherapy Courses**  
seeking  
**IACP Course Accreditation**

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of counselling and psychotherapy in Ireland to date, together with the increasing demand for competent and appropriately qualified practitioners, places a heavy burden of responsibility on those involved in the initial training of practitioners.

The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - IACP has considered it appropriate to develop criteria for Core Training Courses of two or more years' duration, full or part-time.

The criteria are intended to preserve and enhance independence and diversity of approach while ensuring a common focus on those core elements in training which are considered to be fundamental.

It is hoped that the opportunity to acquire 'Accredited' status will encourage the staff of training courses to monitor and develop their performance in ways which are creative and which will lead to an enhancement of the quality of training on offer.

Satisfactory completion of an Accredited Course automatically meets the training/educational requirements for IACP Individual Accreditation as a counsellor/psychotherapist (other conditions apply).

It is the Association's intention to afford accreditation for a 6 year period to those courses which make an application for accreditation and which conform to these criteria and which demonstrate to a designated team that the course provides an appropriate and thorough training. In addition, on accreditation the organisation must guarantee that the course will maintain the agreed format for the 6 year duration of accreditation in terms of standards, numbers, staff, core philosophy and design.

It follows, therefore, that for a course to be successful in its application for accreditation; it must satisfy and adhere to the criteria which are presented in detail in this document. The criteria are related to the requirements laid down by the Association for the accreditation of individual practitioners.

Course accreditation attaches itself to specific courses rather than institutions. If an institution runs two or more courses which it wishes to enter for accreditation then separate applications are required. A course consists of a registration of a maximum of 30 students in any given year, whom undergo a full training, with specified core trainers in a specified location.

In certain defined circumstances where Accredited Prior Certified Learning (APCL) may apply - please see Appendix A.

Courses which have completed the accreditation process and have received confirmation of their accredited status may include the words 'IACP Accredited Course' on their publicity material. Course Providers engaged in training should not include in their publicity material any statement of the fact that they intend to apply or that they have applied for accreditation. The IACP recognises the importance of the institution in delivering the course. The courses are non-transferable. The IACP reserves the right to take into account the ethos of an institution as a sole or other factor in refusing accreditation.

## PART ONE

### 1 REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE ACCREDITATION

- 11 All students on IACP accredited courses are welcome to be Student Members of the IACP.
- 12 Applications for accreditation will be welcomed from training courses which are a minimum of NFQ Level 8 (or international equivalent) and minimum of 4 years full or part time in duration, and not less than 500 hours of student contact. The course must be awarded not less than 180 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits for a Level 8 degree and not less than 120 credits for a Level 9 qualification.
- 13 An Accredited Course must provide an appropriate mix of theoretical matter, personal development, skills, and supervised client work, consistent with the core theoretical model. These elements may overlap to some degree within the course.
- 14 The core theoretical model must be reflected not just in theory, personal development, skills and practice of the students, but also in the way the course is structured, assessed, taught and administered.
- 15 On application, any information, leaflets, brochures, advertisements, etc. supplied to the public must be made available to the IACP, plus any other information deemed relevant by the IACP.
- 16 Course providers must have professional indemnity insurance cover for themselves and their students.
- 17 The course should have an external examiner. The External Examiner is normally appointed by the Institution or Organisation that runs the course. Although the course staff may nominate an External Examiner, the External Examiner remains directly accountable to the Institution and not to the course itself.
- The External Examiner must be appropriately qualified and have some experience of external examining or comparable experience in assessing trainee counsellor/psychotherapists. The most important condition for the appointment of an External Examiner is that he or she has no current association with the Institute or the course, or any current personal or business relationship with any of the course staff or trainees. The External Examiner needs to be seen as independent and unbiased.
- 18 There must be a clear written complaints procedure available to students, staff, clients, training placements and IACP. The Course Provider has ultimate responsibility for clients seen by their students and must have a clear written complaints procedure.
- 19 Courses are subject to the IACP's Code of Ethics and Practice.
- 110 The Course Board/Board of Management/Board of Directors must be familiar with, and accepting of, the IACP Course Accreditation Criteria and are responsible for the adherence to the agreed accreditation conditions for their course.
- 111 All Courses must have written Policies and Procedures in place, with particular emphasis on a Duty of Care towards students and their clients, in the event of their course "Ceasing to Trade."
- 112 Courses are required to provide a statement from an independent auditor that they are financially sound and viable, plus the following documents
- Tax Clearance Certificate (Annually)
  - Memorandums and Articles
  - Succession Policy
- 113 The ethos and environment of the course provider must, in the view of the IACP, be compatible with the ethos promoted by the IACP.

## 2. ADMISSION

- 2.1 At intake it is required that a minimum of 12 students be admitted in any one course cohort.  
Exception: Where a programme is being delivered in mixed year cohorts, the IACP will consider applications on a case by case basis. A coherent Educational Rationale consistent with a Theoretical Model being taught must be provided in each case.
- 2.2 At intake it is required that not more than 30 students be admitted in any one course cohort with a ratio of 1 Core Staff Member to 10 students (see also 3.2 RE core trainers).
- 2.3 Selection procedures should be designed to obtain evidence of the following:
- Self-Awareness, maturity and stability
  - Ability to make use of and reflect upon life experience
  - Capacity to cope with the emotional demands of the course
  - Capacity to cope with the academic demands of the course
  - Experience in personal development/group work, counselling/psychotherapy skills and theory
  - Potential to form a client/counsellor/psychotherapist relationship
  - Ability to self-evaluate and give and receive constructive feedback
  - Potential for further development of the above
  - Awareness of the nature of prejudice and oppression
- 2.4 Evidence for required attributes as listed above should be clearly defined.
- 2.5 Prospective applicants should be provided with detailed and accurate information about the course, including its structure, aims, staffing, content, assessment requirements, fees (including any 'extras' e.g. supervision/ personal therapy fees) and conditions of participation (e.g. time commitments). It is required that selected applicants are interviewed.
- 2.6 The procedure for selection should be clearly explained and be consistent with the course rationale, design and methodology.
- 2.7 Applicants for the course must make detailed written applications and provide a minimum of two professional referees.
- 2.8 Selectors should seek evidence that an applicant's primary need is not for personal therapy or emotional support.
- 2.9 A panel of at least three with at least two core staff members plus other appropriately qualified persons should be directly involved in the selection process. The interview should be conducted by two members of this selection panel.
- 2.10 IACP acknowledges the possibility of courses taking into account APCL in their selection process. Please see Appendix A in this regard.

## 3 STAFF

Course Providers are accountable for the work of all staff.

- 3.1 Course staff shall mean all trainers and internal group supervisors.
- 3.2 Core staff members are members of course staff who have ultimate responsibility for the quality of the course and for the experience and wellbeing of students and their clients. Core staff members are responsible for regular liaison with all course staff, visiting lecturers and external supervisors. Core staff members have direct involvement in admission, course management, decision making, supervision, placement, assessment as well as delivery of theory, skills training and personal development.
- 3.3. There must be at least two staff team members nominated as CORE STAFF for each year of the training of any course cohort (up to a maximum of 20 students). A third core staff member is required for any additional students up to the maximum of 30 students. Core Staff members must have at least 30% class contact hours and have central involvement in their progression. The definition of a course cohort is a group of up to the maximum of 30 who start their training in the same year.

- 3.4 The two/three core staff members must
- have a central involvement in the progression of the students throughout the year
  - have a central involvement in oversight of the year programme
  - have a central involvement in the experiential elements of the year programme and liaise with the course director
  - have a central involvement in provision of support available for the students

The experiential elements of the course comprise

- Skills content
- Personal development content
- Personal awareness groups / group process

- 3.5 The IACP must be immediately informed of any change of core staff members.

- 3.6 Core Trainers must be Accredited Members of IACP and appropriately qualified to teach and supervise the main elements of the course.

Core Trainers must possess and adhere to the following:

- Substantial experience of supervised counselling / psychotherapy for at least five years after accreditation, and be currently practicing
- Understand the principles of adult education, how adults learn
- Have trained as trainers\*
- At least 4 years' experience in counselling / psychotherapy training
- Attend regular external supervision and external consultation on training work
- Have had Personal Therapy
- Commit to ongoing personal and professional development

\* Trainers who have not formally trained as trainers can be assessed by the Course Assessors through a grandparenting clause which includes all of the following:

- trainer must be a practicing member of the IACP
- trainer must be a supervisor member or has had training as a supervisor
- proven experience of training in the field of counselling & psychotherapy
- proven experience of group facilitation
- proven experience of delivering adult education
- understanding of adult learning
- 2 written references confirming suitability as a trainer

- 3.7 The core staff trainers are responsible for all aspects of the student's training, including course work, personal therapy, client work and supervision. For the benefit of the student and to ensure a broader experience, the roles of skills trainer and group supervisor must not be provided solely by the same trainer.

- 3.8 Core staff must be familiar with and agree to work within the current version of the IACP's Code of Ethics and Practice. Copies of the Code of Ethics and Practice are available from IACP.

#### **Course Staff**

- 3.9 **Course Staff must:**

- Have substantial demonstrable experience in the relevant area of expertise
- Understand the principles of adult education and have trained as trainers
- Have a demonstrable commitment to ongoing professional development

- 3.10 There must be regular Training Personnel meetings and other forms of support, consultation and development.

- 3.11 The Training Personnel must meet at least once a year with an external consultant.

The role of External consultant is to be available to advise/consult with staff individually or as a group on any course issues - this may include:

- staff training and development
- staff relationships
- student / staff relationships
- student matters
- course management, content, design and development

The External Consultant must be independent from the course provider/ training organisation and cannot be the same person as External Examiner.

#### 4 COURSE RATIONALE, PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN

- 4.1 Courses should provide a clear statement of the course rationale, philosophy and design, including methods, which is consistent with the actual structure of the course and closely related to the counselling/psychotherapy work for which the students are training.
- 4.2 All courses should provide a detailed study of at least one major model of counselling and/or psychotherapy with an introduction to other models for comparison, contrast and critical analysis.
- 4.3 This emphasis on a major model of counselling/psychotherapy does not militate against eclectic or integrative courses, but it does demand that such courses regard their eclectic or integrative nature as their core theoretical model, explaining fully its philosophical, theoretical and practical implications.
- 4.4 There should be a balance between theory and practice and between all elements of the course.
- 4.5 Course evaluation must be an on-going process throughout the duration of the course.
  - (a) There must be regular Training Personnel meetings designed for the planning and evaluation of the course.
  - (b) Both during, and at the conclusion of a course, students should be given every opportunity to evaluate their training experiences and give feedback on the course to the staff.

There should be regular Training Personnel - Student review meetings for this purpose.

#### Course Content

While all aspects of a well designed counsellor/psychotherapist training offers opportunities for on-going personal and professional awareness, it is fundamental to counsellor/psychotherapist growth to have a discrete and separate practitioner led module providing personal development throughout each year of the course. This module when designed appropriately will afford the student counsellor/psychotherapist, through interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction, the opportunity to grow in self awareness, manage and contain difficult emotions and recognise limitations. This module facilitates on-going reflection and increased awareness over the duration of the training course.

#### 5 WORK ON SELF

##### Personal Development is:

The process of attending to our own needs in such a way as to increase our ability to be with our clients in a way that is not only safe for both parties but which incrementally improves our effectiveness. It is about dealing with our blind spots and resistance so that we may better accompany our clients on their painful or challenging journeys rather than risk blocking them because they seek to enter areas which are frightening or painful for us. It is also about resourcing ourselves so that we have the energy and enthusiasm that effective work demands. (Wilkins, 1997)

- 5.1 Courses should provide regular and systematic approaches to self-awareness work, individually and in a group, which are congruent with the course rationale and which ensure that each student examines and explores his/her personal process.
- 5.2 The modes in which personal development operate within the programme must be:
  - Discrete and specific within the course and labelled as personal development
  - Through focused activities, undertaken at some depth in small and large groups, structured exercises and individual tasks. (Small groups shall not be more than 10 students and larger groups must honour the ratio of 1:10)

- Through reflection on all elements of the course, (such as skills work, feedback opportunities, theoretical and conceptual study, and assessment experience)
- Through reflection on the implications for and application to the individual of the above elements
- Through journal-keeping
- Through the learning from and application of supervision of direct work with clients
- Through the individual student's experience as a client in personal counselling/psychotherapy therapy.
- Through reading including the imaginative engagement with literature and the creative arts.

5.3 Students must maintain a record which monitors their own self development and submit a report showing evidence of personal growth.

5.4 It is the responsibility of the course to ensure that each student has undertaken a minimum of 50 hours of Personal Therapy and to ensure that this is pursued during the training period. Courses must provide a list of therapists suitable to their model of training and theoretical model. The Personal Therapists must be accredited by IACP, BACP, or IAHIP. Peer and co- counselling/psychotherapy do not meet these criteria.

5.5 All students must have completed a minimum of 25 hours of Personal Therapy before the commencement of working with clients.

## 6 WORK WITH CLIENTS

6.1 Students must have opportunities to work with individual clients in a mode consistent with the course rationale, philosophy and design, and with the primary work for which they are being trained.

6.2 It is the responsibility of the training organisation to ensure that students have access to appropriate sources of client referral.

6.3 Before starting client work, students must:

- Be individually assessed for their readiness to take clients
- Have completed a minimum of 25 hours of Personal Therapy
- Have engaged in supervision with an IACP Accredited Supervisor or an Accredited Supervisor of an organisation with whom IACP has a reciprocal agreement
- Have successfully completed Garda Vetting

6.4 It is not appropriate for students in training to gain their client counselling/psychotherapy experience through private or independent practice. Students cannot receive payment directly for client work from the client during training.

6.5 Substantial and regular counselling/psychotherapy practice with real clients is essential in the training of counsellors/ psychotherapists to a professional standard. The minimum acceptable number of client hours under supervision is 100\*. It is the responsibility of the course provider to ensure the capacity of the student counsellor/psychotherapist is matched appropriately to the client.

\* 120 for courses commencing on and from 1st September 2020

6.6 Client Work refers to specific one-to-one counselling/psychotherapy relationships with clients over 18 years of age.

6.7 Explicit written counselling/psychotherapy contracts must apply to student work, including the identification of appropriate boundaries. It is the responsibility of the course that the student and supervisor are given a supervision pack to include intake forms, limits of confidentiality, assessment forms and any records required from the supervisor.

6.8 A clear written contract must be established between the Course Provider and any placement. This placement work should be carefully monitored by core trainers and supervisors.

6.9 This work must take place in an appropriate setting. It is the responsibility of the course to ensure that the student's client work takes place in a safe, secure, professional setting.

6.10 The course must monitor students' ability to establish and maintain ongoing therapeutic relationships.

6.11 Students have an obligation under the IACP Code of Ethics to indicate their Trainee Status to agencies and to their clients.



- 6.12 There should be a clear delineation of clinical responsibility for clients of students and there should be a mechanism for feedback from Agencies to Training Organisations on student work.

## 7 SUPERVISION

- 7.1 Supervision must be undertaken in accordance with current IACP requirements.
- 7.2 Supervisors providing external supervision or internal group supervision must be accredited as supervisors with IACP, IAHIP or BACP
- 7.3 The purpose of supervision is to ensure a high standard of service to the client, act as a support to supervisees, educational input, uphold best practice and to ensure the continuing personal/professional development of the counsellor/psychotherapist.
- 7.4 Before entering a supervisory relationship the course should provide students with a module on the functions and requirements of supervision. This module should offer students an opportunity to:
- Understand what is meant by supervision and the supportive function of supervision
  - Appreciate the need for and value of supervision
  - Know how to prepare for supervision
  - Have learned to identify their own needs for supervision
  - Be familiar with at least one approach to supervision that is congruent with the core theoretical model being taught on the course
- 7.5 Supervision during training should serve four functions:
- Helping the student to integrate theory with practice and to develop competent practice (Teaching Function)
  - Maintaining the student's personal and professional well-being with respect to the client work (Supportive function)
  - Affording a degree of protection for the students' clients (Managerial function)
  - Monitoring the student's progress and giving regular feedback on this to the Training Organisation (Assessment Function).
- 7.6 It is the responsibility of the course to ensure that the student has contracted with their supervisor before starting to see clients.
- 7.7 Accredited courses have a responsibility to ensure that the individual student has access to regular and sufficient supervision. This should be with an appropriately qualified and sufficiently experienced supervisor. Students must be directed to the IACP/BACP/IAHIP websites to source their external supervisor.
- Supervisors are required to meet the current IACP requirements and:
- Have substantial experience of supervised counselling/psychotherapy for at least five years after accreditation, and be currently practising
  - Have regular supervision of their student supervision work
  - Have had personal therapy either individual or group
  - Have an accredited theoretical background
  - Have a commitment to ongoing professional development
- 7.8 A mix of group and individual supervision is required.
- 7.9 In-house group supervision is required. Group size must be between 3 and 6.  
Groups must meet for a minimum of 2 hours per month over two academic years. Minimum attendance is set at 80%. Group Supervisor's Report must be completed post every progression cycle.  
Group supervision should be counted towards academic requirements. Group supervisors must be IACP, BACP or IAHIP Accredited Supervisors.
- 7.10 For counsellors/psychotherapists in training, External one-to-one supervision must not be less than 1 hour's presenting time to 5 hours client work, subject to an overall minimum of 1 hour of presenting time per month per student.
- 7.11 The student's external supervisor must not be a member of the course staff.
- 7.12 Student's external supervisor must not be the same as Student's Group Supervisor.

## 8 THEORY

- 8.1 Courses should have a clear statement of a recognised core psychological approach e.g. Humanistic.
- 8.2 There should be a broad introduction to the concept of change, models of the person and concepts of the self.
- 8.3 There should be sufficient counselling/psychotherapy theory, drawing upon relevant social science disciplines, to enable students to understand and evaluate critically:
- (a) The underlying philosophy, assumptions, basic principles and elements, concepts, strategies and techniques of the core theoretical model.

The following questions should be addressed in relation to the core theoretical model:

- (i) What assumptions are made about the nature and development of human beings?
  - (ii) How do psychological problems develop?
  - (iii) How does the model account for the perpetuation of psychological problems?
  - (iv) How does the model explain the process of therapeutic change?
  - (v) What is the range of therapeutic interventions explicated in the core model?
  - (vi) How does the model deal with any apparent discrepancies between theoretical and practical aspects?
- (b) Comparisons with other counselling/psychotherapy approaches.
- (c) The social system in which we live and the ways this affects client development and counselling/psychotherapy practice (The term 'social system' is taken to include such factors as race, culture, gender, sexuality, politics, religion, ethics and class).
- (d) The theoretical basis for any specific client problems or issues included as topics in the course programme, e.g. anxiety, bereavement and loss etc.
- 8.4 Study of the core theoretical approach and related counselling/psychotherapy practice may be informed and enriched by consideration of other psychological concepts and ideas by reference to current research findings.

## 9 SKILLS TRAINING

- 9.1 The therapeutic relationship is central to the counselling/psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic process and Skills Training is essential in the development of such skills.

### Courses must provide:

- (i) Structured experience and regular opportunities for observation, practice, feedback (from both staff and peers), discussion and review
  - (ii) Opportunities to practise the blend of skills appropriate to the core theoretical model, these skills being identified and developed so that students can describe, analyse and utilise them
  - (iii) A progressive monitoring and assessment of skills development
- 9.2 A range of multimedia supports should be provided including video demonstrations and video and audio recording of student practice.
- 9.3 Methods of skills training should include role-play in the form of dyads, triads, daisy chains and round robins.
- 9.4 Course Providers should note that they are responsible for the teaching and learning that forms the basis of their submission for accreditation. It is not acceptable for courses to count skills or other work which students have done elsewhere, as part of the minimum contact hours.

## 10. METHODS

- 10.1 Course staff should take responsibility for providing a range of learning experiences congruent with the philosophy and rationale of the course. The course should include:

- (i) Encouragement for students to take responsibility for their own learning
  - (ii) Cognitive, affective and skills components
  - (iii) The acquisition of knowledge and information from external sources
  - (iv) Substantial small group work. (See previous sections on Skills, Personal Development and Supervision)
  - (v) The provision of regular opportunities for students to review the course and give feedback on it
  - (vi) Opportunities for students to reflect on the course as an organisation in itself and on the cultural, social and political contexts in which they exist and work
  - (vii) Access for each student to a core member of staff for support.
- 10.2 There should be substantial reading and written work (or creative alternative) required of students to clarify philosophical and theoretical concepts and their application to practical counselling/psychotherapy work. This should be supported by adequate and up to date references, bibliographies and sources. The Course Provider has a responsibility to ensure that recommended books and journals are accessible to students.
- 10.3 Courses must provide on-going opportunities for students and staff to meet as a community to reflect on all aspects of the course and to explore organisational issues.

## 11 PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

- 11.1 It is important that students develop an understanding of the work of other professionals in related fields.
- 11.2 Students should be formally introduced to the IACP's Code of Ethics and Practice. They should be given ample opportunity to discuss all aspects of the Code and relevant legislation, to familiarise themselves with its implications for practice and how it relates to their own values, attitudes and client work. A commitment to abide by the Code of Ethics and Practice should be required of the student from the commencement of client work. This should also include awareness of the relevant laws and statutory guidelines regarding limitations to the bounds of confidentiality.
- 11.3 Students must be reminded of the ethical requirement for supervision throughout their working life and also encouraged to seek further opportunities for continuing personal and professional development.
- 11.4 Courses must provide opportunities to explore multicultural and equal opportunity issues in counselling/ psychotherapy theory and practice. Courses must also provide Child Protection and Reporting guidelines.
- 11.5 Students must be encouraged to read and understand research findings and how they might inform counselling/ psychotherapy practice.
- 11.6 Students must be made aware of IACP's requirement for professional indemnity insurance cover for themselves on completion of the course.
- 11.7 In the final year, the Course Provider must provide information on opportunities for students to discuss post-training professional options.
- 11.8 A course provider must comply with the ethos of the IACP.

## 12 ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 A course must adopt a mode of assessment which is congruent with the philosophy and rationale of the course, with the appropriate combination of all staff, supervisors, peer and self-assessment.
- 12.2 Students must be fully informed of the assessment procedures and the criteria used. They should also be given progress reports at various stages of the course.
- 12.3 There must be substantial emphasis on the assessment of competence in counselling/psychotherapy skills and practice undertaken during the course. This may be achieved through verbatim reports, audio/video recording, viva examination, live supervision etc.
- 12.4 External Supervisors' reports must form an integral part of ongoing assessment.

- 12.5 All assessment criteria must be in line with academic standards, be clear and specific, and made available to students.
- 12.6 The course must provide for an External Examiner, whose task is to monitor the course and the standard achieved by the students and be involved in the Appeals Procedure as appropriate.
- 12.7 The course must include a substantial amount of assessed written work, for example; case studies, essays, projects etc. The 'personal record' and 'professional log' are in addition to this requirement.
- 12.8 Both during and at the conclusion of the course students must be given every opportunity to evaluate their training experience and give feedback on the course to the staff.
- 12.9 Courses must provide details of procedure for deferrals, late submissions, extensions and absences.
- 12.10 A Complaints Procedure must be in place and available to students, clients of students and members of staff.
- 12.11 An Appeals Procedure must be available for students.

## PART TWO

### THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Before applying for accreditation, courses should familiarise themselves with:

- The *IACP Criteria and Accreditation for Counselling and Psychotherapy* courses seeking IACP Course Accreditation.
- The *Accreditation Application Process* and ensure that they meet all the requirements as outlined in the checklist.

#### Application

A course wishing to apply for Accreditation should supply the following in the first instance:

- (i) Application form Completed. (this can be obtained from IACP office)
- (ii) Copies of any explanatory or promotional material used, e.g. Course leaflets, brochures, student handbook, timetables etc.
- (iv) Current Fee.

#### Accreditation

The information submitted will be considered by IACP. If the application meets initial requirements, the IACP will visit and observe the course. Observation will occur at times mutually agreed.

If the IACP deems the course acceptable for accreditation a final report and a confirmation letter will be sent to the Course Provider.

The IACP reserves the right, as deemed necessary, to require amendments to any course as a condition of accreditation and will communicate this to the course organisers.

Course Accreditation by the IACP will last for six years, subject to ongoing monitoring by IACP, after which courses must re-apply for accreditation.

#### Accreditation not Awarded

In the case of accreditation not being awarded, a final report and a letter will be sent to the Course Provider notifying of this outcome.

The IACP reserves the right not to award accreditation in relation to a course where there exist circumstances which lead the IACP to believe that the ethos promoted by the course or the course providers or their employees or agents as part of the course or as part of the environment surrounding the course is/are not compatible with the ethos promoted by the IACP. This is a discretionary right of the IACP.

### Monitoring of the Course after Accreditation

The IACP will continue to monitor courses after accreditation. To support this it is essential that Accredited Courses appoint a person to liaise with the IACP.

The role of this liaison person will be to submit yearly written reports informing the IACP about the continuance of, and any changes to, the course. This report falls due by the 31st of January each year.

IACP can make onsite inspections of all IACP Accredited Courses.

### Sanctions and Withdrawal of Accreditation

Failure to meet the criteria will result in the suspension or complete withdrawal of IACP accreditation. Accreditation of a course may be completely withdrawn or suspended by the IACP at any time if:

- a. Course criteria are not met
- b. Standards are not maintained
- c. If The Course Provider or its employees or agents are in breach of the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice
- d. There is late or non-payment of relevant fees.

In addition, the IACP reserves the right to consider any unusual behaviour by those providing the course or any of its employers or agents, as a breach of the standard expected or as a breach of the Code of Ethics and Practice of the IACP.

### RENEWAL OF COURSE ACCREDITATION

An IACP Accredited course may seek re-accreditation by providing written evidence that it continues to meet the current minimum standards for accreditation. The written submission should include the following:

- Renewal form completed and application must be submitted to IACP at least 9 months before date of expiry of current Accreditation, which will include any changes to the course content, direction, duration and format as well as selection procedure, Complaints and an Appeals procedure.
- Current renewal fee.
- Particulars of any changes in relation to Core Trainers and Course Staff, as well as Qualifications and years of experience as Trainers must be included.
- Copies of any explanatory or promotional material used, e.g. Course leaflets, brochures, student handbook, timetables etc.
- A Report from the External Examiner to the course covering the period of accreditation must accompany the application.
- The name of the person who will liaise with IACP.
- A Report from the External Examiner to the course covering the period of accreditation must accompany the application.
- The name of the person who will liaise with IACP

Applications for Renewal of Accreditation will be considered by The IACP and a visit to the course will be scheduled. Further information may be sought from the course at any time.

This renewal of accreditation is valid for six years.

Enquiries to: **Course Accreditation Department**

**First Floor, Marina House,  
11-13, Clarence Street,  
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin**

**Lo-call: 1890 907 265**

**Email: [iacp@iacp.ie](mailto:iacp@iacp.ie)**

**Web: [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie)**



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*Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*

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**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHANGES  
within the  
IACP Course Accreditation Criteria 2015**

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHANGES WITHIN THE IACP COURSE ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 2015

Please Note: It is the responsibility of Course Providers to familiarise themselves with the entire new Course Accreditation Criteria as not all changes appear in this document.

- The status has changed in terminology from being a 'Recognised' course to an 'Accredited' course. Once a course has received confirmation of their accredited status they may include the words 'IACP Accredited Course' on their publicity material.
- In addition on accreditation the organisation must guarantee that the course will maintain the agreed format for the 6 year duration of accreditation in terms of standards, numbers, staff, core philosophy and design
- A course consists of a registration of a maximum of 30 students in any given year whom undergo a full training with specified core trainers in a specified *location*.

**Please Note: The minimum age requirement of 23 years for students has been omitted. This change is effective immediately.**

### 1 REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE ACCREDITATION

- 1.1 All students on IACP accredited course are required to be student members of the IACP for the full duration of the course.
- 1.2 Applications for accreditation will be welcomed from training courses, which are a minimum of two years full or parttime duration and are of not less than 450 hours of class contact time.  
  
(It is no longer necessary to have completed a full cycle of a course before applying for Course Accreditation).
- 1.10 The Course Board/Board of Management/Board of Directors must be familiar with, and accepting of, the IACP Criteria for Course Seeking Accreditation and are responsible for the adherence to the agreed accreditation conditions of their course.
- 1.11 All courses must have written Policies and Procedures in place, with particular emphasis on a Duty of Care towards students and their clients, in the event of their course "Ceasing to Trade".
- 1.12 Courses are required to provide a statement from an independent auditor that they are financially sound and viable, plus the following documents:
  - Tax Clearance Certificate (Annually)
  - Memorandums and Articles
  - Succession Policy

### 2 ADMISSION

- 2.1 At intake it is required that a minimum of 12 students be admitted in any one course cohort.  
  
Exception: Where a programme is being delivered in mixed year cohorts, the IACP will consider applications on a case by case basis. A coherent Educational Rationale consistent with a Theoretical Model being taught must be provided in each case
- 2.2 At intake it is required that not more than 30 students be admitted in any one course cohort with a ratio of one tutor to 10 students (see also 3.2 RE: course trainers).
- 2.3 Selection procedures should be designed to obtain evidence of the following:
  - Self-Awareness, maturity, stability.
  - Ability to make use of and reflect upon life experience.
  - Capacity to cope with the emotional demands of the course.
  - Capacity to cope with the academic demands of the course.
  - Experience in personal development/group work, counselling/psychotherapy skills and theory.
  - Potential to form a client/counsellor/psychotherapist relationship.



- Ability to self-evaluate and give and receive constructive feedback.
- Potential for further development of the above.
- Awareness of the nature of prejudice and oppression.

- 2.7 Applicants for the course must make detailed written applications and provide a minimum of two professional referees
- 2.9 A panel of three with at least two core staff members plus one other appropriately qualified person should be directly involved in the selection process.
- 2.10 IACP acknowledges the possibility of courses taking into account APCL in their selection process. Please see appendix A in this regard.

### 3 STAFF

- 3.4 Core staff members are crucial to the professional formation of the student counsellor/psychotherapist and as such undertake the bulk of the training and assessment.
- 3.5 The IACP must be immediately informed of any change of core staff members.
- 3.6 Core staff members must be Accredited Members of IACP and appropriately qualified to teach and supervise the main elements of the course.

**Core staff members must possess and adhere to the following:**

- Substantial experience of supervised counselling/psychotherapy for at least five years after accreditation, and be currently practising
- Understand the principles of adult education, how adults learn and have trained as trainers
- At least 4 years' experience in counselling/psychotherapy training
- Attend regular external supervision and external consultation on training work
- Have had Personal Therapy
- Commit to ongoing personal and professional development.

**Course Staff**

- 3.7 Course Staff must be accredited members of IACP or accredited with an organisation with whom IACP has a reciprocal agreement.

**Course Staff must:**

- Have substantial demonstrable experience in the relevant area of expertise
- Understand the principles of adult education and have trained as trainers
- Have a demonstrable commitment to ongoing professional development

- 3.8 Courses are accountable for the work of all staff.
- 3.9 The core trainers are responsible for all aspects of the student's training, including course work, personal therapy, client work and supervision. For the benefit of the student and to ensure a broader experience, the roles of skills trainer and group supervisor must not be provided solely by the same trainer.
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- 3.12 The Training Personnel must meet at least once a year with an external consultant.  
The role of External consultant is to be available to advise/consult with staff individually or as a group on any course issues - this may include:
- staff training and development
  - staff relationships

- student / staff relationships
- student matters
- course management, content, design and development

The External Consultant must be independent from the course provider/ training organisation and cannot be the same person as External Examiner.

### Course Content

While all aspects of a well-designed counsellor/psychotherapist training offers opportunities for on-going personal and professional awareness, it is fundamental to counsellor/psychotherapist growth to have discrete and separate practitioner led module providing personal development throughout each year of the course. This module when designed appropriately will afford the student counsellor/psychotherapist, through interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction, the opportunity to grow in self-awareness, manage and contain difficult emotions and recognise limitations. This module facilitates on-going reflection and increased awareness over the duration of the training course.

### Personal Development is:

The process of attending to our own needs in such a way as to increase our ability to be with our clients in a way that is not only safe for both parties but which incrementally improves our effectiveness. It is about dealing with our blind spots and resistance so that we may better accompany our clients on their painful or challenging journeys rather than risk blocking them because they seek to enter areas which are frightening or painful for us. It is also about resourcing ourselves so that we have the energy and enthusiasm that effective work demands. (Wilkins, 1997)

5.2 The modes in which personal development operate within the programme must be:

- Discrete and specific within the course and labelled as personal development.
- Through focused activities, undertaken at some depth in small and large groups, structured exercises and individual tasks. (Small groups shall not be more than 10 students and larger groups must honour the ratio of 1:10).
- Through reflection on all elements of the course, (such as skills work, feedback opportunities, theoretical and conceptual study, and assessment experience).
- Through reflection on the implications for and application to the individual of the above elements.
- Through journal-keeping.
- Through the learning from and application of supervision of direct work with clients.
- Through the individual student's experience as a client in personal counselling/psychotherapy therapy.
- Through reading including the imaginative engagement with literature and the creative arts.

5.5 All students must have completed a minimum of 25 hours of Personal Therapy before the commencement of working with clients.

## 6 WORK WITH CLIENTS

6.3 Before starting client work, students must:

- Be individually assessed for their readiness to take clients
- Have completed a minimum of 25 hours of Personal Therapy
- Have engaged in supervision with an IACP Accredited Supervisor or an accredited Supervisor of an organisation with whom IACP has a reciprocal agreement
- Have successfully completed IACP Garda Vetting

6.6 Client Work refers to specific one-to-one counselling / psychotherapy relationships with clients over 18 years of age.

6.7 Explicit written counselling/psychotherapy contracts must apply to student work, including the identification of appropriate boundaries. It is the responsibility of the course that the student and supervisor are given a supervision pack to include intake forms, limits of confidentiality, assessment forms etc.

6.12 There should be a clear delineation of clinical responsibility for clients of students and there should be a mechanism for feedback from Agencies to Training Organisations on student work

## 7 SUPERVISION

- 7.1 Supervision must be undertaken in accordance with current IACP requirements.
- 7.2 Supervisors providing external supervision or internal group supervision must be accredited as supervisors with IACP, IAHIP or BACP.
- 7.4 Before entering a supervisory relationship the course should provide students with a module on the functions and requirements of supervision. This module should offer students an opportunity to:
- Understand what is meant by supervision and the supportive function of supervision
  - Appreciate the need for and value of supervision
  - Know how to prepare for supervision
  - Have learned to identify their own needs for supervision
  - Be familiar with at least one approach to supervision that is congruent with the core theoretical model being taught on the course
- 7.5 Supervision during training should serve four functions:
- Helping the student to integrate theory with practice and to develop competent practice (Teaching Function).
  - Maintaining the student's personal and professional well-being with respect to the client work (Supportive Function).
  - Affording a degree of protection for the student's clients (Managerial Function).
  - Monitoring the student's progress and giving regular feedback on this to the Training Organisation (Assessment Function).
- 7.5.1 It is the responsibility of the course to ensure that the student has contracted with their supervisor before starting to see clients.
- 7.9 In-house group supervision is required. This must take place at least monthly with an accredited supervisor. Groups should consist of not more than 4 students and must adhere to current IACP Group Supervision criteria.
- 7.10 For counsellors/psychotherapists in training, External one-to-one supervision must not be less than 1 hour's presenting time to 5 hours client work, subject to an overall minimum of 1 hour of presenting time per month per student.
- 7.11 The student's external supervisor must not be a member of the course staff.

## 8 THEORY

- 8.1 Courses should have a clear statement of a recognised core psychological approach e.g. Humanistic
- 8.2 There should be a broad introduction to the concept of change, models of the person and concepts of the self
- 8.3 There should be sufficient counselling/psychotherapy theory, drawing upon relevant social science disciplines, to enable students to understand and evaluate critically:
- (a) The underlying philosophy, assumptions, basic principles and elements, concepts, strategies and techniques of the core theoretical model.

The following questions should be addressed in relation to the core theoretical model:

- (i) What assumptions are made about the nature and development of human beings?
  - (ii) How do psychological problems develop?
  - (iii) How does the model account for the perpetuation of psychological problems?
  - (iv) How does the model explain the process of therapeutic change?
  - (v) What is the range of therapeutic interventions explicated in the core model?
  - (vi) How does the model deal with any apparent discrepancies between theoretical and practical aspects?
- (b) Comparisons with other counselling/psychotherapy approaches.

- (c) The social system in which we live and the ways this affects client development and counselling/psychotherapy practice (The term 'social system' is taken to include such factors as race, culture, gender, sexuality, politics, religion, ethics and class).
- (d) The theoretical basis for any specific client problems or issues included as topics in the course programme, e.g. anxiety, bereavement and loss etc.

## 9 SKILLS TRAINING

- 9.1 The therapeutic relationship is central to the counselling/psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic process and Skills Training is essential in the development of such skills.
- 9.2 A range of multimedia supports should be provided including video demonstrations and video and audio recording of student practice.
- 9.3 Methods of skills training should include role-play in the form of dyads, triads, daisy chains and round robins.
- 9.4 Courses should note that they are responsible for the teaching and learning that forms the basis of their submission for accreditation. It is not acceptable for courses to count skills or other work which students have done elsewhere, as part of the minimum contact hours.

## 10 METHODS

- 10.3 Courses must provide on-going opportunities for students and staff to meet as a community to reflect on all aspects of the course and to explore organisational issues.

## 11 PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

- 11.2 Students should be formally introduced to the IACP's Code of Ethics and Practice. They should be given ample opportunity to discuss all aspects of the Code and relevant legislation, to familiarise themselves with its implications for practice and how it relates to their own values, attitudes and client work. A commitment to abide by the Code of Ethics and Practice should be required of the student from the commencement of client work. This should also include awareness of the relevant laws and statutory guidelines regarding limitations to the bounds of confidentiality.
- 11.7 In the final year, the Training Organisation must provide information on opportunities for students to discuss post-training professional options.

## MONITORING THE COURSE AFTER ACCREDITATION

The role of this liaison person will be to submit yearly written reports informing the IACP about the continuance of, and any changes to, the course. This report falls due by the 31st of January each year. IACP can make onsite inspections of all IACP Accredited Courses.

## SANCTIONS AND WITHDRAWAL AND ACCREDITATION

### Sanctions and Withdrawal of Accreditation

Failure to meet the criteria will result in the suspension or complete withdrawal of IACP accreditation. Accreditation of a course may be completely withdrawn or suspended by the IACP at any time if:

- a. Course criteria are not met
- b. Standards are not maintained
- c. The Course Provider or its employees or agents are in breach of the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice
- d. There is late or non-payment of relevant fees.

In addition, the IACP reserves the right to consider any unusual behaviour by those providing the course or any of its employers or agents, as a breach of the standard expected or as a breach of the Code of Ethics and Practice of the IACP.

**Please Note: Appendix A**

### CRITERIA FOR COURSES APPLYING TO INCLUDE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFIED LEARNING

## APPENDIX A

### CRITERIA FOR COURSES APPLYING TO INCLUDE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFIED LEARNING

Courses applying for assessment of their accreditation of prior learning procedures as part of their application for course accreditation must ensure that they include evidence to demonstrate that the following criteria have been met:

1. In relation to the protection of the integrity of the cohort
  - (a) Courses must state the maximum percentage of a cohort that they wish to be accredited for prior learning on the course
  - (b) The rationale for this percentage must be given
  - (c) Courses must state how the internal consistency within the course will be maintained.
2. Selection process

The procedures for selection of students seeking exemption must demonstrate how courses assess:

  - (a) The student's suitability for the training offered
  - (b) The student's ability to demonstrate reflective practitioner qualities
  - (c) The student's ability to form a working alliance with the course team and existing Student group
  - (d) The student's skills level.
3. Hours that can be exempted
  - (a) Only courses of a minimum of three years duration are eligible to consider APCL
  - (b) The hours which can be exempt depend on the course structure and it is within the remit of the Course Provider to assess and recognise prior certified learning for the purpose of entry to accredited training courses, as long as all academic and practical components of the course are met and match requirements listed in the IACP course criteria.
4. Working with clients
  - (a) Each exempted student must undertake a minimum of 100 hours (120 from September 2020) of supervised client work whilst on the intake course and have a record of or completed a minimum 20 hours of personal therapy.
5. Target applicants
  - (a) Courses should provide information about where they expect their APCL students to come from (b) How necessary is it to offer this exemption



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