



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Accreditation as a Mental Health Social Worker

Eligibility

- **How do I check whether my qualifications allow me to apply for Mental Health Accreditation?**

Applicants are required to have completed an AASW accredited Bachelor of Social Work degree or Master of Social Work (qualifying) for entry into the profession of social work, and to meet the minimum eligibility requirements for AASW membership. You should refer to the AASW website where you will find all [AASW approved courses](#).

- **Do I need to be a member of the AASW to apply for Mental Health Accreditation?**

An applicant is required to be a current member of the AASW prior to submitting their application. To join, go to www.aasw.asn.au. You can join online with a credit card at any time. Please note: Before applying for MH Accreditation, you will also need to meet the requirements of the AASW CPE program.

- **I completed my degree last year can I apply for Mental Health Accreditation?**

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they have **at least two years** of supervised practice (post qualifying) in a mental health or related field. Post qualifying means work experience **gained after attaining your Social Work degree**.

- **I have worked in Mental Health for five years, but only completed my social work degree recently, would my previous work experience count towards my two years post qualifying experience?**

No, your employment prior to the completion of your Bachelor of Social Work or Masters of Social Work (qualifying) cannot be recognised as work experience post qualifying.

However, the experience gained prior to completing your degree is relevant and should be included in your application to demonstrate your breadth of knowledge and experience working with people with mental health problems.

- **I have worked as a social worker overseas for many years, how do I find out if my qualifications are applicable?**

You should refer to the AASW website under [International Qualifications Assessment](#).

- **I attained CPE accreditation when I first joined the AASW, is this sufficient to meet the requirements for Mental Health Accreditation?**

Applicants need to be accredited in the CPE program for the year in which they submit their application for mental health accreditation. To maintain your status as an Accredited Social Worker you need to have met the Continuing Professional Education requirements for the preceding CPE cycle (accreditation is then valid for the next cycle). Becoming a CPE accredited member is a tangible way to demonstrate you are committed to ongoing development and education. It is also a requirement for attaining and maintaining your accreditation as a Mental Health Social Worker.

- **Do I need to submit a CPE log book, or can I outline what I have done to date for this year (since 1 Jul 2009) in the professional development section?**

You need to submit your CPE log book first as it is a requirement that all applicants are CPE accredited prior to applying. Submit your log book to: Education Officer AASW PO Box 4956 Kingston ACT 2604. Include a note explaining that you are applying for Mental Health Accreditation – that way when you have attained CPE accredited status, the Mental Health Team will be notified.

- **I have been on maternity/paternity leave for 12 months. How do I meet the Continuing Professional Education (CPE) requirements?**

Before applying for Mental Health Accreditation, you should refer to the AASW website under [CPE Policy](#). Should you require further assistance, please contact our Education Officer at cpe@aasw.asn.au

- **I don't work in a specialised mental health setting, how do I know if my work experience meets the requirements for Mental Health accreditation?**

Social workers who consider that are practicing in a mental health related field need to be able to clearly demonstrate the relationship between mental health practice and the work they are doing. This would necessitate showing that they have specific knowledge about mental illness and serious mental health problems. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate the relevance of their work to a mental health field.

- **I have been working part time for the past two years, does that meet the requirement of two years post qualifying experience?**

The requirement for two years post qualifying work experience is equivalent to two years **full time** work experience. You

will need to also provide evidence that you have received supervision during this time.

- **Does the person providing me with supervision have to be a social worker?**

The AASW Practice Standards for Supervision articulate that a supervisor should be a qualified social worker eligible for membership of the AASW and have at least two years practice experience, preferably in a relevant field of practice and that they should have undergone some further training the provision of supervision and/or the field of practice of the supervisee. In general supervisors should have a higher level of practice experience than their supervisees. However, there is recognition that experienced social workers may use the expertise of other professions/disciplines to further their own professional development goals. For the purposes of this assessment, the person providing the testimonial does not necessarily need to have a background in social work, but should have provided the applicant with appraisal and assessment in relation to practice in a mental health field.

- **What courses can I do to assist me with meeting the requirements for Mental Health Accreditation?**

The AASW does not specify any individual education and training programs to assist an applicant to meet the requirements of Mental Health Accreditation. In general we would encourage social workers to identify their own needs in further education around working with people with mental health problems and perhaps discuss these needs with their supervisor.

Further resources include:

- AASW Horizon Career Centre offers a career advisory service to members www.horizonemployment.com.au/resources.php
- AASW website has an events page which is listed by Branch – where you will find information about training sessions and events that are occurring in your area. www.aasw.asn.au/whoware/branches

Application Process

- **With regard to supervision, do I include information about supervision I have provided or supervision I have received?**

For the purposes of this assessment, we are interested in learning about your experience receiving supervision. However, you may wish to include information about supervision you have given to others as an indicator of your overall skills and experience.

- **What evidence do I have to provide regarding my experience receiving supervision?**

When answering the question about supervision, you should provide information about the frequency and duration of the supervision, whether it is individual or group supervision, provided by whom and in general terms provide a description about the focus of the supervision.

- **I can't find any records relating to the supervision I have received. What should I do?**

You should document to the best of your ability the supervision you have received within your places of work along with any external supervision. Where possible, try to include the information outlined in the previous question. If you are unable to recall this information then you should address this in your response to this question.

- **What are the Focused Psychological Strategies?**

Focused psychological strategies (FPS) are specific mental health care treatment strategies, derived from evidence based psychological therapies. They have been shown to integrate the best research evidence of clinical effectiveness with the majority of mental disorders. In other words, FPS consists of a range of specific strategies drawn from Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Interpersonal therapy.

The Focused Psychological Strategies as specified by Medicare Australia are listed under definitions in the "AASW requirements for accreditation to practice as a Mental Health Social Worker" which can be found [here](#). When you are completing your application, it is important that you demonstrate how you would use these strategies.

- **What kind of information should be included when describing my "main therapeutic approach"?**

Applicants are able to describe the framework that underpins their practice, for example 'feminist theory', 'strengths based' etc. In addition, it is important to describe how you might utilize the Focused Psychological Strategies as specified by Medicare Australia. You can include de-identified case studies/examples if you wish or speak in general terms about your experience.

- **I use mainly Narrative Therapy in my practice. Is this acceptable under the Focused Psychological Strategies guidelines specified by Medicare Australia?**

Currently Narrative Therapy has been approved as a psychological intervention only for indigenous clients with mental health problems. Narrative therapy has been identified as a mode of working of particular value to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as it builds on the story telling that is a central part of their culture.

- **I have been a social worker for many years and the training that I undertook which had a mental health focus occurred years ago. Do I need more recent training/ experience?**

The training you have received does not necessarily have to be recent. It will be important to demonstrate that the training was in a mental health or related field and that it will assist you, when working with people experiencing mental health problems, in private practice. In your application you will need to demonstrate that you are familiar with current evidenced based practice in the mental health field.

- **I can't find any records of the education and training I have undertaken, what should I do?**

Evidence of education and training includes certificates of attendance, verification of enrolment and/or a tax receipt. You may be able to contact your employer/institution and ask for a statement of training. Alternatively you may be able to compile a list from your diary and then have this signed off by your supervisor/manager.

- **You have asked me to provide additional information to support my application, can I email it or do I need to post it?**

We are happy to receive additional information via email as this will enable us to complete your application more promptly.

- **I downloaded a copy of the Application Form and have started typing my application directly into it but I need more space. Can I attach additional pages to my application?**

If you need to attach additional pages, simply note this at the bottom of the application form and once printed, attached any additional pages/documents.

- **Can I submit Parts A & B of the Application Form together?**

Submitting Parts A & B together is the simplest and most efficient way to get your application completed. However, if your supervisor would prefer to send their testimonial separately, please ensure you give them the correct address.

- **I started completing responses to the questions on the application form, but I seem to be repeating myself, how can I answer the questions more simply?**

The main purpose of providing information in your application is for you to demonstrate to the assessor your knowledge and skills in working with people experiencing mental health problems and in particular demonstrate how your practice enables you to meet the "Practice Standards for Mental Health Social Workers" (AASW 2008).

We acknowledge that applicants may provide this information in a variety of ways and in order to allow for applicants

to express this information in the way they feel most comfortable we have not specified a set format. However, to avoid repetition in conveying information to the assessor it is quite acceptable to provide a description of your practice and refer to the relevant practice standards at appropriate intervals throughout this description. At times it may be relevant to quote several standards (e.g. This experience demonstrates that I meet practice standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 6.1).

- **What steps are in the Assessment process? Do you contact the applicant for further information or clarification?**

As soon as your application is received, an initial assessment is made to ensure all information is included. If additional information is required we will contact you. This is a common occurrence – the additional information can usually be sent back to us by email. You may be asked to elaborate on what you have already submitted in your application or to submit additional information further to your application. Often there may be a need to communicate several times with you during the process – either via phone or email. You are welcome to contact the [Mental Health team](#) prior to submitting your application if you have any concerns or queries.

- **How long will it take for the assessment to be completed?**

Each application to practice as a Mental Health Social Worker needs to be thoroughly assessed. Applicants should allow four weeks for the assessment process to be completed.

- **If my application is not successful, will the assessment fee be refunded to me?**

The assessment fee covers the cost in time associated with assessing your application. Therefore a refund will not be given if your application is unsuccessful.

- **Why are there two fees – an Assessment fee and an Accreditation fee?**

The assessment fee covers all costs associated with the application process including updating of application forms, reviewing documentation and processes.

The accreditation fee is an annual fee, payable at the time of renewing your AASW membership. This fee covers all costs associated with providing support and advocacy, development of resources, promotion and marketing as well as the assessment of annual CPE requirements for all mental health social workers.

- **How do I find my AASW membership number?**

When you renewed your membership, you would have been sent a letter and an email that included your membership number. If you are unable to locate find your membership number, please call our Membership Officer on 1800 630 124.