



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

## **Working Document**

# **Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Applications**

This document is a guide to completing an application for listing on the PACFA National Register using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pathway. This process allows for assessment of equivalence with formal counselling and psychotherapy training, specifically for applicants who have not completed training requirements as specified in PACFA's Professional Training Standards (2012) but who have a diversity of training, extensive supervision, professional development and client contact hours.

The Recognition of Prior Learning pathways recognises the totality of skills and knowledge gained through, but not limited to, formal training, industry based training, professional development activities, work experience and life experience. This pathway is in agreement with the principles for Recognition of Prior Learning set out in the Australian Qualification Framework. [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)

Applicants are required to prepare a comprehensive submission based on the information provided in this guide to demonstrate that training, experience and level of knowledge and competence acquired through informal learning is equivalent to that of registrants listed on the PACFA National Register (Register requirements are available on the PACFA website [www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au))

As membership of a PACFA Member Association (MA) is a pre-requisite for listing on the PACFA Register, these Guidelines can also be used by PACFA MAs when considering Recognition of Prior Learning in relation to applications for MA membership.

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### **Register Training Requirements**

There are currently two standard training pathways for listing on the PACFA Register.

1. An undergraduate or equivalent single formal course with face-to-face training in counselling and/or psychotherapy of at least 350 hours over a minimum of three years.
2. A relevant degree, plus a post graduate or equivalent single formal course with face-to-face training in counselling and/or psychotherapy of at least 200 hours over a minimum two years. The relevant degree must precede the postgraduate or equivalent qualification.

If applicants' professional training does not fit these standard pathways, but is based on extensive training, practice, professional development and supervision over several years, it may be possible to be admitted to the Register based on RPL. The PACFA Professional

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Training Standards (2012) will be the guide in determining equivalence with training. A higher number of hours of supervised clinical experience may be required. For example, where a number of smaller training courses are the basis of the applicant's submission, it is expected that the applicant will have completed more than 1,200 hours post training client contact with more than 125 hours of post-training supervision over a minimum of two years.

Applicants should refer to the PACFA Professional Training Standards (2012) for further explanation of these requirements.

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### **To make an RPL application**

Applicants should complete the RPL application with the endorsement of their MA.

Applicants must provide a detailed submission which demonstrates their professional training, clinical experience and supervision hours over a sustained period of time and provide evidence to support their application. Examples of evidence required are specified below.

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to argue equivalency of their training and clinical experience with the PACFA Professional Training Standards (2012).
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly demonstrate a level of competency equivalent to registrants listed on the PACFA National Register.

MAs need to endorse applications using the *Member Association RPL Endorsement Form*.

Applications will be assessed by PACFA to determine if applicants can be granted equivalence for the required formal training. Supervision and client contact hours cannot be used to substitute for equivalency in RPL applications.

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### **Section 1 - Training**

Applicants will need to supply certified copies of all relevant training course awards and transcripts.

- Provide copies of transcripts or certificates of completion of all relevant courses, including partial or incomplete courses.
  - Provide detailed evidence of the curriculum and content of all training courses undertaken.
  - Provide evidence of how much of the course undertaken was theoretical and experiential.
  - Detail how self-awareness activities, interpersonal and communication skills training and use of oneself in the therapeutic relationship were covered in the training.
  - Provide evidence of client contact undertaken during training courses.
  - Provide evidence of supervision undertaken during training courses.
  - Provide evidence of work-based learning (for example, placements) undertaken during training courses.
  - Demonstrate how the training is equivalent to the Register requirements.
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## **Section 2 - Work Experience**

Applicants will need to provide evidence of their professional experience as counsellors or psychotherapists.

- Provide a list of counselling and/or psychotherapy positions held since completion of training.
  - Provide position descriptions or details outlining the functions undertaken that were relevant to counselling and psychotherapy practice.
  - Describe the role(s) performed, hours per week and years of duration.
  - Provide evidence including letters of employment, references from line managers or work performance appraisals if possible.
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## **Section 3 - Supervision and Client Contact Hours**

Applicants will need to provide evidence of completion of substantial supervised clinical practice as counsellors or psychotherapists. It is expected that more than 125 hours of post-training supervision linked to more than 1,200 hours of post training client contact hours would have been completed over a minimum of two years.

Applicants must provide supporting evidence such as:

- Supervision logs signed by supervisors.
- Letters from supervisors attesting to client contact hours linked to supervision hours.
- Client contact logs signed by supervisors.

Completion of the requisite number of supervised client hours does not mean automatic approval of RPL. Applicants are still required to argue equivalency with regard to the other RPL requirements and to demonstrate competency equivalent to registrants on the PACFA Register.

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## **Section 4 - Contribution made to the Profession of Counselling and Psychotherapy**

Applicants will need to reflect on their clinical practice performed in the role of practicing counsellors/psychotherapists and specify how this practice has made a demonstrable contribution to the profession.

Applicants must provide supporting evidence such as:

- Evidence of a high level of skill as a practicing counsellor/psychotherapist.
  - Contributions made to the public profile of counselling/psychotherapy.
  - Demonstrated expertise in specific area(s) of practice.
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## **Section 5 - Counselling and Psychotherapy Practice with Clients**

Applicants must demonstrate the effectiveness of their clinical work with clients by providing supporting evidence such as:

- Demonstrated practice with a high volume of clients over an extended period of time.

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- Demonstrated experience in treating a diverse range of clients.
  - Specific skills required to work with specific types of clients and how these have been developed.
  - Demonstrated delivery of high quality group programs (if relevant to practice experience).
  - Demonstration of effective use of evaluation of client outcomes (for example, use of outcome measures).
  - Letters of support for the RPL application from clinical supervisors.
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### **Section 6 - Recognition within the Profession of Counselling and Psychotherapy**

Applicants must provide written evidence (at least 2 A4 pages) from at least two counsellors or psychotherapists who are listed on the PACFA Register\*, which shows they have made a contribution to the field of counselling and/or psychotherapy over a sustained period of time.

\*A person who may be eligible for PACFA Register listing or who has had substantial experience in the field of counselling and /or psychotherapy may be used if necessary.

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### **Section 7 - Supporting Material**

Applicants should enclose as much supporting material as possible to support their applications:

- Comprehensive curriculum vitae including details of employment history or private practice.
  - Evidence of ongoing participation in Professional Development, over many years.
  - Evidence of membership or involvement in any other relevant professional bodies.
  - References from previous employers/supervisor(s) attesting to their competency in the role of counsellor/psychotherapist.
  - Logs of client work and supervision, signed by supervisors.
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### **Section 8 - Documentation Required for Assessment of RPL Application**

- **PACFA Register Application Form**  
Please include the application fee, payable to PACFA.
- **Member Association Endorsement Form, including RPL endorsement**
- **Professional Indemnity Insurance**  
Provide a copy of your current Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- **Member Association Membership**  
Provide a copy of your current Association membership certificate or receipt of payment.
- **RPL submission as per RPL guidelines**  
Include all supporting evidence