Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Applications

This document is a guide to completing an application for PACFA membership or registration using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pathway. This process allows for assessment of equivalence with formal counselling and psychotherapy training for applicants who have not completed the training specified in the PACFA Training Standards 2014.

The RPL pathway 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 consistent with the principles for Recognition of Prior Learning set out in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF).

Applicants are required to prepare a comprehensive application based on the guidelines in this document in order to demonstrate that their training, work experience and level of knowledge and competence acquired through other forms of learning is equivalent to that of practitioners listed on the PACFA National Register.

This document is relevant to:

- individual practitioners applying for PACFA membership and registration in a practicing membership category
- members of PACFA Member Associations (MAs) who are seeking PACFA registration with the endorsement of their MA
- PACFA Member Associations considering membership applications via an RPL pathway.

Requirements to be listed on the PACFA National Register

The training and supervised practice requirements for PACFA membership and registration outlined in this document are based on the PACFA Training Standards 2014 and current Register Requirements.

PACFA TRAINING STANDARDS 2014

*Undergraduate degree or equivalent*

Bachelor degree or equivalent in terms of level and depth of training, as specified by the AQF. See the AQF Bachelor degree specification.

- 350 hours person-to-person training in counselling and or psychotherapy over three years, and
- 50 hours of supervision relating to 200 hours of client contact (a minimum of 10 hours of supervision relating to 40 client contact hours must have taken place within the training)
Postgraduate degree or equivalent

Postgraduate degree or equivalent in terms of level and depth of training, as specified by the AQF, in addition to an undergraduate degree. See AQF Graduate Diploma degree specification and AQF Masters degree coursework specification.

- 200 hours person-to-person training in counselling and or psychotherapy over two years, and
- 50 hours of supervision relating to 200 hours of client contact (a minimum of 10 hours of supervision relating to 40 client contact hours must have taken place within the training)

PACFA REGISTER REQUIREMENTS

- Intern membership/registration
  Either undergraduate or postgraduate training, as detailed in the PACFA Training Standards, including the minimum requirement for supervised practice (10 hours of supervision relating to 40 client contact hours). Interns are still completing the supervised practice requirements for Provisional membership/registration.

- Provisional membership/registration
  Either undergraduate or postgraduate training, as detailed in the PACFA Training Standards, including the requirement for supervised practice (50 hours of supervision relating to 200 client contact hours)

- Clinical membership/registration
  Either undergraduate or postgraduate training, as detailed in the PACFA Training Standards, including the requirement for supervised practice (50 hours of supervision relating to 200 client contact hours), and an additional 750 hours of post-training client contact linked to an additional 75 hours of post-training supervision over two years. The total requirement for supervised practice is 950 client contact hours linked to 125 supervision hours.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PATHWAY

When an applicant’s professional training and formation does not fit the undergraduate or postgraduate training pathways described above, the applicant may be admitted to PACFA membership/registration PACFA via the RPL pathway.

The applicant is required to demonstrate equivalence with the membership or registration requirements as detailed above for the category for which the application is made (i.e. Intern, Provisional or Clinical).

The PACFA Training Standards 2014 will be used as the guide in assessing the RPL application.

1. Counselling and/or psychotherapy training

   1.1 Training relating to counselling and/or psychotherapy practice

   Guidelines:
   - Where an applicant’s training is made up of multiple courses rather than a single counselling or psychotherapy training program, the training must have been comprehensive and in depth, and must relate to counselling and psychotherapy practice and be equivalent to the requirements of PACFA’s training standards.
The courses which form the basis of the RPL application must have been theoretically informed and practice-based. The modality of the courses must have been situated within the broader field of psychotherapy and/or counselling models.

As psychotherapy/counselling is a practical art, theoretical components should have been taught in ways which relate to practical situations. Teaching should have utilised methods such as lectures (live or audiovisual), written notes, set readings, seminars, group discussions, role-plays and experiential training methods.

Applicants are expected to have completed training covering the following subjects or their equivalent:

- Models of assessment and intervention
- Knowledge and integration of social contexts
- Referrals and referral options
- Suicide risk assessment and management
- Ethics of clinical practice and supervision
- Professional development
- Theories and processes of psychotherapy/counselling
- Alternative modes of working with clients, including telephone and real-time internet, incorporating potential security and confidentiality issues
- Stages of human development
- Knowledge and integration of the range of understanding human diversity including culture, gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, class, religion and ethnicity
- Specific training in indigenous awareness and acknowledgement of indigenous history
- Self awareness
- Familiarity with research on counselling and psychotherapy effectiveness

Applicants need to demonstrate how their completed training is equivalent to the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards 2014. Please provide as much detail as possible for the training undertaken to support your RPL application.

Examples of supporting evidence include:

- Certified copies of transcripts or certificates of completion of all relevant courses, including transcripts for incomplete courses
- Details of the curriculum for each course such as copies of course handbooks and subject outlines
- Specify for each course how much learning was theoretical and how much was experiential
- Specify for each course how much learning related to self-awareness activities, interpersonal and communication skills training, and use of oneself in the therapeutic relationship
- Evidence of client contact hours and supervision of practice undertaken during the courses, for example practice and supervision logs
- Evidence of work-integrated learning (i.e. placements) undertaken during the courses

2. Other forms of learning & development relevant to counselling and/or psychotherapy practice

Guidelines:

- Supervision and client contact hours cannot be used to substitute for training in the RPL application, but can be used to support the application, for example:
  - Demonstrated practice with a high volume of clients over an extended period of time
  - Demonstrated experience in working with a diverse range of clients
- Development of specialist skills required to work with specific clients groups
- Demonstrated effective use of outcome measures to evaluate client outcomes
- Substantial experience of personal therapy or other personal development activities relevant to training for particular therapy modalities

- Intern membership/registration
  - PACFA’s minimum supervised practice requirements are 40 client hours linked to 10 hours of supervision
  - Ideally, the frequency of supervision was at the ratio of one supervision hour for every four client contact hours
  - Ideally, the supervised practice took place within training. If not, equivalence to training supervision must be demonstrated.

- Provisional and Clinical membership/registration
  - Ideally, the frequency of supervised practice meets PACFA’s requirements for 10 hours of supervision per annum, or 15 hours per annum if practice hours exceeded 400 client contact hours
  - PACFA only accepts peer supervision hours when practitioners have significant clinical experience
  - Applicants with a higher number of supervised clinical practice hours than the minimum requirement: i.e. more than 950 hours of client contact linked to more than 125 hours of post-training supervision over more than two years may use the higher number of supervised practice hours in support of their RPL application.
  - Ideally, some supervision hours will have been individual rather than in a group. As a guideline, PACFA suggests that at least 20 hours of individual supervision have been completed.

- Refer to Appendix for definitions of supervision and peer supervision.

Examples of supporting evidence:
- Completion of online supervision logs at the Counselling & Psychotherapy Portal. These are completed when making the online application but can be updated at any time in the Portal
- Supervision Verification Forms or supervision logs signed by the applicant’s supervisor(s) or letters signed by the applicant’s supervisor(s) that state the number of client contact hours and supervision hours completed
- A report from the applicant’s current supervisor and any other recent supervisors’ reports attesting to the capacity of the applicant to provide competent, ethical supervision services to counsellors and/or psychotherapists.

2.1 Counselling and/or psychotherapy work experience

Guidelines:
- Work experience as a counsellor or psychotherapist relates to employment in a counselling or psychotherapy position
- The position is expected to require counselling and psychotherapy skills and competencies

Examples of supporting evidence:
- Comprehensive curriculum vitae listing details of employment history as a counsellor and/or psychotherapist, and/or locations and business names for private practice
2.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in counselling and/or psychotherapy

Guidelines:
- Evidence of CPD is required to demonstrate that the applicant has kept up to date and maintained currency while practising as a counsellor and/or psychotherapist
- CPD activities undertaken must be related to counselling and/or psychotherapy practice
- CPD is not a replacement for comprehensive training in counselling and/or psychotherapy

Examples of supporting evidence:
- Copies of certificates or other evidence of participation in CPD
- A brief statement explaining how the learning outcomes from CPD support the RPL application

2.4 Other relevant work and life experience

Guidelines:
- Evidence of work experience in other fields related to counselling and psychotherapy may be provided where this experience has contributed skills relevant to counselling or psychotherapy
- Evidence of personal development activities may be provided where these activities have contributed skills and experience relevant to counselling or psychotherapy

Examples of supporting evidence:
- Comprehensive curriculum vitae, including details of relevant positions held
- Position descriptions are to be provided, or an outline of the functions undertaken relevant to counselling and psychotherapy practice
- A description of the role(s) performed, hours worked per week and the duration of employment
- Evidence of employment such as appointment letters, references from line managers, and work performance appraisals, ideally including the applicant’s current work role
- Documentary evidence of personal development activities undertaken and a brief statement explaining how these support the RPL application
- A brief statement explaining how the learning outcomes from work and life experiences support the RPL application

2.5 Contribution to the counselling and psychotherapy profession

Guidelines:
- Applicants who have made a substantial contribution to the counselling and psychotherapy profession may use these contributions to support the RPL application.
- This may include:
  - Contributions to counselling and/or psychotherapy professional associations or other relevant professional bodies
  - Contributions made to the public profile of counselling and psychotherapy
– Contributions made to counselling and psychotherapy research
– Contributions made to counselling and psychotherapy education

**Examples of supporting evidence:**
- Evidence of professional association memberships, roles and achievements
- A list of counselling/psychotherapy education roles and achievements
- A list of counselling/psychotherapy publications

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**How to make an RPL application to PACFA**

Applicants are to complete the PACFA online Application Form on the Counselling and Psychotherapy Portal. Please use the Practitioner and Educator Application Form.

In response to the question asking whether you wish to apply via the RPL pathway, please select “Yes”.

In addition to the standard PACFA application fee, there is an additional fee to apply via RPL. For details of current fees, please see the Schedule of Fees at the PACFA website. Payments may be made by credit card, cheque or direct bank transfer.

For members of PACFA Member Associations (MAs) seeking PACFA registration, PACFA will seek the endorsement of your MA.

RPL applications are to address the RPL Guidelines by using the following headings to structure the application:

1. Counselling and/or psychotherapy training:
   1.1 Training relating to counselling and/or psychotherapy practice

2. Other forms of learning and development relevant to counselling and/or psychotherapy practice
   2.1 Supervised practice; or
   2.2 Work experience as a counsellor or psychotherapist; or
   2.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in counselling and/or psychotherapy; or
   2.4 Other relevant work or life experience; or
   2.5 Contribution to the counselling and psychotherapy profession.
Appendix

Supervision definitions

What is supervision?

Supervision is a contractual, collaborative process which monitors, develops and supports supervisees in their clinical role. The central focus is on both the optimum treatment outcome for the client and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.

The process of clinical supervision encompasses a number of significant components, including a formal agreement between supervisor and supervisee.

It is an opportunity for the supervisee to present relevant material regarding clinical practice via case discussion, recordings of client sessions, role plays, etc., allowing a space for reflective review by the supervisee and feedback from the supervisor.

Supervision can be undertaken individually or in a small group of no more than six members. It is not the same as administrative or management supervision, nor is it the same as personal therapy of the supervisee.

PACFA does not accept supervision where there have been dual relationships, for example the same practitioner has acted as therapist and supervisor.

What is peer supervision?

Peer supervision is a formal process where therapists contract to provide collegial critiquing and enhancement of each other’s clinical client work. Colleagues or peers work together for mutual benefit, rotating the roles of supervisor and supervisee.

Peer supervision can be undertaken as a dyad or in a small group of no more than six members.

Peer supervision is generally only accepted for practitioners who have provided evidence of more than five years of substantial clinical experience (i.e. more than 950 client contact hours linked to more than 125 hours of supervision) prior to commencing peer supervision.

As a guideline, PACFA generally accepts no more than 50% of supervision requirements as peer supervision.