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COSCA Counsellor and Psychotherapist Accreditation

COMBINATION ROUTE GUIDELINES

The **Combination Route to COSCA Counsellor Accreditation** is for counsellors/psychotherapists who have been working for several years, who have not completed a COSCA validated diploma or equivalent, but who have some formal core training, such as offered within an agency/organisation, and have significant practical experience.

This is the **Guidelines** to assist you with the **Application for COSCA Counsellor/Psychotherapist Accreditation through the COMBINATION ROUTE.**

The Application to become an Accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist with COSCA can be found on – www.cosca.org.uk – Accreditation – Counsellor – Combination Route Application.

Please note that where Appendices are referred to in this document, they form part of the Application document to be found on: www.cosca.org.uk – Accreditation – Counsellor – Application Combination Route.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	p3
A. Aims and Principles of Accreditation	p3
B. Application Procedure	p6
1. Elements of the Application	p9
2. Applicant's Personal Details	p10
3. Core Training and Theoretical Knowledge	p10
4. Therapeutic Alliance	p12
5. Practice	p13
➤ Practice Log	
➤ Career Break	
➤ Summary of recent period of work	
➤ Client time range	
➤ Assessment skills and referral system	
➤ Work settings and arrangements	
➤ Insurance	
➤ Case study	
6. Supervision	p16
➤ Supervision History	
➤ Current Supervision	
➤ Supervisor's Report	
7. Continuing Professional Development	p18
8. Reflective Practitioner	p19
➤ Details of personal counselling/therapy	
➤ Personal Growth	
9. Ethics	p20
10. Fee for Application for Accreditation	p20

COSCA Counsellor and Psychotherapist Accreditation

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMBINATION ROUTE

A: AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION

What is Accreditation?

1. COSCA, the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland, aims to maintain standards of qualifications, training and practice in counselling and psychotherapy. This is to protect clients and counsellors/psychotherapists, minimise the danger of malpractice and support the development of counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland. COSCA, therefore, has developed a system of accreditation of counsellors and psychotherapists, underpinned by its Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.
2. The key purpose of Accreditation is to provide an assurance to the general public that a counsellor/psychotherapist has been assessed and deemed to have attained a mature, professional, competent, safe and ethical standard of practice. Accreditation is also about confirming and evidencing good practice. Accreditation is seen as a part of the professional development of counsellors/psychotherapists. Accreditation requires applicants to demonstrate the quality of their practice and that they have reached a standard that is acceptable for accreditation by COSCA.
3. COSCA recognises that any system of accreditation is as much a protection for the counsellors/psychotherapists concerned as a protection for their clients. COSCA delegates responsibility for the format and criteria of the COSCA accreditation process to its Accreditation and Recognition Standing Policy Group. Through detailed discussions, and consultation within COSCA and other professional counselling bodies, the Group has designed these accreditation criteria, and will continue to monitor and review them. The Group strives to work reflectively so that a sensitive balance between safety and creativity can be reached. Underpinning the whole development of an accreditation system is the recognition that accreditation for counsellors and psychotherapists is a crucial yet complex process. As such it will require continual refinement and revision.

4. COSCA aims to make the process of accreditation accessible and supportive. It is aware of the diverse backgrounds of qualifications, training and experience that counsellors and psychotherapists will bring to the process of accreditation and it has aimed to design a system that can assess this fairly. The process of accreditation is about enabling applicants to show that they have achieved set criteria and is not simply a question of verifying that an applicant has submitted appropriate documentation.

What is the Combination Route to Accreditation?

5. The Combination Route is for counsellors/psychotherapists who have been working for several years, who have not completed a COSCA validated diploma or equivalent, but who have some formal core training, such as offered within an agency/organisation, and have significant practical experience. Counsellors/psychotherapists applying for accreditation by this route must provide evidence of a combination of:
- i) Some cohesive units of formal counselling/psychotherapy training
 - ii) Several years of practice under formal supervision at a minimum of 90 client contact hours per year.

In order to establish parity between applicants coming from a wide range of backgrounds COSCA has introduced the following system of measurement:

Counselling/psychotherapy practice. 1 year of supervised and verified practice (minimum 90 client hours/year)	= 1 unit
Core training – 300 cumulative hours of formal counselling/psychotherapy training, with the cohesive core of the training taking place within 5 years	= 4 units
Further counselling/psychotherapy training – a coherent block of 75 hours of training	= 1 unit

Together the total units for this route must add up to 10 units. Please note that all applicants must have completed 300 hours of core training (= 4 units) and a minimum of 450 supervised client contact hours.

It is possible to gain 10 units from a combination of counselling/psychotherapy practice and core training only i.e. 300 hours core training (= 4 units) plus 6 years of counselling/psychotherapy practice at a minimum of 90 supervised contact hours per year (= 6 units).

Combination Route applicants must indicate clearly in their application how they have arrived at the required 10 units.

What happens to my submitted application?

6. Decision-making on applications for accreditation is the responsibility of COSCA's Counsellor/Psychotherapist Accreditation Panel. The Accreditation Panel is a working group comprised of experienced accredited counsellors/psychotherapists. The Accreditation Panel aims to provide the degree of consistency necessary to take account of the variety of approaches, qualifications, training and experience presented for submission by applicants.
7. Your application must be clearly submitted in the order in which it is asked and you must make use of the proformas included in the application form. In their deliberations, the Accreditation Panel is asked to compare the entire documentation against the criteria. An application should be such that the Accreditation Panel can say, on the basis of what has been submitted, that the applicant is fit, via their learning, skill and experience, to work as a counsellor/psychotherapist independently, as well as within organisations. On the basis of the application the Panel should also be able to be confident that members of the public seeking help from the accredited counsellor/psychotherapist will receive an appropriate response.
8. Applicants can draw upon training and experience gained while working as counsellors/psychotherapists independently, as employees, or as volunteers.
9. The timescale involved in the COSCA accreditation process is based on the understanding that becoming a counsellor/psychotherapist is a gradual process requiring consolidation through time. Where an applicant is applying via the Diploma route, and may have only limited previous counselling experience, the timescale allows for the consolidation of knowledge and skills gained during the Diploma training.
10. All written materials provided by COSCA for the accreditation process are the copyright of COSCA. Photocopying, or copying by any other means, is restricted to the personal use of the applicant.

How do I become a Practitioner Member of COSCA?

The first step in the process of accreditation is that an applicant must be a **Practitioner Member** of COSCA.

Practitioner Members are required to have completed a minimum of 300 cumulative contact hours of training in counselling/psychotherapy. The cohesive core of the above training needs to take place within a period of 5 years. As part of the above training, but not included in the 300 hours, you are required to have a supervised counselling practice placement. Additional training needs to be in substantial and planned blocks, and clearly progressional from the core training.

Practitioner Members are required to have a cumulative practice base of 200 hours, with an average of 2 hours per week; have a supervision ratio of 1:12; and have achieved 54 cumulative hours of continuing professional development with an average of 18 hours per annum over the last 3 years.

Applicants must abide by COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice and reflect knowledge of the Statement throughout their application. Details of how to apply for Practitioner Membership are available from COSCA's website www.cosca.org.uk or by contacting COSCA's office.

Please note that you are eligible to apply for Practitioner Membership two years post your core training in counselling, psychotherapy and/or counselling psychology.

B: APPLICATION PROCEDURE

How do I prepare for submitting my application?

In advance of starting work on their application, COSCA strongly advises all applicants to:

- Attend the COSCA Counsellor Accreditation System Workshop – held bi-annually and advertised under Events – COSCA on www.cosca.org.uk

And/or

- View the COSCA Counselling Accreditation System Online Workshop Video – see under Accreditation – Counsellor on www.cosca.org.uk.

How do I submit my application?

1. All applicants require to use the most up to date Guidelines and Application Forms. The most up to date forms are available to be downloaded from the COSCA website: www.cosca.org.uk. You should include the date of the Guidelines in the box provided under Appendix B of the Application Form.
2. All applications must be submitted, **one master and four copies**, to COSCA, 16 Melville Terrace, Stirling FK8 2NE, and be accompanied by the application fee. See COSCA's website for current fee. Applicants should keep a copy of their application.

In order that your application is assessed anonymously by the Panel, you are required to contact the COSCA Development Officer (Individuals/Courses) to obtain a discrete reference which you are required to add to all the pages of your application.

The **master copy** should **not be anonymised**. The other **four copies** require to be **submitted without any personal identifying details** apart from the reference number supplied by the Development Officer.

3. Please present information clearly and **typed**. Applications that are difficult to read will be returned to the applicant and will have to be re-submitted at the next submission date. **Please also ensure that you include a word count at the end of every written section of the application.**
4. Submission dates are twice yearly: the last working days of March and September. Applications arriving at the COSCA office later than these dates will have to wait until the following round.

The Development Officer can complete a technical check on applications and provide feedback if they are submitted at least four weeks in advance of the submission date. The Development Officer cannot comment on whether the standard has been met for accreditation to be awarded but can advise of any technical criteria that may have been missed.

5. The application must include a contents page, a supervisor's report, and an application checklist (see **Appendix B: Application Elements Checklist**).
6. Your application form is anonymous to the COSCA Counsellor/Psychotherapist Accreditation Panel. If you wish to have an identifying feature on each page or section, please insert your COSCA membership number and not your name in the box provided at the foot of each page of your submission.

What are the outcomes of applying to the Accreditation Panel?

7. When determining each application, the Accreditation Panel has four options:
 - **Accreditation**
 - **Provisional acceptance for Accreditation** subject to minimal requirements or re-submission of certain documents. *See website for re-submission fee.*
 - **No Accreditation Meantime** – some section(s) will require re-submission. *See website for current fee.*
 - **No Accreditation** – substantial section(s) of the submission do not fulfil COSCA's requirements and considerable work is required, essentially representing a fresh application. *See website for re-application fee.*
8. The Chief Executive of COSCA will inform applicants in writing of the outcome, normally within 16 – 20 weeks of the submission date. The Panel will give details of where an application fails to meet the criteria. The extent of the re-submission is at the discretion of the Panel. Applicants will be invited to fulfil the additional requirements and resubmit only that specific area which has been indicated by the Panel.
9. Applicants can appeal against the decision of the Panel, through the COSCA Appeals Procedure, within three months of the decision being made. There are two grounds for appeal:
 - a failure to follow the assessment procedures and/or guidelines; or
 - the applicant has new evidence which might have influenced the decision had it been available when the Panel considered the application for accreditation.

Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists

10. As a Practitioner Member of COSCA, your details would have been entered on the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists. On award of Accreditation, your category of membership would be changed to that of COSCA Accredited Member.

How do I become reaccredited?

11. Please refer to: www.cosca.org.uk - Accreditation – Counsellors - Annual Renewal of COSCA Accreditation.

1. ELEMENTS OF THE APPLICATION

COSCA Accreditation of Counsellors is based on nine elements:

- a) Applicant's personal details
- b) Core training
- c) Theoretical knowledge
- d) Therapeutic alliance
- e) Practice
- f) Supervision
- g) Continuing Professional Development
- h) Reflective practitioner
- i) Ethics

A Submission Checklist is included in **Appendix B**.

Self-Awareness and Use of Self

Please note that your own process and '**use of self**' should be evidenced in every section of the application as you are required to show that you are a mature, reflective practitioner throughout. Your application will not be successful if you do not include sufficient evidence of your self-awareness and use of self.

2. APPLICANT'S PERSONAL DETAILS

You must complete **Appendix A (i) Personal Details, Disclosure and Declaration** in full, and **Appendix A (ii) Summary of Units for Your Combination Route**.

Appendix A will be removed from your application prior to submission to the COSCA Counsellor/Psychotherapist Accreditation Panel.

3. CORE TRAINING / THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

3.1 Criteria

You must have completed a minimum of 300 hours of training (equivalent to 4 units). Please see **Introduction** above for further details.

3.2 Evidence

You need to provide the following information for your minimum 300 hours of training and (if applicable for your application) for every unit of further training you are counting towards your total of 10 units:

- i) course name and qualification awarded
- ii) start/end dates
- iii) contact hours total
- iv) number of weekly hours, weekend workshops, residential, etc.
- v) entry requirements
- vi) assessment methods (e.g. case-study, placement report, oral or written examination; assessment reports may be submitted as evidence).

Please submit photocopies of all relevant certificates, together with a course outline and curricula for each course.

All original documents must be verified by your supervisor, who should then sign the supervisor's declaration (Appendix H Supervisor's Report).

Please note that short courses and workshop such as assertiveness training, co-counselling, yoga, massage, spiritual practice, or conference workshops, **cannot be considered as core or further training**. These may be entered as continuing professional development or personal growth. Distance learning counselling courses and group work training **cannot be considered** as core training, but can be included as continuing professional development.

Counselling Skills training is not considered core-counselling training, and this includes the COSCA Counselling Skills course.

3.3 Criteria

You must have an understanding of the following topics:

- Human Growth & Development
- Theory, Theorists and other Therapeutic Traditions
- The Therapeutic Relationship
- Psychopathology

Please note that your training on the above topics needs to be evidenced in your case study and in your statement of your core orientation.

3.4. Evidence

Please evidence that the above topics have been studied.

For each of the four aspects of knowledge above you should indicate:

- i) what courses/seminars you attended and the number of hours spent on these areas of study
- ii) how these aspects have been integrated into your practice
- iii) the assessment methods used

Learning may take place through a number of routes including: course work, seminars, home reading, and research. Home reading on its own is not sufficient.

3.5. Core Orientation

A personal statement of your core approach or approaches of 1,500 – 2,000 words. Please indicate your counselling/psychotherapy modality/ies or orientation/s at the beginning of your personal statement.

The statement must include the following:

- ✓ a description of the theoretical and philosophical orientation of your practice. This statement needs to show clear consistency with all the following areas in this application: the theoretical framework/s that you use, your core skills, your counselling practice (client case study); your counselling/psychotherapy supervision, your personal and professional development.
- ✓ A reflection of why you have chosen to work in this particular way. For example, how you came to, or chose your orientation, and how your work has developed within it (or how your orientation has changed) and what this means to you.

4. THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

4.1 Criteria

You must be able to establish, maintain and develop a therapeutic alliance with clients.

4.2 Evidence

A 1,000 word statement which includes what you understand by the development of a therapeutic relationship. This statement should detail how you establish, maintain, and end a therapeutic relationship, including the core skills you need to display and demonstrate to facilitate such a relationship.

5. PRACTICE

5.1 Criteria

Prior to submission, you must evidence:

- a minimum of 450 hours of supervised counselling practice over a minimum of 3 years within a period of 5 years prior to submission. However, these hours should not be spread beyond a period of 5 years.
- two years of this supervised counselling practice should be at post-qualifying level (average 90 hours per year, and a minimum of 60 hours per year).

5.2 Evidence

Practice Log

A log and/or statement of supervised counselling practice of a minimum of 450 hours over a minimum of 3 years within a period of 5 years prior to submission. Please see a template for logging your annual practice hours in **Appendix C Practice Log: Summary of Annual Practice Hours**.

Career Break

If you have taken more than 3 months time out from practice because of life events, please contact the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses).

Summary of recent work

A summary of a recent period of your client work (see **Appendix D: Practice Log: Summary of Recent Period of Work**) demonstrating your ability to work with a variety of contracts and range of clients. A practitioner who works with 12 or more clients per week will need to describe no more than a 6-week period, while a practitioner with a smaller practice will need to summarise up to 3 months work. Please give a clear weekly division of the work, indicating variety of clients, stage of counselling/therapy, pattern of working week, client attendance, etc. Please comment on any noteworthy activity that is different to the norm.

Client time range

A description of a range of time that clients spend in counselling/therapy with you (see **Appendix E Frequency of Client Contact**). Please provide a brief explanation of any client contacts that are not weekly.

Assessment skills and referral system

A brief statement (500 – 1,000 words) to evidence and demonstrate/describe:

- how you identify clients you feel able to work with
- how you assess the needs and limitations of your clients; where using assessment scales and measures applicants should evidence that they have been appropriately trained to administer these and that they are authorised to use these where a license is required
- how you assess the successful working of the relationship
- what personal circumstances would prompt you to refer a client on e.g. divorce, bereavement, ill health, etc.
- what limitations if any, there are in your work setting/s
- your capacity for referring clients to other appropriate forms of help
- examples of when you have decided that someone is unsuitable to work with as a client and when you have referred on.

Work setting and arrangements (no set word count)

Details of the setting where your counselling/therapy work is undertaken to show your ability to implement ethical practice in a work setting. If you work in more than one agency or practice, please submit descriptions and examples of documents for each setting.

- ✓ Your statement should include descriptions of the following:
- ✓ arrangements for privacy, avoiding interruption, arrival and departure of clients, client safety, counsellor safety
- ✓ record keeping and maintenance of confidentiality (your supervisor will be asked to comment on this)
- ✓ appointment arrangements, sample letter(s) to clients and handouts given to clients
- ✓ arrangements for breaks taken between counselling sessions in the course of a working day
- ✓ the Ethics and Code of Practice to which you adhere

Insurance

Please sign **Part III of Appendix A Applicant's Personal Details, Disclosure and Declaration** stating that you have adequate and appropriate public and professional liability insurance for your counselling/therapy work. (N.B. COSCA advises that professional liability cover should not be less than £1,500,000.)

Case Study

Please provide either one case study of approximately 3,500 words, or two case studies of not more than 2,000 words each. The case study should be a recent piece of work of not more than one year old, from commencement of writing, and should be written for the purpose of COSCA Accreditation. The case study should give evidence of:

- ✓ the key competencies of your core orientation/approach
- ✓ practice congruent to the stated core orientation/approach, and to the content of your whole accreditation submission; where using assessment scales and measures applicants should evidence that they have been appropriately trained to administer these and that they are authorised to use these where a license is required
- ✓ skills in areas such as assessment, management of boundary issues, coping with endings, referrals, etc., as appropriate to the context and stage of the work
- ✓ application and integration of theoretical knowledge
- ✓ demonstrate ability to develop a therapeutic relationship, exercise professional judgement and work within your competences
- ✓ integration and use of supervision
- ✓ example(s) of content and analysis of the interchange between yourself and your client. You should show your capacity to reflect on and analyse the process of the work, rather than emphasising the narrative in the case study and the transcript
- ✓ demonstrate use of self and awareness of your own process.

Please provide your Supervisor with a copy of the above criteria for the case study along with a copy of the case study.

With your case study, please include a 10 – 15 minute transcript from a session with the client (not to be included in the word count). Please see **Appendix F Transcript Pro Forma**. Reflection on and analysis of the transcript should form part of the case study. If you are submitting two case studies, only one transcript is required.

6. SUPERVISION

6.1 Criteria

You must have 450 hours of supervised counselling/therapy practice on a ratio of 1:12.

6.2 Evidence

Supervision history

A detailed supervision log (see **Appendix G Supervision Sessions**) covering your 450 hours of counselling/therapy practice that you have undergone supervision at an average ratio of 1:12 during your practice (as stated in the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice). At least 65-75% of your supervision must be on a one to one basis.

If group supervision is to be considered as part of the period of supervision, groups should be no larger than permits an allowance of 20 – 30 minutes per group member in the supervision session. The focus of the work must be on client related issues, and the group led by a substantially experienced practitioner: 'peer-led' groups are not acceptable.

Example:

A counsellor/psychotherapist is a member of a supervision group of 4 supervisees, meeting for 2 hours every month. This provides ½ client supervision hours per month for the counsellor. The counsellor is also having fortnightly individual supervision sessions of 1 hour, providing her with a further 2 hours per month. She thus received 2½ supervision hours in total per month. She has arranged this amount of supervision because she works 8 hours per week, seeing between 6 – 8 clients per week. This works out at an average ratio of approximately 1:12 over the year.

Current supervision

A statement of the name of your supervisor, duration, frequency of supervision meetings and ratio of supervision hours to client hours. For group supervision, please state the name of the supervisor, the size of the group as well as the duration and frequency of meetings (see **Appendix G Supervision Sessions**).

Counselling/Psychotherapy supervisor's report

A report from your counselling/therapy supervisor (see **Appendix H Supervisor's Report**).

Your supervisor should be a substantially experienced or accredited counsellor/psychotherapist who belongs to an appropriate professional organisation that has a Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice. He/she should have a wide experience in supervision and not hold any line management responsibilities for your counselling/therapy, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Please note that if you have been working with your current supervisor for less than 6 months, you will also require a supervisor's report from your previous supervisor.

Your supervisor should have as much involvement as possible to support you in the compilation of your application. You may wish to pay for an additional supervision session to focus specifically on accreditation.

Please provide your supervisor with **Appendix G Supervision Sessions** and the following documents to aid him/her:

- ✓ a copy of the COSCA Guidelines and Criteria for Accreditation of Counsellors and Psychotherapists
- ✓ a copy of the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice
- ✓ a copy of your case and transcript study for him/her to verify (including a copy of the criteria for the case study)
- ✓ your completed application for feedback and confirmation.

7. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Criteria

You must have an accumulated total of 54 CPD hours with an average of 18 hours over the last 3 years. CPD is an activity that develops your understanding and skills in your profession and impacts on your work as a counsellor. You should evidence a range of CPD activities, examples of which include: short courses on professional issues, seminars and conferences, designing and facilitating workshops, writing articles relevant to professional practice, participation in relevant professional committees, personal therapy, research relevant to counselling/therapy and further counselling training.

7.2. Evidence

An account of your CPD over the last 3 years, plus copies of certificates of attendance.

A brief description of the ways in which the above CPD has affected your practice (maximum 500 words).

8. REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

8.1 Criteria

You must be a reflective practitioner.

A reflective practitioner focuses on his/her own actions, emotions and thoughts in the counselling/therapy session as well as attending to the quality of the interactions between the client and him/herself. Being a reflective practitioner involves a willingness to be vulnerable and to be open to learning. It also involves examining one's actions, emotions and thoughts in order to further develop active and critical inquiry about one's own aware and unaware activity in the session. Personal insight and self-awareness on the part of practitioners is considered central to being a reflective practitioner.

8.2 Evidence

Evidence of having undertaken a process of personal exploration and growth must be demonstrated.

This on-going personal development/growth needs to be consistent with your orientation/model and developing practice. For example, you might offer hours of personal therapy and/or experience of being in a community/therapy group.

Please give a statement (maximum 1500 words) a) reflecting on your process of personal exploration and development and b) how this has impacted on your work as a counsellor/psychotherapist and your use of self in the therapeutic relationship. Give specific examples of what happened when particular clients brought up a difficult issue for you, and how you dealt with it.

It is important that the above points are articulated in a way that is consistent with your core model and developing practice.

9. ETHICS

9.1 Criteria

You need to be aware of your responsibilities and duties to practice ethically.

As an applicant you will be fully conversant with COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice and abide by it.

9.2. Evidence

Please sign **Appendix A (i) - Applicants Personal Details, Disclosure and Declaration Parts I, II and III** declaring that you will abide by COSCA's Guidelines and Criteria for the Accreditation of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, be bound by COSCA's Memorandum and Articles of Association, and abide by COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

10. FEE FOR APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

- The fee for application can be found on www.cosca.org.uk – Costings.
- You may pay by cheque payable to COSCA or direct to the bank:

Clydesdale Bank PLC

Sort Code: 82 68 05

Account Number: 70174110

Account Name: COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

If you wish an invoice to be sent, please submit details with your application. Please note that payment requires to be made prior to the Panel meeting date.