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COSCA VALIDATION OF DIPLOMA COURSES IN COUNSELLING/PSYCHOTHERAPY

VALIDATION & REVALIDATION APPLICATION & GUIDELINES

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1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland), the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland, seeks to advance all forms of counselling, psychotherapy and the use of counselling skills by promoting best practice and through the delivery of a range of sustainable services.

The COSCA Course Validation Panel awards validation and revalidation to member organisations delivering counselling and counselling skills training which have met COSCA's standards and procedures. In doing so, it advances COSCA's aim of supporting the development of counselling and psychotherapy as a profession that has high standards in both training and practice. The Validation Panel also recognises the importance of high- quality training as a means of protecting both practitioners and clients.

It is COSCA's intention to help course planners by identifying and clearly stating essential course requirements and standards. However, a formal statement of course requirements should not imply that every course should be identical. Standardisation can ensure that essential elements are present while not dictating how these will be covered. This document aims to provide a general framework within which course planners, designing counselling training courses at professional level, can introduce their own emphasis. Variety and innovation are to be encouraged.

The essential content areas in counsellor/psychotherapist training are counselling skills and counselling process, supervised practice, theory, self-awareness and personal development, ethics and professional responsibilities, each delivered with a clear understanding of the client and participant context including in relation to areas of difference and diversity. It is expected that any organisation applying for COSCA Diploma Validation will adhere to the standards required in each area, but it should be noted that having done so does not imply course validation can be assumed, or that it will automatically be awarded.

Any course claiming COSCA Validation must have completed the full validation procedure with the COSCA Course Validation Panel detailed in section 4 of this document.

The COSCA Course Validation Panel understands that its procedures require continual monitoring, evaluation and refinement. The Panel welcomes any written submission suggesting improvements to validation and revalidation procedures which should be sent to the COSCA Development Officer, (Individuals/Courses) Jenny Bell: jenny@cosca.org.uk

Please note that Applicants require to use the current Guidelines and Application Forms for submission for Validation and Revalidation which can be found on the website www.cosca.org.uk under Validation/Diploma.

All documentation mentioned in these Guidelines and Procedures, are available on www.cosca.org.uk

1.2 BASIC PRE-REQUIREMENTS

The guiding principles of a Diploma course in counselling/psychotherapy are:

1. All course planners must have conducted sufficient market research to determine that there is likely to be a sufficient immediate and long-term demand for their course. They must be committed towards ongoing publicising of the course and further market research where required.

2. Trainers must be appropriately trained and engaged with COSCA trainer accreditation requirements. There must be at least 2 core trainers delivering on the course who must meet COSCA Trainer Accreditation and trainer to participant ratio requirements (please see criteria 2.13.2 and 2.13.3)

3. The needs of the participant are paramount, and all work must be approached in the context of the participant.

4. All diploma courses must have a participant selection process that must take place before a student is accepted on the course (see criteria 2.5)

5. All diploma courses must have a readiness for practice placements process that must take place before a participant is approved for practice placements.

6. The learning setting, course delivery structure, title, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, academic credit rating and awarding body if awarded, progression routes, rationale and theoretical base should be clearly stated and communicated to present and prospective students, trainers and other relevant parties.

   The requirements of the course including the development of self-awareness in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity and areas of difference and diversity within self and others must also be clearly stated alongside the courses assessment criteria and learning methods including the group requirements of the course. Course content must be compatible with staff, student and client wellbeing.

   Any changes to the above must be communicated with sufficient notice given to present and prospective participants, trainers, and other relevant parties. Any changes or disruption to intended course delivery including in relation to cancellations or postponement of courses due to low participant numbers or any other reason must be communicated to the COSCA Development Officer, who will advise on approval and/or whether a ‘Change of Delivery’ application requires to be submitted (see criteria 4.5).

7. Participants should be clear on what completion of the course enables them to do i.e. such as registration and membership with professional bodies, including COSCA. Course planners and staff should be familiar with, and incorporate into the course, the COSCA criteria for counsellor/psychotherapist and trainer accreditation

   The position of the course regarding equality, diversity and inclusivity, equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices should be clearly stated and adhered to. Equality, diversity and inclusivity must be embedded throughout the course including in relation to trainer recruitment, participant selection, identification and application of reasonable adjustments, course content, assessment criteria, counselling skills and process, supervisors’ criteria, supervised practice placements, theory, self-awareness and personal development, experiential group elements, ethics and professional responsibilities.

8. The importance of maintaining group continuity to facilitate learning should be emphasised, whilst ensuring that there are sufficient participant numbers to continue to meet validation requirements (see criteria 2.13.3).

   Course planners should endeavour towards fostering course continuity and contact the COSCA Development Officer at the earliest opportunity should concerns emerge surrounding the continued delivery of the course. All courses must have a written exit plan that must be implemented should the course no longer be able to continue to be delivered. (see criteria 2.13.4)

   Please note that efforts to grow and sustain course participant numbers must not override the need for participants to meet the course's requirements, the terms of the participant contract and the course's assessment criteria, nor the wellbeing of its staff and trainers.

9. Course assessment criteria should be clear and made available to participants.

10. Participants must be made aware of the course's validation status and the COSCA Assessor's role at the beginning of the course.

11. Provision must be made to allow continual monitoring of participants' progress and the effectiveness of the course including internal and external monitoring arrangements, and ongoing participant evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

12. All diploma course applicants should have robust complaints and appeals procedures to which participants have access.

    In the interests of clarity and inclusion, complaints procedures of training providers should explicitly include participants among those covered by the procedure, even though they could be regarded in the same way as others receiving a service from your organisation.

    Courses must ensure to clearly delineate and communicate the appropriate processes through which participants may identify and progress their concerns, complaints and appeals. A clear distinction should be made between ethical complaints and appeals by participants against decisions made by the training provider about their achievement of the course's learning outcomes and/or their performance on the course.

    Ethical complaints are those that allege that breach(s) of the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice have taken place. These should be investigated using the training provider's COSCA approved complaints procedure. Decisions by the training provider about passing or failing the course, participant discontinuation, or fee disputes etc. are not normally considered ethical complaints and should be dealt with under a separate appeals procedure.

1.3 ORGANISATIONAL PRE-REQUIREMENTS

Any organisation wishing to apply for diploma course validation must:

1. Be an organisational member of COSCA and abide by the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.
2. Have its own formal organisational, managerial and financial structure, and ways of monitoring financial sustainability.
3. Have the following procedures: a process for handling staff and participant complaints, an appeals process and grievances and disciplinary processes.
4. Training providers must develop, implement and maintain the Participant contract, Group working agreement, Supervised Counselling Practice Placement: Readiness for Practice Placements Process, 4-way contractual agreement and discontinuation process that meets the standards as set out below. The processes must be applied consistently and should be clearly aligned with each other.
5. Have a core of permanent administration, teaching/training and supervisory staff.
6. Ensure all staff are properly and appropriately trained.
7. Have clear arrangements for staff supervision which are regularly monitored and continually developing.
8. Provide staff conditions which meet all health and safety at work legislation and support high staff morale.
9. Provide adequate resources for course participants and trainers e.g., suitable premises, library, access to literature, audio-visual equipment, and information on how to access online resources. Provision and allocation of resources should be consistent with equal opportunities polices.
10. Actively promote anti-discriminatory practices and maintain an equal opportunities policy.
11. Have adequate insurance/indemnity cover.
12. Have an exit plan that will be implemented should the organisation no longer be able to continue, including ensuring that there are reserve funds in place to support this process.

2. DIPLOMA COURSE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Ethics and Codes of Practice

Courses must refer to and work within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice: (www.cosca.org.uk).

2.2 Publicity of Course and Recruitment of Trainers:

2.2.1 Publicity of Course

All course planners must have conducted sufficient market research to determine that there is likely to be a sufficient immediate and long-term demand for their course. Factors that must be considered include the anticipated demand for participants to undertake training in the course's chosen therapeutic approach, and in relation to the suitability of the course's costings, delivery method, timing and structure and location for participants.

They must be committed towards ongoing publicising of the course and further market research where required, including ensuring that there are sufficient finances and resources (e.g. staffing, time) available to enable ongoing publicity of the course. There must also be financial reserves available should the course no longer be able to continue to be delivered to support the wind down process and execution of the courses exit plan (see criteria 2.13.4).

It is required that organisations' publicity includes reference to COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland), the professional validation body for the course being publicised and/or promoted. Course publicity material will not mislead candidates and will state clearly the validation status of courses.

During the assessment stage, and prior to **Full Validation** being awarded, the course provider can use "COSCA Diploma Validation applied for" and/ or "awarded COSCA Initial Validation or COSCA Conditional Initial Validation" in publicity material.

All awards to participants on COSCA validated courses are required to use the COSCA logo. Please contact the COSCA office to obtain a copy of the COSCA logo.

2.2.2 Recruitment of Trainers

It is the training provider's responsibility to recruit trainers in a fair, equal and non-discriminatory manner, preferably with ample advertising and marketing of any vacant posts. COSCA expects appropriate use of measurable recruitment tools such as application forms/questionnaires, personal specifications and interviews.

The posts should have job descriptions, and the post holders should have a contractual agreement, terms and conditions of employment provided, from the trainer provider or an appropriate recruitment agency and should be covered by adequate and appropriate insurance. This applies also to those who may be engaged in the course in other capacities such as assistant trainers (see criteria 2.13.9), guest lecturers, personal tutors, external group supervisors, external assessors and markers.

Trainers must be made aware of COSCA Trainer Accreditation requirements (please see criteria 2.13.2)

Trainers must recruit with these in mind including in relation to accreditation and membership eligibility requirements which necessitate a Scottish address and practice base and the requirement of completion of an eligible training for trainers' qualification. Courses must clearly communicate any supports that may be made available for trainers towards the accreditation process.

2.3 Course Aims and Objectives

1. The aim of the diploma course is to equip participants with the range of knowledge and skills necessary to work with clients as a counsellor/psychotherapist respective to the course's stated therapeutic approach and to provide the necessary training for them to later apply for COSCA membership and accreditation as a counsellor/psychotherapist.

   Should the course involve training and/or practice in counselling children and young people, participants should be equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to work with children and young people (as per the 'COSCA Competencies for Counselling Children and Young people, Guidelines for Training Organisations, Practitioners and Trainees' which can be found on the COSCA website under 'Counselling for Children'.)

   Should the course involve training and/or practice in counselling couples and families, participants should be equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to work with couples and families.

2. Participants should leave the course at ease, sufficiently confident and competent to begin counselling, utilising the courses stated therapeutic approach, in the various contexts that the counselling process may take place, including organisational settings, private practice and/or volunteer settings.

3. The course should help participants develop a high level of counselling skills and to integrate those skills into the counselling/psychotherapeutic process.

4. The course must facilitate the availability of activities and spaces on the course that foster participants' increased insight and self-awareness in relation to difference and diversity within themselves and others, that is supportive of the development of whole person inclusive counselling practice and conditions of equity within counselling training.

   This must include exploring any assumptions, attitudes, prejudices, stereotyping, unconscious biases and sources of power imbalances and privileges that may interact with and/or be damaging to the therapeutic process. The delivery of these activities must be aligned with the course's stated policy in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity and be compatible with participant and trainer wellbeing and protection from psychological harm.

5. The course should foster participants' ability to work within difference and diversity within the client population, whilst working within their competencies. It should support participants' abilities to understand themselves and others within their lived-in context, such as in relation to the various characteristics that may be influencing our identity, interpersonal and intrapersonal relating and our difficulties.

   This should include consideration to age, culture, disability, knowledge, neurodiversity, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and belief systems, socio economic status and resources and sexuality, and embodied aspects such as the experience of trauma. It should also include consideration being given to where any of these may intersect.

This must involve facilitating participants to develop an awareness of systemic and structural inequalities in relation to areas of difference and diversity within self and others and the ways in which these may interact with the therapeutic alliance and therapeutic process.

The above considerations must be embedded throughout the course including in relation to course content, counselling skills and process, supervised practice placements, theory, self-awareness and personal development, experiential group elements, ethics and professional responsibilities.

2.4 Course Structure

2.4.1 Duration of Course

1. The minimum duration of the course will be 400 hours of participant/trainer contact, covering theory, skills and counselling process, self-awareness and personal development, supervision and tutorials, ethics and professional responsibilities with consideration to equality, diversity, and inclusivity being embedded in relation to each of these core elements. Should the Diploma course be incorporated within an overarching qualification *(for example course's incorporating a Post Graduate Counselling Skills Certificate or COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate year 1/ Diploma level years 2 and 3),* the Diploma level courses content must include a minimum of 400 hours of participant/trainer contact.

2. If APL/APEL has been applied to participants then a minimum of 50% of training, must be done under the auspices of the awarding organisation. 100 hours of supervised practice must be completed though the awarding organisation. APL/APEL may only be considered and applied at the stage of a participant being selected onto the course.

3. Practice placements and personal counselling will not be included in the 400 hours. Personal counselling (although desirable) is not a validation requirement.

4. The application will show how the needs of the trainers and participants are met within the delivery schedule of the course.

5. Training providers will have undertaken market research to identify there is a participant demand for the course's identified delivery structure.

6. The course should be completed in no more than 5 years. Should a participant identify extenuating circumstances, training providers may wish to consider at their discretion where there may be any grounds for an extension to the time permitted to complete the course.

Where the training provider is satisfied that there are extenuating circumstances, that it is practical for the course and its trainers to extend the time permitted and that the participant continues to be deemed to be suitable to continue with the course in relation to their capacity and competencies, then an extension may be considered, provided that a maximum timeframe for completion of the course is clearly stipulated to the participant. Any decisions made must be aligned with the course's stated policies in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity, readiness for practice placements process, participant contract and discontinuation processes.

Requests for extensions to the duration permitted to complete the course must also be approved by COSCA. Please submit these to the COSCA Development Officer (Individuals/Courses), jenny@cosca.org.uk

2.4.2 Delivery Method of the Course

Training providers who wish to offer blended delivery of the course must apply for blended delivery approval. A minimum of 70% of the course must be delivered in person. In the instance that the course exceeds the minimum required 400 contact hours then the ratio applies only to the first 400 contact hours. Participants must attend training dates either in person or online (real time); hybrid delivery methods are not permitted.

The ratio applies also to the practice placement hours (see section) for courses approved for blended delivery with a minimum of 70% of practice placement hours being required to be completed in person.

Please see the COSCA website under the heading 'Course Validation' and 'Blended Delivery' for information on blended delivery requirements and the approval application form. Approval forms must be submitted to the Course Validation Secretary: rozanne@cosca.org.uk

The structure and delivery methods for the course and its associated training dates must be clearly communicated and contractually agreed by participants giving them sufficient time to prepare for this.

2.4.3 Balance of Course

The course must balance theory, ethics and professional responsibilities, self-awareness and personal development, skills and counselling process, and supervised practice.

2.5 Selection of Participants

2.5.1 Counselling Training

It is recommended that successful applicants have completed 120 hours counselling skills training to COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate level or equivalent.

The COSCA Counselling Skills Course enables individuals to apply for a place on a diploma in counselling course. Individuals with equivalent counselling skills training can also apply.

2.5.2 Counselling Experience

It is expected that participants on diploma courses will have experience in the use of counselling skills such as having demonstrated these within a voluntary or workplace environment, or in relation to other roles held within their life.

There is no maximum duration of time permitted by COSCA from completion of Certificate level training onto Diploma level training. However, participants must demonstrate that they have maintained the necessary level of counselling skills, knowledge, and self-awareness in the interim.

2.5.3 Accreditation of Prior/Experiential Learning (APL/APEL)

Course organisers must have a suitable APL/APEL process which establishes equivalence of previous training to the COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate, in addition to outlining the processes and criteria required to be evidenced by an applicant should the course wish to consider APL for an applicant for entry to the Diploma course.

Any decisions made here must be aligned with the course's participant selection processes, course requirements, competencies and assessment criteria, in addition to consideration for any impact on the existing participant group and its trainer should a participant(s) join the course at a later stage.

Courses are designated responsibility for administering their own APL systems and determining any decisions made respecting awarding APL, which must be clearly stated within the APL process. APL may only be considered and applied upon the participants selection onto the course.

2.5.4 Individual Suitability

a) Indicators of individual preparedness and suitability for Diploma level counselling training:

It is recommended that successful applicants will have demonstrated an appropriate level of emotional and psychological maturity and life stability, the ability to self-regulate and to manage the emotional demands of the course, and to be self-aware with a reasonable understanding of how they function internally and in relation to others.

Participants should demonstrate their ability to acquire and develop learning in relation to the course's key theoretical approach(es) and their associated frameworks, to conceptualise, and to manage the academic demands of the course. They should be prepared for the receipt of developmental feedback from trainers, peers, supervisors and practice placement providers. They should be prepared to engage with activities (including within a group setting) that support the development of self-awareness in relation to self and others, including in relation to areas of difference and diversity within self and others.
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They should also be able to commit to the course and its attendance requirements over the period of its delivery, taking into account their own lives, relationships, existing demands, capacity and resources.

They must be able to commit to undertaking a supervised practice placement (which must include a minimum of 70 in person practice hours) and to give due consideration as to how this may fit this in within their existing schedule and any limitations here. Finally, they should be prepared to undertake in person practice placement hours, including being prepared to try to source practice placement opportunities within reasonable travelling distance.

b) Additional Support Needs:

From the stage of applying for the course, participants should have an opportunity, should they choose, to identify any adjustments (see criteria 2.5.6) or additional support that they may anticipate they may require in relation to the course, affording both participant and the training provider to prepare and/or apply these as appropriate.

Training providers should ensure participants have given written consent before disclosing their identified additional support needs with the training provider, training team, COSCA, external assessors, credit rating institutions and any other relevant parties. Training providers should consider whether the participant needs to be named in any disclosure to an external party. For example, a training provider may seek permission from COSCA to extend the time permitted for a participant to complete the course without need to name the participant.

Clarity in communication surrounding the course requirements, content, learning methods, assessment criteria, setting, course duration and attendance requirements, disclosure and PVG requirements where relevant, resources and any other relevant factors such as participant numbers and group arrangements is important here in supporting the participant and training provider to identify any potential difficulties at an early stage.

In these instances, the participant should also be encouraged to identify their own resources and support systems in relation to managing any additional needs and balancing these with the requirements of the course.

Undoubtedly needs and difficulties may only emerge as the course progresses, and an open dialogue in relation to the above should be encouraged, and trainers/training providers must work consistently in keeping with equality and diversity policies, their readiness for practice placements process, the 4-way contractual agreement and discontinuation processes.

2.5.5 Selection Procedure

1. The selection procedure should produce a clear statement of the course criteria for selection and require all applicants to provide evidence that they meet the selection criteria through an application form, written submission and interview (either in person or online in real time). Clear information about the course should be communicated to applicants in advance of the group selection procedure. COSCA strongly recommends that courses also include a group interview process although it is not a requirement.

2. There should be an opportunity from the application stage for the participant to identify any additional support needs should the prospective participant choose to, as per the criteria above. This affords the training provider the opportunity to prepare and/or apply these as appropriate. It should give the participant the chance to identify the resources that are accessible within the training provider, to consider the suitability of the training provider respecting their individual needs and to build upon their own resources and support system in relation to these needs.

3. Courses should ensure participants have given written consent before disclosing their identified additional support needs with the training provider, training team, COSCA, external assessor's, credit rating institutions and any other relevant parties. Courses should consider whether the participant needs to be named in any disclosure to an external party. For example, a training provider may seek permission from COSCA to extend the time permitted for a participant to complete the course without need to name the participant.

4.Participants residing overseas may be considered for selection to the course if they are able to meet the courses in person attendance requirements. It is at the course's discretion as to whether participants residing overseas may be considered for selection to the course. Any decision needs to be compatible with staff and participant wellbeing

Training providers would need to consider factors such as language proficiency, insurance, management of any risk to participant wellbeing and whether the course's policies and processes including complaints and appeals processes, the 4-way agreement and discontinuation processes can be appropriately implemented where a participant resides overseas. Another consideration is approval of supervisors and practice placements which may be located overseas (please see criteria 2.10.1).

Training providers would need to give sufficient consideration to the support systems that may be in place for participants residing overseas, for example might they be more isolated than peers and how might this impact arrangements such as group supervision and the trainer's facilitation of these spaces if they are bringing in practice from a country with different ethics/legislative requirements.

The above needs to be thoroughly researched and established before considering a participant residing overseas for selection onto the course.

2.5.6 Reasonable Adjustments

1. Training providers are responsible for determining the suitability of applying reasonable adjustments respective to a participant's individual circumstances, ensuring that any decisions are aligned with legislative and their stated policies with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2. Reasonable adjustments must also be compatible with the course's requirements, participant and staff wellbeing, organisational sustainability and in compliance with the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of Practice and validation requirements.

3. Courses would be required to clearly specify and communicate any limitations with respect to the proposed below list, including identifying where any supports or resources may be provided externally (or signposted towards), rather than being accessible through the training provider itself.

The following reasonable adjustments as listed below are for consideration in instances where participants have identified an additional learning difference and/or need and/or other additional support need.

The proposed list includes for example and is not exclusive to:

- adjustments to selection process
- adjustments to written assignments
- exam or assessment adjustments,
- practice placement adjustments
- additional tutor support
- study skill support
- access to course documentation in preferred format
- communication of assessment criteria in preferred format
- communication of summative and formative feedback in preferred format
- adjustments to classroom setting (such as with respect to lighting and sound)
- movement during classroom sessions
- adjustments to learning methods (for instance with respect to meditation/mindfulness techniques)
- use of a hearing loop
- adjustments to course materials and slides (such as font size/background colour),
- copies of lecture notes/slides in advance
- support with lecture note taking
- permission to record lectures
- use of assistive technologies,
- support or signposting towards disability assessment
- use of a guide dog
- copy of lecture notes/slides in advance
- use of sensory fidget toys
- access to a quiet space
- use of sensory assistive technology
- access to an interpreter
- AI (with disclaimer and if applied in keeping with ethical and legislative requirements

2.6 Core Course Content*:*

2.6.1 Skills and the Counselling Process*:*

Counselling skills should be a central element of the course and participants must be given ample opportunity to learn and practise advanced counselling skills in the context of the counselling process. In the main, participants should master counselling skills through experiential learning.

2.6.2 COSCA's Core Competencies for Counselling

1. COSCA's core competencies for fitness to practise counselling (see below) are considered core for all counselling practice. In the process of diploma training, they should be deepened and developed through practice, theoretical learning, reflection and self- awareness work.

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

- to enter and understand the world of another person and to be authentically present for them in the therapeutic relationship
- to understand the counselling relationship and process in theory and in practice
- to establish, maintain and end 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 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.

2. Should the course involve any training in the counselling of children and young people please refer to the 'COSCA Competencies for Counselling Children and Young people, Guidelines for Training Organisations, Practitioners and Trainees' which can be found on the COSCA website under 'Counselling for Children'. These core competencies must be integrated within the course, with participants supported to develop these throughout its duration.

Should the course involve any training in respect of counselling couples and families these competencies must be integrated within the course, with participants supported to develop these throughout its duration.

3. Courses must also demonstrate how any key competencies specific to fitness to practice within the course's stated therapeutic approach will be delivered throughout the course *(*for example this might include the 'core conditions' in relation to courses with a person-centred approach and 'Socratic questioning' for courses delivering a CBT approach).

2.6.3 Theory

1. The theoretical content of the course must be relevant to counselling, and the emphasis should be on the application of theory to the client/counsellor relationship.

2. The theoretical content should highlight the counselling process and the theories that inform counselling practice and counselling approaches.

3. A clear statement about the core theoretical base of the course should be available and course organisers should ensure that participants and all other relevant parties including supervisors and practice placement providers are aware of the orientation of the course. The core orientation and the course's intended aims and learning outcomes should inform the delivery and structure of the course.

4. While being set within a core approach, the theoretical content of the course must be balanced and broadly based to offer participants the opportunity to study theories that may not be part of the core theoretical base or orientation.

5. The counselling process must be conceptualised within the value system and theoretical base of the course and within an understanding of human growth and development.

The course must teach and assess knowledge of more than one theory of human development and human developmental problems. Sociological as well as psychological perspectives should be included.

This should include appropriate consideration to age, culture, disability, knowledge, neurodiversity, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and belief systems, socio economic status, resources and sexuality, and embodied aspects such as the experience of trauma in relation to the theories delivered. It should also include consideration being given to where any of these may intersect.

As above this should include how difference and diversity and societal, structural and systemic inequalities and experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression may influence human development and human developmental problems.

6. The course must teach and assess knowledge of the different models of psychopathology.

This must include consideration as to how areas of difference and diversity and societal, structural and systemic inequalities and experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression may influence the above.

7. The course must teach theoretical models of risk and identify the factors that may be related to increased risk within the client population (e.g. psychological, physical, social, cultural, relational, etc.).

8. The course's theory should be updated at sufficiently regularly intervals to ensure that the learning remains relevant, ethically and legally compliant. Participants must have the opportunity to be exposed to contemporary research and theory within the course's stated therapeutic approach.

2.6.4 Self Awareness and Personal Development

1. The personal development aspect of the course must be based on the clearly stated rationale of "the reflective practitioner".

2. The personal development component of the course should help participants to develop self-awareness and should provide an environment that is compatible with participant and trainer wellbeing and protection from psychological harm.

3. The personal development aspect of the course should include both an individual and a group focus to help participants develop self-awareness in relation to self and others, including in relation to areas of difference and diversity within self and others.

This must include the opportunity to develop self-awareness in relation to others that takes into consideration the self and others within our lived-in contexts, that is supportive of the development of whole person, inclusive practice.

This should include appropriate consideration to age, culture, disability, knowledge, neurodiversity, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and belief systems, socio economic status and resources and sexuality, and embodied aspects such as the experience of trauma. It should also include consideration being given to where any of these may intersect.

This must include exploring any assumptions, attitudes, prejudices, stereotyping, unconscious biases, sources of power imbalances and privileges and experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression which may influence self-awareness in relation to others.

4. The activities selected, trainers' facilitation of these and the training room conditions would be required to be supportive of the development of relational, dialogical and reflective spaces on courses.

Trainers are expected to endeavour to promote conditions of open dialogue amongst participants, participant transparency, and courage with respect to their identification of self-awareness in relation to areas of difference and diversity, that is supportive of participants' commitment towards equality diversity and inclusivity within their counselling practice, and of fostering whole person, inclusive counselling practice, that recognises the self and others within context.

Trainers would be expected to strive to balance the above with the protection of their participants, themselves, peers and the client population from any physical and psychological harm in relation to the activities undertaken and the related discussion generated. In addition, trainers would be required to endeavour to ensure that the above activities are delivered in keeping with validation and legislative requirements, and the course's stated policies in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

5. Trainers must also commit to their own continuous development of self-awareness in relation to others. They must strive towards conditions of equity within training delivery, whilst working in keeping with the course's stated policies and processes, for example the course's stated equality, diversity and inclusivity policies, participant contracts and discontinuation processes.

They must commit to an ongoing development of their understanding of themselves within their lived-in context(s) and the ways in which this may interact with their delivery and interactions with participants.

They must strive to foster an awareness of their own positionality and the ways in which any personal sources of power imbalances and privileges and experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression may influence their self-awareness in relation to their interactions with participants.

6. The activities required may extend beyond the training space; for instance, self-directed learning, the use of supervision to develop self-awareness in relation to areas of difference and diversity within self and others, and could involve the participants' involvement in other consultation or supportive spaces (for instance personal counselling) that are supportive of engendering participants' commitment towards equality, diversity and inclusivity within their practice.

7. To aid understanding of the counselling/psychotherapy process from a client perspective, and to aid understanding of the impact of the practitioner's own unconscious or not in one's immediate awareness processes on the counselling/psychotherapy relationship, all participants must undertake substantial, formal, personal exploration, reflection and development work.

This should be undertaken in accordance with the ethos of the course and may entail a substantial period of personal counselling/psychotherapy with a professionally registered counsellor or psychotherapist. However, if the participant has employed alternative routes for personal development these should be evidenced accordingly.

8. The course must offer opportunities for developing self-awareness in relation to risk, such as identifying fears, attitudes and beliefs regarding self-harm and suicide that may influence a participant's preparedness and ability to work safely and ethically with risk.

9. Courses must establish from the point of application participants' understanding of the above course requirements and their preparedness to undertake the above activities.

2.6.5 Professional Responsibilities

The course should raise awareness of the professional responsibilities of both participants on placement and of qualified counsellors, working within both organisational and private practice settings.

It must include information on the following, respective to both organisational and private practice settings:

1. Work Settings and Suitability
2. Referral Sources and systems
3. Contracts and confidentiality
4. Ethics and Codes of Practice
5. Relevant legislation
6. Assessment skills, including assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
7. Record Keeping
8. Use of AI
9. Supervision
10. Responsibilities in relationships with other professionals

2.6.5 a) Assessment skills

Courses must support participants to develop skills in undertaking client assessments including:

- identifying and assessing ongoing clients presenting issues, needs, goals (where relevant)
- preferences and suitability for counselling including identification of risk
- assessment of the efficacy of the therapeutic relationship, client progress and any other assessment skills respective to the course's stated modality.

Participants would not be expected to carry out initial assessments on practice placement, which must be done by qualified and experienced counsellors.

2.6.5 b) Assessment and Management of Risk Criteria:

1. Courses must support their participants to develop competencies in identifying the risk of harm to self and others in the client population, including:

- introducing theoretical models of risk and identifying the factors that may be related to increased risk within the client population (e.g. psychological, physical, social, cultural, relational, etc.)

- offering opportunities for developing self-awareness in relation to risk (such as identifying fears, attitudes and beliefs regarding self-harm and suicide that may influence a participant's preparedness and ability to work safely and ethically with risk) developing methods by which to assess, and where appropriate, to manage the level of risk in the client population.

- developing methods by which to assess, and where appropriate, to manage the level of risk in the client population.

2. Courses must support participants to develop and be prepared to potentially utilise qualitative as opposed to quantitative assessment methods to identify and utilise the therapeutic alliance (counselling relationship) to identify and where appropriate manage risk, including the concept of 'positive risk taking'.

This may also include risk assessment tools and scales; however, participants should be informed about the latest NICE (2022) guidelines on 'Suicide and Self-harm' which assert that risk assessment tools have low reliability and should not be relied on to assess risk. Participants should not be taught to use these assessment tools solely to predict the risk of harm to self and others. Participants should also be informed about COSCA's Guidance on Suicide – see the COSCA website under 'guidance and polices'.

Participants should be committed to work ethically, responsibly and responsibly and within their competencies in relation to the risk of harm to self and others. This should be facilitated by clear and appropriate lines of communication and support between the student/course/practice placement and supervisors and in keeping with the terms of the 4-way agreement, ethical, organisational and legislative standards in relation to the risk of harm to self and others.

3. Courses must support their participants to develop competencies in managing the risk of harm to self and others in the client population, where this may be appropriate (for instance the development of 'safety plans').

In relation to managing risk, participants should also be made aware that self-harming behaviours may serve an important function for clients, which may be protective of increased risk in the absence of more adaptive coping mechanisms.

4. Courses must support participants to consider their client's use of AI in relation to the identification and management of risk. Participants should be informed about COSCA's Guidance on AI -see the COSCA website under 'guidance and policies.

5. The course's content in relation to assessment and management of risk should be updated at sufficiently regularly intervals to ensure that the learning remains relevant and ethically and legally compliant.

6. Participants must be prepared to work ethically, and responsibly within their competencies in relation to the risk of harm to self and others.

This should be facilitated by clear and appropriate lines of communication and support between the student/course/practice placement and supervisors, in keeping with the terms of the 4-way agreement and with ethical, organisational and legislative standards in relation to the risk of harm to self and others.

2.6.6 Group Work Requirements

The course should prepare their participants for the group work elements of the course (for instance group work might include and is not exclusive small and large group experiential groups, process groups, fishbowl group encounter groups, group research and presentations and group supervision).

This would involve trainers clearly communicating and stating group work requirements including identifying:

- the function of the group(s) respective to the course's stated modality
- participant and tutor responsibilities within the group
- the purpose of the group(s) and their relation to course assessment requirements
- the group working agreement and referring back to and implementing this where appropriate (see section 2.8-Group Working agreement)

In addition, participants will be expected to be prepared to engage with the group work elements of the course.

Participants' involvement in the group work components of the course must be included in relation to the trainer's assessment of participants' development of self-awareness in relation to self and others including areas of difference and diversity (see criteria 2.6.4 and 2.3.3)

2.7 Contracts and Professional Responsibilities

2.7.1 Participant Contract

1. Courses must develop and implement a participant contract which the participant must agree to before commencement of training.

2. The contract must stipulate the courses and its trainers' responsibilities towards the participant, the participants' responsibilities towards the course/trainers and peers, and the course requirements which the participant must meet.

3. The contract must cover, and is not exclusive to the following areas:
   - attendance requirements (including in person requirements where the course is approved for blended delivery)
   - course duration requirements
   - assessment criteria
   - readiness for practice placements criteria
   - ongoing fitness to practice
   - practice placement and supervised practice criteria (including in person practice placement requirements and practice placement duration requirements)
   - ethical practice
   - academic criteria
   - plagiarism and use of AI technology
   - appropriate representation of self, practice and trainee status
   - use of social media
   - participant safety and wellbeing
   - acceptable behaviour/conduct
   - engagement within groups
   - openness to receiving constructive feedback from trainers, peers, supervisors and practice placement managers and actioning any areas for development, in keeping with assessment criteria
   - payment and retention of course fees by training provider.
   - APL where appropriate
   - reasonable adjustments and consent to disclose where appropriate
   - equality, diversity and inclusivity principles.

4. The contract would also be expected to be clearly linked and aligned with the course's stated discontinuation policy, appeals process, readiness for practice placements process, ongoing fitness to practice, 4-way agreement, equality diversity and inclusion policy and any other relevant policies and processes.

2.7.2 Group Working Agreement

1. Trainers must facilitate the contracting of a ‘group working agreement’ with each cohort of participants. The trainer’s facilitation of this activity and the classroom conditions would be required to be supportive of the development of a group working agreement, that strives to reflect the needs of the group as a whole alongside individual needs.

2. The group working agreement would be required to include mandatory areas for consideration such as:

- confidentiality and ethical practice
- group expectations and responsibilities -to self and each other-
- identification and exploration of individual needs, including opportunities for dialogue surrounding any additional support needs (without compulsion or pressure to disclose),
- clarifying the expectation that the group working agreement is dynamic and may potentially be revisited where appropriate including considering after changing needs or circumstances within the group.

3. Trainers must endeavour to promote conditions of open dialogue amongst participants in developing the stated agreement. They should strive to offer equal opportunities for individual voices to be heard in this process, and to endeavour to facilitate conditions which promote participant transparency, and courage with respect to their identification of individual needs within a group setting without any explicit compulsion or pressure on any individual to disclose an additional support need.

4. Trainers should be aware that not all participants with additional support needs may be able to identify and/or advocate for their needs within a group setting and may require support to do so.

   Trainers must continue to strive to support the facilitation of the creation a group working agreement that is as reflective as is possible of the needs of the group as a whole alongside individual needs, in addition to ensuring that the course’s stated policies in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion are adhered to.

5. Trainers are expected to strive to balance the above with the protection of their participants, themselves, and their peers from any physical and psychological harm in relation to the decided contract and the related discussion generated in its creation.

   In addition, trainers are required to strive to ensure that the above contract is determined in keeping with validation and legislative requirements and the course’s stated policies in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity and discontinuation.

6. COSCA does not wish to be prescriptive regarding the method through which the agreement is created. However, this activity must offer an opportunity for relational dialogue and increased clarity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of trainers and participants towards each other within the course setting. The agreement must be accessible for all participants throughout the duration of the course.

2.8 Supervised Practice Placements Requirements: Practice Placement Hours

1. The course will include a minimum of 100 supervised client contact hours for each participant that will be completed within 18 months of the end of the taught course hours and will ideally give participants experience of both short term (i.e., 1 – 6 sessions) and long term (i.e., more than 12 sessions) case work.

Where the training provider is satisfied that there are extenuating circumstances, it is practical for the course and its trainers to extend the time permitted to complete the practice placement and that the participant continues to be deemed to be suitable to continue with the course in relation to their capacity and competencies, then an extension may be considered, provided that a maximum timeframe for completion of the course is clearly stipulated to the participant.

Any decisions made must be aligned with the course's stated policies in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity, readiness for practice placements process, participant contract and discontinuation processes.

Requests for extensions to the duration permitted to complete practice placement(s) must also be approved by COSCA. Please submit these to the COSCA Development Officer (Individuals/Courses), jenny@cosca.org.uk

2. Courses will require approval for blended delivery should they wish to permit remote practice placement hours (either via an online video platform or by telephone; text-based practice hours cannot be permitted here). In this instance participants will need to be competent to undertake counselling utilising the technology(s) required which must be accounted for within the readiness for practice placement criteria, practice placement approval criteria and 4-way agreement processes. Participants should be informed about COSCA's Guidance on the Use of Technologies -see website under 'guidance and policies'

Please see the COSCA website under the headings 'Course Validation' and 'Blended Delivery' for further guidance on approval criteria and the blended delivery approval application form. These should be submitted to the Course Validation Secretary: rozannee@cosca.org.uk

Where courses have approval for remote delivery, a minimum of 70% per cent of supervised practice placement hours must be completed in person (where there are 100 hours supervised practice hours required). In the instance where a course's required practice placement hours exceed COSCA's minimum 100-hour requirement, a minimum of 70 hours must be completed in person.

3. Should courses have practice placement requirements that extend beyond COSCA's minimum requirements, these need to be clearly communicated to participant's and any other relevant parties, including within relevant policies and processes such as the participant contract, and four-way agreement.

4. Participants should be prepared from the point of application to the course to complete the above practice placement requirements including the requirement of a minimum of 70 in person practice placement hours.

5. It is recommended that any participants who intend to return overseas after the completion of their course should complete their face-to-face portion of their placement hours first (should the

course have blended delivery approval). This is in case any unforeseen circumstances means that the participant must complete their counselling practice placement hours after the course has finished and they need to return home.

2.9 Supervised Counselling Practice Placements Requirements: Readiness for Practice Placement Process

1. Courses must develop and implement a *Readiness for Practice Placement Process.*
2. The process must clearly outline the criteria to be met prior to a participant being approved as ready to commence their counselling practice placement. Participants should be advised to begin looking for a placement as soon as they are accepted on a course as it can take time to identify suitable placements and to build a working relationship with placement providers.

   However, they cannot commence practice until readiness for practice has been approved and the statement confirming their readiness to practice has been evidenced to the practice placement provider.
3. This process must be distinct from any overall assessment of participant competency and/or fitness to practice processes and must be specific to assessing a participant's readiness to commence their counselling practice placement.
4. The process must clearly detail those involved in the assessment of readiness for practice placements, and their respective responsibilities in relation to the process. This must include feedback from tutors, peers, supervisors, placement providers and the participant themselves with regards to their assessment of their own readiness to begin their counselling practice. The tutor and participant must both sign off the document confirming their verification of the participants for practice placement.
5. COSCA requires participants to have appointed a supervisor prior to being approved as ready to practice.

COSCA does not require participants to have had their first supervision per se prior to commencing practice placements. This is as participants are required to meet the 1 to 6 supervision ratio.

However, some level of contact between the participant and supervisor will be required prior to commencing practice placement to confirm the participant's supervision arrangements and the suitability of the supervisory relationship.

6. Readiness for counselling practice placement approval is subject to the participant maintaining the original criteria as set by the training provider for approval purposes. Any of the parties involved in the process, in addition to supervisors and placement providers, may raise a concern in relation to the above.

It should be clearly outlined within the 'Readiness for Practice Placement process', the mechanisms by which a concern may be communicated to the training provider. This must be communicated clearly and aligned with all other relevant and related training provider contractual agreements, policies and procedures.

7. The process must clearly stipulate the maximum duration permitted for the approval of the commencement of a practice placement. It should also outline any remediation that may be offered should the participant not complete the process within the timeframe permitted.

8. COSCA wishes to allow training providers a degree of flexibility concerning the methods by which they apply their readiness for practice placement processes. For example, the mechanism by which the participant identifies their own readiness to practice could take the form of an assignment, a reflective statement or presentation. Nonetheless, the process must include a range of formative and summative assessment methods and a written signed statement confirming the participants' readiness to practice.

9. The process must incorporate the assessment of the participants' acquisition of the below areas of competency, learning, and documentation. Please note this is relevant to the minimum level required for approval of readiness to *commence* their counselling practice placement, whereby it is expected that the participant will continue to develop the skills, theoretical knowledge, self-awareness and understanding of supervised ethical practice throughout the duration of the course:

- Counselling skills
- Remote counselling (if applying for, or approved for blended delivery)
- Competencies for working with children and young people as per (as per the 'COSCA Competencies for Counselling Children and Young people Guidelines for Training Organisations, Practitioners and Trainees' which can be found on the COSCA website under 'Counselling for Children' -if relevant)
- Theory
- Self-awareness and Identification of own readiness to practice
- Equality, diversity and inclusivity
- Ethics and Codes of Practice
- Risk Assessment and Management, including use of AI
- Insurance
- Disclosure and/or PVG (where relevant)
- Supervision

2.10 Coordination of Practice Placements/ Practice Placement Provider Criteria

2.10.1 Practice Placement Approval Processes:

1. All practice placements must be approved by the training provider, prior to the participant commencing practice. All participants must be approved by the training provider as being ready to commence a practice placement *(Readiness for Practice Placement Process).* Training Providers must confirm with placement providers participants readiness for practice status and inform them immediately of any change to student's approval status.

2. Training Providers must develop and implement processes for the assessment, approval and monitoring of the suitability of practice placements providers. Training Providers must keep up to date with practice placement provider's availability and endeavour to forge links with suitable practice placement providers.

3. Training Providers approved to deliver via blended delivery must develop and implement processes for the assessment, approval and monitoring of the suitability of remote practice placement/practice placement hours.

4. Practice Placement Providers must be willing to enter into the 4-way contractual agreement, which details the practice placements responsibilities to the training provider, the student and their supervisor.

5. Practice Placement Providers must agree with the training provider requirements concerning any reports or communication in relation to the participant. They should be willing to share appropriate information with regards to the participant's integration within the service, competencies, developments and any areas for development.

6. Practice Placement providers must agree with the course requirements as identified by the training provider (for instance Case Study and recordings), which must be consistent with any related organisational policies and procedures.

By accepting participants onto practice placement, the provider confirms that they expect to have enough clients available who will be suitable for allocation to participants. In addition, the practice placement provider must expect to have sufficient organisational sustainability to enable the participant to complete their practice placement hours

7. Participants must have insurance for every placement, and this can be purchased themselves or provided by the placement provider(s). See COSCA's list of insurance providers for counsellors on the COSCA website under 'Join COSCA'

8. COSCA also strongly recommends that all participants have an up to date (within 5 years of issue) Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme membership as it is not always possible to predict if a client may later become or reveal to be a protected adult under the definitions of the PVG scheme.

The need for an up-to-date PVG should ultimately be determined by the placement provider and will need, by law, to be in place if they are likely to come into contact with a child or a protected adult.

A protected adult is someone aged 18 or over who:

- is homeless
- is receiving a health or community care service
- needs assistance with the activities of daily living
- has experienced, is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing domestic abuse
- has an impaired ability to protect themself from physical or psychological harm, because of a physical or mental disability, illness, infirmity or ageing

See https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme for more information.

Please also see COSCA's Guidance on the PVG Scheme on the website under 'guidance and policies'.

Participants on placement outside of Scotland will require to comply with the respective legislation of that country in respect of disclosure checks.

9. Should the participant wish to undertake multiple placements, and/or increase their number of practice placement hours, appropriate consideration must be given to the individual's capacity and competency to do so, with ongoing consideration afforded to any impact of the additional placement(s) and practice. A new four-way agreement will need to be created in instances where participants are approved to undertake additional placements and/or change their practice placement.

10. The placement does not necessarily have to be provided in Scotland, as COSCA recognises that participants often travel to Scotland for the high-quality training that is offered. It is at the course's discretion as to whether overseas practice placements may be permitted. Practice Placement providers must meet the courses existing practice placement approval requirements.

Courses will need to consider factors such as insurance, any legislative requirements specific where the placement is situated and whether their policies and processes such as their complaints processes and the 4-way agreement process can be appropriately implemented should the need arise.

They will need to consider the resources that may be required to oversee practice placements based overseas, which must be compatible with staff, participant and organisational wellbeing. They will need to ensure that the participant's supervisor is familiar with the course and COSCA requirements and practice placements requirements.

The supervisor will need to be willing to work within and have a sufficient awareness of legislative and ethical requirements and referral on processes relevant to both practice in Scotland and the location that the supervisee and their placement is situated in.

They must also be willing to work within and have an awareness of and risk assessment and management processes relevant to both practice in Scotland and the location that the supervisee and their placement is situated in. They must be appropriately insured and culturally competent respective to the location that the placement and supervisee are situated in.

Courses will need to ensure that there are sufficient support systems in place for participants residing overseas. For example, will they be more isolated than their peers and how might this impact arrangements such as group supervision and the trainer's facilitation of these spaces if they are practising in a country with different ethics/legislative requirements.

The above needs to be thoroughly researched and established, forming part of the four-way agreement before the start of the practice placement.

11. Careful attention must be paid to possible conflicts of interest where a participant is already engaged by the placement provider as an employee or volunteer, especially if that organisation is also a training provider.

Consideration must be given, in advance of the placement, to what would happen if one or more of those roles are removed, for any reason, and the participant wishes to continue in the remaining roles. An external placement may be advisable to maintain reasonable boundaries so that their work and training are not mutually dependent.

2.10.2 Practice Placement Application Process:

1. Placement organisations should be looking for participants on a counselling course of an appropriate level: COSCA Validated Diploma or equivalent.

2. Any advertising should be clear and consistent and where a diverse group of prospective candidates can be expected to see it. The application process should be conducted in a collaborative and supportive way to determine the applicant's suitability for the practice placement role. Every care should be taken that the process is fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

This should include establishing the participant's availability and any reasonable adjustments that can be made to make the role as accessible as possible while maintaining ethical and organisational standards, policies and processes.

3. There should be a clear job description setting out what is expected of the role and this should be provided to the participant.

Participants should be assessed in any interviews or workshops against these criteria, and only these, to ensure standardisation across the application process. All interviews or workshops where participants are assessed should include at least one qualified counsellor.

2.10.3 Student Inductions:

1. Practice Placement providers must have an induction process in place for participants which clearly introduces them to any organisational policies, procedures and requirements. The participant should feel a part of the organisation and be given the opportunity to observe (but not be required or asked to participate) in other parts of the placement provider organisation.

They should be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the practicalities of the premises and how they are expected to conduct themselves within it.

2. Participants should be given access to and keep a record of all the policies and procedures relevant to counselling within the placement provider organisation, as well as any that are provided for the wellbeing of both student and client e.g. health and safety procedures.

They should also be included in any notifications or consultations of updates or change.

3. Participants should be introduced to other participants, counsellors, administration and management and be informed of opportunities to interact with other counsellors formally at training and meetings and informally in break rooms and events.

The induction should be complete before they have their first counselling session.

2.10.4 Practice Placement Appointment and Record Keeping Systems

1. Participants should be inducted in the placement provider organisation's methods of secure record keeping. Records, notes etc are the property and ultimate responsibility of the organisation.

2. Participants will need access and will contribute to them as part of their placement, but it is the placement provider's ultimate responsibility to ensure that they are held securely and destroyed in line with the placement provider's policies and procedures, ethical and legislative requirements.

3 Participants should not be required or asked to set and confirm initial appointments with clients, nor manage cancellation or confirmation of appointments with clients.

All client contact with participants should be conducted via the practice placement provider. Clients should not have access to contact details for participants out with session time, except in exceptional circumstances.

Counselling is not considered by COSCA an emergency service and clients should be directed to other means of support, not their student counsellor.

2.10.5 Student Support Systems:

1. Participants on placement must not be permitted to lone work whilst undertaking any of their in-person practice placement hours. There must be a named qualified staff member, clinical lead or designated manager present in the premises who is available as a point of contact for the participants to share any immediate concerns.

2. Participants on placement must have the opportunity to interact with counsellors who work for the same placement provider. This must include access to a supervisor or counsellor whom they can contact in real time (either face to face or remotely).

2.10.6 Assessment and allocation of clients:

1. Practice Placement Providers must have an appropriate assessment and/or allocation system in operation, which endeavours to allocate clients respective to the participants' level of competency and development. Participants must be supported by placement providers to refer on where a client's needs exceed their present competency level.

2. Practice Placement providers must ensure that clients are assessed by a person, preferably an experienced counsellor (but at a minimum a qualified counsellor), who has been trained in assessments. Participants should not be carrying out initial assessments.

3. COSCA requires that any assessment of a client prior to allocation to a participant, should occur within a reasonable timeframe, to support as accurate a representation as is practical of the client's current presenting issues and needs for therapy, including identifying any risk factors and the level of any current risk.

4. Practice Placement providers must ensure that initial assessments identify the following before allocation of clients to participants (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

- the identification of the client's individual presenting issues, needs, goals (where relevant) and preferences for therapy (for instance preferred modality/approach and suitability)
- readiness and suitability for counselling
- assessment and identification of any risk factors
- the client's suitability to engage in remote counselling (if relevant)
- the client's suitability to work with a trainee counsellor
- the client's preparedness to work with a trainee counsellor.

Practice Placement providers should assign clients to participant's based upon the initial assessment, whilst being aware that clients may not always disclose everything in an initial session which may impact the ongoing suitability of the client for the participant work with them.

Participants must be supported by placement providers to refer on where additional information disclosed regarding a client's needs indicates that this exceeds their present competency and capacity.

5. Competency does not need to be solely based upon counselling training. The participant may have previous experience in working with a particular client group, they may have taken part in additional training or additional training may be provided by the placement provider.

The emphasis should be on participant competency with the support and guidance of their training provider, supervisor and placement provider. If there is a concern, at any point in the counselling relationship, that the participant is unable to work with what the client is bringing, the participant should be supported by the placement provider, supervisor and training provider to determine whether this is within the competency of the student and to refer on if necessary.

6. Practice Placement Providers must ensure that clients are allocated in a stepped approach (i.e. starting with one client and building up to a full case load), taking care to only add additional clients when the participant has the competency and capacity to do so.

7. Where practice placements offer a specialist service, extra training should be given to ensure that the participant has enough tools to be able to work with that specialist need, or to have the confidence to refer on when necessary. The training provider should be made aware of this extra training and what will be required of the participant.

2.10.7 Endings:

1. The participant and the placement provider should agree at the start of the placement how long the opportunity is offered for and what will happen with both the participant and clients when the opportunity ends.

This can be because the participant has completed the course and is fully qualified, they have decided to broaden their experience and work elsewhere, the placement provider is no longer able to offer the participant the placement, they have been unable to complete the training course, or if the training provider is no longer operating.

2. If this ending is unexpected this should follow the process already in place for when a counsellor leaves an organisation unexpectedly, for example due to ill health.

3. A placement provider may offer the opportunity to continue, as a fully qualified counsellor, after the placement has ended. Possible working or volunteering opportunities and their requirements must be discussed when the placement is first offered

2.11 Supervision

2.11.1 Supervision Requirements:

1. The course must ensure that participants have regular and sufficient supervision in line with the ratio requirements below.

2. Participants should have the opportunity to experience both individual and group supervision.

3. Supervision may be provided in person or online provided that the supervisor is competent to deliver supervision by the method of technology utilised. It is recommended that where possible that the participant and supervisor meet at least once in person.

2.11.2 Ratio of supervision to counselling practice requirements- Individual and group supervision:

1. The ratio of supervision hours to client contact hours should be not less than 1:6

Participants should have at least one hour of supervision to cover every 6 hours of practice.

2. COSCA does not require participants to have supervision where they have not seen any clients, and/or until they have reached six hours of practice since their previous supervision session. It is at course's discretion as to whether there may stipulate any further requirements here (see section 2.11.3).

3. Should a participant require supervisory guidance before their next supervision session is scheduled, they must ensure to seek this to support continued safe and ethical practice. Arrangements for contact out with scheduled supervision session times should be documented within the supervisory contract (see criteria 2.11.7)

4. Should the participant and/or supervisor have a short period of unavailability such as a short holiday, the participant may make up the required ratio with additional supervision time at their next session(s). This must be offered on a limited and reasonable basis only and participants must plan to have at least an hour of supervision by the time they have reached six hours of practice.

Should the participant require supervisory support during the supervisor's temporary absence they should seek support from their course and practice placement provider, who must guide on interim supervision arrangements in this instance.

Individual supervision:

Supervision that is provided as part of the participant's practice placement(s), and/or external supervision may be included towards the ratio provided that the supervisor(s) meet the courses approval criteria and are included within the 4-way agreement.

Group Supervision:

1. Where group supervision is provided *(either internally by the course or externally through the practice placement provider may be permitted),* it will be considered on a pro rata basis.

Members of a supervision group can divide the time spent in a group by the number of group participants e.g. each member of a group of 4 can clam 25% of the time together as supervision. This would mean that if the group has 4 participants and the group session lasts 2 hours, then each participant can claim 30 minutes of supervision.

2. Group Supervisors must ensure that all practice undertaken by trainees is supervised.

3. The focus of the work must be on client related issues, and the group led by a recognised supervisor who has experience of delivering group supervision within a supervision contract.

4. Supervisors must ensure that all practice undertaken by participants is supervised and individual members of the group, and the whole group, have the opportunity to have their developmental needs addressed. 'Peer-led' groups are not acceptable.

2.11.3 Course specific supervision requirements:

Courses must clearly state any supervision requirements that go beyond COSCA's supervision requirements.

They must ensure that these are clearly communicated to all relevant parties including participants, supervisors and practice placement providers and incorporated within the 4-way agreement. These include and are not limited to:

- frequency of supervision
- length of supervision
- individual and group supervision requirements
- requirements for in person or remote supervision
- supervision requirements during holidays
- breaks in participants and/or supervisors practice and instances where no practice hours have been completed in the interim since their previously completed supervision
- the requirement for an external supervisor over and above supervision provided within participant's practice placement(s).

2.11.4 Criteria for supervisors

Supervisors must have substantial counselling experience and will have completed counselling training to diploma level and be a COSCA Accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist, a COSCA Practitioner Member or equivalent:

1. Supervisors must have a recognised Diploma level counselling qualification

2. They should have completed recognised and appropriate training in supervision.

3. Supervisors must be members of COSCA, or another recognised professional body and abide by the relevant Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

4. Supervisors will undergo supervision in relation to their supervisees.

5. Supervisors must be willing to sign and to work within the parameters of the 4-way contractual agreement.

6. Supervisors must be in agreement with training provider requirements with regards to any reports or communication in relation to the student. They should be willing to share appropriate information with regards to the student's competencies, developments and areas for development.

7. Supervisors must inform the training provider regarding any concerns in relation to the students practice, such as serious ethical concerns, serious concerns surrounding competency and capacity or supervision non-engagement.

8. Supervisors may be based overseas should the supervisor meet the approval criteria as identified by the course.

   Should a supervisor and/or the participant and their placement be based overseas the supervisor will need to be willing to work within and have a sufficient awareness of course requirements, legislative and ethical requirements and referral on and risk assessment and management processes relevant to both practice in Scotland and the location that the supervisee/their placement is situated in.

   They must be appropriately insured and culturally competent respective to the location that the placement and supervisee are situated in. Courses will need to ensure whether their insurance and policies and processes such as their complaints processes and the 4-way agreement process can be appropriately implemented should the need arise should supervisor be based overseas.

9. Supervisors must be competent to offer supervision within the course's stated therapeutic approach and with the client group(s) the participant is working with. Where the is practice is with children, and/or couples or other specialisms the supervisor must have sufficient counselling training and experience in these areas.

10. Supervisors must have a sufficient level of skills in client assessment, risk assessment and management of risk, including having a working knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative measures of risk, and risk assessment in relation to the use of AI by clients.

11. Supervisors must be committed towards conditions of equality, diversity and inclusivity within their own and their supervisory practice.

12. Supervisors must be committed towards their own continuous learning and development as both a counsellor and supervisor.

2.11.6 Recognition of supervisors

The course organisers will take responsibility for approval of supervisors who must meet the criteria listed in 2.11.4 This list should be reviewed and updated regularly.

2.11.7 Supervisor Contracts

Each supervisor will enter a clear contract with the course provider, which must include a 4-way contractual agreement. The contract will detail the supervisor's responsibilities towards the course provider, the student and placement provider.

2.12 Practice Placements- Roles and Responsibilities of the Training Provider/ Practice Placement(s)/ Student and Supervisor(s): The 4 Way contractual Agreement:

1. Participants must have a practice supervisor in place prior to being approved as ready to practice and for commencement of practice placement.

2. Training providers must create a 4-way contractual agreement clearly detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of the training provider, practice placement, participant and supervisor(s). This must be completed prior to the student commencing practice placement(s).

3. There should be an open and equal partnership between participant training provider, supervisor(s) and placement organisation(s) with clear lines of communication fostered, and methods of communication by which any concerns can be raised by all parties, clearly stated within the agreement.

4. It should be understood that if any party, including the participant, feels that the participant needs extra support, they can contact the other members of the contract. It is recommended that there is ongoing communication regarding the impact of the participant's workload, other work and family commitments, multiple placements etc. in conjunction with the training provider and supervisor.

5. If any member of the contract no longer is willing, able or in operation to keep up their part of the contract, the whole contract is considered void. A new four-way contractual agreement must then be signed and all four roles must be represented. A separate contract should be completed for each placement.

6. COSCA does not wish to be prescriptive with regards to the structure of the above agreement and appreciates there may be some degree of latitude with regards to individual training provider, practice placement and supervisor requirements here.

Nonetheless, it must clearly state the roles and responsibilities of each party, and towards each other. It must be clearly aligned with other relevant policies and processes

2.13 Staffing: Trainers, Trainer Participant Ratio's and Exit Planning, Supervisors and Personal Tutors

2.13.1 Staffing

The course should be staffed by an integrated core of trainers which should be augmented as required, in keeping with the participant trainer ratio and accredited trainer requirements as below (see criteria 2.13.3.)

There will be a team of two core trainers as a minimum on Diploma courses.

It is the responsibility of the training provider to ensure that the required participant ratio and accredited trainer requirements are met (see criteria 2.13.3 and 2.13.2).

It is the responsibility of training providers to quality assure the training delivered by non-accredited trainers.

All trainers engaged with the course must be familiar with the COSCA Validation guidelines, COSCA individual membership suitable for trainers and trainer accreditation requirements.

Courses must ensure to clearly communicate these requirements to prospective trainers and should strive to recruit trainers who will be able and willing to meet these requirements.

A copy of the guidelines above must be issued to all new trainers and any other relevant parties involved in delivery of the course.

2.13.2 Accredited Trainer Requirements

The core group of course trainers should be experienced counselling practitioners and include at least one COSCA Accredited Trainer (Diploma level), or a trainer who holds COSCA Conditional Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level.

All other trainers should be approved in advance by COSCA as non-accredited trainers and be working towards COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level.

Assistant trainers (see criteria 2.13.9) cannot be considered as part of the 'core' delivery team.

2.13.3 Ratio of Trainers: Participants:

- The optimum ratio of trainer: participants is 2:12.
- The maximum number of participants on courses with 2 trainers is 24.

- Courses with over 24 participants require one trainer for each additional 12 participants.

- The minimum number of participants permitted at the beginning of the course is nine.

- Particular attention should be paid to the provision of sufficient space for confidentiality in triad work and the management of large group processes.

- If the number of participants on courses that have already started drops to less than six, the course should be either cancelled or deferred or delivered outside of the validation criteria. This means that the validation status will either be withdrawn or changed to “Conditional” validation for the duration of that cohort. In the event of low numbers of participants occurring, COSCA should be informed as early as possible. If the course is cancelled, all possible help should be given to participants to continue their training with other providers or in a partnership arrangement with the applicant and another COSCA validated training provider.

- Should the training provider have requirements beyond the minimum number of 9 this must be clearly communicated to participants and accounted for in its exit plan.

2.13.4 Supporting Participant continuity of training: Exit planning

Exit Plan:

Courses are required to have a compliant exit plan in the instance of organisational and course cessation which should include reserve funding to support this process.

The organisation’s exit strategy should show clearly how the organisation will ensure that there is a smooth transition from operating to closing down with minimal distress for participants, trainers, supervisors, practice placement providers, clients and other relevant stakeholders.

Training providers must have measures in place to ensure or minimise that participants’ educational progression is not negatively impacted, potentially through course completion or transfer to another course provider.

The organisation’s exit plan must evidence the following:

- That COSCA, participants (including deferred participants), trainers, supervisors, practice placement providers and all other relevant stakeholders will be informed at the earliest opportunity regarding the organisation and/or course’s cessation.

  This includes the need for participants to cease practice placement as the four-way agreement will be void. Practice placements hold responsibility to action their processes that should already be in place for when a counsellor leaves an organisation unexpectedly, for example due to ill health.

- How participants, trainers, supervisors, practice placement providers and all other relevant stakeholders will be supported, including the availability of an ongoing point of contact in the instance of the organisation and course cessation

- How the course will support the transfer of participants to other training providers where relevant, including in relation to APL/APEL systems, the course's requirements, content and assessment criteria, and individual's participants' progress on the course and evidence of assessment criteria

- How participant records will be retained and accessed in keeping with legislative requirements in the instance of the organisation and course cessation

- The reserve funding available to support this process.

2.13.5 Role of trainers:

The team of two 'core' trainers should deliver the course by sharing training workloads, co-facilitating counselling skills practice sessions, co-assessing participant work, and ensuring complementary expertise, possibly with one focusing more on theory and the other on counselling skills practice.

The team of two trainers collaborate in the planning and delivery of the course. This includes:

- sharing responsibilities: One trainer might lead theoretical input (e.g., counselling orientations/approaches, ethics), while the other leads on practical counselling skills practice in the triads, with both trainers being involved in some way in the delivery of both of the above

- co-facilitating: trainers work together in counselling skills practice sessions, observing, giving immediate feedback, and modelling good practice

- assessing: trainers have some level of involvement across the course's assessment criteria including in relation to counselling skills and the counselling process, supervised counselling practice, theory, self-awareness and personal development and professional responsibilities. They should collaboratively review participant assessments to ensure fairness, consistency, and quality before final decision

- bringing complementary expertise: trainers bring different strengths, such as one trainer having extensive counselling practice experience and the other perhaps more in group facilitation or specific therapeutic approaches, enriching the learning

- supporting participants: trainers jointly provide support to participants, often meeting with participants to discuss progress or address challenges.

2.13.6 Approval of trainers:

2.13.6.(a) Non-Accredited Trainer Approval process

All trainers who do not hold COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level require to be approved by COSCA as a non-accredited trainer before being eligible to deliver on the course. This includes trainers who already hold COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Certificate level or are approved for delivery at Certificate level.

Non-Accredited trainer approval forms must be submitted to the COSCA Development Officer for review and a decision on approval in advance of the trainer's delivery on the course. The form can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/General.

When revalidation is applied for (see criteria 4.9), all non-accredited trainers involved in the delivery of the course (even if it is on a freelance or sessional basis) for more than 2 years prior to the revalidation deadline must be COSCA Accredited (Diploma level) by the point of revalidation, that is within 5 years of the organisation's award of Initial Validation.

2.13.6.(b) Non-Accredited Trainer Eligibility:

Post qualifying experience and practice:

To be eligible to deliver on Diploma courses, trainers must have completed a COSCA Validated Diploma or equivalent in counselling/psychotherapy.

They must have at least two years post qualifying experience practising as a counsellor and must continue to practise as a counsellor whilst delivering on the course.

Courses should ensure that non-accredited trainers have a Scottish address and practice base as this will be required for eligibility for COSCA membership and trainer accreditation.

Therapeutic Approach:

Trainers may have a theoretical base or orientation which is different from that stated by the course, however they must have a sufficient understanding of the course's theoretical approach, and how this underpins counselling practice. When such a situation occurs, it should not affect the theoretical balance of the course.

Training Experience and Qualifications:

Trainers should have some experience of providing training delivery such as at events, or workshops, and experience of large group facilitation. They do not require to have a recognised training for trainers' qualification at the point of approval for delivery, however they will be required to complete this prior to application for trainer accreditation (see criteria 2.13.7).

For a list of eligible training for trainers' qualifications please see the COSCA Trainer Accreditation application form and guidelines Appendix 2: Alternative Trainer Qualifications in the COSCA Trainer Accreditation application form and guidelines (Diploma Level) which can be found on the COSCA website under accreditation/trainer.

Trainers should be committed towards embedding conditions of equality, diversity and inclusivity within their counselling and training practice and towards their own continuous development as a reflective trainer.

2.13.7 Applying for COSCA Trainer Accreditation:

2.13.7 (a) Trainer Accreditation Application eligibility and application process:

Courses must be aware of the requirements and criteria for trainer accreditation. Accordingly, sufficient opportunities should be offered to trainers to gain experience across the areas of training practice required to be evidenced for the purposes of trainer accreditation.

In order to meet the terms of the validation guidelines, non-accredited trainers must be prepared to work towards COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level within 2 years of commencing delivery of the course (even if it is on freelance or sessional basis).

It is recommended that non-accredited trainers join COSCA as a Counsellor Member or a Practitioner Member in order to have access to COSCA resources and support. To be eligible to apply for COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level applicants must have as a minimum practitioner or accredited level membership status of COSCA and should ensure to submit their membership application in sufficient time to afford for it to be reviewed prior to the submission of their accreditation application.

Application forms and guidance on the membership process, including submission deadlines which are agreed on a quarterly basis, can be found on the COSCA website under Join COSCA/Individual Membership.

Application forms and guidance on the accreditation process can be found on the COSCA website under Accreditation/Trainer. The deadline for trainer accreditation application submission is March the 31st and September the 30th each year.

2.13.7 (b) Trainer Accreditation Registration Scheme

- The ‘Trainer Accreditation Registration Scheme’ offers enhanced support towards the trainer accreditation process. Support can be offered either online, telephone or face to face in the COSCA office. It may include additional guidance and feedback on accreditation criteria, the application format and structuring, and in relation to identifying progress made towards the applicant’s individual accreditation deadline(s). Any support offered will be reasonable and time limited with respect to the duration of the application process.

- Please see the COSCA website under accreditation/trainer for further information and the registration scheme application form or contact the Development Officer for further information.

- Should a trainer have an additional support need(s) and wish to disclose this, COSCA may be able to offer additional support towards the process of applying for trainer accreditation. Support may vary depending on the need(s) identified. It may include additional guidance and feedback on accreditation criteria, the application format and structuring, and in relation to identifying progress made towards the applicant's individual accreditation deadline(s). Any support offered will be reasonable and time limited with respect to the duration of the application process. Please contact the Development Officer for further guidance.

- COSCA holds online trainer accreditation workshops bi-annually in the summer and winter each year, offering detailed guidance on the application process. You can find the next dates and booking forms on the COSCA website under 'Events'.

2.13.8 Quality Assurance of trainers: Non-Accredited trainers report of competence

Courses must complete an observatory report for all non-accredited trainers within 6 months of commencement of the delivery of the course.

This report should be completed by a suitably experienced trainer familiar with the work of the non-accredited trainer. The report offers an opportunity for both course and trainer feedback and reflection on their strengths, competencies and areas for development, and may be beneficial for the trainer to draw upon when writing their trainer accreditation application.

The reporting template can be found within – **Appendix 4**; or on the COSCA website under Validation/General.

The report only requires to be submitted once to COSCA, as part of the annual monitoring process. An Annual Monitoring Form (see Section 4, Process of Diploma Validation) must be submitted for each year within the validation period. The annual monitoring form is requested by October 31st each year and COSCA will notify if any changes to this.

Provided that the 'Non- Accredited Trainers Observation Report of Trainer Competence' has already been submitted in the first year of delivery for each non-accredited trainer delivering the course, the course is responsible for ongoing monitoring of the level of competence of non-accredited trainers for any subsequent years of their delivery of the course.

Examples of how to evidence this include the following:

- Updated Non-Accredited Trainer Observation Report of Trainer Competence
- Student feedback on the trainer
- Annual appraisal of the trainer
- Performance and competence review

2.13.9 Assistant trainers:

2.13.9 a) Assistant Trainer Role and requirements:

Training providers can appoint a maximum of 2 individuals to carry out assistant trainer roles in the delivery of a COSCA validated course. Individuals appointed are not to be members of the core training team, all of whom need to be approved as non-accredited trainers. Their role as an assistant rather than a core trainer, including the boundaries and any limitations in relation to this role, must be clearly communicated to participants and any other relevant parties.

It is not essential that those appointed as assistant trainers have post qualifying experience in the relevant area of study, but this is desirable to maximise the benefits to participants.

Those appointed to be assistant trainers do not need to be prepared to work towards COSCA Trainer Accreditation within the normal 2 years, but this should be encouraged if possible. Those appointed do not count in the required ratio of trainers to participants.

Role:

Assistant trainers may work under the guidance of an accredited trainer. The role may include, and is not exclusive to:

- Setting up of equipment and learning environment
- Delivering course content
- Assisting to facilitate experiential group processes
- Leading small group discussions
- Facilitating opportunities for counselling skills practice
- Observing counselling skills practice sessions and offering developmental feedback
- Modelling core counselling skills, ethical practice and the courses stated therapeutic approach
- One to one pastoral support for participants
- Supporting participants with additional support needs and implementing reasonable adjustments
- Managing and updating course materials and resources
- Managing virtual learning platforms
- Attendance tracking
- Maintaining student records
- Acting as a liaison between participants and core trainers

2.13.9 b) Assistant trainers approval process

Training providers who wish to appoint assistant trainers are required to apply for approval from COSCA in advance and submit the following information to the development officer:

- contact details of the COSCA validated training provider
- contact details of the individual to be appointed as an assistant trainer
- evidence that the individual to be appointed is practicing counselling, counselling skills or an activity relevant to the above course
- evidence that the individual to be appointed is a post qualifying member of a relevant professional body
- name of the COSCA validated course
- evidence that the individual to be appointed has successfully completed the above course (or equivalent)
- description of the assistant trainer's role(s) to be carried out including any assessment role
- evidence of successful completion of training to carry out the above role(s)
- confirmation that course participants will be notified in advance about the appointment of an assistant trainer and be given clear information about their respective roles
- confirmation that contracts or agreements have been issued to the assistant trainers and that these included include a confidentiality agreement relating to involvement in a course as an assistant trainer.

2.13.10 Guest Lecturers

COSCA requires Guest Lecturers on COSCA validated courses to possess significant and relevant qualifications, expertise and/or experience in their speciality area, and abide by the values of COSCA laid down in the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

It is the responsibility of validated training providers to appoint appropriate and suitable Guest Lecturers.

Key Requirements for Guest Lecturers:

- **Qualifications, Expertise and Experience**: A high level of qualifications, expertise and/or experience in their field is expected.
- **Nomination Process:** Validated training providers should have a written procedure for appointing Guest Lecturers to ensure their suitability. Providers planning to include Guest Lecturers in their course must submit a copy of the above written procedure with their course validation application.
- **Status:** Guest Lecturers may be categorized as Visiting Lecturers or Visiting Trainers.
- **Immigration:** International, non-visa nationals, need to meet immigration compliance regarding being a Guest Lecturer
- **Duration & Scope:** Guest lectures can range from stipulated one-off guest spots to structured, recurring training sessions within a course, agreed in advance by the training provider.
- **Contribution:** Guest lecturers are expected to contribute to participant learning, often by providing practical insights, relevant perspectives, or specialised knowledge.
- **Costs:** Validated training providers may need to consider a fee structure for guest lecturers depending on their expertise and involvement.

2.13.11 Personal Tutors

It is recommended that the training organisation supports a system of personal tutors to assist in the integration of participants' learning and to address any course related difficulties.

Personal tutors may offer support in relation to the academic and personal development of participants. They may offer support with study skills, the courses requirements and assessment criteria and/or help to signpost or refer participants to other support services where required. They may offer support for those participants who have identified additional support needs, including in relation to the implementation of reasonable adjustments.

Personal tutors must have a recognised Diploma level counselling/psychotherapy qualification and at least two years post qualifying experience as a counsellor/psychotherapist. They must have experience that is relevant to supporting the academic and personal development of counselling students, including in relation to those participants who identify additional support needs.

If the personal tutor(s) is not part of the core delivery team, then they are not required to apply for non-accredited trainer approval and to apply for trainer accreditation. Should the personal tutor be a part of the core delivery team it is advisable that they are not directly involved in marking their allocated participants' assignments wherever possible.

2.13.12 Administrative Staff

The course must have sufficient administrative staff in place to support the course's administrative processes and to implement the course's stated policies and processes. The level of administrative staffing must be conducive to staff and participant wellbeing.

This should include consideration to -and is not exclusive to- tasks such as in relation to:

- market research and course publicity
- application and interview processes
- course fees and financing
- participant enquiries
- course setting
- maintenance of participant and staff records
- participant attendance
- participant registrations
- participant feedback
- administration of the courses assessment criteria such as assignment submission and feedback processes
- maintenance of any online platforms/virtual learning environments,
- implementation of the courses states policies and processes
- producing maintaining and updating the courses resources and materials.
- fees and financing

2.13.13 Staff Meetings

Staff should have regular meetings to discuss course issues such as, but not exclusive to:

- course continuity and participant numbers
- participant application and interview processes
- course content and resources
- assessment criteria including in relation to marking and standardisation
- course administration, policies and processes
- feedback and evaluation
- course monitoring processes
- participant, trainer and staff support and development
- trainer and participant interpersonal dynamics
- equality, diversity and inclusivity.

2.13.14 Staff Support and Supervision

Evidence needs to be provided on the organisation's trainer development strategy and the provisions for trainer support and supervision.

For the purposes of application for trainer accreditation trainers must have a minimum of 12 hours of supervision per annum. Once a trainer has been awarded COSCA Trainer Accreditation at Diploma level they are required to evidence a minimum of four hours of supervision per annum as part of the annual renewal process.

Individual, group and peer supervision may be counted towards the hours required, and this may be provided internally by the training provider and/or sourced externally by the trainer.

Trainers may include time spent with their counselling supervisor provided that is focused on training practice and if their supervisor has relevant training experience.

2.13.15 Annual Trainers Day

COSCA hosts the annual trainers event each year. All trainers involved in COSCA validated courses are eligible and recommended to attend the event each year. Attendance at COSCA's Annual Trainers Event or similar is required for the annual renewal of trainer accreditation.

The event offers learning relevant to counselling training delivery, with each year's theme being shaped in relation to trainer feedback on their desired learning topics and emergent themes within the counselling training field. The event is experiential and offers an opportunity to network with trainers on other COSCA validated courses.

For the purposes of applying for and maintaining trainer accreditation trainers must record attendance at a minimum of one COSCA Annual Trainers' Event or equivalent in the past two years. The event date and booking form will be published on the COSCA website under 'Events'.

2.14 Optional Course Content

2.14.1 Specification of Optional Content

The inclusion of optional elements is encouraged. However, the rationale for the inclusion of options must be stated and links with counselling made clear.

2.14.2 Time Allocation to Optional Components

Time allocated to optional elements cannot be included within the required minimum of at least 400 core contact hours.

3. PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Organisation's External Assessor

Applicants will require to engage, within six months of the award of Initial Validation, an External Assessor who must be different from the COSCA Assessor, and independent of the organisation. Impartiality should be observed when an organisation recruits an External Assessor.

It should be noted that your External Assessor is a different appointment to the COSCA Assessor, and you are advised to appoint someone into the role who has a good understanding of COSCA training standards, is experienced and preferably qualified in both training and counselling practice and who is independent of your organisation.

The External Assessor's role is one of verification and evaluation. The organisation's External Assessor is required to visit the COSCA validated course to observe and assess its delivery, review a sample of participant assignments and their marking/feedback and to speak to the course's trainers, staff and participants.

As well as offering a view as to how your course is being delivered, the External Assessor needs to be able to remain objective and they are required to act as a moderator i.e., if there is a dispute regarding decisions, assigning marks and awards, etc. The appointment and costs of the organisation's External Assessor are met by the validated organisation and not COSCA. It is recommended that the external assessor appointment is regularly reviewed to ensure continued objectivity and the opportunity to benefit from diverse professional perspectives, knowledge and expertise in relation to Diploma level counselling training delivery.

To assist with the appointment of an External Assessor please see the document *'Guide to Appointment of an External Assessor'* on the COSCA website under 'Validation/Diploma'.

As this is an external appointment, COSCA does not keep a list of external assessors and cannot recommend individual assessors or indicate potential costs here. Course's may want to look at COSCA's directory of accredited trainers for potentially suitable assessor's which can be found on the COSCA website under the headings Accreditation/Trainer.

It is recommended that an external assessment is carried out on a regular basis. An external assessor's report will required to be submitted alongside your annual monitoring form at least every 3rd year of validation, and it must be submitted as part of your revalidation application which is due every 5 years (see section 4.9).

To assist with the completion of the External Assessor's Report, please see a copy of COSCA's proforma 'A Guide for the External Assessor's Report' under www.cosca.org.uk.

The external assessor may use this template or choose to use their own preferred reporting format. Where using their own assessment report they must ensure to evidence the criteria as included within the above proforma.

Where the external assessor's report identifies any recommendations for the course, courses must ensure to respond to this within their annual monitoring and revalidation submissions. Courses must clearly indicate any follow-on actions that have been planned and/or implemented in response to the assessor's feedback.

3.2 Assessment

3.2.1 a) Assessment Processes Overview:

1. The course assessment process will be both formative and summative and will be experienced by the participants as supportive.

2. The formative assessment will be ongoing and based on the Learning Outcomes of the Modules and/or units. It can include (and is not exclusive to) the use of observation of practice, feedback and personal reflection and will be linked to individual participant learning.

The summative assessment will be based on the Learning Outcomes of complete Modules and/or units. An assessment framework will be planned and executed based on the Modules' and/or unit's Learning Outcomes.

3. The assessment framework will be progressive and cumulative while being consistently stringent and effective. Evidence of how the framework for summative assessment is planned and executed and how it helps develop an environment where the participant can also be self-reflective and self-assessing of their own learning must be submitted with the validation application.

4. Participants must receive regular feedback- both written and verbal- respecting their progressive development throughout the course in relation to the course's assessment criteria. The course's assessment criteria and processes should be appropriately timed to ensure both continuous ongoing assessment of participants alongside assessment of participants at key developmental stages throughout their training.

3.2.1 c) Communication of Assessment Criteria and Processes

1. The application will provide evidence that information and support concerning the process and criteria for assessment will be communicated to the course participants prior to the course or at the latest before the end of the first session. The assessment criteria and processes must be revisited at a sufficient frequency throughout the duration of the course, and any changes to the courses assessment criteria and processes must be communicated clearly and with sufficient advance notice given to participants.

2. Courses must clearly communicate to their participants whether the course has achieved academic credit levelling through an academic institution, including clarifying any ways in which this may relate to the course's assessment criteria.

Should courses be in the process of applying for academic credit levelling this must be clearly communicated to both participants and COSCA. Any associated changes to the course's assessment criteria and processes communicated clearly and with sufficient advance notice given to participants.

3. The application will provide information on who, when and how this will be carried out, including the various methods through which the course's assessment criteria will be communicated and made accessible to participants.

4. The application must include reference to how participants with additional support needs will be supported and the reasonable adjustments that can be applied in relation to the course's assessment criteria processes.

5. Courses must offer both individual and group tutoring opportunities respecting the courses assessment criteria and processes.

6. Practice placements and supervisors will assist in the assessment of the course's core components and core counselling competencies. Indeed, where appropriate peers and participants themselves may have some role in the self-assessment of their own and their peer's development and demonstration of the course's core components and competencies.

However, always, the ultimate responsibility for assessment processes and their outcomes resides with the training provider and its trainers. This should be clearly communicated to participants and other relevant parties including supervisors and practice placement providers whilst working in keeping with any relevant policies and processes including the participant contract, 4-way agreement, discontinuation process.

3.3 Assessment of Core Components- Assessment methods

1. The courses assessment methods may include and are not exclusive to; readiness for practice placement process (including observed skills practice sessions; see section 3.3.1), written assignments (see section 3.3.6), learning portfolios, reflective journals, case studies, trainer, peer, supervisory and practice placement reports, research projects and presentations.

2. The readiness for practice placement process (including observed skills practice), written assignments, the reflective journal, trainer, supervisory and practice placement reports, records of participants' supervised counselling practice and the case study are mandatory assessment methods.

COSCA does not wish to be overly prescriptive regarding the content, timing and frequency of the course's assessment methods in relation to the core components.

However, evidence of these processes, including where they will be situated within the course schedule and how they will be utilised to measure participants' development of the core counselling competencies, to assess the core components (see section 3.3.1-3.3.6) and to determine participant outcomes must be submitted within the validation application.

The below processes and their implementation must be aligned with course's stated policies and procedures including in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, the participant contract, readiness for practice placement criteria, the 4-way agreement, and discontinuation processes.

The assessment methods as below in relation to the core components must be included and evidenced within the validation application:

3.3.1 Counselling Skills, Counselling process and Supervised Practice Placements

1. The assessment of participants' counselling skills should include reference to peer and trainer, supervisor and practice placement interactions. Trainer observation and assessment of participants' skills practice must be included.

2. As part of the course's readiness for practice placement's process (see section 3.3), supervisors and trainers' reports should provide ongoing feedback and assessment of participants' development of counselling skills and their integration into the counselling process, respective to the course's stated therapeutic approach.

3. The assessment of skills and the counselling process should be aligned with the course's stated therapeutic approach and evidenced within applications for validation as such. For example, for courses identifying a CBT therapeutic approach use of the CTSR scale and how this will be utilised to assess participant skills might be expected to be evidenced here.

4. Participants still completing their supervised practice placement hours beyond the completion of the taught element of the course should be offered adequate ongoing support.

This should endeavour to maintain their ongoing connection with the course, including having access to guidance from its trainers where required and appropriate ongoing evaluation of their counselling practice, in keeping with the terms of the 4-way contractual agreement.

a) Trainers:

Trainers should feedback and report on participants' understanding of supervised skills practice as demonstrated during relevant training sessions, including group supervision where offered internally.

This must include comment on their experience of the participant's abilities in relation to:

- their practice placement setting(s) and suitability
- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice, relevant legislation and organisational policies and procedures
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- Skills and the counselling process

- Integration of theory into practice respective to the course's stated therapeutic approach.
- Self-awareness and personal development in relation to counselling practice, including where any areas of difference and diversity within self and others and any areas of inequality and power imbalances may have interacting with the therapeutic process
- Abilities to self-reflect on practice

b) Supervisors Report:

Supervisors should feedback and report on their experience of the participants' abilities in relation to:

- work setting and suitability
- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice and relevant legislation and organisational processes
- contracting with clients including in relation to confidentiality
- establishing and maintaining a therapeutic relationship
- counselling skills and process
- integration of theory into practice respective to the courses stated therapeutic approach
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- self-awareness and personal development including where any areas of difference and diversity within self and others and any areas of inequality and power imbalances may have interacting with the therapeutic alliance and process
- abilities to self-reflect on practice
- use of supervision and engagement with the supervisory relationship.

c) Written Assignments:

Participants should prepare written submissions which show how their professional counselling skills have developed and been integrated into the counselling process respective to the course's stated therapeutic approach.

1) Readiness for Practice Placements Process: (see criteria 2.9)- *NB This must involve an observed and assessed skill practice element.*

2) Case Study**:**

At least one client case study should be presented by participants to demonstrate their understanding of the counselling/psychotherapy process.

COSCA does not wish to be prescriptive surrounding the exact requirements of the case study. However, it must include the participants' demonstration of understanding in relation to:

- work setting and suitability

- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice and relevant legislation and organisational processes
- contracting with clients including in relation to confidentiality
- establishing and maintaining a therapeutic relationship
- counselling skills and process
- integration of theory into practice respective to the courses stated therapeutic approach
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- self-awareness including where any areas of difference and diversity within self and others and any areas of inequality and power imbalances may have interacting with the therapeutic alliance and process
- use of supervision.

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d) Client recording(s):

COSCA does not wish to be prescriptive surrounding the exact nature of requirements here such as the number or duration of recording and/or whether the recording is reviewed by the course's trainers or within individual or group supervision session:

Courses must assess at least one recording of each participant's counselling skills practice client sessions, and should feedback and report on the participant's abilities in relation to:

- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice and relevant legislation and organisational processes
- establishing and maintaining a therapeutic relationship
- counselling skills and process
- integration of theoretical knowledge into practice respective to the courses stated therapeutic approach
- self-awareness in relation to practice including the ability to self-reflect on their practice

e) Records of practice placement hours/log

A log of participants supervised counselling practice hours should be kept and used in the assessment process. The log must evidence adherence to the required supervision ratio.

Counselling hours must be signed off by the practice placement(s).

3.3.2 Theoretical Knowledge

a) Trainer and Supervisor Feedback and Reports:

1. Trainers should provide a report on each participant's attendance at, and participation in, relevant sessions related to the delivery of theoretical knowledge.

2. Supervisors must comment on the participant's integration of theory within the counselling process. This must include the supervisor's evaluation of how coherently and effectively theory informs the participants' practice, within the course's stated therapeutic approach.

b) Written Assignments

1. Substantive written submissions should demonstrate participants' theoretical knowledge of different models of human development and psychopathology.

2. This must include demonstration of theoretical knowledge relevant to areas of difference and diversity, and the ways in which societal, structural and systemic inequalities may influence human development and psychopathology.

c) Optional:

A written examination may be included in the assessment of this section of the course.

d)

A research project may be included in the assessment of this section of the course.

3.3.3 Self-awareness and Personal Development

a) Reflective journal:

1. Participants must keep a reflective journal throughout the course that logs their growth and development throughout the course and demonstrates its relevance to their counselling practice.

2. This must include their personal evaluation of their self-awareness in relation to self and others that is supportive of their ongoing development of inclusive and reflective practice.

This must include their awareness of:

- their own lived-in context(s) (for example social, cultural, personal contexts) and the various characteristics that may be influencing their identity, interpersonal and intrapersonal relating (e.g. gender, culture, race, age, sexuality, religion etc) and may interact with intrapersonal and interpersonal and the counselling process.

- areas of difference and diversity within self and others, including any experiences of inequalities and power imbalances that may interact with their intrapersonal and interpersonal relating and the counselling process.

b) Trainer and Supervisor Feedback and Reports:

Trainers:

This should include the trainer's feedback and assessment of the participant's development in relation to the below areas, as demonstrated both on an individual basis and within related group activities throughout the duration of the course:

- the participant's personal development and their demonstration of self-awareness in relation to self and others throughout the course

- their demonstration of self-awareness in relation to their lived-in contexts and the various characteristics that may be influencing their identity, interpersonal and intrapersonal relating

- their awareness of areas of difference and diversity within self and others including where any areas of inequality and power imbalances may be interacting with the therapeutic alliance and process.

- the participant's suitability to undertake client case work and to commit to inclusive practice whilst working within their present capacity and competencies.

Supervisors:

This must include the supervisor's feedback and assessment of:

- The participant's development and demonstration of self-awareness and their personal development as evidenced throughout the supervision process.

- The participant's suitability to undertake client case work, including the participant's abilities to recognise and appropriately respond to where areas of difference and diversity within self and others and where any areas of inequality and power imbalance may be interacting with the therapeutic alliance and process

- The participants commitment towards inclusive practice, whilst working within their present capacity and competencies.

c) Other personal development activities:

Participants must demonstrate how deepening personal awareness gained through attendance at personal counselling/psychotherapy and/or other personal development work has affected their counselling practice and their understanding of their role in the client: counsellor/psychotherapist relationship.

d) Optional:

A further written assignment may be included in the assessment of this section of the course.

3.3.4 Professional responsibilities

a) Trainer, Supervisor and Practice Placement(s) Feedback and reports:

Trainers:

Trainers should feedback and report on participant's understanding of professional responsibilities as demonstrated during relevant training sessions.

Supervisors:

Supervisors should feedback and report on participants understanding of professional responsibilities as demonstrated within the supervision process. This must include comment on their experience of the participants' abilities in relation to:

- practice placement setting and suitability
- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice, relevant legislation and organisational requirements
- contracting with clients including in relation to confidentiality
- referral sources and systems
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- record keeping
- management of professional relationships within their practice placement(s)
- use of supervision and engagement in the supervisory relationship

Practice Placement Provider(s):

Practice placement reports should report on participants' understanding of professional responsibilities as demonstrated on practice placement. This should include comment on their experience of participants' abilities in relation to:

- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice and relevant legislation and organisational policies and procedures
- contracting with clients including in relation to confidentiality
- referral sources and systems
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- record keeping
- management of professional relationships within their practice placement(s)

b) Written Assignments:

1. Participants should prepare written submissions that demonstrate their understanding of the professional responsibilities of counsellors/ psychotherapists, working both within an organisational setting and within private practice settings.

2. This must include demonstration their understanding of:

- their practice placement setting(s) and suitability
- working within the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Codes of practice, relevant legislation and organisational policies and procedures
- contracting with clients including in relation to confidentiality
- assessment skills, including their assessment and management of risk and working within competency and capacity
- referral sources and systems
- record keeping
- management of professional relationships within their practice placement(s)
- use of supervision.

3.3.5 Written Assignments: Further Guidance

a) Communication of assignment criteria:

1. Courses must communicate assignment deadlines to the course participants prior to the course or at the latest before the end of the first session for each module of the course.

2. Where there are any changes to assignment criteria and deadlines this must clearly be communicated with sufficient advance notice to participants.

3. Course's must have a clear policy in relation to the use of AI with respect to written assignments, which must be clearly aligned with any other relevant policies and processes including in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity, the participant contract, readiness for practice placement processes, the 4-way agreement, appeals and the discontinuation process.

4. The assessment of counselling skills would not fall within the guidance as above which refers to written assignments. Requirements relating to the assessment of counselling skills including criteria for further skills assessment attempts should be covered within the 'readiness for practice placement process.

b) Marking

1. Courses must offer assignment marking and feedback that is supportive to progressive participant development and that is in keeping with the course's stated therapeutic approach its intended aims, learning outcomes and stated academic level, where relevant.

2. Courses must evidence the processes through which they intend to mark assignments in keeping with the course's stated therapeutic approach, intended aims and learning outcomes, and its assessment criteria, rubric and academic level where relevant.

3. Courses must specify who will be involved in marking assignments and the processes that will be implemented in relation to the standardisation and moderation of assignment

marking. This should include the identification of an external assessor (see criteria 3.1) who should review sample assignments and feedback and may be required to act as a moderator i.e., if there is a dispute regarding marking decisions.

c) Resubmissions:

1. Courses need to clearly stipulate assessment criteria, including clear processes in relation to resubmissions and the maximum number of resubmissions permitted and the maximum duration permitted to pass the assignment. A time limit for resubmissions of written assignments must be set e.g. six weeks or 3 months from the failure notification.

2. Resubmissions must apply only when a participant has failed the written assignment and are not allowed to improve the mark awarded (if the assignment is marked using grades).

3. One resubmission is allowed as a matter of right. One further resubmission shall not be allowed as a matter of right but may be permitted at the discretion of the course in compliance with their policies and procedures.

4. It is at the course's discretion how many resubmissions are permitted over the course of the qualification, provided that any decisions are aligned with validation requirements and any other relevant policies and processes including in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity, any reasonable adjustments that may have been applied, the participant contract, readiness for practice placement processes and the discontinuation process.

Courses are advised to clearly specify arrangements here to participants in relation to the above assessment criteria and the level to which any remediation may be offered, such as within the student handbook, and within any associated policies such as discontinuation policies.

Any decisions made should be compatible with staff, participant and client wellbeing and in keeping with the tutor's assessment of the participant's abilities to progress throughout the course, to develop the necessary competencies and evidence the required learning outcomes within the course's stated therapeutic modality.

5. No further training should be provided for the assignment failed.

3.4 Optional Component

Organisations including optional content must indicate how it will be assessed. It will be necessary to demonstrate that the assessor(s) involved in this part of the course are suitably qualified to carry out assessment in the relevant areas and if necessary external assessors should be employed.

3.5 Attendance of Participants

3.5.1 Communication of attendance criteria:

1. Applicants are required to show evidence of how the information on attendance requirements is communicated to participants. Attendance requirements must be clearly communicated to participants and aligned with any other relevant policies and procedures including the participant contract, readiness for practice placement criteria, the 4-way agreement, equality, diversity and inclusivity and discontinuation processes.

2. Trainers should inform participants that they should plan for 100% attendance on this course. Participants must commit in advance to this level of attendance. Planned absences should be discussed in advance with the trainer and may or may not be acceptable. Due to the experiential nature of the course and its possible impact on the group, absences are to be avoided.

   As a minimum, it is expected that participants attend 85% of the course with no difference between attendance requirements for face-to-face delivery and blended delivery. For courses delivered over a two-year period a minimum of 85% attendance is permitted each year of the course.

   Courses must remind participants that should they have any planned holidays during the training timetable that even if in taking their planned holiday they will retain the 85% ratio that if other circumstances emerged (such as an unexpected illness) that this would cause them to drop below the required ratio.

3.5.2 Missed training dates where the participant remains within the 85% minimum attendance ratio:

If, due to circumstances, participants miss any training dates (but remain within the 85% minimum attendance ratio) courses can offer and provide at their own discretion, an appropriate way for the participant to catch up and to continue or, if it is possible, to offer them the opportunity to repeat the training with another group later.

In addition, as above trainers will be required to remind participants that missing course dates whilst remaining with the 85% ratio still entails lost learning, and the course will be responsible for determining whether this work can be reasonably made up.

Any decision regarding affording flexibility in relation to missed training dates must take into consideration the participant's individual circumstances and the learning content that has been missed.

This should include due consideration of the method of the missed learning/content and identifying whether this can realistically be replicated.

This must involve the training course determining whether this would be detrimental to:

- the participant's development of competencies
- the requirement for them to have completed the previous module prior
- to progression onto subsequent modules
- the development of safe, ethical practice within the courses stated
- modality.

Any decisions made must be clearly aligned with all relevant policies and procedures including the participant contract, readiness for practice placement process, equality diversity and inclusion and discontinuation processes.

3.5.3 85% minimum ratio not met and extenuating circumstances:

In instances where the participant has failed to meet the required 85% ratio it should be clear that flexibility with respect to the ratio is not a matter of right and will only be considered by the course at its discretion. This should be only in instances where exceptional circumstances apply, and where the work is determined to be reasonably possible to be made up.

It is the responsibility of the course/tutors to determine whether there are legitimate extenuating circumstances such as, and not exclusive to;

- medical issues and/or illness
- mental health issues
- significant personal issues
- being the victim of a crime,
- bereavement,
- caring responsibilities
- transport being cancelled and/or classified as being significantly unsafe due to weather warnings issued
- pandemic

As previously, the training course will be responsible for determining whether this work can be reasonably made up including due consideration of the method of the missed learning/content and identifying whether this can realistically replicated.

This will involve the training provider determining whether this would be detrimental to the participant's development of competencies and the development of safe, ethical practice within the courses stated modality.

In addition, it will be required for participants to have completed the previous module prior to their progression onto subsequent modules.

Any decisions made must be clearly aligned with all relevant policies and procedures including the participant contract, readiness for practice placement process, 4-way agreement, equality diversity and inclusion and discontinuation processes.

3.5.4 Methods to make up lost learning:

Some of the methods by which missed learning may potentially be made up are, and are not exclusive to:

- additional time with course tutor(s)
- submission of an additional assignment
- self-directed learning
- opportunity to repeat the missed training with another group.

3.6 Discontinuation of Participants

Course providers must have written contractual arrangements with participants to cover the discontinuation of participants from COSCA validated courses.

A statement to this effect should be presented to the Panel in the application for validation.

Discontinuation Policies must be applied consistently in relation to the training provider's existing policy on equality, diversity and inclusion, readiness for practice placement processes, and the 4-way contractual agreement and the participant contract.

Discontinuation policies must meet the below criteria:

- a clear specification of the grounds for discontinuation on the course must be identified

- it must include clear policy in relation to the following areas: participant contract, assessment, competency and performance, attendance, student safety and wellbeing, plagiarism including in relation to misuse of AI technology, misrepresentation of self/practice, ethical practice, acceptable behaviour/conduct, online and personal presence and use of social media.

- It must specify the number of meetings with the course and its trainers that will be offered to a participant with regards to discussion of the grounds for discontinuation.

  This should include specifying the timeframe that will be permitted for this process, and identifying the method by which a decision will be communicated to the participant should they choose not to attend these meetings or are unable to attend.

- It must specify the expected role of individuals accompanying participants in a supportive capacity to attend discontinuation related meetings.

- This would include clarifying those in any specific roles/positions who would not be suitable to accompany the participant, the specific role of the supportive individual during any discontinuation related meeting and the process that would be followed should a 'conflict of interest' be identified.

- Sensitivity must be applied in relation to the timing and communication in relation to the termination of studies whilst ensuring the protection of the needs of the participant their clients, trainers and the wider training group.

- It must include information on the support that will be offered to assist the participant to manage this ending.

- It must clearly stipulate who will be informed regarding the above concerns, and at what stage, and must be in keeping with the parameters of the 4-way agreement and readiness for practice placements process.

- It must clearly stipulate how any credits may be transferred to a new training provider should the participant choose to apply for another Diploma level course and request this.

  Courses are not required to pass on information regarding a participant being discontinued to COSCA or to other prospective training providers. The new provider is responsible for determining the participants suitability to meet their courses requirements and to assess their readiness for practice placements.

3.7 Participant's Course Evaluation

COSCA is continually working to develop the quality and value of the services it offers. To this end, it is required that you pass the Course Evaluation Proforma to participants on your course. See **Appendix 5 – Participants Course Evaluation**

4. PROCESS OF DIPLOMA VALIDATION AND REVALIDATION

4.1 Before Applying

1. An organisation wishing to submit a diploma course to COSCA for validation must be a Corporate Member, Full Organisational Member or an Organisational Companion Member of COSCA. Organisational membership applications are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Please see the COSCA website under 'Join COSCA/ Organisational Membership' for further details including application forms, guidance on the process and application submission deadlines. For further queries please contact the COSCA Administrator: christina@cosca.org.uk

2. Organisations must ensure to factor in sufficient time to apply for organisational membership, and to evidence the application criteria required. This includes submission of a compliant complaint's procedure, evidence of the organisations structure, financial structure and a compliant exit plan strategy.
Please see the COSCA website or contact the COSCA Recognition Scheme Development Officer: jenna@cosca.org.uk for further guidance and support on complaints procedure requirements.

Should your organisation have been in existence for less than one year before applying for organisational membership there are additional application requirement as detailed below:

- Evidence of the formation of your organisation, including the date of formation
- A diagram of the structure of your organisation

- A business plan showing clearly the lines of accountability, projections for the future, and the financial procedures and structures in place, and how these are audited
- Evidence of how your governing body and/or principle committees are appointed, their remits, and how often they meet
- A list of the names and addresses of all the people in the governing body and/or principle committees
- Information about the premises used by the organisation and the resources available to those who work for the organisation and those who receive services from it. Please complete and submit the suitability of premises form – COSCA website.

3. The validation application must be prepared using the same numbering format as the COSCA Diploma Guidelines and Procedures.

4.2 Application for Initial Validation

Support with the application process:

The COSCA Development Officer Jenny Bell (Individuals/Courses) jenny@cosca.org.uk is available for support throughout the application process and if requested can undertake a technical review on your application and any related documents.

Please note that the Course Validation Panel is responsible for determining application outcomes and its decisions are final here.

Application Form:

1. Applications should be made using the Diploma Validation Application Form. This can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/Diploma. An electronic copy of complete applications must be submitted by email to the Development Officer. Please note that the minimum font size to be used in your application is 12.

2. The application should be augmented with supporting evidence detailing where each of the criteria have been met as indicated within the application.

For example, this might include and is not exclusive to evidence such as, a course handbook, timetable, publicity materials, policies and processes, participant assignments and marking key/rubrics etc. These should be submitted as electronic attachments.

The Course Validation Panel appreciates that courses are likely to be still under some construction at the point in time at which an initial validation application has been submitted. Accordingly, it recognises that some of the evidence submitted may still be at draft level.

It acknowledges that the courses content and requirements, assessment criteria, policies and processes, marketing materials and resources may be subject to change and may be influenced and impacted by factors including (but not exclusive to); further market research, participant and trainer feedback, the requirements of credit rating bodies where relevant and indeed the feedback of the Course Validation Panel. Where changes have been made to any of the initial materials submitted during the application process courses are required to submit these to the Course Validation Panel for review.

3. Applications may be submitted for a course that is yet to be delivered or a course that is already being delivered. Please note that if the course is already being delivered if/when validation is awarded then the validation of the course will only apply to those cohorts that are already under way at the time of applying for validation, and any cohorts being delivered thereafter validation is awarded. This must be clearly communicated to participants.

Application Deadlines:

1. Applications need to be submitted by April 30th, August 30th and December 30th at the latest to be reviewed at the next corresponding Course Validation Panel meeting. The dates of Panel meetings are available from the COSCA website under 'Validation'.

2. Please ensure to factor in sufficient time as these are the submission deadlines rather than application review dates. For example, applications received in April will not be reviewed until late May and any outcome would not be received until early June at the earliest.

3. The current payment structure for diploma validation is shown on the COSCA website under 'About Us'.

Application Outcomes:

1. The Course Validation Panel of COSCA will consider the written application and assess the suitability of the course for COSCA Diploma Validation. It will identify any strengths and areas of good practice for the course alongside any areas for feedback and/or required development within their response to the applicant.

2. The Panel has 3 options:

- **To award Initial Validation**
- **To award Conditional Initial Validation**, during which additional information or action will be required before Initial Validation can be awarded. For example, this might include the requirement to amend or submit additional policies and procedures, and/or to clarify any Panel queries in relation to the validation criteria. The Panel will give detailed feedback on any criteria which is to be submitted.
- **Not to award Initial or Conditional Initial Validation** - a complete resubmission will be required.

3. If the Panel considers that the application demonstrates that the course is eligible for ***Initial Validation***, the application will proceed to Assessment, and the Panel will appoint a COSCA Assessor (CA) to observe the course and prepare at least three reports on how the course meets the criteria in practice; an initial assessment report, interim report and third and final assessment report.

4. Alternatively, ***Conditional Initial Validation*** can be awarded where specific requirement(s) are still outstanding, prior to awarding Initial Validation.

5. If the Panel considers that the course is not eligible for Initial or Conditional Initial Validation, the application will proceed no further and a full resubmission including resubmission of the validation fee will be required. The Panel and COSCA reserves the right not to accept further

validation submission in instances where there may have been serious concerns identified surrounding the training providers abilities to meet the required validation standards.

6. The applicant will be advised of the Panel's decision in writing by the Chief Executive within a reasonable time frame.

4.3 COSCA Assessment

1. During the period of Initial Validation, a COSCA Assessor (CA) will be appointed by the Panel to check that the endorsement of the Panel is justified.

2. The COSCA Assessor will be someone who has a sufficient level of expertise in relation to Diploma level counselling training and the courses stated therapeutic approach(es).

3. There should be no known conflicts of interest with the appointed COSCA Assessor.

4. The CA will be responsible to the COSCA Course Validation Panel.

5. The CA will liaise with the course provider to arrange suitable times to visit to determine if the course meets COSCA Validation Guidelines and Procedures.

6. The CA will undertake at least three assessment visits to observe the course, an initial assessment visit which is undertaken around the start of the first year of the course (where possible), an interim visit towards the end of the first year (where possible), and the third and final assessment visit. Where the course is approved to deliver via blended delivery at least one of these observatory visits must take place face to face.

7. During the assessment visit the CA will look to observe course delivery and to liaise with the course coordinator, trainers, participants, and other relevant parties involved with the course. While COSCA does not stipulate the duration, assessment visits should not normally involve more than a one-day visit to the training provider.

8. The CA will assess the courses standards in relation to criteria such as the selection of participants, the training environment and resources, course management, course monitoring and evaluation, staffing and delivery team (including trainers, tutors and supervisors), course aims and objectives, course structure and content, delivery of the core components- skills, theory, self-awareness, professional responsibilities, ethics, assessment processes, assignments, participant contract, readiness for practice placement process, 4-way contractual agreement, coordination of practice placements, supervision, embedding of equality, diversity, inclusivity throughout the course and it's delivery, discontinuation processes, participant attendance, participant progress and development on the course and participant feedback on their experience of the course and it's delivery.

9. Upon completion of each visit the CA will complete an assessment report which is to be completed within one month of the assessment visit and submitted for review at the next Course Validation Panel meeting.

10. The assessment reports are not directly shared with the course. However, the assessor should offer the course verbal feedback on areas of good practice and any areas for concern or development. The Course Validation Panel will write to the course with feedback regarding the

CA's findings after each session visit. Accordingly, it will issue the course with any recommendations or requirements for changes/development alongside identifying any areas of good practice.

11. The final assessment visit is undertaken towards the end of the course's final year. When the course is finished the CA will prepare a final written report for the Panel; upon consideration of this a decision on Full Validation will be made, or the requirement for further changes/development will be issued to the course. Please see the COSCA website under Course Validation/ Diploma/COSCA Assessor's report for full details of the criteria the CA will be assessing and reporting on within their final assessment report.

4.4 Full Validation

1. The period of Initial Validation concludes with the consideration of the COSCA Assessor's (CA) final report and, if appropriate, the requirements of Conditional Initial Validation are met.

2. Although it is expected that a course will move from Initial Validation to Full Validation following consideration of the Assessor's report, **the decision to award Full Validation rests with the Panel** and cannot be assumed until that decision has been made

3. The CA's report will be considered by the Panel and if the Panel is satisfied with the standard of the course, it will award the course COSCA Diploma Validation. The CA is not required to submit their report to the applicant.

4. The decision to award Full Validation will be the responsibility of the Course Validation Panel and not the CA.

5. Written notice of the Panel's decision will be sent to the applicant by the Chief Executive within a reasonable time frame.

4.5 Changes to a Validated Course: Change of Delivery application

1. Course providers must inform COSCA of any changes to the delivery of a validated course. This must include any changes in relation to the course titling, credit rating and awarding body, therapeutic approach, delivery structure, delivery venue, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, rationale, theoretical base/ therapeutic approach and delivery team.

2. Failure to disclose such information may affect the validation status of the course. COSCA reserves the right to withdraw validation from any course that fails to adhere to this condition.

3. It is a requirement of validation that applicants inform COSCA in advance about plans to make any changes in relation to the above. This is to be carried out in the first instance by completing the '*COSCA Validation Application to Change Existing Delivery'* which can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/General, followed by documenting changes in the 'Annual Monitoring Form' (see criteria 4.8). Please ensure that any change of delivery form is supplemented with the necessary information, for example a proposed updated course timetable, or sufficient information on any new proposed delivery venue.

Changes to the training team do not need to be reported through the ‘Change to Existing Delivery’ system, however all new trainers must be approved by submitting a’ non-accredited trainer approval form’ to the COSCA Development Officer (unless the trainer is already COSCA Trainer Accredited respective to the level of the course being delivered).

4. It is a requirement to fully inform COSCA about all trainers’ activities carried out under the auspices of your organisation using the validation given by COSCA.

5. If you are still unclear on the mechanism through which to report changes to your course, please contact the Development Officer.

4.6 Publicity Material and Awards

1. When an organisation has been advised of the Panel’s decision to offer Conditional Initial, Initial or Full validation of the course, it can use the relevant terminology respecting the course validation status on its course publicity material and awards.

2. The course will be entered on our course directory on our website once Conditional Initial Validation has been awarded. Please ensure to keep us up to date respecting any required changes to your directory listing, by contacting the COSCA administrator: christina@cosca.org.uk

3. COSCA is pleased to provide Full Validation course awards. There is a charge for this Award (see www.cosca.org.uk).

4. On request, and with a minimum of 8 weeks’ prior notice, COSCA is able to provide Diploma awards for participants. There is a charge for the production of this award (see www.cosca.org.uk).

Courses may choose to produce their own certificate rather than purchase from COSCA. However they should be advised that in this instance, COSCA cannot issue replacement certificates should participants request this.

All awards issued by COSCA validated providers to participants on COSCA validated courses are required to use the COSCA logo. Please contact the COSCA office to obtain a copy of the COSCA logo.

4.7 Registration of Participants

4.7.1 Participants Database – please refer to Appendix 1.

This is a statement of the information held on COSCA's Participants Database, and how to access the information contained in it.

4.7.2 Registration of Participants

Validated providers are required to complete the '***COSCA Registration of Participants proforma' -*** at the end of the course and return it to the COSCA office for the registration of participants, and to order certificates if required. The form can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/General and should be returned to the Course Validation Secretary: rozanne@cosca.org.uk

The applicant is required to make a signed declaration on this proforma that participants have been assessed to have met all of the Learning Outcomes detailed in the course validated by COSCA.

The cost of registration and certification by COSCA is contained on the proforma. There is no charge for registration of unsuccessful completion. Please note the timescale for registration and certificates to be issued is eight weeks upon receipt of participant registration forms.

4.7.3 Sample Letter to Participants regarding the COSCA Database/Registration of Participants – please refer to Appendix 2

This is a sample letter provider are advised to issue to participants containing information on the storage of information in keeping with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

4.7.4 Sample Letter to Participants Giving Permission for Registration – please refer to Appendix 3

This is a sample form for participants to give permission for their details to be passed to COSCA for storage on the COSCA database.

4.8 During the Period of Full Validation

4.8.1: During the period of Full Validation, the course provider must:

- Continue in Organisational Membership of COSCA
- Ensure that at least one member of the core training team is COSCA accredited as a trainer at Diploma level and that all other trainers are approved as non-accredited trainers and working towards COSCA accreditation as a trainer within the required two-year time period (see criteria 2.13.2)
- Meet the required minimum participant numbers and participant trainer ratios
- Ensure that participants are appropriately registered upon completion of the course
- Continue to comply with any other guidelines and procedures for validation
- Inform COSCA of any changes to the organisational structure, delivery process and course content, through the 'Change to Existing Delivery' process (see criteria 4.5)
- Demonstrate that the trainers are actively engaged in self-development and networking with other course providers by attendance at COSCA's Annual Trainers Event or similar (see criteria 2.13.5)
- Engage an external assessor (see criteria 3.1) to visit and complete an assessment report at least every third and fifth year of validation
- Submit the COSCA Annual Monitoring Form (see below)

If the above requirements are not complied with, COSCA may carry out a quality assurance visit to the course, the cost of which will be borne by the applicant.

4.8.2: During the period of Full Validation, the course provider must submit the annual monitoring form.

1. It is a requirement of continued Validation that during the period of Full Validation, course providers complete the Annual Monitoring Form and return it to COSCA by the end of October annually, for the attention of the COSCA Development Officer.

2. During the first year of Full Validation the annual monitoring form will be reviewed by the Course Validation Panel. The Panel will issue feedback and any recommendations in response to the submission. They will look for evidence of where any of their and the assessor's (COSCA assessor and external assessor's) developmental feedback has been responded to by the course including any follow-on actions that have been taken in response to this.

3. This form provides COSCA with a means to ensure that the standards achieved at the point of Full Validation are maintained during its entire period. It also gives course providers a valuable opportunity to monitor their own activities and outcomes. The form can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/General. Should you require any guidance with completing the course please contact the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses).

4. The form must be accompanied by an internal or external assessors report, or both may be submitted. At least every third annual monitoring year an external assessor's report must be submitted, and it is recommended that an external assessor's report is completed yearly where possible.

5. The external assessor may use their own reporting template or use the COSCA proforma which offers guidance on the criteria the COSCA Development Officer/ Course Validation Panel will be looking to verify. Please see the COSCA website under 'Validation/General' for the document 'Guide to External Assessor Report to COSCA'.

6. If submitting an internal assessor's report (i.e., written by an individual with significant involvement in the courses delivery), the report must have a reflective and exploratory style and clearly identify the course, its trainer's and its participants' experience of its delivery over the monitoring period. It must document any developments and changes to the course over the monitoring period.

7. The length of the detail included within the application form and related reports is variable, but it is essential that all parts of the form are completed, and that sufficient information is provided.

8. The COSCA Development Officer will review the monitoring submission and indicate if any further information may be required, or the Course Validation Panel in the first year of annual monitoring. If completing the Annual Monitoring Form at the end of the first year of a two-year course, you can omit sections 1 and 2.

9. Should the evidence as requested by the COSCA Development Officer as part of the annual monitoring process continue to fail to be evidenced without reasonable explanation, COSCA may carry out a quality assurance visit to the course. The course may drop to Conditional Validation until such time that the outstanding criteria has been evidenced. The cost of this visit will be borne by the applicant.

4.9 Revalidation

1. Revalidation is required to be applied for 5 years from the date of initial validation being awarded.

2. The COSCA Development Officer (Individuals/Courses) will guide you as to your required deadline for submission of your revalidation application.

3. If the course has blended delivery approval, then re-approval for remote delivery must be applied for alongside the revalidation application submission. You can find the form on the COSCA website under 'Course Validation'/Blended Delivery. The form and any queries regarding the reapproval process should be submitted to the Course Validation Secretary rozanne@cosca.org.uk

4. The revalidation application will offer an opportunity to report on any changes and developments in relation to the course over the last two years of the revalidation period, and to ensure that the standards for validation continue to be met. It is an opportunity to identify any strengths and achievements of the course over the last two years of the revalidation period alongside identifying any areas for development and where relevant the courses response to this.

The form requires you to report on any changes and developments in relation to the course's organisational structure, academic validation, number of cohorts and successful participants completing the course, and its delivery team. The form can be found on the COSCA website under Validation /General.

5. The application should be written in a reflective, exploratory style and must include:

- an internal evaluation report documenting the courses delivery and development and changes over the last two years of the revalidation period
- an external assessor's report(s) documenting delivery and development and changes over the revalidation period and specifying recommendations for revalidation.
- where relevant any evidence in support of the above; for example, this might include participant feedback forms, updated participant handbooks and resources, and/or updated course publicity materials for example.

A) Internal Evaluation Report-

An internal evaluation report should be written by an individual with significant involvement in the course's delivery.

The report must have a reflective and exploratory style and clearly identify the course, its trainer's and its participant's experience of its delivery over the monitoring period. It must document any developments and changes to the course over the monitoring period.

Courses must report and reflect on the following criteria, across the previous two years of course validation:

- The organisations evaluating procedures for monitoring the course
- The nature and impact of any changes to the course; for instance, with regards to structure, content, delivery, learning outcomes and assessment methods
- The ways in which the course learning outcomes are monitored and reliably assessed
- Key achievements and strengths of the course; for instance, with regards to academic validation, increased participant interest and take up of the course, participant retention levels, support for participants with additional support needs, positive feedback from participants, positive publicity, published research, achievements of participants/former participants, employment secured by former participants within the counselling/psychotherapy field and achievements of its trainers,
- Interpersonal dynamics of the delivery team and staff culture, trainer/participant dynamics,
- Quality assurance issues and challenges experienced by the course and how the difficulties identified were resolved
- Critical feedback from course participants and how it was responded to
- Feedback from external assessor and how it was responded to
- Any other areas identified for development
- Any other relevant information regarding the course.

B) External Assessor's Report

The organisation's External Assessor is required to visit the COSCA validated course to observe and assess its delivery, review a sample of participant assignments and their marking/feedback and to speak to the course's trainers, staff, participants and any other relevant staffing and to complete an assessment report.

The external assessor may use their own reporting template or use the COSCA proforma which offers guidance on the criteria the COSCA Development Officer/ Course Validation Panel will be looking to verify. Please see the COSCA website under 'Validation/General' for the document 'Guide to External Assessor Report to COSCA'.

They external assessor is required to comment on their experience of the course's delivery and development over the last two years of the revalidation period and to make its recommendations as to whether revalidation should be awarded.

Please see criteria 3.1 for further information on the appointment of an external assessor and requirements here.

Where the external assessor identifies any areas of development and/or makes recommendations in relation to the course, the validation application and/or the internal evaluation report must refer to this and evidence any follow-on actions that have been taken or will be taken in response to this feedback.

5. At the revalidation submission stage, the following processes will be carried out:

Technical Review Stage:

The revalidation form and accompanying evidence should be submitted to the COSCA Development Officer (Individuals/Courses) who undertakes a technical review to establish the completeness of the application and to identify any gaps to be filled.

Please note that any decisions in relation to application outcomes reside with the Course Validation Panel.

Panel review Stage:

1. The application will be evaluated by the Course Validation Panel at the next meeting date after the course's validation application deadline. If the course is approved a letter of revalidation to the applicant is passed by the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses) to the Chief Executive for signing, then issued to the course. The Panel will offer feedback highlighting any identified strengths and areas of good practice for the course alongside identifying any areas for development.

2. If the course is not approved at this stage for revalidation, requirements are set by the Course Validation Panel, and a timeframe is given within which the requirement(s) need to be met. The course will drop to Conditional Validation, and the course directory will be updated to reflect this until such time that the requirements have been met and Full Validation has been restored. A letter stating the above information is passed to the Chief Executive for signing, then issued to the course.

Assessment Stage:

1. If the course continues not to meet the requirement(s) as set by the Course Validation Panel for revalidation, a quality assurance visit may be carried out by a COSCA Assessor (CA). The CA reports directly to the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses). Based on the COSCA Assessor's report, the Course Validation Panel reaches a decision.

2. If the course is approved at this point a letter of revalidation is passed by the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses) to the Chief Executive for signing, then issued to the course. If the course is not approved at this stage requirement are set and the course is given a timeframe within which the requirements need to be met.

3. After the deadline for meeting the requirements has passed, the Course Validation Panel reaches a decision and, via the Development Officer (Individuals/Courses), passes a letter to this effect to the Chief executive for signing, then issuing to the course

In considering the application for renewal, COSCA reserves the right to seek further information or clarification and COSCA reserves the right to carry out a quality assurance visit at the course's expense.

COSCA reserves the right to withdraw validation entirely where validation standards continue not to be met by courses and to refuse any further applications for validation and revalidation.

4.10 Appeal

Applicants wishing to appeal against the decision of the COSCA Validation Panel can do so through the COSCA Appeals Procedure. The appeal must be submitted within three months of the decision being made. www.cosca.org.uk.

4.11 Payment of Fee

The fee for COSCA Validation requires to be submitted with the application and payment requires to be made prior to the Panel meeting.

For Validation fees please see the COSCA website under 'About Us'.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT'S DATABASE

Information on participants involved in all COSCA validated courses is held on COSCA's participant database. The procedure for entering participant information onto this database varies depending on the nature of the validated course. Information on participants involved in:

- COSCA's Counselling Skills Course is entered at the end of each of the four Modules of the course

- COSCA validated counselling diploma courses is entered at the completion of the diploma course

- other COSCA validated courses is entered at the completion of the course.

Identifying data is held electronically and includes the participant's name, date of birth, address, name of training provider, successful or unsuccessful completion of the Course, whether APL/APEL is applied, dates of commencement/completion of the course, month/year of issue of award by COSCA, participant workplace.

All information kept on participants involved in COSCA validated courses is held by COSCA in line with the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

COSCA validated course providers can request access to information relating to whether a participant has started a COSCA validated course, which parts, if any, have been completed and which organisation or agency provided the training.

Participants whose names are listed on the database can have access to their own information. Information will only be given to other parties with the written permission of the participant on whom information is requested.

All requests for information must be made in writing either by email or letter, using the relevant ***Participant Information Request Pro-forma***, which can be found on the COSCA website under Validation/General.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS REGARDING THE COSCA DATABASE AND REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Dear (Participant's name)

As you aware, *name of provider's course* is professionally validated by COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland).

Registration

As part of the validation system, COSCA maintains a register of all participants enrolled on COSCA validated courses. The register contains:

- The name and address of the participant
- Date of birth of the participant
- Name of the provider of the training
- Dates of commencement and completion of the Modules/Course
- Confirmation of successful or unsuccessful completion of the Modules/Course
- Whether APL/APEL is applied
- Month and Year of issue of Certificate by COSCA
- Workplace of participant.

In order to maintain this register, *name of provider* with participants' permission, passes these details on to COSCA.

Certification

On successful completion of the course, and at the request of the trainer/training provider, each registered participant is awarded a COSCA Certificate.

These certificates are issued direct to *name of provider* who passes them on to the participants.

In order to ensure that you are registered with COSCA, please complete the attached permission form. You are entitled to withhold this permission. In this case, however, you would not be able to receive the relevant COSCA Certificate on completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS GIVING PERMISSION FOR REGISTRATION

PERMISSION FOR COSCA REGISTRATION

Please tick relevant box

☐ I hereby give permission for ***name of provider*** to pass the following details on to COSCA, Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland.

- My forename and surname and address
- My date of birth
- Name of the provider of the training I am enrolled on
- Dates of commencement and completion of the training
- My successful or unsuccessful completion of the training
- If given APL/APEL
- My workplace

☐ I do not give permission for ***name of provider*** to pass on the above details to COSCA. You are entitled to withhold this permission. In this case, however, you would not be able to receive the relevant COSCA Certificate on completion of your studies.

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

<u>Please return this form to:</u> ***name of provider***

APPENDIX 4: NON-ACCREDITED TRAINERS OBSERVATION REPORT OF TRAINER COMPETENCE

- This form must be completed for all non-COSCA Accredited Trainers during the period covered by this Annual Monitoring Form and within 6 months of their involvement in the delivery of training.
- All non-COSCA Accredited Trainers must be observed for the purposes of completing this Form. This observation must be completed by a suitably experienced trainer familiar with the work of the non-accredited trainer.
- You must reflect on the trainer's performance and competencies and the extent to which they meet each competency.
- You must reflect on their delivery and development as a counsellor, including areas of strength and clear points for development.
- All non-accredited trainers must offer their own reflective commentary and assessment of the above criteria.

Non-Accredited Trainer Details:
Trainers Name: Trainers Address: Telephone Number: Email Address:

Training Provider and Observers Details
Providers Name:
Providers Address
Name of Observer:
Designation:
Telephone Number
Email address:

APPENDIX 4: NON-ACCREDITED TRAINERS OBSERVATION REPORT OF TRAINER COMPETENCE: DIPLOMA LEVEL

A reflective report about the ability and competence of all non-accredited trainers who are, or who have been, involved in the delivery of COSCA validated training is required on an annual basis to meet COSCA Validation criteria.

You are invited to provide a reflective commentary of:

- Personal style and abilities of trainer
- Skill mix and level of competence
- Areas of strength
- Developmental points
- Progress towards COSCA Trainer Accreditation

The non-accredited trainer must also input their own self-assessment and reflective commentary in relation to each of the criteria. It is suggested that the non-accredited trainer makes use of this feedback to support them in writing their COSCA Trainer Accreditation Application.

You may find it helpful to refer to the list of necessary skills and competencies below. The person completing the report must be familiar with the work of the trainer. Where appropriate, more than one person can contribute to the information.

Please note that in order to comply with COSCA validation and revalidation criteria and requirements, all non-accredited trainers who have been involved in the delivery of the course for more than 2 years prior to the revalidation deadline must be COSCA Trainer Accredited at the time of applying for revalidation.

Trainer Skills and Competencies:

Participant Support and interpersonal skills:

- ☐ Ability to support participants with additional support needs, implement reasonable adjustments and to embed conditions of equity within training delivery
- ☐ Ability to clearly communicate and implement the course's requirements, policies and procedures and to manage any related challenge and/or conflict where appropriate.
- ☐ Ability to create a climate where learners feel they can approach the trainer should they have any concerns and/or if any further support is required
- ☐ Ability to differentiate between the boundaries of their role as a trainer and that of counsellor.

Preparation:

- ☐ Ability to review, prepare and adapt delivery of the course content appropriately in response to learners' needs
- ☐ Ability to prepare appropriately for delivery of the course's content and related activities

Delivery and Personal Style:

- ☐ Ability to present and clearly explain the aims and outcomes of activities/exercises
- ☐ Ability to use a variety of training methods to enhance the learning opportunities and to create an engaging learning environment
- ☐ Ability to present theory and impart knowledge and information clearly and accurately
- ☐ Ability to use language appropriate to the level of understanding within the group
- ☐ Appropriate use of self and own experiences as a counsellor to support participant learning
- ☐ Provide additional and summary information, on request
- ☐ Sequence and paces information to suit the group and individual learners
- ☐ Deal sensitively and appropriately with distractions and interruptions
- ☐ Uses appropriate questioning and information seeking techniques
- ☐ Creates a climate where learners can comfortably ask questions and make comments
- ☐ Supports learners in learning new skills
- ☐ Models and demonstrates the course's stated therapeutic approach(es)

Group Facilitation:

- ☐ Clearly communicates the function of experiential groups
- ☐ Contract and clarify boundaries and trainer/participants roles within the group
- ☐ Attends to the safety of the group whilst endeavouring to create conditions of growth and development and increased participant self-awareness.
- ☐ Attends appropriately to group dynamics
- ☐ Appropriately challenges excluding, discriminatory or other unacceptable behaviour or language
- ☐ Models the courses stated therapeutic approach(es) in interactions with students
- ☐ Awareness of own positionality and where any sources of power imbalances and/or experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression may influence trainer's responses to participants and the group.

Assessment:

- ☐ Ability to clearly communicate the course's assessment criteria
- ☐ Ability to attend appropriately to participant queries and concerns regarding supervised practice placements.
- ☐ Ability to implement the courses formal assessment procedures
- ☐ Gives appropriate developmental feedback in a constructive and supportive manner
- ☐ Abilities to manage any challenge and conflict in response to participant assessment and feedback
- ☐ Facilitate participants in self-assessment

Self-Awareness and reflective training practice:

- ☐ Self-awareness in relation to others- understanding of themselves within their lived-in context(s) and the ways in which this may interact with their delivery and interactions with participants.
- ☐ Openness and responsiveness to feedback from participants
- ☐ Abilities to access trainer support systems and appropriately implement any developmental feedback

Use of Technology:

- ☐ Where blended or online (real time) delivery is approved, demonstrates an ability to make appropriate use of the selected technology and to create an engaging online learning space.
- ☐ Structures and paces remote delivery appropriately in keeping with participants needs
- ☐ Abilities to manage any challenges associated with remote delivery.

APPENDIX 4: NON-ACCREDITED TRAINERS OBSERVATION REPORT OF TRAINER COMPETENCE	
NAME OF NON-ACCREDITED TRAINER: NAME OF OBSERVER:	DATE OF REPORT:
Personal style & Abilities	Observer Feedback:
	Non-Accredited Trainer Comments:
Skill mix and level of competence	Observer Feedback:

	Non-Accredited Trainer Comments:
Areas of strengths	Observer Feedback:

	Non-Accredited Trainer Comments:

Developmental points/areas, including progress towards COSCA Trainer Accreditation	Observer Feedback:
	Non-Accredited Trainer Comments:

Names of non-accredited trainer and observers completing the form:	Signatures of non-accredited trainer and observers completing the form: Date:

APPENDIX 5: COSCA VALIDATED DIPLOMA IN COUNSELLING PARTICIPANT COURSE EVALUATION

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)
16 Melville Terrace | Stirling | FK8 2NE t: 01786 475 140 f: 01786 446 207
e: info@cosca.org.uk w: www.cosca.org.uk

We hope you have enjoyed your training for the Diploma in counselling. COSCA is continually working to develop and improve the quality of materials and services it offers. You would help us in this work by taking a few minutes to complete the evaluation form and return it to the above address.

Please give your opinion, or circle a number which best corresponds to your opinion, where requested. If you wish to make any further comment, please do so on the back of the form or on a separate sheet of paper.

Course Title
Course Training Provider
Date

1. YOUR EXPECTATIONS

DATE: ……………………………………………….

a) Before you started the course what did you expect to gain from it?

b) Have you gained what you expected to?

Not at all				Completely
1	2	3	4	5

c) Please comment on how the course did/did not help you gain what you expected to.

d) Having completed the course, do you intend to pursue further training and/or pursue counselling as a career?

e) If you do not intend to continue in the counselling field, can you give a reason?

2

COURSE PRESENTATION

a) How do you rate the presentation of the course?

Very poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

b) How do you rate the materials used?

Very poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

c) How could the course presentation be improved?

COURSE CONTENT

3

a) How do you rate the course content?

Very poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

b) Was the content relevant to your training needs?

Completely irrelevant				Extremely relevant
1	2	3	4	5

c) What parts of the course were particularly useful?

d) What parts of the course were not useful?

If you wish to comment on any other aspect of the course, please do so on the reverse of this form or on a separate piece of paper.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS EVALUATION