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COSCA's Education and Training Standards for Registrants on the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists

1. Summary of Education and Training Standards

Those in membership in the following categories are eligible for entry on the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists:

- ✓ Counsellor Member (Organisations)
- ✓ Counsellor Member
- ✓ Practitioner Member
- ✓ UK Body Accredited Member
- ✓ COSCA Accredited Member

A summary of the education and training standards for the above categories is detailed in the table below:

Membership Category	Minimum Tutor Contact Training Hours	Minimum Supervised Counselling Practice (not including tutor contact hours)
✓ Counsellor Member (Organisations)	150 tutor contact training hours endorsed by the COSCA member organisation	60 hours with actual clients (1:6 supervision ratio*)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Counsellor Member ✓ Practitioner Member ✓ UK Body Accredited Member ✓ COSCA Accredited Member 	COSCA validated Diploma or equivalent (400 tutor contact training hours) or 300 tutor contact training hours of integrated core training programme	100 hours with actual clients (1:6 supervision ratio*)

****1:6 on COSCA validated courses/ratio not specified but supervision required on non-COSCA courses***

2. Introduction to Education and Training Standards

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland) aims to support counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland to develop and maintain high standards in education and training, and ethical practice. COSCA believes that all its registrants need to be educated and trained to give them the capacity to make sense of the client's issues and to anticipate and understand the impact of their interventions in the process of their therapeutic work with clients.

We require all registrants to have satisfactorily completed a thorough and rigorous professional training, including a substantial emphasis on personal development, with ongoing supervision and CPD, and a commitment to COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice. Our education and training standards are geared to ensure fitness to practice and we follow a competency-based approach to outcomes.

COSCA has set professional rather than academic educational and training standards that enable its registrants to practise competently and safely in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy. COSCA's professional education and training standards for counsellors and psychotherapist working independently are very similar to those set by other professional bodies in the field.

Because of COSCA's long-standing involvement with the majority of counselling taking place within counselling organisations in Scotland, it is also well placed to set standards for its registrants who work solely within its member organisations.

COSCA:

- takes action when registrants on our Register do not meet our standards
- creates public trust in counsellors and psychotherapists by setting, monitoring and implementing these standards
- provides all registrants with the Professional Standards Authority Accreditation Mark to display to the public, their clients and employers
- aims to keep our registrants informed about matters related to counselling and psychotherapy

The Register can be accessed on www.cosca.org.uk – 'Find a Therapist' and information about the contents of entry on the Register are contained in the 'About the Register and Registrants' section of the Register. It is important that all applicants for membership make themselves aware of these contents before applying.

3. Education and Training Standards for Entry to COSCA's Register

On the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, COSCA registers individuals who have met our standards in relation to training and education, and also practice and supervision. These standards are shown below in detail for each of the registrant categories.

In addition, training courses in counselling and psychotherapy are required to include **COSCA's Core Competencies for Counselling**. Please see below **4. Essential Content of COSCA Validated Education and Training Programmes**

Registrants working with children and young people must be able to demonstrate in their core training the additional competencies identified in COSCA Competencies for Counselling Children and Young People: Guidelines for Training Organisations, Practitioners and Trainees – www.cosca.org.uk – Children.

➤ **Counsellor Member (Organisations):**

This category of membership is for those who do not practise independently but who are engaged as a counsellor by an organisation that is a member of COSCA

For entry to the Register, registrants need to have undertaken:

- ✓ a minimum of 150 hours of integrated core training in counselling delivered by an organisational member of COSCA for the training of its counsellors
- ✓ additional learning activities outside of the above 150 hours e.g. reading and studying course and other relevant references, preparing written assignments, self-reflection etc.
- ✓ 60 hours of supervised counselling practice with actual clients while in training
- ✓ supervision ratio of 1:6 while in training on a COSCA validated course; supervision level not specified but required on non COSCA validated courses
- ✓ a practice base of at least 5 – 8 hours per month for the last three months in an organisation that is a member of COSCA.

Following registration, registrants need to have:

- ✓ a practice base of at least 5 – 8 hours per month in an organisation that is a member of COSCA
- ✓ supervision ratio of at least 1:12
- ✓ at least 15 hours of continuous professional development per annum that enhances and develops their counselling practice
- ✓ public liability insurance cover of at least £1million for their counselling practice.

Because their training is not at diploma level, the scope of practice for Counsellor Member (Organisations) is limited to working within Organisational Members of COSCA and not to practise independently. These registrants are not entitled or expected to work as counsellors with clients and the public outside of the COSCA member organisation that engages them and endorses their education and training.

COSCA requires member organisations to ensure that Counsellor Members (Organisations) are aware of their competencies and work within them. To help them do this, member organisations are required to provide opportunities for further training through courses, workshops, seminars etc; (see paragraph 2.4 in the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice). These requirements provide safeguards for the public that the Counsellor Member (Organisations) refers on clients with whom they do not have the skills, training, experience or competence to work.

COSCA further ensures that Counsellor Members (Organisations) work within their competences by requiring organisational members to ensure that provision is made for appropriate consultative support for managers and others responsible for running the organisation (please see paragraph 2.7 in the Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice).

In setting the education and training standards for its Counsellor Members (Organisations), COSCA takes account of the above responsibilities that its member organisations have towards these registrants. These member organisations ensure the health and safety of their counsellors, and look after and pay for insurance cover, counselling supervision, counselling room provision, further training, initial assessment of clients etc.

➤ **Counsellor Member:**

This category of membership is for newly qualified and/or trained counsellors and psychotherapists who practise independently and/or with counselling organisations that are members and non-members of COSCA.

For entry to the Register, registrants need to have undertaken:

- ✓ A COSCA validated diploma of a minimum of 400 tutor contact training hours (or equivalent diploma) in counselling or psychotherapy

or

- ✓ a minimum of 300 cumulative tutor contact training hours in counselling or psychotherapy. The cohesive core of the training programme needs to take place within a period of 5 years. Additional training needs to be in substantial, rational, structured and carefully planned 'modular' blocks that demonstrate progression from the cohesive core element of the training.

Plus:

- ✓ additional learning activities outside of the above contact training hours e.g. reading and studying course and other relevant references, preparing written assignments, self-reflection etc.
- ✓ 100 hours of supervised counselling practice while in training
- ✓ supervision ratio of 1:6 while in training on a COSCA validated course; supervision level not specified but required on non COSCA validated courses
- ✓ a practice base of at least 5 – 8 hours per month for the last three months

Following registration, registrants need to have:

- ✓ a current supervised practice base of at least 5-8 hours per month
- ✓ a supervision ratio of 1:12
- ✓ at least 18 hours of continuing professional development per annum
- ✓ public liability insurance cover of at least £1million for their counselling practice.

Counsellor Members can work in a counselling organisation and also practise independently.

➤ **Practitioner Member:**

This category of membership is for experienced counsellors and psychotherapists who have consolidated their initial training for at least two years post the successful completion of their core training in counselling/psychotherapy.

For entry to the Register, registrants need to have undertaken:

- ✓ A COSCA validated diploma of a minimum of 400 tutor contact training hours (or equivalent diploma) in counselling or psychotherapy

Or

a minimum of 300 cumulative tutor contact training hours in counselling or psychotherapy. The cohesive core of the training programme needs to take place within a period of 5 years. Additional training needs to be in substantial, rational, structured and carefully planned 'modular' blocks that demonstrate progression from the cohesive core element of the training.

Plus:

- ✓ additional learning activities outside of the above contact training hours e.g. reading and studying course and other relevant references, preparing written assignments, self-reflection etc.
- ✓ 100 hours of supervised counselling practice while in training.
- ✓ supervision ratio of 1:6 while in training on a COSCA validated course; supervision level not specified but required on non COSCA validated courses
- ✓ 2 years post training experience
- ✓ 54 hours of continuing professional development over a 3 year period
- ✓ a cumulative practice base of 200 hours with an average of 2 hours per week
- ✓ a practice base of at least 8 hours per month for the last three months

Following registration, registrants need to have:

- ✓ 18 hours of continuous professional development per annum
- ✓ current supervised practice of at least 8 hours on average per month
- ✓ supervision ratio of 1:12
- ✓ public liability insurance cover of at least £1million for their counselling practice.

Practitioner Members can work in a counselling organisation and also practise independently.

➤ **UK Body Accredited Member:**

This category of membership is for individuals who:

- ✓ have achieved full accreditation as a counsellor or psychotherapist with another UK Professional Body in the field of counselling and psychotherapy
- ✓ have met the criteria laid down in the respective membership application forms – see www.cosca.org.uk - membership/individual
- ✓ are current and continuing members of a UK Professional Body in the field of counselling and psychotherapy

The above Members can work in a counselling organisation and also practise independently.

➤ **COSCA Accredited Member:**

This category of membership is for those who have:

- ✓ been Practitioner Members of COSCA for at least 2 years (see above under Practitioner Member for education and training standards)
- ✓ attained a mature, professional, competent, safe and ethical standard of practice
- ✓ demonstrated their quality of practice that is acceptable for accreditation by COSCA
- ✓ demonstrated that they have met the necessary criteria for counsellor accreditation. Please see www.cosca.org.uk - accreditation/counsellor.

The above Members can work in a counselling organisation and also practise independently.

4. Essential Content of COSCA Validated Education and Training Programmes

COSCA does not have its own education and training programme in counselling and psychotherapy. Instead, COSCA validates the education and training programmes of member organisations that have their own programmes. These are listed in separate directories on our website under courses. The quality of validated courses is assessed via COSCA's course validation system. All these criteria need to be evidenced as a condition of a course being awarded COSCA validation. See our website under validation for the details of each course validation system.
www.cosca.org.uk

The essential content areas in an acceptable programme of education and training in counselling and psychotherapy are:

- counselling skills
- the counselling process
- supervised practice of actual clients while in training
- counselling and psychotherapy theory
- self-awareness and personal development
- ethics

In addition, training courses in counselling and psychotherapy are required to include **COSCA's Core Competencies for Counselling**. These core competencies for counselling:

- have been mapped against the Skills for Health National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Psychological Therapies. www.skillsforhealth.org.uk
- provide transparency around the outcomes that are required to be achieved through pre-registration education and training programmes in counselling and psychotherapy
- are considered core for all counselling and psychotherapy practice. In the process of initial training they would be deepened and developed through practice, theoretical learning, reflection and self-awareness work
- are used when mapping for equivalence non-COSCA validated courses onto COSCA's internal Equivalent Education and Training Database (see 5. Other Training Programmes below). Only courses in counselling and psychotherapy that demonstrate that they include the core competencies are mapped as equivalent.

For the purposes of entry to the Register, the pre-registration programme course needs to have successfully included education and training based on meeting COSCA's set of 12 core competencies in order to ensure fitness for practice. The education and training also needs to have its learning outcomes based on the core competencies below.

The **core competencies** for fitness to practice counselling and psychotherapy include the capacity:

- to enter and understand the world of another person and to be authentically present for him/her in the therapeutic relationship
- to understand the counselling relationship and process in theory and in practice
- to establish and maintain a therapeutic relationship
- to work coherently within a theoretical model that informs the counselling practice
- to be ethical and accountable in all aspects of practice
- to use supervision for development of self-awareness and safety of clients
- to recognise and respond to one's needs and limits in relation to professional competence, boundaries and personal circumstances
- to value and support difference and diversity

- to understand, recognise and integrate personal and professional values and be accepting of the challenge of difference
- to work with risk, resilience and change
- to have an awareness and understanding of issues of personal and professional power and authority
- to tolerate uncertainty and the unknown.

Please also see these core competencies for counselling posted on www.cosca.org.uk - counselling/COSCA's core competencies for counselling.

In the above list of core competencies, the 5th competency reads as follows: 'to be ethical and accountable in all aspects of practice'. This competency ensures that the content of the education and training includes training on COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice and that it is linked throughout to the ethical principles and values contained therein. See www.cosca.org.uk - ethics/COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

To be awarded full course validation, a full breakdown of the education and training programme needs to be submitted in the form of a course handbook by the training provider. This is approved and held on file by COSCA. Training providers are required to submit up-dates of any changes to the programme and these must be approved by COSCA for validation to be continued. COSCA keeps a record of any up-dates received from the training provider.

5. Other Training Programmes

For courses not validated by COSCA, a mapping system is used to assure COSCA about the quality of education and training. This mapping assures COSCA that mapped courses require students to have a supervised counselling practice during their time as a student in addition to the required tutor contact training hours. COSCA checks that the mapped course promotes client safety under the evidence submitted for core competency no 6: 'to use supervision for development of self-awareness and safety of clients'. For the course to be mapped by COSCA there needs to be evidence that students' development is facilitated and that students are enabled to become fit to practise. The evidence required to be submitted under the core competencies 1, 2, 3 and 4 is checked to ensure that the above is met.

In addition, other education and training programmes are verified for equivalence for each of the membership categories listed above by checking against the following standards:

- the COSCA core competences for counselling embedded in the course
- the core course content
- the submission of a referee's contact details.

Once the education and training programme has been verified and approved, full details are added to our internal Equivalent Education and Training Database. Full details of education and training that are not approved are added to our internal Non Approved Education and Training Database for future reference.

COSCA only accepts evidence of integrated core training that is in counselling and psychotherapy. Education and training based on the following (including but not limited to) will not be accepted for membership:

- Psychology
- Hypnotherapy
- Social work
- Coaching
- Art Therapy
- Play Therapy

6. Quality Assurance of COSCA Validated Education and Training Programmes

COSCA Validation of Courses in Counselling & Psychotherapy

As referred to above, COSCA has a highly developed course validation system for the external quality assurance of education and training programmes. See www.cosca.org.uk - Validation.

Education and training programmes validated by COSCA do not need to have academic validation, although most COSCA validated education and training programmes do have this.

COSCA's Course Validation Panel has responsibility for implementing COSCA's education and training standards and has the lead role in the maintenance, development and review of these standards.

Annually, validated training providers are required to submit Annual Monitoring Forms. After a period of five years all validated training providers are required to apply for revalidation. During the process of considering revalidation applications, COSCA examines all previous Annual Monitoring Forms to ensure that quality is assured.

Brian Magee
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