



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

## **Membership Requirements and Guidelines for PACFA Member Associations**

This document is intended to provide information on the membership requirements for professional associations in psychotherapy and counselling that are current or prospective Member Associations of PACFA. In particular, it sets out the expectations around ethics and good governance for PACFA Member Associations. This will ensure consistency is the standard of services provided by Member Associations while also providing protection for individuals who are members of these Associations and who benefit from their services.

### **Ethics and ethical complaints**

PACFA has a role in determining the principles for ethical conduct and governance for professional associations which are Member Associations of PACFA. PACFA Member Associations foster ethical practice in organisational management and governance and are accountable to their Members and to the profession in relation to these functions.

#### ***Membership Requirements***

1. Member Associations are required to have a Code of Ethics that sets standards for ethical practice in counselling and psychotherapy for their Members, a copy of which must be lodged with PACFA. The Association's Code of Ethics must align with the principles and requirements of PACFA's Code of Ethics.

Member Associations are free to adopt the PACFA Code of Ethics as the Code for their members, or to adapt the PACFA Codes of Ethics to meet the needs of their Association. Where the PACFA Code of Ethics is adapted, please ensure that the Association's Code still aligns with the principles and procedures of the PACFA Code of Ethics

2. Member Associations are responsible for receiving, investigating and hearing complaints regarding the ethical conduct of its Members. "Members" in this context refers to those who were current Members at the time the service was provided or at the time a complaint was lodged.

PACFA has a limited role in assisting and supporting the process of resolution of complaints against practitioners who are members of Member Associations in circumstances where the Member Association cannot do so without conflicts of interest, or where they are not competent to do so. For details see the PACFA Professional Conduct Procedures.

3. Member Associations have documented procedures to be followed in the event of a complaint of unethical conduct against a Member. The procedures must include an appropriate appeals mechanism.
4. The sanctions that can be imposed for upheld ethical complaints must include the possibility that a Member can be debarred from membership of the Member Association, the PACFA Register and any other register for which approved membership is required.
5. Notification of the suspension or expulsion of a Member by a PACFA Member Association must be provided to PACFA, to all other PACFA Member Associations and to the general public via the Member Association website.

6. Member Associations are required to report the number of ethical complaints dealt with in the previous 12 months period including outcome of the complaints, and to sign a declaration that they maintain and up to date Code of Ethics that aligns with PACFA's Code of Ethics.

### **Guidelines**

- A. Member Associations, through their structures, processes and leadership, demonstrate a culture in which the values and principles in the PACFA Code of Ethics, are upheld. For details, refer to the PACFA Code of Ethics.
- B. Member Associations take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to their Members and actively protect the integrity of their relationship with their Members.
- C. Member Associations are committed to protecting the public against unlawful or unethical conduct or incompetent practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy by Members.
- D. Member Associations publish accurate information about the qualifications and experience of Members and the nature of services offered.
- E. Member Associations set and maintain professional structures and boundaries within their organisations.
- F. Member Associations, when faced with situations which exceed the boundary of their competence, experience or available resources, seek qualified professional advice or assistance.

## **Good governance**

### **Membership Requirements**

1. Member Associations are required to be incorporated under an appropriate legal structure for a not-for profit association.

The legal structure of the Association could be an Incorporated Association or a Company Limited by Guarantee. For information on the legal requirements for Incorporated Associations, please refer to the relevant legislation in the state or territory where you are incorporated. If you also operate nationally, you are legally required to be a registered body with ASIC. For Companies Limited by Guarantee, please see the requirements detailed at the ASIC website.

2. Member Associations operate in accordance with their Constitution or other governing document. This includes having a properly constituted *Committee of Management* (Board, Committee, Executive or any other term that denotes the *Committee of Management*) which is responsible for the governance of the organisation.
3. Member Associations abide by the PACFA Constitution and the documented requirements of their membership as detailed in this policy. Member Associations are aware that non-compliance with the PACFA Constitution may result in suspension or termination of their PACFA membership.

### **Guidelines**

- A. Member Associations foster ethical practice in organisational management and governance and are accountable to their Members and to the profession in relation to these functions.
- B. The Committee of Management purchases public liability and Association liability Insurance and maintains their currency to protect the interest of the Association and its Members.
- C. The Committee of Management works in the best interests of the organisation and works on behalf of, and in the best interests of, their Members.
- D. Member Associations do not take actions that could undermine public confidence in their organisation, the services provided by their Members, or the profession of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

- E. The Committee of Management will ensure that their organisational culture and practices do not exploit Members for financial, sexual, emotional, academic or other personal gain.
- F. Committee members do not accept or offer payments for privileges, or engage in any financial transactions, apart from those detailed in the Association's governing document.
- G. Where Committee members have conflicts of interest, these are declared and Committee members stand down from participating in discussions and decisions where there is a conflict of interest. Member Associations also act promptly to address any conflicts of interest in relation to Members.
- H. Member Associations treat in confidence any personal information about Members, whether obtained directly or indirectly. Member Associations protect Members' rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- I. Member Associations work within the law. They take all reasonable steps to be aware of current legislation and regulations affecting the Association and the professional work of Members.
- J. It is recommended that the Committee of Management reflects annually on their Governance and on the quality and effectiveness of their activities and their ability to support Members professionally. This will support the Association to maintain high standards of organisational and ethical governance.

## **Member management**

### ***Membership requirements***

1. Member Associations require their practising Members have public liability and professional indemnity insurance to support the protection of Members and the public from harm.

### ***Guidelines***

- A. Member Associations clearly communicate the terms on which membership and/or registration is offered.
- B. Member Associations do not solicit the Members of PACFA or other Member Associations.
- C. In the event of harm resulting from organisational management or processes, Member Associations take responsibility for acknowledgment and reparation/restitution.
- D. Member Associations have clear guidelines regarding conflicts of interest in relation to Members. Any Member in a position such as trainer or supervisor will exclude themselves from decisions impacting on a Members or prospective Members with whom they have a dual relationship. For example, if there is a dual relationship the Member excludes themselves from decisions about membership, marking a Members' work in training contexts or taking part in complaints processes against Members.
- E. Member Associations are aware that special care is required when using client case studies in reports and publications or in presentations and teaching contexts. The author, educator or presenter must obtain the informed consent of the person concerned and comply with relevant privacy legislation.

## **Organisational complaints**

### ***Membership requirements***

1. Member Associations are required to have a Complaints Policy and Procedures to respond to any complaints from members or the general public about the Association or the services it provides. Member Associations may develop their own policy or adopt PACFA's *Complaints and Feedback Policy*, making the required changes to the policy to meet their own purposes.

### ***Guidelines***

- A. Member Associations deal with complaints against the Association in accordance with their documented Complaints Procedures. When doing so, they avoid any conflicts of interest.

## **Member Association renewal process**

### ***Membership requirements***

1. Member Associations are required to complete the annual Member Association Renewal Form.
2. To renew their PACFA membership, Member Associations are required to provide:
  - accurate membership numbers as at 31 March for the purpose of the annual audit to calculate per capita fees;
  - data on ethical complaints managed in the previous 12 months period using the Complaints Reporting Template;
  - declarations that the membership requirements are met by the Member Association.
3. Member Association fees are due by 1 July each year.