BACP Course Accreditation Scheme

General Application Guidance

Preparing to make your application

Pre-application self-assessment exercise

Please read each criterion carefully: consider and decide if the course is meeting it in full and whether this can be evidenced clearly. These two points will help you consider your course in the context of the application form:

1. What description or explanation could you provide to BACP about how the course is meeting that criterion?

Bear in mind that our assessors do not have any previous knowledge of your course. When you complete the application form, this sort of explanation will be required alongside each criterion. They are known as Self-Statements.

2. What actual evidence could you provide to BACP in order to support the explanation, to demonstrate that the course is meeting the criterion in practice?

Can you provide enough evidence to prove this beyond any doubt? Self-Statements must be accompanied by a sufficient piece of evidence which supports them. The assessors must be able to find each piece quickly and easily amongst all the evidence submitted in support of the application (Portfolio of Evidence).

The pre-application preparation stage is important for getting the application right ahead of its submission to BACP. The course assessment process is not considered to be a developmental exercise in helping the course to meet the criteria, neither is it a coaching exercise to help a course to gain accreditation. The assessors will be expecting an application to clearly demonstrate that the requirements for course acreditation can be met.

Please notify BACP at least two months in advance of sending your application

Part A: Eligibility criteria – specific guidance

Our Eligibility Guide has been designed to get you working on your course's eligibility for accreditation against Criteria A1 – A9.

Only courses which can meet the Eligibility Criteria should consider making an application against all the requirements of the course accreditation scheme. Please note that we are currently unable to accept applications from courses which have not graduated a cohort of students

How to fill out your application – getting the basics right

About the form itself, self-statements, supporting evidence, clear labelling and correct assembly

- All boxes in the form should expand automatically to fit your responses as you type. The form has been designed specifically for A4 portrait format. Please do not alter the wording, orientation of the form or modify it by deleting boxes, changing its content, size or format or save it as another type of file; it may become incompatible with BACP's office software and/or invalidate your application.

- Please bear in mind that it is your particular course that we are assessing. If your course is based on the requirements of a national body, awarding body or network organisation, we will need to consider the documentation published specifically by you, the training provider, regarding the delivery of your course. In other words, we are not assessing the requirements and documentation of the awarding/other body; we are assessing your particular delivery of the course as the training provider

- Keep a copy of the current course accreditation criteria document next to you at all times when completing the application form and refer to it regularly to ensure that the information that you are providing is aligned with the necessary requirements.

- When completing the application form, underneath the heading 'How is this criterion met?' for each criterion you need to type an explanation of how the course meets its requirements (1st blank section). This explanation is known as your 'Self-Statement'.

- Next, you need to type an exact and specific cross-reference into the section entitled 'Reference to supporting evidence' to direct the assessor to the precise location of the corresponding piece of supporting evidence (2nd blank section).

- Make sure all evidence is clearly labelled and correctly cross-referenced in the application form – **please refer to the rest of this document for more detailed guidance on collating your application and the portfolio of evidence**

- Provide a contents table as a preface to the supporting evidence. This will help the assessor navigate around your application and portfolio of evidence. We have supplied a pro-forma Application document table of contents that you can use for this if you wish.

- Compile your Portfolio of Evidence in the order of the Contents Table.

- Please leave all other sections on the application form blank e.g. Assessor comments and Assessor decision) and do not delete them – they will be used for the assessor's report

- It is essential that BACP receives the completed application form electronically as a Word document, so please do not change or convert the file in any way (i.e. don't write protect it or save as a pdf). You may encrypt the document but remember to send the password separately to BACP.

How much information?

Consider the amount of material you could send through compared to how much information the assessor really needs to see. If you are referring us to something very straightforward such as the existence of a complaints policy, you can signpost us to where it is on a website rather than send it as a hard copy appendix. Extracts might be sent instead of whole documents.

What makes a good application?

Hints and tips from the assessment team

- Clear and explanatory self-statements: they must contain enough information for the assessors to know how the course is meeting a criterion and that they will make sense to the assessors.

- Sufficient evidence: make sure that all the evidence referenced is included with the application and that what is being submitted is sufficient enough to show that the course is doing what it says it is doing.

- Specific cross-referencing: the assessors need to locate the information easily within the evidence documentation and go to exactly where it appears within a document or page.

- Well-organised and assembled: the application must be in order, have clear separate sections which are easy to find (e.g. dividers), be clearly labelled and have page numbering etc.

We can spot poorly-informed or rushed applications. It is highly recommended that you set sufficient time aside to familiarise yourself with the requirements and to prepare, write, evidence and assemble your application.

Poor quality applications have potential to cause considerable disruption to the assessment system. Assessment of additionally requested information takes up valuable assessor time which could be allocated to other applications waiting for consideration. For this reason, we will return applications for revision if they are incomplete, do not have clear, specific referencing or the evidence is poorly collated.

A returned application will lose its place in the assessment schedule and may incur an additional assessment fee (this does not apply to applications where there is a legitimate need for further supporting information). Our rationale is that valuable assessment time should not be spent collating unordered applications or searching for information that has not been referenced correctly. From experience, this delays the assessment of your application and that of other courses and results in a backlog of assessments.

Making your application – the detail

Self-statements and your Portfolio of Evidence

You are required to submit a portfolio of evidence which addresses each of the criteria and sub-criteria in Part A: Eligibility Criteria and Part B: Course Delivery Criteria. Please ensure that all criteria – including sub-criteria – are individually addressed.

The application form provides a section - 'Reference to supporting evidence' - for cross-referencing to the evidence required.

- Under 'How is this criterion met?'/'How is this sub-criterion met?' you must provide a clear 'Self-Statement' that clearly identifies exactly how the course meets each of the corresponding criteria or sub-criteria and provides the assessor with enough information to understand how the course meets that criterion/sub criterion.

- For each of these statements, under 'Reference to supporting evidence', please indicate exactly where the evidence for each criterion/sub-criteria can be found within your portfolio of evidence. For example, the evidence might be contained within a larger document such as the course/student handbook. Please give page references and subheadings of exactly where the information can be located.

- Please note that the response 'see course handbook' is not an exact location; assessors must be able to refer to the evidence quickly rather than having to search pages or whole documents for the necessary evidence. If the evidence is a brief sentence embedded within a document, please indicate exactly where this can be found.

- In your Portfolio of Evidence, please make use of use clear headings, page tabs and make sure all pages are numbered.

- Please insert a contents table as a preface to the supporting evidence. All references to documents in the portfolio and cited in the application form must tally and correspond to this contents table. We have supplied a pro-forma Table of contents portfolio of evidence guide that you can use for this if you wish and a completed Application example table of contents you can use for reference.

- Please use the Application Checklist provided to make a final check of your application – this will be used to make an initial screen of your application when it arrives.

> **Assessors must be able to refer to the evidence within your portfolio quickly and accurately. Assessment time is limited to assessing against the criteria; it cannot be given over to searching through pages or whole documents for the information necessary to begin with.**

Generally, completed evaluation forms, coursework and other potentially sensitive materials should be presented at the assessment visit rather than included with the application.

Notes on electronic evidence
How to cross-reference websites, Moodle, Blackboard and other online resources/documents.

Electronic evidence is acceptable if the course can show specifically where the course considers a criterion/sub-criterion is being met. References to evidence that is embedded within information that is stored online can only be accepted where a specific reference has been supplied e.g. a full website hyperlink.

Courses wishing to submit online documents and/or resources as evidence will need to ensure that:

- The log in details for sites such as Moodle or Blackboard, are submitted along with the application to give the Accreditation Assessors access to any relevant online material.

- All online evidence is clearly identified on the application form in the 'Reference to supporting evidence' section. It is not sufficient to give a general link or reference to a web page or site. The course will need to clearly identify the relevant document or section of a website and exactly where and how it can be found e.g. 'http://www.bacp.co.uk/cpd/ (CPD Search)'.

- The assessors will need specific instructions for how they can access and locate any online evidence. This will include instructions on how to log in to relevant sites as well as clear, step by step instructions on how to locate any documentation and also the specific sections that are relevant to the criteria/sub-criteria.

- Alternatively, the course may choose to include printed pages from their website and/or Moodle/Blackboard to include in their portfolio of evidence. Please ensure that all supporting evidence is succinct and clearly referenced to the relevant criteria and sub-criteria.

Staff details
Applications must include sufficient details of all course staff, including training, qualifications, accredited/registered status, or otherwise with BACP or other professional body; on-going counselling/psychotherapy, supervision and training work including supervision arrangements; counselling/psychotherapy related research, publications, conference presentations and relevant work experience; specific contribution to the course.

Staff CVs can be included if the information required above is included and clearly presented, otherwise, the information required can be submitted using the application document Team Member Profile. There is also a template for submitting an overview of the course staff team (Course Staff Overview).

It is a course's responsibility to comply with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) requirements when sharing personal data for accreditation purposes.

Other reports
Please include the current or most recent report from the external examiner and/or consultant and an indication of how this feedback and evaluation has been integrated into the course.

Part B: Course delivery criteria – specific guidance

Over time, the assessment team have picked up on a number of criteria that can cause difficulties for courses and where pitfalls may arise. The most common mistake overall tends to be when courses do not respond specifically to the criterion - and where relevant, any respective sub-criteria - and/or do not provide actual evidence to support self-statements about how the course addresses these issues. In addition, misunderstandings may occur regarding the type of evidence that assessors might be looking for in relation to each criterion.

In light of this and to pre-empt any potential issues, the assessors have compiled guidance documents specific to the 'Course Delivery Criteria (B1-9). The guides aim to identify those criteria that most often cause problems for courses, to highlight some of the common pitfalls and provide additional guidance in order to facilitate the application and assessment process. There is specific guidance sheet for each section of the criteria, e.g. Application guidance criteria section B3

QAA Subject Benchmarks Statement

BACP is pleased to have been part of the group which developed a Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (Quality Assurance Agency). The Benchmark Statement should be used by all providers of higher education qualifications in counselling/psychotherapy. It is also a valuable resource for all those involved in the training of counsellors/psychotherapists, irrespective of the type of qualification offered.

A comparison of the course accreditation scheme's criteria with the QAA requirements is available from BACP course accreditation upon request.

The application form – real examples

Due to the limits on their assessment time, assessors are unable to give feedback about every criterion. However, they will always offer an explanation where a criterion is not met in full (conditions) and make recommendations where there is room for development. Consequently, most criteria that have been met will be lacking any corresponding comments.

Example of a where a criterion is met.

B8.2

The course must give students regular opportunities to evaluate their training experiences and give feedback on the course.

How is this criterion met?

Various opportunities are provided for students to evaluate their training experiences and provide feedback on the course, e.g. end of term meetings, end of term individual tutorials with the Training Manager. Students can also comment on the feedback offered in the end of term and end of course reports from seminar leaders, tutors and supervisors.

Reference to supporting evidence

5C, Course handbook part 12, 10A – C, 12B, 13A - D

Assessor comments - *course to leave blank*

Assessor decision - *course to leave blank*

Met

Example of a recommendation

B4.12

The course must ensure that students have regular and sufficient supervision in line with the requirements of the Ethical Framework. A mix of individual and group supervision is strongly recommended.

How is this criterion met?

All of our placements offer group or individual supervision - the supervision requirements are set out in the Placement Contract

Reference to supporting evidence

Section 7: "Placement Contract"

Assessor comments - *course to leave blank*

Assessor decision - *course to leave blank*

Met

Recommendation: It is strongly recommended that students who are only receiving group supervision in their placement also have access to individual supervision. Please address this recommendation in the next Annual Monitoring Report

Example of where a criterion has not been met, with accompanying condition and deadline

B4.17

The boundaries of supervision on the course and supervision at the placement provider must also be specified. This contract must include provision for the supervisor to report concerns about any aspect of the student's practice.

How is this criterion met?

Supervision is not provided by the course. Procedures for the supervisor to report concerns about any aspect of the student's practice are explained in the Student Handbook and Supervision Information Sheet – a copy is provided to each supervisor each year.

Reference to supporting evidence

Student Handbook pages 25, 30-35 and Appendix D; Supervision Information Sheet.

Assessor comments - *course to leave blank*

Assessor decision - *course to leave blank*

Not met

Condition: That, by 30 March 2016 (two weeks), the course amends the supervision contract so that it details the provision for the supervisor to report concerns about any aspect of the student's practice.

Fees ad payment

Payment is due in two stages:

Application Stage £1100.00 + Visit Stage £1375.00 (total of £2475.00 per application)

The Application Stage fee must be submitted in advance of or with your application. The Visit Stage fee is payable when the application moves to the Visit Stage but may be paid at the same time as the Application Stage fee. BACP will not accept an application without payment of the Application Stage fee.

Payment options:

- Cheque enclosed with your application or in advance, payable to 'BACP'. Please write your organisational membership number on the reverse and state what the fee is for e.g. 'course accreditation: application stage' or 'course accreditation: application and visit stages'
- Completed debit/credit card payment slip enclosed with application or sent in advance
- Card payment by telephone on 01455 883300. Please have your organisational membership number and state or 'course accreditation: application and visit stages'
- Invoice: you must raise a purchase order for the amount and send to BACP in order for us to invoice you. Orders should show your organisational membership number, the correct fee and 'course accreditation application stage'. You may include 'visit stage' at the same time if both fees are itemised separately on the order.
- You can pay by BACS transfer – please ask us to send account details.

Sending your finalised submission to BACP

When you are ready to submit your whole application:

Email the completed, referenced Word form to sabine.maltby@bacp.co.uk

- Print out the completed form and attach all supporting evidence in order of contents table
- Include your payment with the application hard copy or make payment in advance (details below)
- Make the correct number of hard copies of the entire, collated application

- First-time accreditation   = 2
- Reaccreditation   = 1
- Print a copy of the Terms and Conditions and sign and date it, then and add the hard copy to the application package you will send to BACP.

Post the hard copies to:

Course Accreditation, BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, LE17 4HB

Please also send an electronic copy of the supporting evidence.

BACP has a Microsoft Office Site, maximum file size of 10MB. Please send large files separately and/or zip files to compress them. Alternatively, send a link us to where you have uploaded your files securely online. Remember to send your password separately for encrypted information. We are unable to accept Dropbox applications.

The assessment process

Your application will be checked by the office to see that it has been completed correctly, has supporting evidence that has been referenced and does not contravene the eligibility requirements. It will then be scheduled for assessment by an assessor to determine the course's eligibility for course accreditation. If eligible, a second assessor will be allocated to the application and the team will make a full assessment of the submission against all criteria. Only when all criteria are met will the assessors arrange to visit the course. Once the assessors have made their report, it will be moderated, ratified and released to the course

We may contact you during the assessment process if we require any clarification or further information in order to move to the Visit Stage. Where queries remain unresolved or if a response is deemed unsatisfactory, the application may be withdrawn from the accreditation process.

Accreditation/continued accreditation will be granted when all criteria have been met as specified. The assessor may also make good practice recommendations, to be considered for course development or improvement.

Any conditions to be met before accreditation/continued accreditation can be awarded will be detailed in the report. Failure to meet conditions by the deadlines specified will result in the application being withdrawn from the accreditation process.

BACP should be notified of any changes proposed or made to the course as it was presented in the application **immediately**. Failure to do so will invalidate your application.

Information and assistance

Please contact the office team for further information or clarification:

Sabine Maltby (Administrator Accredited Courses)
Telephone 01455 883302
sabine.maltby@bacp.co.uk

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