

## BACP Course Accreditation Scheme

### Delivery Guidance - B4

#### B4. CLIENT WORK

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This section refers to all the necessary elements that are required for students to undertake client work safely and ethically.

B4 begins with criteria that are specific to the client work itself and then the criteria that follow refer to the practice placement, the application of theory to practice and the requirements for supervision. What follows is a summary of those criteria that we most often get asked about or where issues tend to arise during the application and assessment process.

#### B4.1 (general)

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This criterion and its associated sub-criteria set out the practical requirements for students undertaking client work. Most of these are self-explanatory but those that commonly cause problems are:

##### B4.1 i.

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**Before starting client work, students must be assessed individually for their readiness to take clients'**

Students must be assessed for their readiness to start seeing clients by course staff and not by independent, external assessors who are not part of the core teaching team. It is helpful if courses can provide some evidence of how and when such assessment occurs, perhaps by providing schemes of work, assessment criteria or other such documentation that shows how this process is conducted on the course.

##### B4.1 iii.

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**The client work undertaken by students should be congruent with the rationale and philosophy of the course**

It is not appropriate for students to undertake client work within a placement where they are required to practice in a way which differs from how they are being taught on the course.

Courses might consider evidencing these requirements within the placement documentation and/or contract. For example, placement providers could be required to sign a statement which confirms consistency between the course rationale and the student's way of working within the placement.

##### B4.1 v.

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**The course has an obligation under the Ethical Framework to ensure that placement providers indicate student status to their clients**

A self-statement that confirms that this is taking place is not enough here. Evidence is required to show *how* this criterion is being met. One way of addressing this might be to include this requirement in the placement contract so that the placement provider is required to sign to confirm their compliance with this requirement in addition to their adherence to the BACP Ethical Framework.

#### **B4.2**

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**The course must have a procedure in place for students to extend the training period in order to complete the required practice hours**

Again, a self-statement is not sufficient for this criterion. What is required here is a clear procedure that is made available to students that states *'clearly under what circumstances an extension is permitted'* (i), *'over what time period this is allowed'* (ii) and *'how students are being supported during that period'* (iii).

### **PRACTICE PLACEMENT**

#### **B4.3**

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Here, the course is asked to demonstrate that it has clear procedures in place for practice placements that are made available to students and placements alike. These procedures will need to be submitted as evidence in support of this criterion.

#### **B4.4**

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The course is asked to *'demonstrate how it approves its placement providers as appropriate for the particular course'*. The course should explain this process and provide supporting evidence.

#### **B4.5**

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This criterion addresses the three-way contract *'between the students, the placement provider and the course'* and the associated sub-criteria set out all of the necessary elements that should be included in this contract. It is most helpful to all concerned, if all of this information is contained within the one document, rather than referring placement providers to separate documents to access information, such as the course rationale for instance.

All of the sub-criteria i - vii must be covered within the three-way contract with key information being set out by the course with allocated space for the placement provider to include the information that is required from them

e.g. *'Details of how clients are assessed for suitability to work with students'* (vii).

The contract must also have a space for each party to sign in agreement. It should also be made clear within the contract, what is expected of placement providers in relation to any *'requirements for reports on students, reciprocal feedback, meetings etc'* (iv). Remember to cross-reference each sub-criterion to its corresponding evidence.

### **THE APPLICATION OF THEORY TO PRACTICE**

This section requires the course to demonstrate how it enables students to apply the relevant theory/theories they have been taught to practice, with a focus on their development as ethical and competent practitioners. This means that the course needs to

provide documented evidence of how it meets each criterion and sub-criterion. Evidence can take a variety of forms, however might include documents such as module/unit specifications, learning outcomes, module/unit timetables, session plans, course handouts, assignment criteria and/or guidance etc.

This list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. What is important is that the evidence clearly demonstrates how and where (within the curriculum) the particular criteria/sub-criteria is met by the course.

Experience shows that the most common pitfalls within this section arise from courses not addressing each of the sub-criteria - e.g. within B4.8 - or failure to cross-reference these to specific evidence. Other areas of misunderstanding may be related to the types of evidence that assessors might be looking for in relation to the criteria:

#### **B4.6**

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**The course must ensure that students are formally introduced to the Ethical Framework before starting client work. The course must demonstrate that it assists its students to develop as ethical, accountable and reflective practitioners.**

Please note that it is the Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions to which courses must introduce their students. It is this Ethical Framework that courses are expected to use as the framework for enabling students to develop as ethical, accountable and reflective practitioners.

#### **B4.7**

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**Formal course time must be given to:**

- i) Training in assessment procedures consistent with the rationale and philosophy of the course. This must include the important elements of a risk assessment strategy informed by evidence based practice and relevant research.**
- ii) Teaching the students to conceptualise the nature of the clients' issues and to negotiate an appropriate therapeutic contract, which may include referral**
- iii) Equipping the students to establish and sustain an effective, ethical therapeutic alliance with a client for the duration of the contract; a relationship in which the client is enabled to explore complex emotional concerns.**

Problems arise when the evidence in the portfolio does not show clearly that the course donates formal contact time to training in each of the above sub-criteria. In fact each of these sub-criteria may be evidenced in more than one activity on the course for example, in taught sessions and in group supervision, however, it would not be enough to state this on the application form. Explicit evidence is required which might include module/unit timetables, sample session plans, course handouts etc.

#### **B4.8**

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**The course will develop, monitor and assess each student's competence to:**

- i. Establish a clear framework for the therapeutic work, including:
  - a. Awareness of the limits of confidentiality and other ethical and professional boundaries
  - b. Clear procedures for pre-assessment communication with clients about services on offer
  - c. Clear information about the process of therapy and the process of therapeutic change
  - d. A description of the responsibilities of each party to the contract
  - e. The negotiation of appropriate outcomes with clients
  - f. The negotiation of all details of the practical arrangements including the number of sessions available

The course will need to show here exactly how students are developed, monitored and assessed in each of the above areas (a-f). A self-statement is not enough to meet the criteria - evidence of how this is accomplished, for each sub-criterion, is required. See above for examples of documents which might be submitted as evidence. The evidence must be specific to the criterion, clearly labelled and cross-referenced.

## **SUPERVISION**

This section covers all the necessary elements regarding supervision and what is expected from the course, the supervisors and students.

### **B4.11**

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The first criterion in this section sets out the responsibilities of the course with regards to preparing students for the effective use of supervision and its various functions:

### **B4.11**

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**The course must inform students about different methods of supervision and prepare them for the effective use of supervision as a professional requirement throughout their working life. The course must demonstrate that students can effectively use supervision including the following key aspects:**

- i. Educational - to stimulate critical thinking about the relationship between theory and practice.
- ii. Reflective - (a) to consider how the therapist's own values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours impact on the therapeutic process and (b) reflection on and evaluation of practice.
- iii. Developmental - to facilitate student development as ethical, competent and accountable practitioners.
- iv. Supportive - to consider student personal and professional well-being with respect to client work.

v. Managerial - to have due regard to the needs of: the client, the student, the course, the placement, the profession and society at large in accordance with the Ethical Framework.

The course must show how it enables students to develop their understanding of the different processes in supervision so that they can effectively engage with supervision for the benefit of their clients and the development of their practice. Of course engaging in supervision itself plays an important part in how students learn about supervision however, relying on supervision alone is not likely to meet the criterion. Clearly cross-referenced evidence must be provided to show how the course is meeting each of these sub-criteria. This could take the form of module/unit specifications, learning outcomes, module/unit timetables, session plans and/or course handouts etc. that cover these elements.

Most of the rest of the criteria within this section can be addressed within a clear, written supervision contract.

#### **B4.5**

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It is suggested that courses develop a three-way contract between the course, the student and the placement provider. However, rather than having two separate contracts - one for the placement and one for supervision - some courses have found it helpful to produce a four-way contract between the course, the placement provider, the student and supervisor, in which all the course requirements in relation to these criteria are set out in an explicit document that is available to all.

Whichever approach the course chooses to adopt, the course must ensure that the elements included in **B4.12**, **B4.13** (i, ii & iii) **B4.16** and **B4.17** are all made explicit to supervisors, placements and students where appropriate.

#### **B4.14**

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**The course will need to demonstrate the effectiveness of its own arrangements for ensuring the quality of supervision. If supervision is provided in-house the course must be aware of the possibility of dual role conflict and ensure that students have access to independent supervision**

A common pitfall at **B4.14** is that courses all too often do not demonstrate how they monitor the quality of supervision and how effective these evaluative methods are. The course will need to have some system in place by which it can ensure that students are receiving supervision that is conducive to their development. This would most likely involve some form of feedback process that students engage in. If supervision is only provided in-house to the course, the course must show that it is aware of some of the potential issues related to dual supervisory roles and how these are considered as well as ensuring '*that students have access to independent supervision*'. Courses that only provide in-house supervision are unlikely to meet this criterion. As before, evidence must be provided.

#### **B4.15**

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**The course must have specific criteria for the selection of supervisors. They must work within the Ethical Framework. Their rationale and philosophy should be compatible with that of the course**

The course must be able to demonstrate how it selects supervisors for their suitability to work with their trainees and provide supporting evidence. The types of evidence that might be relevant here could include a person specification and/or an application form for supervisors. Some elements of the criterion could perhaps be addressed in the supervision/4-way contract by way of a signed agreement whereby supervisors confirm to say that they work within the BACP Ethical Framework and a statement indicating that their rationale and philosophy is compatible with that of the course.

If courses allow their students to work with clients under the age of 16 years then they must also ensure that any supervisors who will be supervising trainees who are practising with CYP have the necessary training and experience to supervise work with this particular client group.