

# Counsellor Education Standards

## Philosophy

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) works to support the development of the profession, including establishing, maintaining, and promoting high professional standards of counselling practice, supervision, research, and counsellor education. Professional standards in counselling and counsellor education are shaped by the principles and values of NZAC.

NZAC supports counsellor education and professional development that promotes the integration of counselling theory, research and practice, and that is consistent with obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

## Introduction

This document provides overarching standards for NZAC programme accreditation, that is accreditation by the profession, taking into account accreditation standards and processes already in place through education authorities.

1. Counsellor education standards and a programme accreditation process provide a benchmark for professional counsellor education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. These standards are for the guidance of tertiary education institutions that provide counsellor education.
3. NZAC programme accreditation is referenced to NZAC membership criteria:
  - a. From January 2019, applicants for NZAC membership must have, as a minimum qualification, a degree in counselling accredited according to these standards.
  - b. Provisional membership of NZAC will be granted to the following (a) graduates of NZAC-accredited undergraduate programmes (BCouns or equivalent counselling degree), and (b) current students or graduates of NZAC-accredited postgraduate programmes (MCouns); providing such applicants have completed two hundred hours of supervised counselling practice and undergone the NZ Police vetting procedure.

## Specific Standards

### 1) *Qualification level*

A counsellor education programme which offers applicants a path to membership of NZAC must be at the minimum level of:

- a. An undergraduate degree in counselling (360 credits) (BCouns or equivalent counselling degree), or
- b. A master's degree in counselling (240 credits) (MCouns)
- c. And be New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) or Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) approved.

## 2) Governance

- a. The education institution and the programme must have the relevant tertiary education accreditation and approval. Where a programme seeks to gain or regain tertiary education approval through New Zealand Qualifications Authority or the Committee on University Academic Programmes the programme must demonstrate that the NZAC Counsellor Education Standards Committee has been involved in the approval process.
- b. The tertiary education institution maintains control of all aspects of the curriculum, including practicum.
- c. The programme is implemented through a distinct team of counsellor educators which has a clear identity within the educational institution. The staff of the counsellor education team will predominantly hold advanced counselling qualifications. There is clear demonstration of how the staffing is appropriate to the delivery of the counsellor education programme.
- d. The counsellor education programme, its teachers and students enact the values and ethical principles of NZAC.
- e. In undergraduate programmes where there are generic papers, a member of the counsellor education team, who is a qualified counsellor and a member of NZAC or a comparable professional counselling association, has identifiable responsibilities for coordination of the counselling specialty content.

## 3) Curriculum

- a. The curriculum arises out of the following statement about counselling from the NZAC Code of Ethics:

Counselling involves the formation of professional relationships based on ethical values and principles. Counsellors seek to assist clients to increase their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others, to develop more resourceful ways of living, and to bring about change in their lives. Counselling includes relationships formed with individuals, couples, families, groups, communities and organizations.
- b. The curriculum provides for the teaching and learning of counselling practice which is clearly founded in a well-articulated theoretical and philosophical rationale. This philosophical and practice focus is consistently applied throughout the programme, informing the ways in which students and graduates account for their practice.
- c. The curriculum responds to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and prepares graduates to develop cultural competence for counselling practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes the following:
  - i. The history and meanings of Te Tiriti o Waitangi;
  - ii. The historical impact of colonisation and its contemporary effects;
  - iii. The nature of culture, cultural identity, and effects within the counselling relationship;
  - iv. The responsibilities and privileges of the cultural identities available in post-colonial New Zealand;

- v. The provision of at least one residential noho marae as well as multiple wananga.
- d. The curriculum guides students towards integration of counselling theory, research and practice. The curriculum includes:
  - i. Understandings of the nature of identity in context;
  - ii. Critical understandings of social, cultural, political, economic, and legislative contexts, and the nature of power;
  - iii. Understandings of wellbeing and recovery, in the context of spiritual, emotional, physical and whanau life;
  - iv. Contemporary understandings of cultures in the widest sense, focusing on commonality, complexity, difference and diversity;
  - v. The implications of theory and research from kaupapa Māori, social science, education, and other related fields for the practice of counselling;
  - vi. Multiple opportunities for ongoing enhancement of self- and other-awareness and personal/professional development;
  - vii. The history of counselling, including the significance of therapeutic relationship, for Māori and non-Māori;
  - viii. Knowledge and application of the NZAC Code of Ethics;
  - ix. Establishing of therapeutic alliance and purpose;
  - x. Identifying and responding therapeutically to a range of presenting issues/problem areas;
  - xi. Understanding and facilitating processes of change including practices of assessment, goal setting and evaluation;
  - xii. Practice skills with individuals, families, and/or groups;
  - xiii. Engaging in professional counselling practice, including in supervision, cultural consultation, agency/community settings, and the professional community.
- e. The NZAC Code of Ethics frames all teaching and learning including practicum and supervision.
- f. The curriculum is designed to ensure graduates will have foundational level of competence to practise as professional counsellors.
- g. The programme includes clearly articulated assessment strategies to ensure integration of theory and research, practice and placement learning.

#### 4) *Selection*

The selection process:

- a. Is designed to establish applicants' personal, academic and professional readiness to study at the level of the programme, and suitability to study professional counselling;
- b. sets out clear criteria and rigorous processes for selection, involving individual

interview or whanau/group process;

- c. references NZAC's criteria for the selection for counselling personnel (2002);
- d. requires applicants to demonstrate that they are persons of good character; to declare any criminal convictions, or complaints about their practice; and where relevant to discuss any significant experience of trauma that might affect learning or professional practice.

#### 5) *Practicum*

- a. The programme is responsible for providing the criteria, the framework and support for the practicum.
- b. The programme will demonstrate that each practicum is undertaken in an organisation that provides appropriate professional guidance and oversight.
- c. The programme requirements must include at least 200 hours of supervised professional counselling practice in placement settings over a minimum of two years.
  - i. This practicum counselling must be supported by a minimum of twenty hours of regular professional supervision with a qualified counsellor who is a full member of an appropriate professional association.
  - ii. This practicum counselling must be supported by a minimum of 10 hours of cultural supervision provided by Maori supervisors who are practitioners of counselling and/or psychotherapy.
  - iii. Counselling practice experience with class peers is used for skill acquisition and is not considered practicum experience.
- d. The programme will demonstrate processes and regulations to consider students' fitness to undertake a counselling practicum.
- e. The programme will demonstrate that policy and processes are in place to address any concerns about a student's professional competence, conduct or suitability, prior to or during placement periods.

#### 6) *Professional and Stakeholder collaboration*

- a. Programmes must articulate how the placement requirements of their students will be able to be met, taking account of community opportunities and other counsellor education providers.
- b. Programmes must offer stakeholders appropriate opportunities to give feedback on the programme and be involved in programme review.

**The process for programme accreditation** is detailed in the document, NZAC Counsellor Education Standards Programme Accreditation Process.

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