



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

# Education Program Accreditation Committee

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Introduction

PACFA accredits education programs and specialist courses in counselling and psychotherapy in accordance with the PACFA Training Standards 2018. PACFA accreditation is a quality assurance mechanism that supports the regulation of the counselling and psychotherapy profession by PACFA.

The Education Program Accreditation Committee (EPAC) is delegated responsibility for implementing two PACFA accreditation schemes:

- [Education Program Accreditation](#)
- [Specialist Training Accreditation](#)

Accreditation leads to the designation of 'PACFA Accredited Course' or 'PACFA Accredited Specialist Course'. Accreditation indicates that a training program has fulfilled the requirements of the accreditation scheme under which it is accredited and will continue to meet or exceed the accreditation requirements. Accreditation is usually for a five or seven year period, but may be for a pro-rata period when appropriate.

### Responsibilities

#### PACFA Board

The PACFA Board holds overall responsibility for PACFA's course accreditation function which is one of the key regulatory functions PACFA provides for the counselling and psychotherapy profession.

The PACFA Board is responsible for:

1. Approving the guidelines, policies and procedures for both accreditation schemes in consultation with EPAC and PACFA's peak policy-making body, the PACFA Council; and
2. Providing advice to EPAC when EPAC requests an interpretation of the applicable guidelines, policies and procedures in a particular case.

#### Education Program Accreditation Committee

EPAC is delegated responsibility for implementing both of PACFA's accreditation schemes:

In carrying out its delegated responsibilities, EPAC will:

1. Provide consultation and guidance to training providers about the requirements for both accreditation schemes.

2. Participate in the accreditation processes for both accreditation schemes in order to develop and maintain expertise in PACFA's requirements and processes, including:
  - Course Accreditation Panels for the Education Program Accreditation Scheme;
  - Review of applications for the Specialist Training Accreditation Scheme.
3. Make accreditation decisions relating to:
  - Applications for accreditation and re-accreditation under both accreditation schemes;
  - Applications to amend a program or course or its accreditation details or conditions;
  - Outcomes from the mid-cycle review process that require decision or action.

EPAC decisions will take into account:

  - Recommendations of Panels in relation to applications under the Education Program Accreditation Scheme; and
  - The report of the External Consultant and the report of the EPAC-appointed course reviewer in relation to applications under the Specialist Training Accreditation scheme.
4. Seek the advice of the PACFA Board when an interpretation of the applicable guidelines, policies and procedures is necessary before making a final decision on particular matters.
5. Monitor compliance with accreditation conditions through:
  - Considering concerns about accredited programs, specialist courses or training providers, when these are raised with EPAC or identified in the mid-cycle review process; and
  - Addressing complaints about accredited programs, specialist courses or training providers
6. Establish and implement appropriate policies and processes for course accreditation.
7. With assistance from the External Consultant, review and develop the requirements for both accreditation schemes in the form of guidelines, policies and procedures and make recommendations on the requirements to the PACFA Board.
8. Provide advice to the PACFA Board on matters relating to course accreditation.
9. Discharge such other responsibilities as necessary to fulfil its Terms of Reference.

#### **EPAC Chair**

The EPAC Chair is selected by the PACFA Board based on expertise in course accreditation, in accordance with the PACFA Constitution.

The EPAC Chair will:

1. Represent EPAC on the PACFA Board;
2. Liaise with the EPAC Administrator regarding agendas for EPAC meetings and chair meetings;
3. Provide leadership, guidance and advice to support EPAC members to discharge their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference;
4. Liaise with EPAC members for input on EPAC decisions and to delegate tasks relating to requests for advice from training providers about the requirements for both accreditation schemes to members of EPAC;

5. When required, provide support and advice to the External Consultant, the EPAC Administrator, Course Accreditation Committee Members and Course Accreditation Panel members in relation to EPAC business.

### **External Consultant**

An External Consultant will be appointed by the CEO, in consultation with EPAC, to provide expert advice in relation to applications under both accreditation schemes, based on the applicable guidelines, policies and procedures.

The responsibilities of the External Consultant will include:

- Reviewing applications for accreditation under both accreditation schemes;
- Preparing a report on the findings of the review of each application for accreditation of an education program to the Panel considering the application;
- Preparing a report on the findings of the review of each application for accreditation of a specialist course to EPAC, in consultation with the EPAC-appointed course reviewer;
- Reviewing and re-writing EPAC guidelines, policies and procedures in consultation with the EPAC Chair and PACFA CEO.

### **Course Accreditation Panel members**

Course Accreditation Panels are responsible for finalising recommendations on applications under the Education Program Accreditation Scheme, including:

- Considering the preliminary report from the External Consultant;
- Undertaking site visits when required to discuss the application with Training Providers.

The Panel Chair will:

- Chair all meetings during the site visit;
- Prepare the report and recommendations to EPAC.

### **Course Accreditation Administrator**

A member of staff will be appointed to provide high-level administrative support to EPAC. The responsibilities of this staff member are documented in a detailed Position Description.

In accordance with PACFA's established management structure, the member of staff will report to and be supported by a Line Manager who will be the PACFA Operations Manager.

The Course Accreditation Administrator will liaise with the EPAC Chair, EPAC members, Course Accreditation Panel members and training providers as required to undertake the role. However, the Course Accreditation Administrator's accountability is to the responsible Line Manager.

### **Committee Membership**

There shall be a minimum of six and a maximum of 10 people appointed to EPAC who will provide a range of viewpoints and based on their experience.

Membership of EPAC will be structured as far as possible to be inclusive of, but not limited to members who can represent the viewpoints of a diverse range of interest groups including:

Subject-matter experts:

- The Board-appointed Chair
- A nominee of the Australian College of Counselling and Psychotherapy Educators
- Other academics engaged in or with recent experience in the education of counsellors and psychotherapists

Members with other perspectives such as:

- At least one practitioner from the counselling and psychotherapy field
- At least one representative from outside the counselling and psychotherapy education field, for example an academic from another discipline or a representative of an organisation that employs counsellors and psychotherapists.

In the interests of diversity and accountability, at least two members of EPAC should not be members of PACFA or a PACFA Member Association. However, in accordance with the PACFA By-Laws, a majority of members of EPAC must be Clinical or Academic members of PACFA or hold an equivalent membership of a PACFA Member Association. These members must be of good standing within the counselling and psychotherapy profession.

Where possible, the academic members of EPAC will be from diverse institutions, for example academics from large tertiary training providers, from small specialist training providers with less than 50 students, and rural and regional training providers.

External members of EPAC are required to have specialist perspectives relevant to the Terms of Reference of EPAC. They are required to have good standing within their profession or organisation.

### **Process to appoint EPAC members and the EPAC Chair**

Candidates for the positions of EPAC Chair and members of EPAC may be identified by the EPAC Chair or by the PACFA Board. Candidates are invited to submit a Curriculum Vitae to express interest in an EPAC role. Appointments to EPAC require Board approval.

The Chair and members of EPAC serve for a term of two years at a time and may serve for a maximum of four terms. Each two year term requires further approval by the PACFA Board. The period of appointment of members can be extended by resolution of the Board.

### **Eligibility**

Candidates for EPAC membership must meet the eligibility requirements in the PACFA By-laws.

All members of EPAC 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**

EPAC will meet formally four times a year or more often if required to meet the requirements of these Terms of Reference.

Three meetings per year will take place via Zoom web-conference and one meeting per year will be face-to-face. Additional meetings, if required, will take place via Zoom.

Committee members will participate in most meetings with allowance being made for reasonable absences due to other commitments.

In between meetings, discussions may take place via email to enable decisions to be made in a timely manner.

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

## **Review**

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years.

The review process will include:

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

## **Appendix – Applicable Policies and Procedures**

Policies and procedures currently in force:

1. Course Accreditation and Application Guidelines 2018
2. PACFA Accreditation Application Form
3. Process for reviewing courses in psychotherapy and counselling
4. Specialist Training Requirements for Accreditation 2018
5. Specialist Training Accreditation Application Form

Policies and procedures to be developed:

1. Selection, training and evaluation process for course accreditation panel members
2. Course accreditation complaints process