



# National standards for counsellors and psychotherapists

Draft for consultation  
November 2024

**Allen + Clarke Consulting have been commissioned by the Department of Health and Aged Care to develop the national standards for counsellors and psychotherapists.**





# Introduction

## Background

The role of counselling and psychotherapy is becoming increasingly vital in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of individuals across Australia. Counselling and psychotherapy are currently self-regulated through various mechanisms, involving a combination of professional bodies and legislative frameworks, to support the competency, integrity, and accountability of counsellors and psychotherapists.

To date, consistent national standards have yet to be established for the counselling and psychotherapy professions in Australia. The lack of clear national standards poses the risk of inconsistency in training, practice, and ethical guidelines within the respective professions.

In November 2021, the Select Committee into Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (the Committee) released its final report. This report noted reservations about current registration and regulatory structures for counsellors and psychotherapists due to the lack of consensus on academic and experiential requirements for registration. The Committee recommended a review of current self-regulated standards used by the sector. The Committee emphasised the need to define national minimum standards for education, supervision, continuing professional development (CPD), and oversight requirements.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the Committee's recommendations, in May 2023, the Australian Government announced a commitment to develop national standards for counsellors and psychotherapists.

The intention is for the national standards to set out the skills and abilities expected of counsellors and psychotherapists by detailing the education, supervision, CPD, and oversight requirements of the professions. The establishment of national standards addressing the minimum requirements for counsellors and psychotherapists will be essential to ensure practitioners in the sector are able to play their key roles in the broader mental health workforce and provide critical support for the community. The national standards will also support improvement in the quality of care received by clients.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Representatives Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. (2021). *Mental Health and Suicide Prevention - Final Report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Former\\_Committees/Mental\\_Health\\_and\\_Suicide\\_Prevention/MHSP/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Former_Committees/Mental_Health_and_Suicide_Prevention/MHSP/Report)

## Development of draft national standards

### Research and consultation

The draft national standards have been informed by a program of research and consultation. This includes a desktop review of the current state of counselling and psychotherapy in Australia, current membership-based practice standards, international regulatory approaches, and regulation and competencies for other health professions offering counselling support. A national public consultation process was also undertaken to engage with the Australian community, and in particular, the counselling and psychotherapy sector, to understand their expectations and preferences for the national standards. Views were sought from the public about governance, scope, and the potential content of the national standards via interviews, focus groups, an online survey (see **Table 1**) and written submissions. The key themes from stakeholder consultations are outlined in **Figure 1**.

**Table 1: Breakdown of online survey respondents**

Role:	Total:
 <b>Consumer and/or carer</b>	<b>22</b>
 <b>Counselling and/or psychotherapy practitioner</b>	<b>270</b>
 <b>Education provider</b>	<b>48</b>
 <b>Employer/service provider</b> <i>(i.e., PHN, mental health service provider or other health provider)</i>	<b>15</b>
 <b>Government agency</b>	<b>4</b>
 <b>Lived experience worker</b> <i>(i.e., peer support worker, consumer consultant or carer consultant)</i>	<b>14</b>
 <b>Non-government agency</b>	<b>19</b>
 <b>Other counselling professional</b> <i>(i.e., psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, etc.)</i>	<b>23</b>
 <b>Peak body</b>	<b>51</b>
 <b>Other</b>	<b>3</b>
 <b>Total</b>	<b>469</b>

**Figure 1: Key themes from stakeholder consultation**

Participants generally supported the need for mandatory national standards to promote high-quality counselling and psychotherapy services.

There was also broad agreement on which areas should be covered by the national standards, including education and training, supervision, and continuing professional development (CPD).

There was less consensus on the detailed requirements of areas that should be included in the national standards (such as the level of qualifications required, placement/client contact hours, and what constitutes professional development), and how the national standards should be regulated.

There was a strong interest from stakeholders to participate in the development of the national standards. This included being able to provide feedback on a draft version.



# Consultation

## Whole-of-government regulatory practices

The draft national standards have been developed in alignment with Australian Government regulatory policies and frameworks, including its Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework.<sup>2</sup> This Framework prescribes six principles for regulation, including targeted and risk-based, integrated into existing systems, user-centred, evidence-based and data-driven, reflective of the digital era, and continuously improved and outcomes-focused. For the purposes of applying the Framework principles to developing the draft national standards, the working definitions as set out in **Table 2** have been adopted.

**Table 2: Application of regulatory principles to national standards**

Framework principle	Application to national standards
<b>Targeted and risk-based</b>	The national standards clarify and standardise professional expectations for counsellors and psychotherapists, including professionals that offer counselling and psychotherapy support.
<b>Integrated in existing systems</b>	The national standards build on existing registration and accreditation processes.
<b>User-centred</b>	The national standards are focused on delivering health services aligned with consumer preferences and are accessible and usable by the profession.
<b>Evidence-based and data-driven</b>	The requirements of the national standards are informed by evidence and data, including the educational profiles of existing counsellors and psychotherapists.
<b>Reflective of the digital era</b>	The national standards recognise and utilise digital platforms, including for education and training.
<b>Continuously improved and outcomes-focused</b>	The national standards have a mechanism to facilitate regular review.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Finance (2024), [Australian Government Regulatory Policy, Practice and Framework](#), Australian Government, p.7



## In scope

We are seeking your feedback on the draft national standards, including the structure and content. Specifically, we are seeking responses to the following questions:

1. Should there be fewer or additional domains? Please provide details.
2. Should a career descriptor be added, changed, or removed? Please provide details.
3. Should there be fewer or additional focus areas? Please provide details.
4. Some focus areas are graduated by career stage e.g. education, while other standards, such as core skills, provide the similar minimum standards for each career stage. Do you agree with this approach? Why?
5. The education and training domain includes specifications related to qualification, placement and professional development. Do these focus areas reflect best practice? Do you agree with this approach? Please provide details.
6. Are there any other changes that should be made? Please provide details.

Please submit your response via the [Department of Health and Aged Care's Consultation Hub](#).

## Out of scope

### Governance and implementation

There are multiple regulatory models available to the government for consideration, including self-regulation, quasi- and co-regulation, and enforcement-based regulation. Based on stakeholder feedback in the first round of consultation, it is proposed that the regulatory model is industry-informed, client-focused, and sufficiently independent to act. The final design of the regulatory model will be the subject of further consideration by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Implementing the national standards can occur in different ways, including a gradual and phased rollout (>3 years) incorporating grandfathering arrangements and support mechanisms, and accelerated rollout with targeted support (<3 years), or testing through pilot programs first. Based on stakeholder feedback received in the first round of consultation, some form of staged approach with grandfathering arrangements and support for the transition was preferred. The final implementation program will be the subject of further consideration by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

# National standards at a glance

The national standards for counsellors and psychotherapists will help practitioners, employers, funding providers, and the public to understand the skills and expertise of counsellors and psychotherapists across four career stages: foundational, qualified, advanced, and specialist.

The draft national standards propose four domains, including training and practice, ethics, competency, and disciplinary. Each domain prescribes requirements for an identified focus area, with graduated requirements for each career stage where relevant (e.g. educational attainment). The draft national standards also provide for review and evaluation in accordance with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy.

Where appropriate, these standards draw on expectations and themes from existing self-regulated standards from counselling and psychotherapy membership bodies, and relevant health professions. These draft national standards do not seek to replicate the level of detail in the existing standards or defined scope of practice. Rather, they aim to highlight key outcomes or requirements expected at each career stage.

The draft national standards do not define counselling or psychotherapy beyond the expected behaviours, skills, and training for each level. These definitions should sit in the empowering instrument of the national standards. For example, in an enforcement-based model, these definitions would be in legislation.

The requirements of the draft national standards should be considered in conjunction with relevant legislative and regulatory instruments.

## DOMAIN 1: TRAINING AND PRACTICE

- Education and training
- Professional/clinical supervision
- Private practice

## DOMAIN 2: ETHICS

- Ethics and professional conduct

## DOMAIN 3: COMPETENCY

- Professional identity
- Core skills
- Cultural competency and safety

## DOMAIN 4: DISCIPLINARY

- Complaints and enforcement mechanisms
- Removal from practice

## EVALUATION

- Evaluation approach



# Domain 1: Training and practice

## Standard 1.1: Education and training

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist
<b>Focus area 1.1.1 Education</b>			
<p>Accredited qualification in counselling at AQF level 5-6, with less than 450 hours of client contact.</p> <p>Accredited qualification in counselling or psychotherapy at AQF level 7-9, with less than 450 hours of client contact.</p>	<p>Accredited qualification in counselling at AQF level 5-6, with 450-750 hours of client contact.</p> <p>Accredited qualification in counselling or psychotherapy at AQF level 7-9, with 450-750 hours of client contact.</p>	<p>Accredited qualification in counselling or psychotherapy at AQF level 7-9, with greater than 750 hours of client contact.</p>	<p>Accredited qualification in respective specialisation at AQF level 9, with greater than 750 hours of client contact in respective specialisation.</p>
<b>Focus area 1.1.2 Placement</b>			
<p>For AQF level 5-6, at least 100 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p> <p>For AQF level 7-9, at least 200 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 80 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p>	<p>For AQF level 5-6, at least 100 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 40 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p> <p>For AQF level 7-9, at least 200 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 80 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p>	<p>At least 200 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 80 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p>	<p>At least 400 hours of supervised practice placements within the training program, with a minimum of 80 hours of face-to-face client contact.</p>
<b>Focus area 1.1.4 Recency of practice</b>			
<p>At least 150 practice hours<sup>3</sup> per year or 450 practice hours over the past 3-year period.</p>	<p>At least 150 practice hours per year or 400 practice hours over the past 3-year period.</p>	<p>At least 150 practice hours per year or 400 practice hours over the past 3-year period.</p>	<p>At least 150 practice hours per year or 400 practice hours over the past 3-year period.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Practice hours include time with clients, session preparation, note taking and follow-up. For the purposes of Recency of Practice calculations, 1 client contact hour can be converted into 2 practice hours.





Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist
<b>Focus area 1.1.5 Professional development</b>			
A minimum of 20 hours CPD annually.	A minimum of 20 hours CPD annually.	A minimum of 20 hours CPD annually.	A minimum of 20 hours CPD annually, focused on area of specialisation.



# Domain 1: Training and practice

## Standard 1.2: Professional/clinical supervision

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist
<b>Focus area 1.2.1 Focus and form of supervision</b>			
<p>The focus of supervision is on the optimum outcomes for the client, and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.</p> <p>Can be undertaken as individual supervision (1 supervisor to 1 supervisee) or group supervision (1 supervisor to up to 6 supervisees).</p>	<p>The focus of supervision is on the optimum outcomes for the client, and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.</p> <p>Can be undertaken as individual supervision (1 supervisor to 1 supervisee) or group supervision (1 supervisor to up to 6 supervisees).</p>	<p>The focus of supervision is on the optimum outcomes for the client, and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.</p> <p>Can be undertaken as professional supervision or peer supervision. Peers work together for mutual benefit as they rotate the roles of supervisor and supervisee – providing collegial critiquing and enhancement of each other’s clinical client work.</p>	<p>The focus of supervision is on the optimum outcomes for the client, and the professional development and self-care of the supervisee.</p> <p>Can be undertaken as professional supervision or peer supervision. Peers work together for mutual benefit as they rotate the roles of supervisor and supervisee – providing collegial critiquing and enhancement of each other’s clinical client work.</p>
<b>Focus area 1.2.2 Supervision hours</b>			
Undertakes 1 hour of supervision per 10 hours of client contact.	Undertakes 1 hour of supervision per 20 hours of client contact.	Undertakes 1 hour of supervision per 20 hours of client contact.	Undertakes 1 hour of supervision per 30 hours of client contact.



Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 1.2.3 Ability to provide supervision

Has no ability to provide supervision to others.	Has no ability to provide supervision to others.	<p>Able to provide supervision with completion of a recognised training program.</p> <p>The supervisor should have more experience than the supervisee with regard to professional seniority and skill development, except for when peer supervision is undertaken.</p>	<p>Able to provide supervision with completion of a recognised training program.</p> <p>The supervisor should have more experience than the supervisee with regard to professional seniority and skill development, within a particular specialty, except for when peer supervision is undertaken.</p>
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### Focus area 1.2.4 Audit

<p>Maintains a record of supervision for the duration of the supervisory relationship.</p> <p>An audit of clinical supervision records will be conducted on a rolling 3 yearly basis with all practitioners being audited once every 3 years.</p>	<p>Maintains a record of supervision for the duration of the supervisory relationship.</p> <p>An audit of clinical supervision records will be conducted on a rolling 3 yearly basis with all practitioners being audited once every 3 years.</p>	<p>Maintains a record of supervision for the duration of the supervisory relationship.</p> <p>An audit of clinical supervision records will be conducted on a rolling 3 yearly basis with all practitioners being audited once every 3 years.</p>	<p>Maintains a record of supervision for the duration of the supervisory relationship.</p> <p>An audit of clinical supervision records will be conducted on a rolling 3 yearly basis with all practitioners being audited once every 3 years.</p>
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# Domain 1: Training and practice

## Standard 1.3 Private practice<sup>4</sup>

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist
<b>Focus area 1.3.1 Eligibility for private practice</b>			
Has no ability to work in private practice.	Able to work in private practice when a licence is obtained and endorsement from peak body (where relevant) is received	Able to work in private practice when a licence is obtained and endorsement from peak body (where relevant) is received.	Able to work in private practice a licence is obtained and endorsement from peak body (where relevant) is received.
<b>Focus area 1.3.2 Requirements for private practice</b>			
Not applicable.	<p>Meets the legal and ethical dimensions specific to the practitioner's state/territory and federal legislation.</p> <p>Works to professional standards by practising within the bounds of individual professional competence and by keeping skills and knowledge up to date.</p> <p>Provides clients with an agreement that includes information about the services they want to receive, how these services will be delivered and how information or data about them will be protected. This agreement needs to be in language and a format that can easily be understood.</p>	<p>Meets the legal and ethical dimensions specific to the practitioner's state/territory and federal legislation.</p> <p>Works to professional standards by practising within the bounds of individual professional competence and by keeping skills and knowledge up to date.</p> <p>Provides clients with an agreement that includes information about the services they want to receive, how these services will be delivered and how information or data about them will be protected. This agreement needs to be in language and a format that can easily be understood.</p>	<p>Meets the legal and ethical dimensions specific to the practitioner's state/territory and federal legislation.</p> <p>Works to professional standards by practising within the bounds of individual professional competence and by keeping skills and knowledge up to date.</p> <p>Provides clients with an agreement that includes information about the services they want to receive, how these services will be delivered and how information or data about them will be protected. This agreement needs to be in language and a format that can easily be understood.</p>

<sup>4</sup> The [British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) defines private practice as when a practitioner is self-employed and, for a fee, offers therapeutic services directly to clients either through self-referral or via a third party.



# Domain 2: Ethics

## Standard 2.1: Ethics and professional conduct

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 2.1.1 Best interests of clients

<p>Acts in the client's best interests.</p> <p>Delivers non-judgmental professional services to the client, respecting their individuality and autonomy.</p> <p>Treats the client with care and compassion, and takes all reasonable steps not to harm the client during counselling sessions.</p> <p>Avoids conflicts of interest and does not exploit the client for personal, professional, political, or financial gain.</p>	<p>Acts in the client's best interests.</p> <p>Delivers non-judgmental professional services to the client, respecting their individuality and autonomy.</p> <p>Treats the client with care and compassion, and takes all reasonable steps not to harm the client during counselling sessions.</p> <p>Avoids conflicts of interest and does not exploit the client for personal, professional, political, or financial gain.</p>	<p>Acts in the client's best interests.</p> <p>Delivers non-judgmental professional services to the client, respecting their individuality and autonomy.</p> <p>Treats the client with care and compassion, and takes all reasonable steps not to harm the client during counselling sessions.</p> <p>Avoids conflicts of interest and does not exploit the client for personal, professional, political, or financial gain.</p>	<p>Acts in the client's best interests.</p> <p>Delivers non-judgmental professional services to the client, respecting their individuality and autonomy.</p> <p>Treats the client with care and compassion, and takes all reasonable steps not to harm the client during counselling sessions.</p> <p>Avoids conflicts of interest and does not exploit the client for personal, professional, political, or financial gain.</p>
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### Focus area 2.1.2 Informed consent

<p>Informs the client about the purpose, risks, limits, and costs of the proposed services at or before the first meeting and throughout the relationship.</p> <p>Ensures that the client freely consents to participate at all stages of the counselling process and respects their right to discontinue at any time.</p>	<p>Informs the client about the purpose, risks, limits, and costs of the proposed services at or before the first meeting and throughout the relationship.</p> <p>Ensures that the client freely consents to participate at all stages of the counselling process and respects their right to discontinue at any time.</p>	<p>Informs the client about the purpose, risks, limits, and costs of the proposed services at or before the first meeting and throughout the relationship.</p> <p>Ensures that the client freely consents to participate at all stages of the counselling process and respects their right to discontinue at any time.</p>	<p>Informs the client about the purpose, risks, limits, and costs of the proposed services at or before the first meeting and throughout the relationship.</p> <p>Ensures that the client freely consents to participate at all stages of the counselling process and respects their right to discontinue at any time.</p>
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Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 2.1.3 Respecting diversity

Understands their own values, beliefs and assumptions, and seeks to limit any harmful impact of these in their work with the client.

Respects diversity by not discriminating against the client based on their race, colour, disability, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual identity, lifestyle, age, religious, spiritual or political beliefs, or on any other basis.

Gives careful consideration to whether they are competent to work with clients who come from diverse groups, or have special needs.

Understands their own values, beliefs and assumptions, and seeks to limit any harmful impact of these in their work with the client.

Respects diversity by not discriminating against the client based on their race, colour, disability, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual identity, lifestyle, age, religious, spiritual or political beliefs, or on any other basis.

Gives careful consideration to whether they are competent to work with clients who come from diverse groups, or have special needs.

Understands their own values, beliefs and assumptions, and seeks to limit any harmful impact of these in their work with the client.

Respects diversity by not discriminating against the client based on their race, colour, disability, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual identity, lifestyle, age, religious, spiritual or political beliefs, or on any other basis.

Gives careful consideration to whether they are competent to work with clients who come from diverse groups, or have special needs.

Understands their own values, beliefs and assumptions, and seeks to limit any harmful impact of these in their work with the client.

Respects diversity by not discriminating against the client based on their race, colour, disability, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual identity, lifestyle, age, religious, spiritual or political beliefs, or on any other basis.

Gives careful consideration to whether they are competent to work with clients who come from diverse groups, or have special needs.

### Focus area 2.1.4 Confidentiality

Provides the highest levels of confidentiality to protect the privacy of clients and create the trust necessary for counselling or psychotherapy.

Informs the client of their right to confidentiality and explains the limits of this duty of care.

Takes steps to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of the client's personal information.

Provides the highest levels of confidentiality to protect the privacy of clients and create the trust necessary for counselling or psychotherapy.

Informs the client of their right to confidentiality and explains the limits of this duty of care.

Takes steps to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of the client's personal information.

Provides the highest levels of confidentiality to protect the privacy of clients and create the trust necessary for counselling or psychotherapy.

Informs the client of their right to confidentiality and explains the limits of this duty of care.

Takes steps to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of the client's personal information.

Provides the highest levels of confidentiality to protect the privacy of clients and create the trust necessary for counselling or psychotherapy.

Informs the client of their right to confidentiality and explains the limits of this duty of care.

Takes steps to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of the client's personal information.



Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

**Focus area 2.1.5 Personal and professional development**

Practices within the boundaries of their training, experience and competence, and accurately represents their credentials and services when advertising.

Maintains professional competence through ongoing CPD and by attending to their personal well-being.

Undertakes appropriate, regular, and ongoing supervision and debriefing to develop skills, monitor performance, and sustain professional accountability.

Practices within the boundaries of their training, experience, and competence, and accurately represents their credentials and services when advertising.

Maintains professional competence through ongoing CPD and by attending to their personal well-being.

Undertakes appropriate, regular, and ongoing supervision and debriefing to develop skills, monitor performance, and sustain professional accountability.

Practices within the boundaries of their training, experience and competence, and accurately represents their credentials and services when advertising.

Maintains professional competence through ongoing CPD and by attending to their personal well-being.

Undertakes appropriate, regular, and ongoing supervision and debriefing to develop skills, monitor performance, and sustain professional accountability.

Practices within the boundaries of their training, experience and competence, and accurately represents their credentials and services when advertising.

Maintains professional competence through ongoing CPD and by attending to their personal well-being.

Undertakes appropriate, regular, and ongoing supervision and debriefing to develop skills, monitor performance, and sustain professional accountability.



## Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

### Focus area 2.1.6 Professional boundaries

Establishes and maintains appropriate boundaries around the counselling relationship.

Where possible, avoids dual and multiple relationships with clients that could impair their professional judgement or increase the risk of harm to clients. If such relationships are unavoidable, for example in a rural or regional community, takes responsibility for clarifying and managing boundaries and protecting confidentiality, including discussing this within professional supervision.

Avoids providing counselling or psychotherapy services when their functioning is impaired by alcohol or drugs (whether illicit or licit).

Exercises all reasonable care before entering into a personal or business relationship with former clients, taking into account the time that has elapsed since counselling or psychotherapy ended.

Establishes and maintains appropriate boundaries around the counselling relationship.

Where possible, avoids dual and multiple relationships with clients that could impair their professional judgement or increase the risk of harm to clients. If such relationships are unavoidable, for example in a rural or regional community, takes responsibility for clarifying and managing boundaries and protecting confidentiality, including discussing this within professional supervision.

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Avoids providing counselling or psychotherapy services when their functioning is impaired by alcohol or drugs (whether illicit or licit).

Exercises all reasonable care before entering into a personal or business relationship with former clients, taking into account the time that has elapsed since counselling or psychotherapy ended.





Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 2.1.7 Ethical supervision of counsellors

Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Maintains appropriate boundaries between supervision and other relationships they may have with the supervisee (an individual over whom they have a supervisory, evaluative, or instructional role).  Does not act in exploitative relationships with the supervisee.	Maintains appropriate boundaries between supervision and other relationships they may have with the supervisee (an individual over whom they have a supervisory, evaluative, or instructional role).  Does not act in exploitative relationships with the supervisee.
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# Domain 3: Competency

## Standard 3.1: Professional identity

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 3.1.1 Personal competence

<p>Understands the importance of ensuring high standards of competence in their work.</p> <p>Actively monitors their competence through supervision and is willing to consider any views expressed by their clients and their colleagues.</p> <p>Is able to deliver the services being offered under supervision and carries out only those professional activities for which they have established their competence to practice.</p> <p>Practices in areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervision.</p>	<p>Ensures high standards of competence in their work.</p> <p>Actively monitors their competence through supervision and is willing to consider any views expressed by their clients and their colleagues.</p> <p>Is able to deliver the services being offered competently and carries out only those professional activities for which they have established their competence to practice.</p> <p>Practices in areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervision and, when developing skills in the new specialty areas, takes steps to ensure the competence of their work and protect others from possible harm.</p>	<p>Ensures and maintains high standards of competence in their work.</p> <p>Actively monitors their competence through supervision and is willing to consider any views expressed by their clients and their colleagues.</p> <p>Is competent to deliver the services being offered and carries out only those professional activities for which they have established their competence to practice.</p> <p>Practices in areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervision and, when developing skills in the new specialty areas, takes steps to ensure the competence of their work and protect others from possible harm.</p>	<p>Ensures, maintains and demonstrates high standards of competence in their work.</p> <p>Actively monitors their competence through supervision and is willing to consider any views expressed by their clients and their colleagues.</p> <p>Is competent to deliver the services being offered and carries out only those professional activities for which they have established their competence to practice.</p> <p>Practices in areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervision and, when developing skills in the new specialty areas, takes steps to ensure the competence of their work and protect others from possible harm.</p>
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Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 3.1.2 Responsibility to the profession

<p>Understands the importance of upholding the values, integrity, and ethics of the profession.</p> <p>Understands the importance of celebrating excellence in counselling and psychotherapy practices and participates in the activities of these professions.</p> <p>Represents honestly and accurately their membership status, qualification, training and competencies.</p>	<p>Upholds the values, integrity, and ethics of the profession.</p> <p>Supports efforts to celebrate excellence in counselling and psychotherapy practices and participates in the activities of these professions.</p> <p>Represents honestly and accurately their membership status, qualification, training, and competencies.</p>	<p>Upholds and fosters the values, integrity, and ethics of the profession.</p> <p>Celebrates excellence in counselling and psychotherapy practices and participates in the activities of these professions.</p> <p>Represents honestly and accurately their membership status, qualification, training, and competencies.</p>	<p>Upholds, fosters and demonstrates the values, integrity, and ethics of the profession.</p> <p>Encourages and celebrates excellence in counselling and psychotherapy practices and participates in the activities of these professions.</p> <p>Represents honestly and accurately their membership status, qualification, training, and competencies.</p>
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### Focus area 3.1.3 Working with colleagues and other professionals

<p>Is able to treat colleagues and other professionals with mutual respect, fairness, and honesty.</p> <p>Understands the need to establish positive working relationships and communication with colleagues and other professionals that enhance services to the client.</p> <p>Respects confidentiality about clients in all communications with colleagues and other professionals.</p>	<p>Treats colleagues and other professionals with mutual respect, fairness, and honesty.</p> <p>Endeavours to establish positive working relationships and communication with colleagues and other professionals that enhance services to the client.</p> <p>Respects and is mindful of confidentiality about clients in all communications with colleagues and other professionals.</p> <p>Understands the need to avoid soliciting clients away from other counsellors.</p>	<p>Treats colleagues and other professionals with mutual respect, fairness, and honesty.</p> <p>Endeavours to establish and maintain positive working relationships and communication with colleagues and other professionals that enhance services to the client.</p> <p>Respects and is mindful of confidentiality about clients in all communications with colleagues and other professionals.</p> <p>Avoids soliciting clients away from other counsellors.</p>	<p>Treats colleagues and other professionals with mutual respect, fairness, and honesty.</p> <p>Establishes and maintains positive working relationships and communication with colleagues and other professionals that enhance services to the client.</p> <p>Respects and is mindful of confidentiality about clients in all communications with colleagues and other professionals.</p> <p>Avoids soliciting clients away from other counsellors.</p>
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Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

**Focus area 3.1.4 Undertaking research about the counselling and psychotherapy professions**

Understands the importance of advancing professional knowledge through research and evaluation to inform and develop counselling or psychotherapy practice.

Understands the need to seek ethics approval from an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing data collection.

Understands the need to protect the rights of research participants.

Protects the privacy and respects the confidentiality of research participants.

Supports efforts to advance professional knowledge through research and evaluation to inform and develop counselling or psychotherapy practice.

Supports efforts to seek ethics approval from an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing data collection.

Supports efforts to ensure the rights of research participants are carefully considered and protected.

Protects the privacy and respects the confidentiality of research participants.

Works to advance professional knowledge through research and evaluation in order to inform and develop counselling or psychotherapy practice.

Seeks ethics approval from an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing data collection.

Ensures the rights of research participants are carefully considered and protected, including providing sufficient information about the research to enable informed consent to be freely given. This information shall include the right to withdraw from the research.

Protects the privacy and respects the confidentiality of research participants.

Advances professional knowledge through research and evaluation in order to inform and develop counselling or psychotherapy practice.

Seeks ethics approval from an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing data collection.

Ensures the rights of research participants are carefully considered and protected, including providing sufficient information about the research to enable informed consent to be freely given. This information shall include the right to withdraw from the research.

Protects the privacy and respects the confidentiality of research participants.

# Domain 3: Competency



## Standard 3.2: Core skills

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 3.2.1 Promoting effective therapeutic relationship

<p>Understands the importance of developing and maintaining an effective and respectful therapeutic relationship with the client, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a shared sense of trust and empathy</li> <li>• general agreement about the goals and purpose of interventions</li> <li>• broad agreement about how to achieve those goals</li> <li>• a shared understanding of the area of competence, and when and how referrals to other professionals will be made</li> <li>• prepared and managed ending of counselling or psychotherapy relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>Develops an effective and respectful therapeutic relationship with the client, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a shared sense of trust and empathy</li> <li>• general agreement about the goals and purpose of interventions</li> <li>• broad agreement about how to achieve those goals</li> <li>• a shared understanding of the area of competence, and when and how referrals to other professionals will be made</li> <li>• prepared and managed ending of counselling or psychotherapy relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>Develops and maintains an effective and respectful therapeutic relationship with the client, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a shared sense of trust and empathy</li> <li>• general agreement about the goals and purpose of interventions</li> <li>• broad agreement about how to achieve those goals</li> <li>• a shared understanding of the area of competence, and when and how referrals to other professionals will be made</li> <li>• prepared and managed ending of counselling or psychotherapy relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>Develops and maintains an effective and respectful therapeutic relationship with the client, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a shared sense of trust and empathy</li> <li>• general agreement about the goals and purpose of interventions</li> <li>• broad agreement about how to achieve those goals</li> <li>• a shared understanding of the area of competence, and when and how referrals to other professionals will be made</li> <li>• prepared and managed ending of counselling or psychotherapy relationships.</li> </ul>
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### Focus area 3.2.2 Applying theories and ideas in practice

<p>Develops appropriate therapeutic interventions or responses for the client informed by an assessment of relevant counselling or psychotherapy theories, research, and ideas.</p>	<p>Develops appropriate therapeutic interventions or responses for a diverse client population informed by an assessment of relevant counselling or psychotherapy theories, research, and ideas.</p>	<p>Develops appropriate therapeutic interventions or responses for broad or specialised client populations by an assessment of relevant counselling or psychotherapy theories, research, and ideas.</p>	<p>Develops appropriate therapeutic interventions or responses for diverse and specialist client populations, informed by an assessment of relevant counselling or psychotherapy theories, research, and ideas.</p>
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Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

**Focus area 3.2.3 Identifying and working with risks and discrimination**

Understands risks, including suicidal risk, self-harming behaviours, and symptoms of trauma.

Recognises their own limitations and competence in managing risks and seeks assistance or makes referrals where appropriate.

Understands the impact of discrimination, prejudice, displacement, and oppression on client mental health.

Is able to identify risks, including suicidal risk, self-harming behaviours, and symptoms of trauma to work collaboratively with the client.

Recognises their own limitations and competence in managing risks and seeks assistance or makes referrals where appropriate.

Understands the impact of discrimination, prejudice, displacement, and oppression on client mental health, and develops interventions and strategies informed by this awareness.

Is able to identify risks, including suicidal risk, self-harming behaviours, and symptoms of trauma to work collaboratively with the client and develop appropriate therapeutic responses or interventions.

Recognises their own limitations and competence in managing risks and seeks assistance or makes referrals where appropriate.

Understands the impact of discrimination, prejudice, displacement, and oppression on client mental health, and develops interventions and strategies informed by this awareness.

Is able to identify risks, including suicidal risk, self-harming behaviours, and symptoms of trauma to work collaboratively with the client and develop appropriate therapeutic responses or interventions.

Recognises their own limitations and competence in managing risks and seeks assistance or makes referrals where appropriate.

Understands the impact of discrimination, prejudice, displacement, and oppression on client on mental health, and develops interventions and strategies informed by this awareness.

**Focus area 3.2.4 Communication and evaluation**

Understands the importance of communicating in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the client and relevant professionals.

Understands the importance of applying audit and evaluation approaches to promote continuous improvement in their counselling or psychotherapy work.

Clearly communicates in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the client and relevant professionals.

Understands and applies audit and evaluation approaches to promote continuous improvement in their counselling or psychotherapy work.

Clearly communicates in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the client and relevant professionals.

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Clearly communicates in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the client and relevant professionals.

Understands and applies audit and evaluation approaches to promote continuous improvement in their counselling or psychotherapy work.



# Domain 3: Competency

## Standard 3.3: Cultural competency and cultural safety

Descriptor for career stage			
Foundational	Qualified	Advanced	Specialist

### Focus area 3.3.1 Cultural competency

<p>Able to recognise and explore with the client the perspectives that underpin their understanding of identity, culture, values, and worldview.</p> <p>Respectfully engages with people who have culturally diverse identities.</p>	<p>Able to understand the significance and impact of own identity, culture, language, values, and worldview in work with clients.</p> <p>Able to apply an intersectional lens in their approach to complexities around culture and diversity.</p>	<p>Able to reflect on aspects of own identity, culture, values, and worldview that have most influenced 'self' and work on own preconceptions and bias when developing responses or interventions with the client.</p> <p>Consult with relevant community members to inform their work with and for people from diverse identities and backgrounds.</p>	<p>Able to critically challenge perspectives on own identity, culture, values, and worldview when developing responses or interventions with the client.</p> <p>This critical thinking should be incorporated/applied when developing responses or interventions with the client.</p>
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### Focus area 3.3.2 Cultural safety

<p>Able to make initial and ongoing risk assessments regarding clients' safety and comply with safeguarding guidance appropriate to the therapy setting, taking into account own limits of competence and skill at a foundational level (as set out by these national standards for this career stage).</p>	<p>Able to make initial and ongoing risk assessments regarding clients' safety and comply with safeguarding guidance appropriate to the therapy setting, taking into account own limits of competence and skill at a qualified level (as set out by these national standards for this career stage).</p>	<p>Able to make initial and ongoing risk assessments regarding clients' safety and comply with safeguarding guidance appropriate to the therapy setting, taking into account own limits of competence and skill at an advanced level (as set out by these national standards for this career stage).</p>	<p>Able to make initial and ongoing risk assessments regarding clients' safety and comply with safeguarding guidance appropriate to the therapy setting, taking into account own limits of competence and skill at a specialist level (as set out by these national standards for this career stage).</p>
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# Domain 4: Disciplinary

Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

## Focus area 4.1.1 Avoid undermining public confidence in the profession

Understands the need to avoid conducting themselves in their counselling-related activities in ways that undermine the profession's reputation or public confidence either in their role as a counsellor or psychotherapist or in the work of other counsellors or psychotherapists.

Understands the needs to avoid using social media in a way that brings the profession into disrepute, such as making derogatory or insulting remarks about another counsellor or psychotherapist.

Avoids conducting themselves in their counselling-related activities in ways that undermine the profession's reputation or public confidence either in their role as a counsellor or psychotherapist or in the work of other counsellors or psychotherapists.

Avoids using social media in a way that brings the profession into disrepute, such as making derogatory or insulting remarks on social media about another counsellor or psychotherapist.

Avoids conducting themselves in their counselling-related activities in ways that undermine the profession's reputation or public confidence either in their role as a counsellor or psychotherapist or in the work of other counsellors or psychotherapists.

Avoids using social media in a way that brings the profession into disrepute, such as making derogatory or insulting remarks on social media about another counsellor or psychotherapist.

Avoids conducting themselves in their counselling-related activities in ways that undermine the profession's reputation or public confidence either in their role as a counsellor or psychotherapist or in the work of other counsellors or psychotherapists.

Avoids using social media in a way that brings the profession into disrepute, such as making derogatory or insulting remarks on social media about another counsellor or psychotherapist.

## Focus area 4.1.2 Addressing questionable practice

Challenges questionable practices from other counsellors or psychotherapists.

Where the conduct cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor or psychotherapist concerned, reports potential breaches of these standards to the relevant body.

Does not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are unwarranted or intended to harm a professional rather than to protect clients or the public.

Challenges questionable practices from other counsellors.

Where the conduct cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor or psychotherapist concerned, reports potential breaches of these standards to the relevant body.

Does not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are unwarranted or intended to harm a professional rather than to protect clients or the public.

Challenges questionable practices from other counsellors.

Where the conduct cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor or psychotherapist concerned, reports potential breaches of these standards to the relevant body.

Does not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are unwarranted or intended to harm a professional rather than to protect clients or the public.

Challenges questionable practices from other counsellors.

Where the conduct cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor or psychotherapist concerned, reports potential breaches of these standards to the relevant body.

Does not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are unwarranted or intended to harm a professional rather than to protect clients or the public.





Descriptor for career stage

Foundational

Qualified

Advanced

Specialist

### Focus area 4.1.3 Complaints and enforcement mechanisms

Cooperates with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the relevant complaints body having jurisdiction over those accused of breaching these standards.

Cooperates with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the complaints body having jurisdiction over those accused of breaching these standards.

Cooperates with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the complaints body having jurisdiction over those accused of breaching these standards.

Where a supervisee is under investigation, supervisors are required to cooperate with investigations, including where an assessment of their supervision is required.

Cooperates with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the complaints body having jurisdiction over those accused of breaching these standards.

Where a supervisee is under investigation, supervisors are required to cooperate with investigations, including where an assessment of their supervision is required.

### Focus area 4.1.4 Removal from practice

Recognises that procedures for withdrawal of membership may be implemented for breaches of these standards.

Recognises that procedures for withdrawal of membership may be implemented for breaches of these standards.

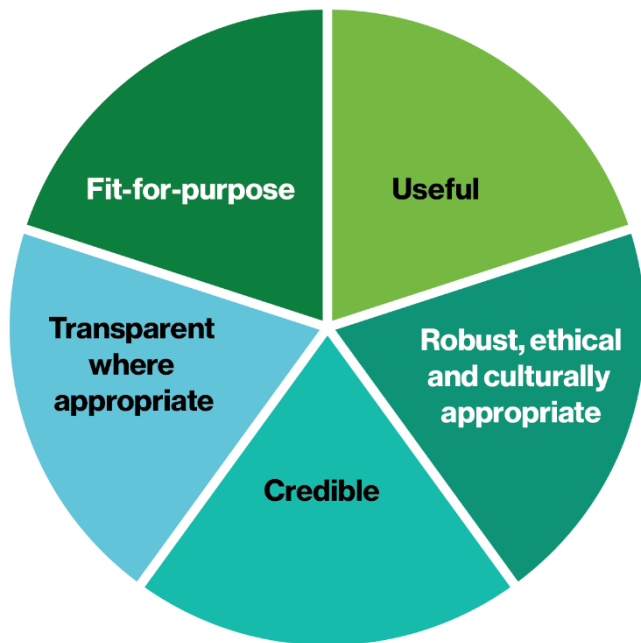
Recognises that procedures for withdrawal of membership may be implemented for breaches of these standards.

Recognises that procedures for withdrawal of membership may be implemented for breaches of these standards.

# Evaluation of national standards

The national standards for counsellors and psychotherapists will be regularly evaluated by the Department of Health and Aged Care, consistent with the Commonwealth's Evaluation Policy. This Policy provides for a principles-based evaluation approach, where evaluation activity is fit-for-purpose, useful, robust, ethical, culturally appropriate, credible, and transparent where appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure: Evaluation approach**



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<sup>5</sup> The Treasury (n.d.), [Commonwealth Evaluation Policy](#), Australian Government.



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