



Psychotherapy & Counselling
Federation of Australia

Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning

This document is a guide to completing an application for PACFA membership or registration, or to upgrade to a higher membership or registration category, using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Pathway. This process allows for RPL principles to be applied in limited circumstances, taking into account the requirements of the [PACFA Training Standards \(2018\)](#).

This document is relevant to:

- People applying for individual PACFA membership in a practicing membership category (Provisional or Clinical) or applying to upgrade from Provisional to Clinical membership
- A member of a PACFA Member Association (MA) who is applying for PACFA registration with MA endorsement, or applying to upgrade from Provisional to Clinical registration

PACFA TRAINING STANDARDS (2018)

The training and supervised practice requirements for PACFA membership and registration are based on the [PACFA Training Standards \(2018\)](#). There are also additional requirements set out in the [Membership and Registration Requirements and Renewal Requirements](#).

Education and training in counselling and psychotherapy must be undertaken in a qualification approved by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) or the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) at either the undergraduate or postgraduate levels (AQF level 7 to 9).

The minimum volume of learning requirements listed below apply to any program, whether undergraduate or postgraduate.

400 hours of instruction (minimum) (applicable to AQF level 7-9). This may be made up of:

- i) 200 hours direct person-to-person instruction of which 60 hours may be synchronous online (e.g., interactive webinars).
 - This equates to (140 hours) which must be solely taught face-to-face plus (60 hours) of synchronous training
 - The central focus of this person-to-person instruction is on interpersonal skills development
- ii) 200 hours of instruction may be conducted via online asynchronous training for theory-based studies.

In addition, a minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face counselling or psychotherapy practice (client contact) with 10 hours of supervision (related to client contact) must be completed within training and assessed as successful by the training provider. Successful completion of supervised practice is required to be evidenced by a log signed by the responsible supervisor(s).

PACFA REGISTRATION CATEGORIES

Provisional Membership/Registration

To be listed as a Provisional Member/Registrant, applicants must demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards (2018). Applicants must have completed at least 40 client hours linked to 10 hours of supervision during their training.

Clinical Membership/Registration

To be eligible for listing as a Clinical Member/Registrant, applicants must have completed a further 750 hours of post-qualifying client contact linked to minimum of 75 hours of post-qualifying supervision over a minimum of two years.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PATHWAY

When an Applicant's training does not meet the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards (2018), the Applicant may be admitted to PACFA membership or registration, or upgrade to Clinical membership or registration, via the RPL Pathway.

RPL is only available in three specific situations:

1. Where the training was not accredited by PACFA
2. Where the training was undertaken in a country other than Australia
3. Where substantial client contact hours were completed during training (more than 500 hours) and some credit is sought towards the supervised client contact hours required for Clinical membership or registration.

However, as a minimum, all applicants for membership must have completed training in Counselling or Psychotherapy that meets the AQF standards and levels of learning. ***All qualifications must be approved by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) or the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) at either the undergraduate or postgraduate levels (AQF level 7 to 9).***

The only exception to this requirement is relation to overseas training for which an assessment is required to verify that the training is recognised in Australia in accordance with the AQF. For details see section 2 below on "Training that was undertaken in a country other than Australia".

Training must be a single training program in counselling or psychotherapy. PACFA does not allow training that is made up of more than one course, where the courses are not related and are not run by the same institution.

However, PACFA will accept applications where training is within a single institution in a nested or articulated program. A nested or articulated program is where the training has stages, with each stage being a pre-requisite for the next stage in the training. For example, a Graduate Certificate that articulates into a Graduate Diploma. As long as the final award is AQF 7 to 9 and the full sequence is completed, this is seen as a single training program. This is a normal PACFA application and does not require application via RPL.

Consideration will not be given to practical experience in lieu of formal training.

RPL cannot be used if you trained in another discipline. Psychiatry, Psychology, Social Work and Mental Health Nursing are distinct professions with different training from the training required by PACFA. These qualifications are not accepted by PACFA.

1. Training that was not accredited by PACFA

Training programs that are not accredited by PACFA have not been scrutinised in detail by PACFA to ensure that they meet the requirements of the PACFA Training Standards (2018). Therefore ***Applicants who have not completed training that is accredited by PACFA are required to apply via RPL.*** A detailed assessment of training that is not PACFA-accredited is undertaken by PACFA under the RPL Pathway.

To successfully apply via the RPL Pathway you will need to provide the following information:

Information to be provided with your online application via the Portal	Additional information to be provided with your RPL application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified copies of your full academic transcript/s • Certified copies of your qualification/s • Details of any client contact and supervision undertaken during training • Details of any client contact and supervision undertaken after training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the course handbook or other document that describes each unit of study • Further information from the institution describes each unit of study for which academic credit has been allowed • Supporting letters from employers and/or supervisors • Copies of memberships or accreditations with other Professional Associations for counselling or psychotherapy (not for other professions)

All of the above information must be verifiable by the training institution, employer, supervisor or organisation.

Academic credit

Where academic credit is given towards a training program that is not accredited by PACFA, the validity of the academic credit awarded will need to be considered as part of the RPL application. Please refer to the academic credit arrangements details in the PACFA Training Standards (2018).

Acceptance of academic credit is subject to the following limitations:

- The academic transcript must clearly state which units were awarded via academic credit
- Supporting information on the course content for all units for which academic credit is awarded must accompany the application
- Academic credit can only be awarded for counselling and psychotherapy subjects relevant to the curriculum detailed in the PACFA Training Standards (2018)
- Academic credit is not allowed for client contact or clinical supervision hours
- Academic credit is not allowed for units of study completed more than ten years prior to entry into the training program.
- When academic credit is awarded, the total length of the training, including the academic credit, must meet the minimum requirements of the Training Standards(2018) in terms of length and depth of training and the allowable component of online learning

Training that does not include supervised client contact

Where training is not accredited by PACFA there may be no supervised client contact during the training, or insufficient supervised client contact, which means the Graduates may not be sufficiently prepared for safe professional practice.

RPL may be considered by PACFA in exceptional circumstances where the minimum of 40 hours of client contact and 10 hours of supervision did not take place during training but takes place after training. However it is expected that the Applicant will complete substantial supervised client contact post-training before applying to PACFA. To ensure quality of the post-qualifying supervised practice, it is expected that:

- A minimum of 100 client contact hours linked to 25 hours of clinical supervision is completed.
- Post-qualifying supervised client contact takes place in an organisation where a high level of supervision is provided by a supervisor acceptable to PACFA. Supervisors will have expertise similar to that detailed in the PACFA Supervision Training Standards.
- A report is provided by the Supervisor confirming successful completion of the post-qualifying supervised client contact hours and details of the supervision provided.

These Applicants are required to provide the following evidence in support of their RPL application to demonstrate completion of 100 client contact hours and 25 hours of supervision:

- Information on why the supervised contact wasn't completed in full during training
- Evidence of any client contact and supervision undertaken during training (including dates), such as signed client and supervision logs or signed confirmation letters
- Evidence of client contact and or supervision undertaken after training (including dates), such as signed client and supervision logs or signed letters of confirmation

2. Training that was undertaken in a country other than Australia

All Applicants with training undertaken in a country other than Australia must apply via the RPL Pathway, unless the overseas training program is accredited by PACFA.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If the assessment of your overseas training cannot be completed by PACFA, PACFA will need to refer your application to [VETASSESS](#) for a more detailed assessment. VETASSESS is the leading national qualification assessment authority that assesses whether overseas qualifications meet the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

PACFA will advise Applicants whether assessment by VETASSESS is required once we receive your RPL Application.

PACFA can sometimes assess overseas training programs with which we are familiar. For example, we can assess some programs accredited by overseas professional bodies with similar requirements to PACFA. However, if PACFA is not familiar with the training program being assessed and, in particular, whether it meets the requirements of the AQF, an ***Overseas qualification assessment*** by VETASSESS will be required. A fee is payable to VETASSESS for this assessment.

In circumstances where the assessment of an overseas training program is very complex, PACFA will also require an assessment of the training to be completed by VETASSESS against the PACFA Training Standards (2018). A fee is payable to VETASSESS for this assessment.

Where documents are not in English, the Applicant is responsible for obtaining translations of all documents by a certified NAATI translator. [NAATI](#) is the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters.

Please only supply documents that relate specifically to your Counselling or Psychotherapy Training. Documents relating to other professions such as Psychiatry, Psychology, Social Work and Mental Health Nursing are generally not relevant as these are distinct professions in Australia with training that is different from the training required to be a counsellor or psychotherapist. The meaning of the different professions varies in other countries, so these qualifications should only be submitted if relevant to training in counselling or psychotherapy.

3. Client hours required for clinical membership or registration

PACFA will consider applications for Clinical membership or registration, or applications to upgrade from Provisional to Clinical membership or registration, where less than 750 hours of post-qualifying client contact has been completed, only in situations where a high volume of supervised client contact was completed during training (500 or more hours of client contact and 50 hours of supervision).

A maximum of 200 of these client contact hours and 20 of the supervision hours may be counted towards the 750 client contact hours and 75 supervision hours required for Clinical membership or registration. The Applicant must still have a minimum of 2 years' of post-qualifying practice experience to be granted credit for the supervised client contact required for Clinical membership or registration when making an RPL application.

APPLICATIONS

Applicants are required to prepare an application based on these Guidelines in order to demonstrate that their training and experience meets PACFA's requirements.

The application should be a statement with the following headings and include all available supporting documentation:

- i. Completion of the online application form via the PACFA Portal (confirm completion)
- ii. Reason for applying via RPL
- iii. Reason training did not include the required supervised client contact (if applicable)
- iv. Units of training for which Academic credit was awarded (if applicable)
- v. Total client contact hours and supervision hours completed
- vi. Names and contact details for employers and supervisors
- vii. List of supporting documents (attached)

Application fees cover administration costs and are non-refundable in the event that the application is unsuccessful.

PACFA Application Fees

Application - Provisional or Clinical	\$138 (inc GST)
Upgrade - Provisional to Clinical	\$93 (inc GST)

RPL Assessments Fees

RPL Assessment undertaken by PACFA	\$100 (inc GST)
Overseas qualification assessment by VETASSESS	\$275 (inc. GST)
Overseas qualification assessment by VETASSESS including assessment against PACFA Training Standards (for complex applications)	\$385 (inc. GST)