



Flexible accreditation arrangements during COVID-19 pandemic

Updated November 2021

Training providers have implemented distance learning arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure they comply with social distancing requirements.

Under ordinary circumstances, some of these arrangements would not meet the requirements of PACFA's Training Standards. However, during the pandemic PACFA is aiming to be as flexible as possible to meet the needs of training providers and their students.

PACFA has developed a set of flexible arrangements to enable training providers to respond to the current pandemic while also ensuring that students will be able to graduate from PACFA-accredited training programs. These arrangements have been extended until 30 June 2022 after which there will be a further extension only if required.

Please Note this extension only applies to Training Courses that are delivered in States and Territories that are impacted by restrictions on Face-to-Face Learning. Courses that operate in States and Territories that have no limitations on Face-to-Face learning will be expected to deliver learning that is consistent with the PACFA Training Standards and with the requirements of their PACFA Accreditation.

1. Synchronous online learning

PACFA will allow a higher volume of learning to take place via online synchronous learning than is required under the Training Standards. Normally we require 200 hours of face-to-face learning of which 60 may be online synchronous learning. For the duration of time where student learning is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, all face-to-face learning requirements can be completed as online synchronous learning.

This is not to suggest that the requirement for face-to-face learning in the PACFA Training Standards will be permanently changed. PACFA does not consider synchronous online learning to be equivalent to the person to person (in the same location) training experience.

Counselling and psychotherapy are relational professions therefore PACFA considers face to face learning to be an essential element of the student's learning experience. This needs to be retained as an important feature of the PACFA Training Standards into the future.

Should any students be unable to participate in online synchronous learning sessions (due to illness or caring responsibilities) and instead have to be provided with recorded lectures in asynchronous mode, we request training providers to take steps to check that that students can demonstrate

engagement with each of the asynchronous learning activities. This is PACFA's least preferred option but we understand that this may occur due to isolation or illness during the coronavirus emergency.

Record keeping on Course Changes

Training providers are requested to provide information to PACFA on the variations that have been made to learning activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including information on the changes to synchronous and asynchronous online learning and face-to-face learning that is envisaged into the future.

Where training providers are already providing this information to other accrediting authorities (TESQA or ASQA) you may provide a duplicate copy of the information provided to TESQA or ASQA to PACFA and supplement this where necessary with the additional information required.

This information will enable PACFA to assess the extent to which teaching arrangements have been adapted during the coronavirus emergency so that we can assess over time the impact of these arrangements on learning.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic is at an end, all institutions that are accredited by PACFA are required to return to your normal face to face teaching arrangements in accordance with the PACFA Training Standards.

2. Supervised client contact

Should students be unable to complete the required 40 hours of face-to-face client contact and 10 hours of supervision due to the pandemic, client hours and supervision may be completed by video conference (telephone is to be avoided if possible). The full practice placement must be completed, allowing for this alternative medium by the student in order to qualify for registration.

This is a temporary measure to help students and training providers manage student placements during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Use of video or telephone counselling on placement

PACFA considers that client contact via video conference is preferable to telephone counselling. This is because video counselling is much closer to replicating the face-to-face counselling context than does telephone counselling. In light of the additional requirements where telephone counselling is undertaken, training providers are encouraged to seek placements where students can undertake client contact hours via video rather than telephone.

In exceptional circumstances, where telephone counselling is the only placement option available for a particular student, telephone counselling may be permitted. Where client contact hours are completed by telephone, the student may graduate but there will be additional practice requirements for graduates to join PACFA (see below).

When students undertake telephone counselling on placement, the training provider is requested to provide PACFA with evidence that students have been trained in the use of this platform, either before or during the placement. This evidence should to be forwarded to PACFA via email when you advise us of your program changes.

Use of an alternative platform for completion of client contact hours must be demonstrated to be consistent with the philosophy of practice of the program.

PACFA Membership

In order to be flexible but as a temporary measure due to the pandemic, graduates whose client contact hours are by completed by video will be able to join PACFA at **Provisional** level. If a graduate has completed some or all of their supervised client contact as telephone counselling and wishes to apply for PACFA Provisional membership, face to face client hours must be completed and logged after graduating to make up for the client hours completed by telephone during training. This is a membership requirement rather than an accreditation requirement. It is not an additional placement, it is post-qualifying professional practice.

Record keeping for Graduates

Where client contact hours on placement are not completed face to face, graduates will need to provide a log of client hours detailing the context and platform in which those hours were conducted and the log must be signed off by the training provider.

Graduates should provide PACFA with a copy of their signed log at the time of applying for PACFA membership.

For graduates who have completed client contact hours via video, the log will enable PACFA to check whether they are required to complete face to face client hours after qualifying in order to progress to PACFA Clinical membership in the future. For those who have completed client contact hours via telephone, we will need to check completion of face to face client hours after qualifying in order to apply for PACFA Provisional membership.

3. Extension of accreditation period

Where a training provider is due for PACFA re-accreditation any time up to 30 December 2021 but is not in a position to submit an application on time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an extension of the current accreditation may be requested and will be approved for a period of up to 12 months.