

Criteria for an Equivalence Decision



Overview

Equivalence decisions are primarily for counsellors who have trained outside of the UK¹ and who wish to join the ACC register. The decision-making process involves assessing the applicant's qualifications, additional training and experience against criteria which are set out below.

The assessment is undertaken by ACC assessors who are qualified, experienced counsellors and who are also responsible for the assessment of counselling and supervision audits and accreditation applications. The assessors will carefully consider all the information that is provided against the criteria set out in Appendix 1 and may request further information from and/or a discussion with an applicant before reaching a decision.

Entry level training standard

The equivalence decision is based on evidence provided by the applicant that the training and experience they have had meets or exceeds the standards set by ACC for entry to our register.

An applicant has to demonstrate that they have training and experience that maps onto the minimum qualifying entry level, which is:

- achieving a minimum level 4 diploma in counselling which is accredited by an academic or vocational qualification accrediting body (in the U.K. these accrediting bodies come under OFQUAL);
- the training has taken place predominately in an in-person training setting (i.e. not from an exclusively online training course);
- the course specification has a minimum of 300 guided learning hours (the time a learner is being taught, instructed or participating in training under guidance or supervision of a tutor/lecturer, including assessment time);
- and the course includes a 100-hour supervised clinical placement as an integral part of the core counselling training.

¹ In rare cases a counsellor who has trained in the U.K. but does not have the standard level 4 diploma, may be subject to an equivalence process. Please note that there is no direct 'experience route' to the register. Applicants must be able to evidence relevant training as well as experience. For further explanation please contact register@acc-uk.org.

Application process

There is an application form to complete. The application form asks for details of training, practice experience and professional memberships. It also asks for a professional reference and a declaration of commitment to ACC's ethics and practice standards.

Information to be provided by the applicant to support the process

Applicants need to submit:

1. Certificates of all core/foundation counselling/psychotherapy training, the academic level of the course², together with a detailed breakdown of what was covered in the training (e.g. transcript, curriculum outline, other description) and the web address of training provider³.
2. Certificates relating to further additional counselling training, for example higher diplomas, master's degrees, supervision qualifications etc., and web address of training provider.
3. If applicable, details of membership of other counselling professional bodies.
4. A reference from course tutor, current supervisor or clinical manager which states:
 - their name, occupation, counselling/supervisory qualifications and in what capacity they know the applicant and for how long;
 - a statement to the effect that in their professional opinion the applicant is a safe, competent practitioner and of suitable character in relation to ACC's Ethics and Practice to be considered for registered membership of the ACC.

² Where educational levels are not clear, the assessors may request that the applicant acquires a NARIC certificate of equivalence. Please be aware that charges apply. *NARIC is the UK's national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.*

³ For certificates and transcripts in other languages, please submit a certified translation.

5. A statement outlining summary counselling practice hours gained normally post qualification in different settings and totals for accompanying supervision for a specified period of practice, for example:

2017-2018

Counselling Practice

200 hours at Oak Tree Counselling Centre (include web address, telephone number and contact person)

55 hours private practice (include web address and directory listings as available)

Supervision

15 hours 1 to 1 supervision private practice (name of supervisor and contact detail)

22 hours group supervision at Oak Tree Counselling Centre (name of supervisor and contact details)

6. Representative sample of CPD activities with CPD certificates where available.
7. A reference from a Christian sponsor who can confirm that the applicant is someone who identifies as a Christian.

Counselling practice hours

Counselling practice hours are hours spent intentionally providing counselling or psychotherapy services to a client, patient or service user. This is normally an intentional activity, where the therapist and client enter into a formal contract to meet regularly for an agreed period of time, and where a therapeutic relationship is established and sustained. The counsellor uses knowledge and skill gained through training and practice experience to select and utilise various known approaches and interventions, in order to help the client resolve their psychological difficulties and/or cope with life challenges. Psychological difficulties include issues that overlap with a client's faith and spirituality.

Counselling practice in the U.K. requires that a counsellor has a supervisor and professional indemnity insurance.

Counselling hours cannot therefore be hours spent in providing pastoral care and support, spiritual direction and/or chaplaincy. However, hours spent in an employment (paid or voluntary) that have the key attributes of a counselling relationship as described above, may be accepted. Where an applicant wishes these hours to be taken into account they need to provide further information to support a reasonable claim that the activity was counselling and not mental health support delivered in the context of pastoral care, spiritual direction or chaplaincy activities.

Specifically you will need to tell us

- Under what agreement or contract were you seeing clients (for example a contract of employment or a service description)?
- What service did the client believe they were coming for?
- What were the arrangements in terms of number of sessions on offer, assessment and referral practices, payment (if any)?
- What approaches and interventions were within the scope of the service?
- What boundaries were in operation (e.g. confidentiality/limits to confidentiality; existence of dual relationships/avoidance of dual relationships)?
- What ethics and practice guidelines were in place for the service?

Successful applications

An equivalence decision does not automatically allow entry onto ACC's register. There are further criteria associated with registered counsellor membership which are set out in the online application process on ACC's website. These include for example an applicant's agreement to counselling within ACC's Ethics and Practice, and an applicant's status with regard to whether they have been subject to a professional complaint and/or have unspent criminal convictions.

An equivalence decision may also be conditional on an applicant accepting a restriction in the scope of their practice and/or undertaking some further CPD training prior to, or in their first year of registered membership.

Accreditation

Depending on the level of training and professional accreditation with other counselling bodies, an applicant may be able to apply to transfer this into an ACC Accreditation. There is a separate accreditation transfer process.

Appendix 1 Criteria for Assessing Equivalence in Training

Qualifying Training		
Format	Curriculum Evidence	Mandatory /Desirable
Can be achieved over more than one training course in more than one training institution. Majority of study must be in a face-to-face context.	Skills training including relational aspects of counselling and supervision [Must be face-to-face training]	M
	Depth study of one or more approaches to counselling, e.g. humanist, behaviourist, systemic, integrative	M
	Spiritual and religious integration and interventions	D
	Ethical codes, their content and importance and how to deal with ethical dilemmas	M
	Standards of Practice covering dual relationships, contracting, confidentiality, record keeping, supervision, CPD	M
	100-hour supervised clinical placement	M
	Academic equivalent to or exceeding UK level 4 diploma	M
Factors taken into account if shortfall in above		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of reasonable level of regular counselling practice allowing for explainable practice breaks • evidence of regular supervision/peer support in line with standards of practice operational in country practicing in • evidence of continuing CPD relevant to practicing in UK setting • evidence of adequate insurance cover in line with the standards of practice operational in country they are practicing in • evidence that advertising and promotion fall within the UK's Advertising Standards Authority guidelines or equivalent (for example, the counsellor is not making false claims about themselves or their practice) 		

Document history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	February 2021	First version issued
1.1	August 2021	Addition of further guidance on counselling practice hours
1.2	April 2023	Updated with new name, logo, branding
