



Education Program Accreditation Committee (EPAC)

Process for Panel Members reviewing courses in Psychotherapy and Counselling June 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) regularly reviews psychotherapy and counselling programs to ensure that they meet the criteria required by the Training Standards.

1. THE PACFA ACCREDITATION PANEL

Panel members will be appointed by the EPAC, following a selection process that includes written application, CV and interview, followed by participation in a training program. Panel members are experienced practitioners and academics who have knowledge and understanding of curriculum design, principles of adult education, the tertiary education environment, and of the minimum standards for psychotherapy and counselling practice.

1.1 Term of appointment of Accreditation Panel members

Appointment to the Accreditation Panel is initially for a period of three (3) years.

1.2 Procedures for appointment to the Accreditation Panel

- i) When there is a need to recruit to the Accreditation Panel, a call for applications will be published in the PACFA Newsletter, or requested via email to PACFA member associations.
- ii) Applicants must be well-regarded members of the profession, members of a PACFA member association with a minimum of five (5) years relevant experience since graduation, and the capacity to demonstrate on-going support and commitment to PACFA.
- iii) Applicants must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which professional psychotherapy and counselling education interface with practice and of current adult educational philosophies and processes.
- iv) Successful applicants will be able to represent the interests of the profession in, at times, challenging situations. They will be able to analyse and work flexibly within broad policy guidelines, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, think critically and reflectively, and make reasoned and sometimes difficult judgements and recommendations. They will have had experience and be comfortable in working as a member of a team.
- v) Applications should be sent to the PACFA office and should be accompanied by the curriculum vitae and a statement supporting their application, indicating the manner in which they meet the criteria for appointment to the PACFA Accreditation Panel.
- vi) Applicants will be interviewed.

1.3 Training of Accreditation Panel

Each new panel member will be provided with an induction to the role and given all relevant documents. When appointed to a panel, new members will receive further support from the panel chair.

1.4 Accountability of Accreditation Panel

Members of the Accreditation Panel who are appointed to review an existing course are known as a panel team. Each team is accountable to EPAC and its first duty is to ensure that the review is conducted according to the guidelines. At the conclusion of the review of the psychotherapy or counselling course, the team submits a report, which must conclude with a recommendation related to approval of the course. The report must be prepared in accordance with the PACFA guidelines.

Any concerns which emerge during the course of the review, which relate to either the review process or PACFA documentation, or policy, must be communicated to the EPAC PACFA Chair. It is neither appropriate nor acceptable for a member of the Accreditation Panel to comment publicly upon such issues.

1.4 Review of appointment of Accreditation Panel members

Appointment of panel members is initially for three years. A panel member's name can be removed from the list at the direction of the EPAC PACFA Committee, at any time, for any of the following reasons:

- i) Is no longer a member of a PACFA member association;
- ii) Has committed a proven breach of the relevant Code of Ethics;
- iii) Does not comply with the requirements of the review process (eg. Reports are below expected standard, time-lines are not complied with, breaches of accountability have occurred;
- iv) They have breached confidentiality;
- v) The panel member voluntarily withdraws; or
- vi) The panel member takes leave of absence.

Allegations that a panel member has failed to meet any of the above criteria will be investigated by a sub-committee of EPAC PACFA, who will present EPAC a report for EPAC's decision. The decision-making process will follow the principles of natural justice. The panel member will be entitled to know the nature of the identified problem and to respond to identified concerns.

Members whose names are to be removed from the list will be advised by the Chair of EPAC PACFA, in writing, of the reasons for their removal.

2.0 REVIEWING EXISTING PSYCHOTHERAPY AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMS

As indicated above, members of the Accreditation Panel undertake the review of existing psychotherapy and counselling programs, and proposed new psychotherapy and counselling programs. Existing programs are reviewed by a team of three panel members. Responsibility for membership of review teams lies with the EPAC PACFA.

2.1 Appointment of a review team

Existing psychotherapy and counselling programs are reviewed by a review team which consists of three members, one of whom will chair the team. Two members of the team are nominated by the EPAC PACFA and one by the training provider under review. All nominees must be members of the Accreditation Panel. The team will conduct an on-site visit.

When appointing members of the accreditation team, the following will be taken into account:

- i) Compatibility of the proposed team with the training program;
- ii) Particular knowledge base relevant to any special needs of the training program: and
- iii) Travel distance involved to contain costs for training program.

2.2 Processes to be followed after the review

- i) At the conclusion of the review, the team prepares a report and recommendation for the EPAC PACFA and forwards it to the Chair, EPAC PACFA. The recommendation must be either:
 - a) Recommendation for accreditation of course;
 - b) Recommendation against accreditation of the course (reasons must be given):
or
 - c) Recommendation for provisional accreditation of the course for a limited period, subject to meeting certain clearly stated requirements. This option is preferred to option (b) but should only be made if the requirements can be accomplished within the stated time limits.
- ii) Upon receipt, the report from the team will be sent to the training provider with a request for comment within two (2) weeks.
- iii) The review team's report, and the training provider's response, are presented to the EPAC PACFA who then makes a decision.
- iv) The EPAC Chair, or nominee, writes to the training provider informing them of the outcome of the deliberations of EPAC PACFA. A copy of the letter is sent to each team member.

3.0 Reports of reviews

The following guidelines must be used in the preparation of the report:

- i) The report must focus upon the degree to which the training provider meets the relevant criteria. The team's judgement should be based on the information made available by the school and other interested parties, and on material collected through discussions and observations of the course;
- ii) A recommendation of provisional accreditation must be accompanied by clearly stated requirements for change and the criteria by which achievements of the changes will be judged.
- iii) Differences amongst team members should be identified and minority reports used as and when appropriate: and
- iv) The review is a retrospective process. However, it may be appropriate for the team to include appropriate prospective comments.

(end)