



Professional Standards Committee TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

According to PACFA's Constitution the primary object of the association is to promote the development of the science relating to the art and practice of Psychotherapy and Counselling. PACFA's mission is to represent the counselling and psychotherapy profession to communities and government, and to develop the evidence-base for counselling and psychotherapy. This includes the provision of support, public accountability and representation of the professions.

This includes the provision of self-regulatory activities including:

- Registration (management of registration of individuals deemed competent to work with clients)
- Ethics (management of ethical complaints from clients)
- Accreditation (management of assessment of courses graduating individual eligible for registration)

The role of the Professional Standards Committee

Practising members of PACFA (registrants) are publicly listed on PACFA's national Register. The Professional Standards Committee (PSC) oversees the core business of PACFA by ensuring Registrants have demonstrated an approved level of training, experience and competence through their assessment against Training Standards which articulate requirements of training, supervision and personal development.

The PACFA Professional Standards Committee (PSC) is delegated responsibility for ensuring consistency and currency in the ongoing development and revision of the PACFA Training Standards and Supervision Training Standards (STS) as they relate to individual and Register requirements. The PSC also oversees Appeals from declined membership applications, ensures an Appeals Register is maintained, and advises membership on the implementation of assessment against the Training Standards through the development of appropriate documentation.

The role of the Board

The PACFA Board holds overall responsibility for PACFA's key regulatory function of registration for the counselling and psychotherapy profession.

The PACFA Board is responsible for:

1. Approving key documentation that supports the provision of high-quality counselling and psychotherapy.
2. Providing advice to PSC when requested
3. Ensuring that PACFA's registration activities meet legal and charitable obligations.

Professional Standards Committee responsibilities

Responsibility for overseeing PACFA's registrant management is delegated to PSC. This includes:

1. Providing expertise on appropriate standards for membership as evidenced in competency standards, scope of practice and guidelines for practice.
2. Developing resources to help guide achievement of these standards across the PACFA membership.
3. Providing oversight to PACFA office of implementation of PACFA's membership standards as outlined in core documentation (ie Training Standards)
4. Assessing Appeals of membership applications and providing documentation (including an Appeals Register) to office enable accrual of institutional knowledge
5. Providing expert oversight of PACFA Register which ensures PACFA is meeting legal and charitable obligations.
6. Providing advice to other committees and colleges on standards of practice for counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous Healing Practitioners
7. Ensuring PACFA standards and PACFA documentation meets international training and registration standards by through regular benchmarking with comparable professionals.
8. Providing guidance to Board about clinical practice, especially emerging practice areas.
9. Ensuring PACFA's Register meets its organisational obligation for supporting public safety for people seeking counselling, psychotherapy and Indigenous Healing Practice services.

To inform this PSC must demonstrate consideration of:

- Recommendations of other PACFA committees, Board and staff (as appropriate),
- Evidence and evidence informed practice as appropriate and
- PACFA policies and procedures, with clear identification of ensuring public safety and promoting the profession

Committee Membership

There shall be a minimum of six and a maximum of 10 people appointed to PSC. They will provide a range of viewpoints based on their experience in counselling, Indigenous healing practices and psychotherapy professional practice and education.

Membership will include:

- The Board-appointed Chair
- Expert members with substantial clinical experience
- Expert members with significant qualifications
- A senior practitioner nominee of each of the respective PACFA colleges (CATSIHP, Psychotherapy, Counselling, Relationship Counselling, Education, Creative & Experiential Therapies). If a committee prefers not to be represented they can instead offer to provide expertise on an 'as-needed' basis.
- Other professional experience in governance, regulation or policy is desirable.

Where possible, members of PSC will be from diverse background and modalities.

All members must be of good standing within the counselling and psychotherapy profession.

For the purpose of collaboration across PACFA committees, attendance of representatives of the PACFA Board or relevant committees will be invited as appropriate.

Members of the Professional Standards Committee are bound by the duty of confidentiality.

Eligibility

As PSC is an expert committee performing a crucial leadership function in a committee represented on the Board all members must be of a Clinical level with full PACFA membership. Candidates for PSC membership must meet the eligibility requirements in the PACFA By-laws.

All members of PSC are required to be of good standing. Where an ethical complaint or investigation is brought against a Committee member, that member is required to stand down from the Committee until the complaint or investigation is concluded.

Committee Meetings

The PSC meets face to face or by teleconference usually monthly, and may be additionally convened whenever the PACFA Board requests any review of TS, STS or Register requirements. The PSC dictates its own schedule of meetings to ensure the tasks are completed by deadlines agreed by the Board.

Meetings will be scheduled as required (generally monthly) and be either face-to-face or held by other means such as teleconference or videoconference. A record of the meetings will be kept and distributed by the Chair to the PACFA office.

According to PACFA By-laws, the quorum for the Committee meeting is the presence of three Board-approved members.

Committee members will participate in most meetings with an allowance for reasonable absences due to other commitments. In between meetings, discussions will occur via email to enable timely decision-making. Email responsiveness is expected to be within 3-5 working days.

Committee members are required to declare any conflicts of interest in relation to PSC business and to stand down from participation in meetings where there is a conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

All members of the PSC are bound by a confidentiality agreement that states that matters discussed at the PSC may only be discussed with other PSC members or with the PACFA Board. If external consultation is required as part of the review or development process, agreement must be sought from the PSC members before such consultation takes place.

Conflict of interest

The PSC must maintain a Register of Interests in which all members of the PSC must declare any potential conflict of interest between their role on the PSC and other roles they may have. This may not preclude the members from being part of the PSC but must be noted in formal documentation submitted to the PACFA Board as part of the regular feedback to the Board.

Expenditure

The chair of PSC has no authority to approve expenditure, including travel expenses, unless delegated within a budget approved by the PACFA Board.

Publication and review

These Terms of Reference will be made publicly available on the PACFA website.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years. The review process will include:

- Review of the Terms of Reference by the Board in consultation with PSC
- Review PSC's operations, outputs, and effectiveness by PACFA Board

Appendix – Applicable Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures currently in force:

1. Application process
2. Appeals process
3. Complaints process

Date agreed: 2022