

# New Zealand Association of Counsellors

## 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, counsellor education, supervision and research. Professional standards in counselling and counsellor education are shaped by the principles and values of NZAC.

NZAC supports counsellor education and professional development that promote the integration of counselling theory, research and practice and are consistent with working 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 tertiary education authorities.

1. Counsellor education standards and a programme accreditation process provide a benchmark for professional counsellor education in Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. Tertiary education institutions are **required** to adhere to these standards in the provision of NZAC-accredited counsellor education.
3. NZAC programme accreditation is referenced to NZAC membership criteria:
  - a. Applicants for NZAC membership must have, as a minimum qualification, a bachelor's or a master's degree in counselling from a programme accredited according to these standards.
  - b. Provisional membership of NZAC will be granted to the following:
    - (i) graduates of NZAC-accredited undergraduate programmes (BCouns or equivalent counselling degree), and
    - (ii) current students or graduates of NZAC-accredited postgraduate programmes (MCouns) provided they have completed two hundred hours of supervised counselling practice and have undergone a satisfactory NZ Police vetting process.

### 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 approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) or the Committee on University Academic programmes (CUAP).

#### 2) Governance

- a. The tertiary education institution maintains control of all aspects of the curriculum, including practicum.
- b. The programme is implemented through a distinct team of counsellor educators that has a clear identity within the educational institution.

- c. The majority of staff in the counsellor education team will hold advanced counselling qualifications. The programme leader will hold an academic qualification at least one level higher than the degree being delivered, plus a counselling qualification and counselling experience.
- d. There is clear demonstration of how the staffing is appropriate to the delivery of the counsellor education programme.
- e. The counsellor education programme, its teachers and students enact the values and ethical principles of NZAC.

### 3) Curriculum

The curriculum of each accredited programme is designed to ensure that the learning of counselling students is well supported and that graduates have an essential and integral level of counselling and Te Tiriti competence to practise as professional counsellors in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is necessary that:

- a. The curriculum responds to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and prepares graduates to develop Te Tiriti o Waitangi informed, bicultural competence for counselling practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. This requires inclusion of the following:
  - (i). The history and meanings of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
  - (ii). The nature of tangata whenua culture, one's own cultural identity, and their influence within counselling relationships.
  - (iii). Understanding the responsibilities connected with one's own cultural identity in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.
  - (iv). Critical understandings of social, cultural, political, economic and legislative contexts and the nature of power.
  - (v). The provision of at least one residential noho marae as well as multiple wananga.
- b. Each programme must include evidence of the following:
  - (i). Knowledge and application of ethical principles embedded in the NZAC Code of Ethics across all aspects of professional counselling practice.
  - (ii). Knowledge and application of the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi across all aspects of professional counselling practice
  - (iii). In depth understanding and knowledge of the historical and ongoing impact of colonisation and its contemporary effects for tangata whenua and tangata tiriti.
  - (iv). Contemporary understandings of cultures in the widest sense, focusing on commonality, complexity, difference and diversity across all peoples including minority groups.
  - (v). Understanding the significance of establishing a therapeutic alliance and the nature of therapeutic relationships for tangata whenua and tangata tiriti identities within a counselling relationship.
  - (vi). Understanding the assessment of wellbeing and recovery, in the context of spiritual, emotional, physical and social relationships.

- (vii). Knowledge and application of the philosophical implications of counselling theories underpinning the programme.
- (viii). Critical understandings and skill in the facilitation of processes of change in counselling including practices of assessment, goal setting and evaluation.
- (ix). Understanding the context and responding therapeutically to events which have contributed to client experiences of a range of presenting issues, including particularly depression, anxiety, loss, grief, trauma, suicidality, and risk of intentional or unintentional harm.
- (x). Counselling courses that include working with whānau/family, couples, and adolescents and young people in the context of the community as a whole.
- (xi). Multiple opportunities for ongoing enhancement of self- and other-awareness and personal/professional development.
- (xii). Modes of delivery of counselling that meet contemporary needs such as face to face, tele and e-counselling.
- (xiii). Knowledge of the implications of theory and research from Kaupapa Māori, social science, education and other related fields relevant for the practice of counselling.
- (xiv). Research in an undergraduate degree will include knowledge of basic research methodology and the ability of students to critically read and interpret results. Research in a post-graduate degree will advance undergraduate understandings through engaging in independent research or a research-based portfolio.

#### 4) Selection

The selection process must demonstrate that it:

- a. is designed to establish applicants' personal, academic and professional readiness to study at the level of the programme, including self- and other awareness that enables personal and professional growth.
- b. ensures that applicants are selected because they demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence, sufficient emotional maturity, the capacity for empathy, ability to relate to clients' levels of emotional depth, and have the capacity to learn when to use therapeutic tools, techniques and more advanced skills.
- c. requires applicants to be persons of good character; to declare any criminal convictions, or complaints about their practice; and to discuss any significant experience of trauma, including addiction, that might affect learning or professional practice.
- d. sets out clear criteria and rigorous processes for selection or non-selection, involves at least two experienced counsellors and requires an individual interview and/or a whānau/group process.
- e. is responsive to understanding Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa and other cultural worldviews in considering the readiness of applicants applying for the programme.
- f. is considerate of diversity and openness to worldviews and abilities, for example ethnicity, spirituality, sexuality, disability.
- g. requires applicants to demonstrate a commitment to social justice, inclusivity, equity, diversity and to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

## 5) Practicum

**The programme is responsible for providing the criteria, the framework and support for the practicum.**

The documentation of each programme will demonstrate the inclusion of professional counselling practice, supervision and Te Tiriti o Waitangi informed cultural consultation with individuals, family, whānau, hapū and/or iwi/ groups in agency/community settings and the professional community.

- a. The programme requirements must include at least 200 hours of supervised professional counselling practice of which a minimum of 100 hours needs to be face-to-face. 100 hours may be tele and /or e-counselling (excluding text only) and up to 50 of the 200 hours may be therapeutic group facilitation.
  - (i). This practicum counselling must be supported also by a minimum of 20 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 Te Tiriti o Waitangi informed cultural consultation provided by Māori supervisors or consultants who can provide cultural education around "Matauranga Māori" (ie: tikanga, protocols). They may be practitioners of counselling and/or psychotherapy or representatives from local iwi with this expertise.
  - (iii). Counselling practice experience with class peers is used for skill acquisition but is not considered practicum experience.
- b. The programme will demonstrate that policies and processes are in place to address any concerns about a student's professional competence, conduct or suitability, prior to or during placement periods. This will include notification to students that if they fail the practicum requirements in a placement, they may only repeat the practicum and attempt to pass the requirements once, or will be disallowed from completing the qualification.
- c. The Counsellor Education Committee recommends working towards an optimal lecturer/student ratio of 1: 6 for staff to facilitate and assess student counselling practice and skill development effectively.

## 6) Professional and Stakeholder collaboration

- a. Programmes must articulate how the placement requirements of their students will 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 to be provided in a separate document entitled *NZAC Counsellor Education Programme Accreditation Process*