ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY

Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy

How ICPHAA defines its membership categories, sets training and practice standards, and makes, renews and reviews accreditation decisions for members and training programmes.

REFERENCE	ICPHAA-POL-11	VERSION	1.0
EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

A voluntary, not-for-profit professional association · admin@icphaa.ie · www.icphaa.ie

Policy and procedure framework of the Association · ICPHAA-POL-11

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY · ICPHAA-POL-11

Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy

APPLIES TO	All ICPHAA members and applicants, in every membership category, and training providers that hold or seek ICPHAA programme accreditation.
VERSION	1.0 · effective 9 November 2026 · next review 9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors
CONTACT	ICPHAA Registry · admin@icphaa.ie

AT A GLANCE

- Four membership categories show the public each member's level of training and scope of practice.
- Accreditation is based on verified evidence of training, supervised practice, supervision, CPD, insurance and Garda vetting where required.
- Specific hours and ratios are set in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements published by the Accreditation Department.
- Decisions are made in writing with reasons, and applicants have a right of appeal.
- Accreditation is renewed annually and is professional membership, not statutory registration.

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out the professional standards that the Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA) expects of its members, and the way in which ICPHAA assesses, awards, renews and reviews accreditation. It brings together, in one place, the Association's membership categories, its training and qualification standards, the evidence required for accreditation, and the accreditation of training programmes.

The policy applies to every ICPHAA member and applicant, in every category of membership, including allied healthcare members, and to training providers that hold or are seeking ICPHAA accreditation for a programme. Compliance with this policy is a condition of membership and, where relevant, of programme accreditation.

The detailed figures that sit beneath this policy, such as the number of supervised client hours, supervision ratios and annual CPD for each category, are set out in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements published by the Accreditation Department. Where this policy refers to a requirement for a membership category, it means the requirement stated in that document as it stands at the relevant time.

2. Principles

ICPHAA's approach to standards and accreditation rests on the following principles.

- **Public protection.** Standards exist first to protect the people who use counselling, psychotherapy and allied healthcare services.
- **Transparency.** Clients and the public should be able to understand, from a member's category, the level of training and experience of the practitioner they are engaging with.
- **Evidence.** Accreditation decisions are based on verified documentation, not on assertion.
- **Fairness and consistency.** Applications are assessed against published criteria, in the same way for every applicant, with reasons given for every decision.
- **Proportionality.** Requirements are set at the level needed for safe and effective practice in each category.
- **Honesty about status.** ICPHAA is a voluntary, not-for-profit professional membership association. Accreditation by ICPHAA is a professional standard; it is not a licence to practise and it is not statutory registration.

3. Membership categories

ICPHAA operates a structured membership framework. Each category reflects a distinct level of training, experience and practice, and each member's category is shown clearly on the ICPHAA public directory.

CATEGORY	WHO IT IS FOR	PRACTICE STATUS
Student Member	People currently enrolled on a counselling, psychotherapy or allied healthcare training programme that meets ICPHAA's requirements.	May not practise independently, see clients other than on a supervised training placement, or charge fees for therapeutic services.
Pre-Accredited Member	Practitioners who have completed their initial training but have not yet met every requirement for accreditation.	May practise and charge fees, provided they maintain the clinical supervision required for their category.
Accredited Member	Practitioners who have met all of the requirements for accreditation, including supervised practice, supervision, CPD and insurance.	Practise independently, with ongoing supervision and CPD as required for their category.
Accredited Member & Supervisor	Experienced accredited practitioners who have completed additional training in clinical supervision and meet ICPHAA's supervisor criteria.	May supervise pre-accredited and accredited members and, where appropriately trained, student practitioners.

Within these categories, ICPHAA also recognises accredited role categories, namely Accredited Counsellor, Accredited Addiction Counsellor, and Accredited Addiction, Trauma or Bereavement Support Worker, together with allied healthcare members. The requirements for each role category are set out in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements.

> **STUDENTS**
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> A Student Member's directory listing always shows their student status. Student members must not describe themselves, in any setting, in a way that suggests they are qualified or accredited practitioners.

4. Training and qualification standards

ICPHAA requires members to hold academic and clinical training that meets the Association's minimum standards. These standards are set with reference to the National Framework of Qualifications, to current developments in higher and further education in Ireland, and to the introduction of statutory registration for counsellors and psychotherapists by CORU. The qualification level expected for each category is stated in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements.

Training that leads to accreditation as a counsellor or psychotherapist must include substantive content in each of the following core areas:

- counselling and psychotherapy theory and skills;
- ethics and professional practice;
- human development across the lifespan;
- psychopathology and mental health;

- diversity, equality and cultural competence;
- research and evidence-informed practice; and
- supervised clinical practice.

Training for accredited role categories and for allied healthcare members must be appropriate to the scope of that role and is assessed against the criteria the Accreditation Department publishes for it. Where an applicant trained outside Ireland, the Accreditation Department assesses whether the training is comparable and may ask for further evidence or for additional training to be completed.

5. Requirements for accreditation

To be accredited, a practitioner must show, through verified documentation, that they have met the clinical practice requirements for the category they are applying for. These requirements are designed to ensure that accredited practitioners have enough supervised experience to practise safely and effectively with clients across a range of presenting issues. An application must include:

- evidence of completed training that meets the standards in section 4;
- verified records of supervised client contact after training, meeting the requirement for the category in the ICPHAA accreditation requirements;
- supervision records showing supervision proportionate to the volume of clinical work, with a clinical supervisor who meets ICPHAA's supervisor criteria, as set out in the Supervision Policy;
- a CPD log relevant to the practitioner's area of practice and development needs;
- evidence of current professional indemnity insurance appropriate to their practice;
- evidence of current Garda vetting where the practitioner's work requires it, under the Garda Vetting Policy; and
- references, including a reference from a clinical supervisor.

Every applicant also signs a declaration accepting the ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members and confirming that the information supplied is true and complete. Providing false or misleading information in an application is a serious matter and may lead to the application being refused or to action under the Disciplinary Procedures.

6. How accreditation decisions are made

Applications are assessed by the Accreditation Department, led by the Accreditation Manager, using the following steps.

1. The applicant submits a complete portfolio to the ICPHAA Registry at admin@icphaa.ie.
2. The Registry confirms receipt and checks that all required documents are present. Incomplete applications are returned with a list of what is missing.
3. The Accreditation Department reviews the portfolio against the published criteria for the category applied for.

4. The Accreditation Department may seek clarification, ask for additional information or verification, or invite the applicant to an interview.
5. A decision is made to accredit, to accredit with conditions, to defer pending further evidence, or to refuse.
6. The decision is communicated to the applicant in writing, with reasons and, where relevant, guidance on what is needed to meet the standard.
7. An applicant who disagrees with a decision may appeal in writing to admin@icphaa.ie, setting out the grounds. The appeal is considered by a person or panel who had no part in the original decision, and the outcome is given in writing with reasons.

Anyone involved in an accreditation decision who has a personal, professional or financial connection with the applicant, including through a training provider, declares it and takes no part in that decision, in line with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

7. Renewal and maintaining accreditation

Membership and accreditation are renewed every year. At renewal, members confirm and, where asked, provide evidence of continued compliance with:

- the CPD requirement for their category, as set out in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy;
- the supervision requirement for their category, as set out in the Supervision Policy;
- current professional indemnity insurance, as set out in the Insurance & Liability Policy;
- Garda vetting where required; and
- any conditions attached to their accreditation.

ICPHAA may audit a sample of renewals and may ask any member for further evidence of competence where concerns about their practice arise. A member who moves from one category to another, for example from Pre-Accredited Member to Accredited Member, applies through the process in section 6.

Members must tell the Registry without delay about any change that affects their accreditation, including a lapse in insurance or supervision, a change of name or practice details, or any matter that should be declared under the Fitness to Practise Policy.

8. Accreditation of training programmes

Training providers seeking ICPHAA accreditation for a programme must show that the programme:

- delivers the required academic content in the core areas listed in section 4;
- gives students adequate supervised clinical practice opportunities;
- employs appropriately qualified and experienced teaching and supervisory staff;
- operates quality assurance and assessment processes consistent with national standards, including internal moderation and external examination; and

- commits to periodic external review.

Programme accreditation includes an initial review of the application, a visit by an accreditation panel (in person or online), ongoing monitoring through annual self-evaluation reports, and periodic re-accreditation at intervals set by the Accreditation Department. Programmes that do not maintain the required standards may have conditions placed on their accreditation, may have accreditation suspended, or may be removed from ICPHAA's list of accredited programmes. Providers are told of any such decision in writing, with reasons, and may appeal in the same way as individual applicants.

Accredited providers must describe their ICPHAA accreditation accurately and must not suggest that it confers statutory recognition or registration.

9. Responsibilities

Members and applicants

- Practise only within the scope of their membership category and competence.
- Describe their category and accreditation accurately on websites, social media, directories and marketing materials.
- Keep accurate records of training, client hours, supervision and CPD, and provide them when asked.
- Notify the Registry promptly of any change that affects their accreditation.

ICPHAA

- Publish clear accreditation requirements for every category and keep them up to date.
- Assess applications fairly, consistently and within a reasonable period, giving reasons for decisions.
- Keep the public directory accurate, showing each member's category.
- Handle applicants' personal data in line with the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the GDPR.

10. Concerns, statutory regulation and review

Concerns about a member's standards of practice can be raised with the ICPHAA Registry at admin@icphaa.ie and are handled under the Complaints Procedures and, where relevant, the Fitness to Practise Policy and the Disciplinary Procedures. Concerns about how this policy has been applied can be raised in the same way.

CORU is Ireland's regulator for health and social care professionals under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, and statutory registration of counsellors and psychotherapists is being introduced by CORU. ICPHAA accreditation does not replace statutory registration. Members should follow CORU's own published guidance and timelines on registration, and ICPHAA will update its standards as the statutory framework develops.

The ICPHAA Board of Directors owns this policy. It is reviewed by the review date shown in the document control table, and sooner if law, regulation or professional practice changes. Suggestions for improvement are welcome at admin@icphaa.ie.

READ ALONGSIDE

- Regulatory & Accreditation Infrastructure
- Supervision Policy
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Emerging Regulation (CORU) Policy
- ICPHAA Code of Conduct for Members

DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED BY
1.0	9 November 2026	Reissued in the ICPHAA policy framework (replaces the former ICPA version).	ICPHAA Board of Directors

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