Admission Requirements
Master of Counselling with nested Graduate Diploma of Counselling and proposed nested Graduate Certificate in Counselling

Admission to the Master of Counselling is governed by the principles of merit, fairness, transparency, and timeliness; and is informed by evidence drawn from a range of indicators, including prior academic achievement and an intake interview.

All applicants are required to:

- Complete a School of Counselling application form;
- Provide certified copies of all relevant academic and other supporting documents;
- Submit references from two referees;
- Successfully complete an admission interview (including a Readiness for Counselling and Psychotherapy Training Questionnaire);
- Provide a National Criminal History Record check (obtainable from https://www.nationalcrimecheck.com.au); and a Working with Children check (obtainable from https://wwccheck.ccyp.nsw.gov.au/Applicants/Application#), these by Census Date of the first semester of enrolment.

Becoming a Counsellor

Applicants are encouraged to consult relevant counselling associations (e.g. either the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia [PACFA] and its member associations such as the Christian Counsellors’ Association of Australia [CCAA] or the Australian Counselling Association [ACA]) to ensure their awareness of those associations’ membership requirements.

Graduate Master of Counselling Program

The Master of Counselling is a Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency [TEQSA] accredited postgraduate coursework degree, whose course content is designed to comply with the 2014 PACFA Training Standards. Upon completion of the degree, graduates also holding a relevant undergraduate degree are able to apply for membership of PACFA and/or its member associations). Students, while in training, may apply for intern membership status with PACFA, and this is encouraged by the School of Counselling. Students may also elect to join alternate counselling associations (e.g. ACA).

Admission Criteria

There are multiple pathways for admission into the counselling program:

- Applicants may be admitted to the Graduate Certificate in Counselling, Graduate Diploma of Counselling or Master of Counselling if they have previously and successfully completed a relevant undergraduate degree consisting of a minimum three full-time years of study (or the part-time equivalent). A relevant undergraduate degree may include (for example) a degree in any of the following areas of study:
  - Social sciences, e.g. psychology, sociology, etc
  - Health sciences, e.g. occupational therapy, nursing, social work, speech therapy, etc
  - Teaching/education, e.g. primary, secondary and/or tertiary teaching
  - Theology/ministry
  - Law
  - Medicine.

- Applicants may be admitted to the Graduate Certificate in Counselling or Graduate Diploma of Counselling if they have previously and successfully completed a non-relevant undergraduate degree consisting of a minimum three full-time years of study. A non-relevant undergraduate degree may include (for example) a degree in any of the following areas of study:
  - Natural and biological sciences
  - Mathematics

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1 Relevance in this instance has been defined as per the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia March 2014 National Executive Meeting’s consideration, clarification and definition of relevant versus non-relevant undergraduate degrees.
- Engineering
- Computer sciences
- Agricultural sciences
- Accounting/Commerce/Business
- Fine arts

Where students entering the course with a non-relevant undergraduate degree successfully complete all course requirements of the Graduate Diploma of Counselling they can apply to advance to the Master of Counselling.

- Applicants may be admitted to the Graduate Certificate in Counselling where they can demonstrate a combination of prior learning, professional skills, and/or vocational experience(s), deemed by the Admissions Committee to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree.

Applicants admitted via this pathway will normally be required to complete two bridging units: Academic Skills A and Academic Skills B, which prepares them for the academic requirements of postgraduate study.

**Admission Criteria and Later Professional Standing**

During the admission process students will be advised about profession membership opportunities available to them upon completion of their nominated course, specifically in relation to the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) membership categories (whose Training Standards inform both the Master of Counselling course content and processes).

More specifically applicants, depending upon their entry pathway, will be advised of the following:

- Students with a relevant undergraduate degree and who successfully complete a Master of Counselling will be eligible for graduate membership status with PACFA.

- Students with a non-relevant degree or with no undergraduate degree who successfully complete a Master of Counselling will be eligible to apply for intern membership status with PACFA and will need to undertake additional professional development and complete additional counselling hours to achieve graduate membership with PACFA.

- Students who complete either a Graduate Certificate in Counselling or a Graduate Diploma of Counselling (regardless of their entry pathway), while having obtained counselling knowledge and skills, will not be eligible for Graduate level membership with PACFA and will need to undertake additional professional development and complete additional counselling hours to achieve graduate membership with PACFA.

Applicants wishing to join an alternate counselling professional association will be advised it is their responsibility to appraise themselves as to the membership requirements of those professional associations.

**International Student Admission Criteria**

The Master of Counselling is available to overseas/international students, subject to satisfying the aforementioned admission criteria. International students are only permitted to commence in the course in the first semester of each academic year so as to ensure completion of the full-time course within the required two years (as per Australian student visa requirements).

Applicants whose qualifying undergraduate studies were taken in a language other than English will be required to demonstrate proficiency in spoken and written English equivalent to the IELTS Academic minimum overall result of 7.5, with a minimum of 8.0 in speaking and listening modules, and a minimum of 7.0 in reading and writing modules. Test score equivalencies for alternative tests are provided below in Table 1:

**Table 1: Admission language requirements for applicants with undergraduate degree completed in a language other than English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests of Academic English Language Proficiency</th>
<th>Scores: Overall</th>
<th>Scores: Speaking &amp; Listening</th>
<th>Scores: Reading &amp; Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IELTS Academic</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language internet- based Test (TOEFL iBT)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTE Academic</td>
<td>73-78</td>
<td>79-82</td>
<td>65-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Second Language Proficiency rating (ISLPR)</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Admission Criteria for Advancement across the Counselling Program

Students admitted to the Graduate Certificate in Counselling, upon successful completion of all requirements of that part of the counselling program, may apply to advance to the Graduate Diploma of Counselling.

Students admitted to the Graduate Diploma of Counselling, upon successful completion of all requirements of that part of the counselling program, may apply to advance Master of Counselling.

Advancement to each next stage in the counselling program requires students to:

- complete all academic requirements of the counselling units at their current level of the program, as specified in each individual course unit outline;
- be deemed clinically competent at their current level of the program, as specified in each counselling practice course unit outline;
- complete the minimum personal counselling component required at their current level of the program;
- exhibit an appropriate professional demeanour and ongoing psychological health, as specified in the ‘Counselling Progression and Protocols’ document, and also noted in each individual counselling course unit outline.

Applying for Credit upon Admission to the Counselling Program

Applicants gaining entry into the Graduate Certificate in Counselling, the Graduate Diploma of Counselling or the Master of Counselling course may apply for credit on the basis of prior completed accredited AQF Level 9 studies that have reasonable equivalence with given Masters units. The maximum level of credit that may be granted into the Master of Counselling is normally one-third of the course requirements. However, candidates who have completed an accredited Graduate Diploma in counselling may be granted up to one year’s credit into the Master of Counselling. All credit applications for Counselling Practice units and/or Counselling Practicum I must be accompanied by a DVD of a counselling session employing the counselling modality of the counselling practice unit for which an exemption is being sought. Further, applicants seeking credit must demonstrate, through the provision of evidence, how they have already attained the knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills specified in the unit’s student learning outcomes.

Applying for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) upon admission to the Counselling Program

Applicants gaining entry into the Graduate Certificate in Counselling, the Graduate Diploma of Counselling or the Master of Counselling degree may apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) on the basis of prior completed studies and/or other relevant employment experience, which in totality have reasonable equivalence with the Masters units. The maximum level of RPL that may be granted into the Master of Counselling is normally one-third of the course requirements. Applicants seeking RPL must demonstrate, through the provision of evidence, how they have already attained the knowledge, skills and capacity for the application of knowledge and skills specified in each unit’s student learning outcomes. All RPL applications for Counselling Practice and or Counselling Practicum I must be accompanied by a DVD of a counselling session employing the counselling modality of the counselling practice unit for which an exemption is being sought.

Compliance with the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australian (PACFA) 2014 Training Standard Course Admission Requirements

The PACFA 2014 Training Standards provide clear program guidelines for providers of counselling programs seeking PACFA course accreditation. In particular, Section 1 of the 2014 Training Standards stipulates admission requirements which course providers must comply with, if the course is to obtain PACFA course accreditation. Table 2 sets out how the Master of Counselling admission requirements align with the course admission requirements stipulated by PACFA.
Training Standard 1. Admission

1.1 Principles

1.1.1 Trainees need to demonstrate the presence of some fundamental human capacities (as outlined in Points 1.1.2 to 1.1.5 below) as a prerequisite for beginning training as a psychotherapist/counsellor. These capacities can be demonstrated through live interviews, observing the trainee’s participation in an experiential workshop, referees, etc.

1.1.2 Trainees need to demonstrate self-awareness, including the capacity to relate in a facilitative way with others and to reflect on and examine the impact of these actions.

1.1.3 Trainees need to demonstrate a relational capacity. This could be in a one-to-one therapeutic situation or, if the therapeutic modality involves couples/family/group work, an ability to work with a group or team.

1.1.4 Trainees need to demonstrate a capacity to understand and practice ethical behaviour and be prepared to follow a code of ethics which is an integrated part of the training program.

1.1.5 The above qualities presume a certain level of mature life experience on the part of the applicant and this is shown by the capacity to reflect on and learn from experience, including being open to positive and challenging feedback.

1.2 Process

1.2.1 The process of selection should be non-discriminatory on the grounds of gender, class, cultural background, sexual identity, disability or beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PACFA Admission Requirements</th>
<th>Master of Counselling Admission Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All applicants are required to: complete a School of Counselling application form, provide certified copies of all relevant academic and other supporting documents including two written references; successfully complete an admission interview (including a Readiness for Counselling Training Questionnaire) conducted by the Head of School and/or his/her nominee(s); and provide a National Criminal History Record Check (within 30 days of accepting placement offer) and a Working with Children Authorisation (within three months of commencing the program).</td>
<td>All applicants are interviewed by the Head of School and/or his/her nominee (e.g., a senior counselling staff member) for a one hour interview during which the interviewee’s capacity with respect to following will be observed in terms of preparedness to undertake a counsellor training program: • Personal reflection of his/her strengths and vulnerabilities • Self-awareness • Appropriate collaborative conversation engagement • Role and contribution of their relational history to their personal development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The initial relational capacity identified during the admission process is further fostered throughout the Master of Counselling course. Multiple units in the course include a specific focus on counsellor self-awareness and self-development components (via content and assessment tasks). Further relational capacity, self-awareness, and reflective functioning are fostered during the 40 hours of mandatory counselling completed by students during the course.</td>
<td>All students complete a core unit Ethical Issues and Practice and are required to demonstrate their understanding and application of Codes of Ethics, Codes of Professional Conduct, Mandatory Reporting, compliance with Australian Anti-Discrimination Laws, and the Australian Health Act. Specifically, via a range of ethically-focused assessments, students must demonstrate the application of ethical knowledge and legal requirements to their counselling practice and clinical care of clients. Student must successfully complete this course to remain in the counselling program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the Master of Counselling program staff will continue to observe students’ development as novice counsellors. It is expected students will provide evidence of increased theoretical, clinical and personal maturation and overall integration via improvements in their academic performance and counselling skills. This process is supported through ongoing feedback from staff, formally through assessment feedback and informally during student consultations. Where students struggle to improve as is expected at a given point in the course, an appropriate intervention plan will be initiated addressing specific academic and/or clinical deficits and/or students’ psychological wellbeing.</td>
<td>Admission to the Master of Counselling is governed by the principles of merit, fairness, transparency, and timeliness; and is informed by evidence drawn from a range of indicators, including prior academic achievement and an intake interview. Gender, class, cultural background, sexual identity, disability or beliefs are not considered or relevant to the application process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Master of Counselling course compliance with the PACFA admission criteria