ICPHAA

Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY

Quality Assurance Policy

How ICPHAA checks, reviews and continuously improves the quality of its membership, accreditation, education and complaints functions, and what it expects of accredited training providers.

REFERENCE	ICPHAA-POL-13	VERSION	1.0
EFFECTIVE	9 November 2026	NEXT REVIEW	9 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	ICPHAA Board of Directors		

ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION & QUALITY · ICPHAA-POL-13

Quality Assurance Policy

APPLIES TO	ICPHAA's Board, staff, volunteers and panel members, all members, and training providers with 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

- Quality is built into every ICPHAA function through a plan, deliver, review and improve cycle.
- Accreditation files, renewals and CPD records are checked through second review and sample audits.
- Feedback, complaints and audit findings are used to improve standards and procedures.
- Accredited training providers must operate their own quality assurance, including moderation and external examination.
- Quality findings are reported to the Board, and corrective actions are tracked to completion.

CONTENTS

1 Purpose 2
2 Scope 3
3 Quality principles 3
4 The quality cycle 3
5 Quality mechanisms 4
6 Feedback, complaints and learning 5
7 Quality expectations of accredited training providers 5
8 Corrective action 5
9 Responsibilities 6
10 Monitoring and review 6

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Irish Counselling, Psychotherapy & Allied Healthcare Professionals Association (ICPHAA) assures and improves the quality of what it does. It forms part of the Association's governance framework and reflects ICPHAA's commitment to operating as a transparent, accountable and ethically grounded professional body.

Quality assurance is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to make sure that the Association's standards are sound, that its decisions are fair and consistent, that its records are accurate, and that members, clients and the public can rely on what ICPHAA says and does. The Association believes that the wellbeing of practitioners and of clients are both important, and that good professional governance is a precondition of good therapeutic care.

2. Scope

This policy covers the following ICPHAA functions:

- membership applications, renewals and changes of category;
- accreditation of members, accredited role categories and training programmes;
- the public directory and the verification service at www.icphaa.ie/verify-certificate;
- events, training and CPD delivered or endorsed by ICPHAA;
- complaints, fitness to practise and disciplinary processes;
- policies, guidance and other published information; and
- the handling of personal data and records.

It applies to the ICPHAA Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and panel members, to all members in their dealings with the Association, and, where stated, to training providers that hold ICPHAA programme accreditation.

3. Quality principles

ICPHAA's quality work is guided by these principles.

- **Fitness for purpose.** Each process should do what it is meant to do: protect the public, support members and uphold standards.
- **Consistency.** Like cases are treated alike, against published criteria.
- **Evidence.** Judgements about quality are based on records, data and feedback, not assumption.
- **Proportionality.** Checks are proportionate to risk, so that effort is focused where it matters most.
- **Openness to learning.** Mistakes and complaints are treated as opportunities to improve, and are acknowledged honestly.
- **Involvement.** Members, providers and, where possible, people who use services are invited to contribute to improvement.

4. The quality cycle

Each ICPHAA function follows a simple, repeating cycle.

1. **Plan.** Set clear standards, criteria and procedures for the function, and publish them where they affect members, providers or the public.

2. **Deliver.** Carry out the function in line with the published procedures, keeping accurate records of decisions and the reasons for them.
3. **Check.** Review a sample of work, gather feedback, and compare performance against the standards and against the Association's own service aims.
4. **Act.** Agree improvements, assign responsibility and a completion date for each, and confirm that the change has worked.
5. **Report.** Report findings and actions to the Board of Directors so that it can satisfy itself that quality is being maintained.

The depth of checking is matched to risk. Functions that most directly affect public protection, such as accreditation decisions, the public directory and the handling of complaints, receive the closest scrutiny. Lower-risk activities are reviewed more lightly, so that quality assurance remains proportionate and does not place unnecessary burdens on members, providers or volunteers.

Where a function is new, or has changed significantly, it is reviewed early, after it has been in use for a short time, so that any problems can be identified and corrected before they affect many people.

5. Quality mechanisms

ICPHAA uses a range of mechanisms to check quality. The main ones are set out below.

AREA	HOW QUALITY IS CHECKED
Accreditation decisions	Decisions follow the published criteria and record reasons. A sample of decisions is reviewed by a second person within the Accreditation Department, led by the Accreditation Manager, to check consistency.
Renewals and CPD	A sample of members is asked each year to provide evidence of CPD, supervision and insurance, in line with the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy and the Supervision Policy.
Directory and verification	Directory entries are checked against membership records, and changes of status are reflected without delay. Reports of inaccuracy are investigated promptly.
Programme accreditation	Accredited programmes submit annual self-evaluation reports and are reviewed periodically, as set out in the Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy.
Events and training	Participants are invited to give feedback, and presenters and content are reviewed against the Events & Training Policy.
Complaints and discipline	Case handling is reviewed for fairness, timeliness and consistency of outcomes, and themes are identified to inform standards and guidance.
Policies and information	Each policy has an owner, version and review date under the Document Control Policy, and is checked for accuracy at review.

6. Feedback, complaints and learning

Feedback from members, providers, clients and the public is an essential source of information about quality. ICPHAA welcomes comments and suggestions at admin@icphaa.ie and considers them when reviewing its procedures.

Complaints about the Association's own services and administration are handled separately from complaints about members. Each is acknowledged, looked into fairly and answered with reasons. Where a complaint or an audit reveals a weakness, ICPHAA records the issue, the action taken and the lesson learned, so that the same problem does not recur.

Information drawn from complaints and disciplinary cases is used only in anonymised or summary form for quality purposes, in line with the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the GDPR.

7. Quality expectations of accredited training providers

Training providers that hold ICPHAA programme accreditation are responsible for the quality of their own provision. As a condition of accreditation, they must:

- operate documented quality assurance procedures consistent with national standards in education and training;
- design assessments that are valid, reliable, fair and transparent, and mark them against clearly defined criteria;
- subject significant assessments to internal moderation and to review by an external examiner who is independent of the programme;
- give students a fair and transparent assessment appeals process;
- maintain fair procedures for academic integrity and student fitness to practise, as set out in the Events & Training Policy;
- gather and act on student feedback; and
- report material changes to the programme, and any serious quality concerns, to the Accreditation Department without delay.

Where a provider does not meet these expectations, the Accreditation Department may agree an improvement plan, attach conditions, or recommend suspension or withdrawal of programme accreditation.

8. Corrective action

Where a quality check identifies a problem, ICPHAA responds in proportion to the risk.

1. The issue is recorded, with a note of its likely impact on members, clients or the public.
2. Any immediate risk is addressed first, for example by correcting an inaccurate directory entry or pausing a process until it is fixed.
3. The underlying cause is identified.

4. An improvement action is agreed, with a named person responsible and a target date.
5. Completion is checked and the result recorded.
6. Where the issue affected a decision about a member or provider, the person affected is told and, where appropriate, the decision is reconsidered.

> **PERSONAL DATA INCIDENTS**
>
> Where a quality problem involves a personal data breach, it is handled immediately under the Legal & Data Governance Policy, including notification to the Data Protection Commission and to the people affected where the GDPR requires it.

9. Responsibilities

ICPHAA Board of Directors

- Owns this policy and receives regular reports on quality findings and actions.
- Makes sure that the Association has adequate resources, training and support to carry out its functions well.

Accreditation Department and Registry

- Carry out quality checks, keep records of findings and track corrective actions to completion.
- Recommend improvements to procedures and standards to the Board.

Members and accredited providers

- Co-operate with audits and requests for evidence.
- Give honest feedback and report errors they notice in ICPHAA records or publications.

10. Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of this policy is monitored through the reports described above, through the annual membership renewal process, and through the outcomes of accreditation reviews and complaints. Summary, anonymised information about quality findings may be shared with members to support transparency, in line with the Public-Facing Transparency Policy.

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, statutory regulation or professional practice changes. Concerns that the policy is not being applied consistently or fairly, and suggestions for improvement, are welcome at admin@icphaa.ie.

READ ALONGSIDE

- Professional Standards & Accreditation Policy
- Regulatory & Accreditation Infrastructure
- Education & Governance Policy
- Events & Training Policy
- Document Control Policy
- Public-Facing Transparency Policy

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

Support · Develop · Empower