

## BACP Course Accreditation Scheme

### Delivery Guidance - B3

#### B3. KNOWLEDGE

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This section asks the course to demonstrate how it enables students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the theories that are taught on the course.

As a starting point at B3.1, the course must firstly convey a *'clear rationale and philosophy that underpins the whole programme and by which students can account for their practice'*.

A clearly explained rationale and philosophy here will create a firm foundation on which the rest of the B3 criteria, and in fact the whole of the application, is based. This criterion can be linked to the information provided on page three of the application form at the section entitled *'Course orientation, philosophy, approach or model'*. Throughout the rest of the criteria, the course is asked to show which theories are included in the curriculum and how they are taught to facilitate *'students to develop understanding of a substantial body of knowledge'* (B3.3).

A key component of B3 is that the course must also demonstrate how students are helped to develop the ability to critically evaluate (e.g. B3.2, B3.3 and B3.7). The types of evidence that courses tend to submit in support of the B3 criteria is wide and varied but could include documents such as module/unit specifications, learning outcomes, module/unit timetables, session plans, course handouts, assignment criteria etc.

In our experience, the most common mistakes made in this section are when courses don't address each of the sub-criteria for B3.3 i.e. i, ii a-e, iii, iv & v or cross-reference these to specific evidence. Other areas of misunderstanding concern the types of evidence that assessors might be looking for in relation to the following criteria:

#### B3.5

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**The course must ensure that students are aware of the types of medication commonly used in treatment of various psychological states and their effects and possible side effects, including the potential impact on the therapeutic process**

The course must submit evidence to show how the course teaches students about pharmacology in mental health so that they understand the implications for therapeutic practice. This could be addressed in more than one activity on the course e.g. in taught sessions and group supervision sessions, however, it would not be enough to simply say this on the application form. Explicit evidence will be required e.g. module/unit timetable, sample session plan, course handouts etc.

#### B3.6

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**Students must be enabled to develop an understanding of the work and roles of other professionals in the mental health field**

What is needed here is for the course to show how students are enabled to develop this understanding, which again could be achieved in a number of different ways e.g. in taught sessions, visiting speakers, course supervisions sessions. Many courses find that the most significant learning in relation to this criterion occurs when students have varied placement opportunities. However, as there are no guarantees that all students would gain this understanding on their placement it is important that opportunities for such learning to take place are included within the course curriculum. A course that also provides the counselling placement in-house may find it difficult to meet this criterion if students are not gaining experience of working in different contexts and so alternate ways to expose their students to the variety of roles in the mental health field will need to be incorporated into the curriculum.

### **B3.7**

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**Students must be helped to develop a critical awareness of research findings in counselling, psychotherapy and related areas through study of the relevant literature and to reflect on how these inform evidence based practice**

Here the course will need to demonstrate how students are helped to understand the links between existing research and practice. Examples of the types of evidence that might be relevant here include research discussion groups and assignments such as a case study that discusses the link between theory and practice or a critical evaluation of a research paper.

### **B3.8**

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**Students must be enabled to gain an awareness and working knowledge of research methodology to enable them to develop basic competences in small scale research projects**

Courses that are undergraduate or postgraduate level will often meet these criteria through a dedicated module/unit which covers research methodologies and requires students to conduct a small scale research project as an assessed piece of work. However, it is recognised that the academic level of taught programmes differ greatly and as such, this criterion may present a sticking point for level 4/5 courses. In such cases, a research project may be impractical and so other ways of meeting the criteria will need to be sought. These could include the inclusion of some taught sessions on research methodologies and an assignment which asks students to convey their understanding, perhaps by producing a research proposal for example, or by conducting a critique of research methodologies employed within an existing research study.