



**Singapore
Association for
Counselling**

FOR COUNSELLING
AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Singapore Association for Counselling Recognition of Counsellor Training Courses

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

24 February 2021

***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 courses. This document is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead serves to encourage each educational organisation to raise their counselling training courses 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:

1. Ministry of Social and Family Development
2. Ministry of Education
3. National Council of Social Service
4. National University of Singapore
5. Singapore Association of Social Workers

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Frederick Low

President

Singapore Association for Counselling (2020 – 2022)

Trina Tan

Chairperson

Counsellors' Education Board (2020 – 2022)



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Introduction

The Singapore Association for Counselling had established a Register for trained counsellors since 2003. With the establishment of this register came a need to clarify the standards of training an individual would need to accomplish in order 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 important to identify, without any form of inconsistency, courses 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 Counsellors' Education Board (CEB). (See para 1.8)

- 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 be members, they should be able to qualify for membership with SAC. In addition, all trainers must have at least five (5) years of clinical experience with one thousand (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. It is only when training procedures have been implemented that their effectiveness can be evaluated. Courses that do not meet this criterion 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 only recognises courses that award a post-graduate level diploma or master's degree. The intent is to acknowledge courses that go beyond certificate-level and undergraduate programmes.
- 1.4. The course must include counselling content of a minimum of three hundred (300) lecturer-led face-to-face contact hours consisting of physical and/or virtual classrooms. These hours should cover a period of at least twelve (12) 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) Research and psychometric tools
 - h) Counselling modalities for specific clientele e.g., Marriage and Family counselling, Counselling for children, etc.
- 1.6. The counselling practicum/internship. The course must include counselling practicum/internship as part of the training:
 - a) The internship must include at least one hundred (100) hours of face-to-face and/or video counselling experience as part of the course.
 - b) The internship must include at least one hour of supervision for every ten (10) hours of counselling. The clinical supervisor must have at least five (5) years' experience with one thousand (1000) hours of clinical counselling provided. If the clinical supervisor is not a SAC Registered Counsellor, s/he must present an authenticated log and curriculum vitae.
 - c) Face-to-face and/or video counselling refer to the interaction between student and client in a helping relationship.
 - d) Face-to-face and/or video counselling include individual, marriage and family or group counselling, with individual counselling making up at least 60% of the total number of counselling hours clocked.
 - e) The length of internship must not be less than six (6) months.
 - f) The school must have one trainer who 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, projects, 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 three hundred (300) lecturer-led face-to-face contact hours consisting of physical and/or virtual classrooms as mentioned in para 1.4.
- 1.8 For a foreign training provider, its course must be recognised by the appropriate national association for counselling in its home country in qualifying a student who has successfully completed the course to be a counsellor there.
- 1.9 It is strongly recommended that courses applying for recognition should 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 courses with a religious orientation, it is mandatory for the educational institution to obtain accreditation with a religious body acceptable to SAC. SAC will recognise the programme from a counselling perspective.
- 1.11 If exemptions are given for any courses listed in para 1.5, the school is responsible to provide other relevant courses related to the field of study. Every student within the school must complete at least three hundred (300) face-to-face contact hours.

2 Skills Training

2.1. Training providers should provide:

- a) Structured experience and regular opportunities for observation, practice, feedback (from both staff and student 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 consider skills or other work which students have acquired prior to admission into the programme, 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
- f) 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 commitment).



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 and/or videotape recording, examination, and 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 ten thousand (10,000) words (in English) in total or its 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

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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 the training provider. Training courses should undertake responsibility for maintaining a record of awards made.
- 7.3. 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 a 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 to gain recognition, to maintain themselves in the CRS, and to gain re-recognition every three-four (3-4) years, subject to conditions listed below in Section 17. The CEB maintains the right 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 are useful to training providers wishing to clarify their eligibility for the scheme as well as those setting up new courses. These consultations can vary from meetings at the consultant's workplace or at the applying institution.
- 9.2. Consultations 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 and discuss other issues, but this does not bind the Counsellors' Education Board in their assessment of a formal application.

10 The Application Stage

Submission Document

- 10.1. A course wishing to proceed with an application for recognition will produce a detailed course document in accordance with a specified format.
- 10.2. A course application should constitute a substantive document and cover each of the basic elements found in the Institution Self-Assessment Checklist (refer to Appendix 2) providing the required supporting documents.
- 10.3. 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.
- 10.4. All new applications should be submitted via email to counsellorseducation@sacsingapore.org. The full application fee, i.e., the Administrative and Evaluative fees (refer to Appendix 3) should be mailed to the official address of SAC's secretariat.
- 10.5. SAC will screen out ineligible applications and advise the training provider, in writing, to withdraw the application. In this case, the Application fees less Administrative fee will be refunded to the training provider. If a training provider chooses not to take this advice the process may be continued, and the entire Application Stage fee will be retained.
- 10.6. SAC will convene the CEB to examine the application document and identify aspects of the course, which may seem inadequate or require clarification. The Secretariat of CEB will write to the course provider asking for additional information. The training provider should note that it would be important to respond in full to the CEB's 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.
- 10.7. After the review, if the Counsellors' Education Board decides that the course does not satisfy the criteria for application, the training provider will be advised to terminate the process and a report will be sent to the training provider. Application fees are not refundable at this stage.

11 The Visit Stage

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

12 The Decision Stage

- 12.1. The CEB will prepare a written report on its findings in respect to the course's eligibility for recognition. There are three (3) possible recommendations that the Panel can make:
 - a. The CEB may recommend that recognition be granted. Suggestions for improvement and development of the course could be included in the report.
 - b. The CEB may recommend that the course should not be recognised. The report will detail the reasons and the course provider 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 according to the recommendations made in the report.

- c. The CEB may recommend that the course should not be recognised until specific conditions are met. These conditions will be clearly stated, and a maximum time period will be given for these conditions to be met. The report will clearly state whether the CEB is recommending for the course to be recognised from the date of CEB's assessment, once conditions have been met or whether the changes required are too substantial for the recognition to be thus backdated.
- d. When the conditions have been met, the training provider will 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. The CEB will then decide whether the recognition can be ratified. Courses may be considered recognised by SAC when they receive written confirmation of this rectification.

12.2. Recognition of two (2) years 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.

12.3. Courses will receive an SAC Certificate of Recognition.

12.4. Appeal against the CEB's conditions and/or decision not to recognise must be addressed in writing to the Chairman of the CEB within fourteen (14) days of the results being formally notified to the training provider, including making payment to SAC for Appeal fee (refer to Appendix 3). 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 the published criteria in this Manual. The CEB will take such reasonable steps, as it considers necessary in its absolute discretion to consider the appeal, including an appropriate recourse to an independent assessor.

13 Advertising

18.1. 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 Part I of this document, training providers should particularly note of the following:

- a) The Counsellor Recognition Scheme (CRS) is for counsellor training courses. Courses with the term therapy rather than the term counselling in their title may be eligible provided they include all basic elements to satisfy the criteria in Part I. It should be clear that in this case the course is recognised by SAC as a counsellor training course.
- b) Recognition attaches itself to specific courses rather than institutions. If an institution runs two (2) or more courses, which it wishes to apply, for recognition, then separate applications and fees are required.

15. Timetable for Initial Recognition Process

15.1. The CEB will meet three (3) times each year in January, May, and September.

a) January

CEB will meet in January. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1st October of the previous year. Any submissions after this date may be kept for the May sitting of the CEB. The course provider will be informed in writing of the CEB's decision within one (1) month of the meeting.

b) May

The CEB will meet in May. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1st February. Any submissions after this date may be kept for the September sitting of the CEB. The course provider will be informed in writing of the CEB's decision within one (1) month of the meeting.

c) September



The CEB will meet in September. Submissions for recognition must be received by the SAC secretariat by 1st June. Any submissions after this date may be kept for the January sitting of the CEB. The course provider will be informed in writing of the CEB's decision within one (1) month of the meeting.

16. Complaints against Training Providers

- 16.1. Complaints of improper conduct of training will be investigated and could result in the revoking of the SAC Recognised Programme status.

17. Applications for Re-Recognition

- 17.1. A SAC Recognised Programme may seek re-recognition by providing written evidence that it continues to meet the minimum standards for entry to the CRS. Guidelines for making a re-recognition submission are available from SAC website (www.sacsingapore.org).
- 17.2. It may be useful to include **relevant appendices** to illustrate or clarify aspects of the course report.
- 17.3. In considering 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 can be found in Appendix 3.
- 17.5. The following validity periods for re-recognition may be granted up to a maximum of: -
 - a) Three (3) years – for programmes with non-negotiable areas for immediate attention and rectification.
 - b) Four (4) years – for programmes with minor or no issues.



PART III: SCHEME MANAGEMENT

18. Management of Counsellors' Education Board (CEB)

- 18.1. The SAC Executive Committee is accountable for the CEB.
- 18.2. The CEB nominates board members to consider applications and to receive reports, make assessments and site visits, and gives its recommendations to the CEB when they meet in January, May, and September.
- 18.3. The CEB, acting on behalf of SAC, has the authority to approve or not to approve applications for recognition and to confirm conditions of recognition and re-recognition.
- 18.4. The CEB will recommend to the SAC Executive Committee any proposed changes in the fees payable.
- 18.5. The CEB may seek representations from organisations such as:
 - a) Ministry of Education
 - b) Ministry of Health
 - c) Ministry of Social and Family Development
 - d) National Council of Social Service
 - e) Singapore Association of Social Workers
 - f) Singapore Psychological Society

- 18.6. The CEB will comprise of representatives of each of the primary organisations involved in the provision of counselling. This is intended to assure applicants that the recognition received from this board will be recognised by employers in Singapore.

- 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 training provider should be responsible to confirm with the placement site the final agreement for the internship. Though student can be given the option to find their own placement, they should have the option of the training provider providing the link.
2. The training provider should have clear documents for use in the internship. This includes:
 - a) The structure of the supervision contract
 - b) The requirements of the course for completion of the internship
 - c) Documents for recording counselling hours
 - d) Documents for recording supervision hours/sessions.
 - e) Feedback/complaint form
3. The training provider should provide a course-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 have to do so.



APPENDIX 2

Institution Self-Assessment Check List

Insert a 'X' to indicate that you have included the required documents listed below. Please input in the Remarks column if institution wish to explain reasons for non-submission of some documents.

No.	New Application	X	Re-Recognition	X	Remarks
1	Cover Sheet		Significant changes to course and/or staff		
2	Contents Sheet		Details of professional or ethical issues		
3	Historical Background		Responses to the original Course Recognition Board Report		
4	Aims of the course		Summary of student evaluation and feedback and record of the consultative partnership during the period of recognition		
5	Course structure		Copies of External Examiner/Moderators reports for the period and/or Consultative Partner's report.		
6	Specific Elements of Counsellor Training		Institution Self-Check List		
7	Details of the Staff				
8	Other Aspects of the Course				
9	Appendices				
10	Institution Self-Check List				

Name of Award		Post-nominal	
Institution's Name		Course Leader	
Awarded by (if it is by different Institution)		Submission Date	
Type of Submission	New Application / Re-Submission of Application / Re-Recognition / Re-Submission for Re-Recognition*		

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Initial Reviewer's			Second Reviewer
Signature			Signature
Recommendation	Approve / Reject / Inconclusive		Recommendation
Date			Approve / Reject / Inconclusive
CEB Meeting Date			Committee's Decision
Approval Period	From	To	Chair of Panel
Comments			



Insert a 'X' to indicate that the Course under view has met the stated requirement. Kindly include title of corresponding documents or other evidence which is verifiable to support the claim. Please input in the Remarks column if the institution wishes to explain for non-compliance of any of the published criteria.

No	Criteria	X	Evidence	Remarks
1	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).			
2	All providers of a recognised course should have trainers teaching counselling specific courses who would themselves qualify for the SAC register. In addition, all trainers must have at least five (5) years of clinical experience with 1000 hours of counselling provided.			
3	The Course Recognition Scheme (CRS) is for existing courses that have graduated at least one (1) cohort of students, and have been able to develop in the light of that experience			
4	SAC recognises programmes that give a graduate-level diploma or Master's degree.			
5	The course must include counselling content of a minimum of 300 classroom face-to-face contact hours altogether.			
6	This minimum of 300 classroom hours should be extend for a period of at least twelve (12) months.			
1	Core Components	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	The course must include the following core components:			
i	Counselling Theory, which includes the principles, concepts, and practice of counselling and orientation to basic counselling models;			
ii	Counselling skills			
iii	Counselling ethics, which would include familiarity with the SAC Code of Ethics			
iv	Human Growth and Development			
v	Helping relationships			
vi	Group work			
vii	Appraisal and Research			
viii	Marriage and Family counselling			
2	Practicum / Internship	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	The course must include counselling practicum and internship as part of the training programme:			
i	The internship must include at least one hundred (100) hours of face-to-face counselling experience for the student while in the programme			
ii	The internship must include at least one (1) hour of supervision for every ten (10) hours of face-to-face counselling. The clinical supervisor must have at least five (5) years' experience with one thousand (1000) hours of clinical counselling provided. If the person is			



iii	Face-to-face counselling refers to the physical presence and interaction between student and client in a helping relationship			
iv	Face-to-face counselling includes individual, marriage and family or group counselling			
v	The internship must be not less than six (6) months in length.			
vi	The school must have one trainer that visits each intern's site at least once during the internship.			
vii	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.			
viii	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.			
ix	For counselling programmes with a religious orientation, it is mandatory for the educational institution to obtain accreditation with a religious body acceptable to SAC.			
x	If exemptions are given for any courses listed in the previous section, the school is responsible to provide other relevant courses related to the field of study. Every student within the school will complete at least three hundred (300) hours of classroom studies.			
3	Skills Training	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	Training providers should provide:			
i	Structured experience and regular opportunities for observation, practice, feedback (from both staff and peers), discussion and review			
ii	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			
iii	A progressive monitoring and assessment of skills development			
B	There should be enough counselling theory, drawing upon relevant psychological and behavioural disciplines, to enable students to make explicit:			
i	The underlying assumptions, basic principles and elements, concepts, strategies, and techniques of the recognised theoretical model taught.			
ii	The therapeutic process, principles and mechanisms of change as conceived in the recognised theoretical model taught.			
iii	Comparisons with other counselling approaches.			
iv	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.)			
v	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	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	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).			
B	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	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	Students should be fully appraised of assessment procedures at the start of the course. They should receive regular feedback on their progress.			
B	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.			
C	The course should include a substantial amount of assessed written work, for example case studies, essays, projects etc, amounting to at least ten thousand (10,000) words (in English) in total or equivalent in other languages. The 'personal record' and 'professional log' are an addition to this requirement.			
D	There should also be a published Appeals Procedure.			
6	Course Evaluation	X	Evidence	Remarks
A	Course evaluation, like assessment, should be an on-going process This assessment should be done in a written form that can provide documentation later.			
B	A published Complaints Procedure			

- END OF DOCUMENT -



APPENDIX 3

	New Application	Re-Recognition
Administrative Fee*	SGD1,000	SGD1,000
Evaluation Fee*	SGD2,500	SGD3,500
Total Amount Payable:	SGD3,500	SGD4,500
Appeal Fee	SGD2,500	SGD3,500

*Fees must be paid in full at the point of submission in order for the application to be considered for evaluation.