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Singapore Association for Counselling

Recognition of Counsellor Training Courses

**SAC Course Training Standards, Recognition Procedures
and Criteria**

*This manual has been adapted with permission from the
Australian Counselling Association's
Recognition of Counsellor Training Courses*

Foreword

Permission has been given by the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) for the use of the document "Recognition of Counselling Training Courses: ACA Course Training Standards & Recognition Procedures and Criteria" in adapting and creating this present document. Thank you ACA.

The purpose of this document is to clarify educational standards for counselling training programmes. This document is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead serves to encourage each educational organisation to raise their counselling training programmes to full standards.

The training standards, recognition procedure and criteria were intentionally crafted to provide a wide scope of counselling practice in Singapore.

It is hoped that this document will further inspire the clear development of highly qualified counsellors who had sufficient professional education in counselling provided by recognised training providers.

We wish to thank the following organisations, who made this manual possible:

- a. Ministry of Social and Family Development, formally known as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
- b. Ministry of Education
- c. National Council of Social Service
- d. National University of Singapore
- e. Singapore Association of Social Workers

Yours Sincerely,

David Blakely
President, Singapore Association for Counselling
and
Chairman, Course Recognition Committee
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Introduction

The Singapore Association for Counselling has recently established a Register for trained counsellors. With this register came a clarification of the standards of training an individual would need to accomplish to become registered. This has been done at an individual level, and has been important for assuring the quality of care of clients.

It is now seen as an important next step to identify, without any form of inconsistency, programmes that would effectively train counsellors to meet the standards of the Register.

PART I: RECOGNITION CRITERIA

1. Criteria for Recognition

While courses differ in the approach they take to training, all recognised courses will need to fulfil specific criteria. Training providers must be registered under the Council for Private Education stipulated under the Private Education Act or the Ministry of Education and recognised by the Course Recognition Committee (CRC) (See para 18)

1.1 All providers of a recognised course should have trainers teaching counselling specific courses who would themselves qualify for the SAC register. Though they need not have become members, they should be able to qualify. In addition, all trainers must have at least five years of clinical experience with 1000 hours of counselling provided.

1.2 The Course Recognition Scheme (CRS) is for existing courses that have graduated at least one cohort of students, and have been able to develop in the light of that experience. It is only when training procedures have been implemented that their effectiveness can be evaluated. Courses that do not meet these criteria may still apply for recognition but will need to demonstrate how they will continually evaluate that course. They need to demonstrate how they gather and use feedback and evaluate information.

1.3 SAC recognises programmes that give a graduate-level diploma or Masters degree. The intent is to acknowledge programmes that go beyond certificate-level courses.

1.4 The course must include counselling content of a minimum of 300 classroom face-to-face contact hours altogether. This minimum of 300 classroom hours should be extend for a period of at least twelve months.

1.5 The course must include the following core components:

- a. Counselling Theory, which includes the principles, concepts, and practice of counselling and orientation to basic counselling models;
 - b. Counselling skills
 - c. Counselling ethics, which would include familiarity with the SAC Code of Ethics
 - d. Human Growth and Development
 - e. Helping relationships
 - f. Group work
 - g. Appraisal and Research
 - h. Marriage and Family counselling
6. The counselling internship

The course must include counselling practicum and internship as part of the training programme:

- a. The internship must include at least 100 hours of face-to-face counselling experience for the student while in the programme
- b. The internship must include at least one hour of supervision for every ten hours of face-to-face counselling. The clinical supervisor must have at least five years experience with 1000 hours of clinical counselling provided. If the person is not a SAC Registered Counsellor, s/he must present an authenticated log.

- c. Face-to-face counselling refers to the physical presence and interaction between student and client in a helping relationship
- d. Face-to-face counselling includes individual, marriage and family or group counselling
- e. The internship must be not less than six months in length.
- f. The school must have one trainer that visits each intern's site at least once during the internship. The intent is to create a relationship of accountability for the best learning opportunity for the student.

1.7 For each student, there would be considerable time required for personal reading, writing, course work assignments, research, client work, professional supervision and personal therapy/development (if required by the course). However, these activities are *not* part of the 300 hours of classroom contact time.

1.8 For a foreign training provider, its programme must be recognised by the appropriate national association for counselling in its home country as qualifying a student who has successfully completed the programme to be a counsellor there.

1.9 It is strongly recommended that all application programmes be affiliated with either a tertiary institution that is recognised within its own country or directly supported by a government agency.

1.10 For counselling programmes with a religious orientation, it is mandatory for the educational institution to obtain accreditation with a religious body acceptable to SAC. SAC will recognize the programme from a counselling perspective.

1.11. If exemptions are given for any courses listed in 1.5, the school is responsible to provide other relevant courses related to the field of study. Every student within the school will complete at least 300 hours of classroom studies.

2. Skills Training

2.1 Training providers should provide:

- a. Structured experience and regular opportunities for observation, practice, feedback (from both staff and peers), discussion and review
- b. Opportunities to practise the blend of skills appropriate to the recognised theoretical model taught. These skills being identified and developed so that students can describe, analyse and utilise them
- c. A progressive monitoring and assessment of skills development

2.2 Training providers should note that they are responsible for the teaching and learning that form the basis of their submission for recognition. It is not acceptable for training providers to count skills or other work which students have done elsewhere, as part of the minimum contact hours. However, a case-by-case appeal may be considered with the submission of relevant information.

3. Theory

3.1 There should be enough counselling theory, drawing upon relevant psychological and behavioural disciplines, to enable students to make explicit:

- a. The underlying assumptions, basic principles and elements, concepts, strategies and techniques of the recognised theoretical model taught.
- b. The therapeutic process, principles and mechanisms of change as conceived in the recognised theoretical model taught.
- c. Comparisons with other counselling approaches.
- d. The social system in which we live and the ways these affect client development and counselling practice. (The term 'social systems' is taken to include such factors as race, culture, gender, sexuality, politics, religion, ethics, laws and class.)
- e. The theoretical basis for any specific client issues for e.g. anxiety, bereavement and loss etc included as topics in the course programme.

4. Admission Criteria for Students to Course

4.1 Prospective applicants should be provided with detailed and accurate information about the course including its structure, aims, staffing, contents, assessment requirements, appeals process, fees (including any 'extras' e.g. supervision/personal therapy fees) and conditions of participation (e.g. time commitments).

4.2 The procedure for selection should be clearly explained and be consistent with course rationale. Courses are expected to subscribe to an equal opportunity policy with respect to admission, course content and delivery.

5. Assessment

5.1 Students should be fully appraised of assessment procedures at the start of the course. They should receive regular feedback on their progress.

5.2 There should be a substantial emphasis on the assessment of competence in counselling skills and practice undertaken during the course. This may be achieved through verbatim reports, audio/ videotape recording, via examination, live supervision etc.

5.3 The course should include a substantial amount of assessed written work, for example case studies, essays, projects etc, amounting to at least 10,000 **words** (in English) in total or equivalent in other languages. The 'personal record' and 'professional log' are an addition to this requirement.

5.4 All assessment criteria should be clear and specific and made available to students. There should also be a published Appeals Procedure.

6. Course Evaluation

6.1 Course evaluation, like assessment, should be an on-going process throughout the duration of the course and not just something which happens at the end. This assessment should be done in a written form that can provide documentation later.

6.2 The training provider must have a published Complaints Procedure.

7. Formal Award

A course should provide a formal award as an integral part of the training. The course should also provide a detailed transcript of competencies/standards and of the areas covered during the course, including a statement about the range of clients seen by a student and the settings in which counselling practice/ client work has been undertaken. The award should indicate the name of the student, the name of the institution and the date of the award. It should also carry a personal signature of the head or training representative of training provider providing the course. Training courses should undertake responsibility for maintaining a record of awards made. Formally recognised courses should provide students with a qualification that includes the words 'SAC Recognised Course' or a signed statement to the effect that they have successfully completed an SAC Recognised Course._

8. Recognition of Prior Certificated and Government Recognition Courses

8.1 Courses that have prior government recognition and/or registration should not presuppose that the course will get automatic recognition with the Singapore Association for Counselling.

8.2 Courses that have developed a syllabus document or similar document for government recognition may submit this document as part of their submission for SAC recognition.

PART II: APPLICATION AND RECOGNITION PROCESS

APPLICATION PROCESS

Training courses will need to pass through the following stages in order to gain recognition, to maintain themselves in the CRS, and to gain re-recognition every two years. The CRC maintains the right at all times during the recognition period to conduct reviews and internal audits of the course to ensure that standards are maintained.

9. The Consultation Stage

9.1 Consultations can be of use both to training providers wishing to clarify their eligibility for the scheme and those setting up new courses. These consultations can vary from short meetings at the consultant's workplace to half-day events at the applying institution.

9.2 Consultation can be completed via electronic means if necessary.

9.3 It should be noted that the consultation process is not an assessment process. A consultant may offer an opinion about eligibility or other issues but this does not bind the committee in their judgement of a formal application.

Submission Document

9.4 A course wishing to proceed with an application for recognition will produce a detailed course document in accordance with a specified format.

9.5 A course application should constitute a substantive document and should cover each of the basic elements and describe how the course satisfies the criteria set out in the first part of the booklet. The document should be typed double-spaced on plain A4 sized paper. Pages should be numbered and a list of contents included.

9.6 Although many courses have a variety of explanatory and promotional material already available, e.g. course leaflets, brochures, etc. the submission document should stand in its own right and provide complete and comprehensive coverage of the criteria.

9.7 The document should include the following components: (Please refer to Appendix 2 for full description of submission document)

- a. Cover Sheet
- b. Contents
- c. Historical Background
- d. Aims of the course
- e. Course structure
- f. Specific Elements of Counsellor Training
- g. Details of the Staff
- h. Other Aspects of the Course
- i. Appendices
- j. Conclusion

10. The Application Stage

10.1 All new applications will now be processed on line. At www.sac-counsel.org.sg you will find the "Application for Trainer Providers" under the tab labeled Training. Hue full application fee should be mailed to the official address of SAC's secretariat.

10.2 SAC will screen out any manifestly ineligible application and advise the training provider, in writing, to withdraw. In this case the submission document will be returned together with the Application Stage fee less an amount for administration. If a training provider chooses not to take this advice the process may be continued and the entire Application Stage fee will be retained.

10.3 SAC will convene a Panel to examine the course document and identify aspects of the course, which may seem inadequate or require clarification, whereupon the assigned committee member will write to the course asking for additional information. The training provider should note that it would be important to respond in full to Panel requests at this point. If these requests cannot be met within a specified period then the training provider will be advised to withdraw its application.

10.4 If, after the Panel review, the Panel decides that the course does not satisfy the criteria for the Application Stage, the training provider will be advised to terminate the process and a detailed report will be sent to the training provider. Application fees are not refundable.

11. The Visit Stage

Where it is deemed necessary by the Panel, the recognition process will involve a site visit.

12. The Decision Stage

12.1 The Panel will prepare a written report on its findings in respect of the course's eligibility for recognition. There are three kinds of recommendations that the Panel can make:

- a. The Panel may recommend that recognition be granted. A number of suggestions for improvement and development of the course could be included in the report.
- b. The Panel may recommend that the course should not be recognised. The report will detail the reasons and a course is advised to seek consultation if it wishes to reapply. In this case a new application would be required at some later stage, when the course has been changed in the light of recommendations made in the report.
- c. The Panel may recommend that the course be not recognised until specific conditions are met. The conditions will be clearly stated and a maximum time (up to one year) given for these conditions to be met. The Report should clearly state whether the Panel are recommending that the course can be recognised *from the date of the visit* once conditions have been met or whether the changes required are too substantial for the recognition *to be thus backdated*.

When the course has met the conditions the training provider shall write to SAC explaining in full how the conditions have been met; the specific changes which have been made; and how these changes affect other parts of the course. At this point the assigned committee member, in consultation with the Committee Chair, will decide whether the Panel's recommendation to recognise can be ratified. Courses may be considered recognised by SAC when they receive written confirmation of this ratification from the assigned committee member.

Recognition takes effect from the date stated in the confirmation letter. The first cohort of students that can be deemed to have attended a recognised course are those attending the course on or after that stated date and completing the fully recognised course curriculum.

12.2 The final certification fee is payable at this stage. Courses will receive an SAC Certificate of Recognition.

12.3 Appeals against a Panel's conditions or the decision not to recognise must be addressed in writing to the Chairman of the (CRC) (See also para 18.5). The legitimate grounds for appeal should be that the published process was not followed or that assessment has not been carried out with reference to published criteria. The Course Recognition Committee will take such reasonable steps, as it considers necessary in its absolute discretion to consider the appeal, including as appropriate recourse to an independent assessor. SAC will charge a fee before considering an appeal.

13. Advertising

Training providers and/or institutions are not authorised to advertise recognition by SAC until official notification has been given of such recognition.

14. Special Notes on Course Eligibility

14.1 In addition to the criteria listed in the first part of this document (training providers should particularly note the following:

- a. The scheme is for counsellor training courses. Courses with the term therapy rather than the term counselling in their *title* may be eligible provided that they include all basic elements to satisfy the criteria. It should be clear that in this case the course is recognised by SAC as counsellor training.
- b. Recognition attaches itself to specific courses rather than institutions. If an institution runs two or more courses, which it wishes to enter, for recognition then separate applications and fees are normally required. If the courses were identical and run by the same trainers then they would be considered as one for the purpose of recognition. However if the courses were different (e.g. a full time and a part time course), or if the staff were different, then a separate application would normally have to be made for each course. Where the courses were identical except in their staffing, it is likely that the 'Application Stage' fee for one of the courses may be waived.

15. Timetable for Initial Recognition Process

1. The CRC will meet three times each year in January, May and September.

15.2 January. The CRC will meet by the third week of January. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1 November of the previous year. Any submissions after this date may be kept for the May sitting of the CRC. The programme will be informed in writing of the committee's decision within two weeks of the committee meeting.

2. May. The CRC will meet by the third week of May. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1 February. Any submissions after

this date may be kept for the September sitting of the CRC. The programme will be informed in writing of the committee's decision within two weeks of the committee meeting.

3. September. The CRC will meet by the third week of September. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1 June. Any submissions after this date may be kept for the January sitting of the CRC. The programme will be informed in writing of the CRC's decision within two weeks of the committee meeting.

16. Complaints against Training Providers

Complaints of improper conduct of training will be looked into and could result in the revoking of approving training status of training provider.

17. Applications for Re-recognition

17.1 A Recognised Course may seek re-recognition by providing written evidence that it continues to meet the minimum standards for entry to the Scheme. Guidelines for making a Re-recognition submission are available from SAC. In summary, the process will require a course report indicating:

- a. Significant changes to course and/or staff
- b. Details of professional or ethical issues
- c. Responses to the original Course Recognition Committee Report
- d. Summary of student evaluation and feedback and record of the consultative partnership during the period of recognition
- e. Copies of External Examiner/Moderators reports for the period and/or Consultative Partner's report.

17.2 It may be useful to include *relevant* appendices to illustrate or clarify aspects of the course report.

17.3 A Panel will consider applications for re-recognition. Further information may be sought and in certain circumstances a site visit may be necessary. Otherwise, applicants for re-recognition will only be required to complete the initial Application Stage procedure.

17.4 The cost of re-recognition will be a small administrative cost of **\$1000** unless the course has changed significantly and the panel needs to completely re-assess the application. The costs for this will be negotiated individually with the provider.

17.5 Recognition is valid only for two years.

PART III: SCHEME MANAGEMENT

18. Management of Course Recognition Scheme (CRS)

1. The SAC Executive Committee is accountable for the CRS.

18.2 The Course Recognition Committee (CRC) nominates committee members to consider applications and to receive reports and recommendations from those panels.

18.3 The CRC, acting on behalf of SAC, has the authority to approve or not approve applications for recognition and to confirm conditions of recognition and re-recognition recommended by the Panel that investigate a course.

18.4 The CRC will recommend to the SAC Executive Committee any proposed changes in the fees payable.

18.5 The CRC shall comprise representatives from each of the following organisations:

- a. Singapore Association for Counselling
- b. Ministry of Social and Family Development, formally known as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
- c. Ministry of Education
- d. National Council of Social Service
- e. National University of Singapore
- f. Singapore Association of Social Workers

18.6 The committee for evaluation of programmes will be composed of each of the primary organisations involved in the provision of counselling. This is intended to assure the applicants that the recognition received by this committee will be recognised by employers here in Singapore.

19. Fee Structure

19.1 Fees for the stages of the recognition process are payable in advance of each stage.

19.2 The total amount payable for Course Recognition is \$2500 at the current rate and includes the licensing agreement to use the SAC Recognised Training logo on marketing material.

19.3 Please check with SAC the current fees before submitting an application.

19.4 The payments will be made in full at the time of application.

19.5 Once approved courses may indicate on their advertising that they are SAC-recognised.

19.6 An administrative charge is made in the event of withdrawal before a Panel is formed.

19.7 The fees for a Re-recognition application are also payable in full at the time of submission.

=End of Document=

APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for Client Work, Training Placements and Supervision in Counsellor Training Courses

These guidelines are meant for aiding in the placement of student counsellors:

1. The school should be responsible to confirm with the placement site the final agreement of the internship. Though student can be given the option to find their own placement, they should have the option of the school providing the link.
2. The school should have clear documents for use in the internship. This includes
 - a. The structure of the supervision contract
 - b. The requirements of the school for completion of the internship
 - c. Documents for recording counselling hours
 - d. Documents for recording supervision hours/sessions.
 - e. Feedback/complaint form
3. The school should provide a school-based supervisor of the internship that will work to keep consistent communication with the placement supervisor.
4. The placement supervisor should be able to qualify for the SAC Register, although he/she might not necessarily to have done so.

APPENDIX 2

Format for Submission Document

1. A course wishing to proceed with an application for recognition will produce a detailed course document in accordance with the following format.
2. The contents of the document should include the following components:

a. Cover Sheet

This will include the following details:

Title of the course

Name of the organisation or institution

Name, address, email address, and telephone and fax numbers of the contact person

A suggested template for the title is:

'Submission to SAC for entry to the Scheme for the Recognition of Counsellor Training Courses of ... (Official course title) at ... (name of body/organisation).'

b. Contents

A contents page should be included and the pages of the document numbered.

c. Historical Background

A brief statement about the organisation that is providing the course i.e. when/how the organisation and/or course was established including the date of completion of the first cohort and the range/type of any other courses or related counselling service which is provided.

d. Aims of the course

(e.g. 'to provide a theoretical foundation and practical training in the particular approach which will enable students to practice as counsellors in such fields/areas as...')

e. Course structure

Information should be clearly presented under the following subheadings:

- i. The overall management and staffing structure of the course and how this relates to the management structure of the institutions organisation
- ii. Length of the course
- iii. Mode of attendance (e.g. full time/ part time/ evening/ block release/ In-class/ External/ Combined)

- iv. Location(s)/place(s) where course is to take place (e.g. in the home university or the training institution etc)
- v. Mode of consultation (e.g. face-to-face instruction)
- vi. Sessional hours
- vii. Day(s) of the week on which the course is held
- viii. Target group of students
- ix. Total number of staff contact hours
- x. Staff student ratios; and the contact hours for each core staff member
- xi. Course content/structure (i.e. what is taught by whom and for how long)
- xii. A detailed list of course content, course outcomes, competencies achieved by trainees upon completion of each unit, contact hours for each unit, mode of delivery and mode of assessment for each unit
- xiii. Compulsory readings and recommended readings required for each unit
- xiv. Course policies on equal opportunity issues (including, class, race, gender, sexuality and people with disabilities). The attitude the course adopts towards these issues should be expanded in the sections on Admission Policy (See para 4) and Theory (See para 3)

f. Specific Elements of Counsellor Training

The course document should then go on to address separately each of the specific elements of training detailed in Part I of this document. It should show how the course relates to the specific criteria given for each of these elements. Objectives, method and indicative content (i.e. topic first), teaching methods and indicative readings for each module/ unit should be included at some point.

A list of practical and theoretical assignments and assessment procedures including marking scheme and arrangements for referral and deferral of assessed work should be provided under the Assessment element.

g. Details of the Staff

It is important that this section follows the format given underneath.

- i. Details of the prior counselling training undergone by each trainer
- ii. An indication of whether the trainer would qualify for the SAC Register or not
- iii. Details of each trainer's on-going counselling work, including the number of clients seen each week and the context in which this counselling takes place

- iv. Details of counselling related research, publications, conference presentations and relevant work experience
- v. Details of each trainer's particular contribution to the course

h. Other Aspects of the Course

This is a 'miscellaneous' section, which might be omitted by some training providers but could include a lot of material for others. In this section training providers are encouraged to write about special features of the course that are not covered by the above structure for the Course Document. This is also the part of the document in which the course should make mention of ethical, professional or managerial issues which have been of recent concern to the training provider or its staff.

i. Appendices

These should include a recent report from the External Examiner and/ or Consultant and an indication of how this feedback and evaluation has been integrated into the course.

Training providers may also wish to submit selected items of existing material. However, if such material is included the purpose of doing so needs to be explained and the items cross-referenced to the main body of the document. Such material might typically include the course brochure or booklet, a blank application form etc. Generally, however, course handouts and other materials should be made available at the time of the Panel visit (optional) and *not* included as part of the initial application.

j. Conclusion

The document should be signed and dated by the Course Director/Leader and wherever possible by the Head of Department or Manager.