



Professional Accredited Courses

Academy of Counselling Education (ACE Courses)

Candidate Policies and Procedures



Welcome

ACE Courses are experienced in designing and creating inspirational and bespoke approved and endorsed CPD Counselling Courses and offer national accredited programmes to help grow and develop your professional counselling practice.



ACE Courses is a CPCAB Approved Centre
Providing innovative courses for counselling professionals

CONTENTS	Page
1. Internal Assessment and Appeals Procedure	3
2. Candidate Withdrawal Policy	8
3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (EDI)	10
4. Extenuating Circumstances	14
5. Student Code of Conduct	17
6. Grievance, Complaint and Concern Policy	22
7. Malpractice/Maladministration/Plagiarism	24
8. Privacy Notice / GDPR	25

1. Internal Assessment and Appeals Procedure

Scope

Academy of Counselling Education, otherwise known as ACE Courses, is committed to achieving the highest of professional standards based on impartial, reliable and valid assessment judgments when assessing candidate work submitted for the purpose of achieving a CPCAB qualification. Whilst we endeavour to execute our responsibilities with openness and fairness there may be times when candidates wish to question assessment decisions.

ACE Courses is committed to ensuring that candidates' work is assessed by staff who have appropriate knowledge, understanding and skill, who have been trained in this activity, and are approved by the awarding organisation as a tutor for the qualification. Whenever its staff mark candidates' work this is done fairly, consistently and in accordance with the awarding organisation's specification and associated documents. Where more than one tutor is involved in marking candidates' work, internal quality assurance processes and standardisation will ensure consistency of marking.

This policy scope covers assessment decisions made by centre tutors in relation to Internal Assessment of CPCAB qualifications only. Internal Assessment decisions remain a centre responsibility, and appeals are carried out by the centre. CPCAB does not have a role in conducting Internal Assessment appeals.

This policy does not cover assessment decisions made externally, for example CPCAB External Assessment (exams), which are dealt with directly by CPCAB.

This policy scope does not cover disagreements about other aspects of a candidate's learning experience, which should be addressed via the centre complaints policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge the right to appeal of all candidates who feel disadvantaged by an assessment decision they believe to be incorrect and to clearly identify the process of appeal.

Definition

Appeals allow registered candidates to question an assessment decision. An appeal is a process through which the outcome of an assessment decision may be challenged.

Centre Responsibilities

To protect the interests of all candidates and the integrity of the qualification ACE Courses will:

- Inform the candidate at induction, or via the use of a Student Handbook, of the internal assessment appeals policy.
- Ensure that candidates are provided with formative assessment feedback throughout the course and are informed of their internal assessment outcomes so that they may submit an appeal before results are submitted to the awarding organization.
- Operate a clear and staged appeals procedure.
- Provide a clear deadline for candidates to submit a request for an appeal. Requests will not be accepted after this deadline.
- Allow sufficient time for the appeal to be carried out, and to make any necessary changes to the assessment.
- Ensure that any review of marking is conducted by an assessor who has appropriate competence, has had no previous involvement in the assessment of that candidate for the component in question and has no personal interest in the outcome of the review.
- Ensure that any review of marking checks that the candidate's assessment is consistent with the standard set by the centre, and consistent with the awarding organisation's specification and associated documents.
- Inform the candidate in writing of the outcome of the appeal.
- Keep appeals records for review by the awarding organisation.
- Take appropriate action to protect the interests of other candidates and the integrity of the qualification, when the outcome of an appeal questions the validity of other results.
- Monitor appeals to inform quality improvement.

Candidate Responsibilities

- Familiarise themselves with the centre's appeals policy.
- Inform the centre of their intention to appeal at the earliest possible opportunity and raise an appeal before any centre appeal deadline has passed.
- Make an appeal request in writing and candidates must explain on what grounds they wish to request an appeal.
- Follow the staged process for appeals provided by the centre.

Grounds

Where a candidate questions an assessment decision, they should identify grounds for an appeal. Appeals against internal assessment decisions for CPCAB qualifications typically fall into three categories:

- 1. An appeal questioning the standard/level of tutor assessment of evidence submitted by a candidate to meet the specified Assessment Criteria.**

CPCAB guidance to centres

In cases of appeal in this category it is typical to:

- Conduct a remark/review of the tutor assessment, (or a sample of), to check that assessment levels are consistent with the standard of the centre and consistent with the awarding organisation's specification and associated documents.
- These may be cross-checked with External Verification reports from CPCAB and centre IQA records to check that assessment standards are within expected levels.
- It should be made clear to the re-marker/reviewer, the tutor(s) and the candidate that no-one is permitted to alter the work or add new assessment material/evidence after the initial tutor(s) have provided a result to the candidate.
- The reviewer should provide, in writing, a reason for upholding or changing any part of the assessment outcome awarded by the tutor(s).

- 2. An appeal questioning the application of contraindications, or the tutor(s) overall decision of proficiency, at the conclusion of the course.**

CPCAB guidance to centres

In cases of appeal in this category it is typical to review the following:

- The documented history of potential for contraindications, failure to achieve the Learning Outcomes/Assessment Criteria, or failure to meet any identified action plans/deadlines provided by the tutor(s).
- Any evidence provided by a candidate's placement agency, supervisor, personal therapist which supports a case for contraindications (where applicable).
- Any evidence provided by the candidate to demonstrate tutor bias or malpractice.

3. An appeal questioning the application of assessment requirements, or reasonable adjustments in internal assessment.

CPCAB guidance to centres:

In cases of appeal in this category it is typical to review the following:

- Documentation relating to any learning contract, assessment schedule, Student Handbooks, or other guidance provided on assessment requirements.
- The documented history of any requests for reasonable adjustments, including any initial assessments of need.
- Any evidence provided by the candidate demonstrates a misapplication of the assessment requirements or failure to respond to requests for reasonable adjustments.

Process

Stage 1 INFORMAL:

The candidate consults with their tutor(s) within a period of 2 weeks. Following an assessment decision, to raise an enquiry and discuss the assessment decision. If this informal stage does not resolve the enquiry, then the issues are documented before moving to stage 2.

Stage 2 APPEAL:

The candidate must raise an appeal request in writing to the course tutors within a period of 2 weeks following the Stage 1 discussion. The grounds for appeal are reviewed and where appropriate a review/remark of assessment decisions takes place by an individual suitably qualified to make an assessment decision for that qualification. The candidate will be notified of findings and is required to agree or disagree, in writing, with the outcome within a period of 1 week. If unresolved, move to stage 3.

Stage 3 APPEAL HEARING:

A panel (people not previously involved and without a personal interest in the outcome) will hear the appeal within a period of 2 weeks of the candidate's written response. The grounds for appeal, any remarked assessments and any supporting documentation will be reviewed to determine if the initial outcome is to be upheld or overturned. This will be communicated to the candidate in writing within 2 weeks. The

decision of the stage 3 appeal hearing is final. Recording appeals: each stage will be recorded, dated and show either agreement or disagreement with decisions.

All complaint information will be communicated with CPCAB, Ace Courses and the candidate.

Candidate signature of understanding of the Appeals Procedure:

Signature: Print Name: Date

Assessor Name: Internal Verifier Name:

Name of candidate:

Name of who the appeal is lodged against:

Date that the issue arose: Date appeal made:

2. Candidate Withdrawal Policy

ACE Courses policy of a candidate's withdrawal from a course is in accordance with guidance by CPCAB policy and is split into two parts:

- CPCAB – Registrations Fee
- ACE Courses Fee

CPCAB Policy – Registration Fees

CPCAB policy of withdrawal of a course states that after 6 weeks of the course starting there is a nil-refund on registration fees.

If notification of withdrawal is received by email by ACE Courses within 6 weeks of the course starting, CPCAB via ACE Courses will refund the registration fee minus an administration charge of £15.

Where a candidate leaves a course due to medical grounds, a medical certificate should be emailed to ACE Courses. We will then forward this onto CPCAB for consideration of a refund covering half the registration fee minus an administration charge of £15

ACE Courses Fee - Refund Policy

The initial booking fee and registration fee as advised by ACE Courses is non-refundable. These payments may be slightly different depending on the chosen course. A breakdown of part-payments will be advised on acceptance of registration, for example:

Level 2/3:

Initial Booking Fee for both Level 2/3: £275.00

Registration Fees: Level 2: £325.00 and Level 3: £425.00

Level 4 and above

£275.00 Initial Booking Fee

£2000.00 Registration Fee

If a candidate withdraws part way through a course and has not paid the full course fee due to an agreement for instalments, the full payment of the course will become payable with a requirement any outstanding fees will be paid by the candidate within 28 days of the invoice. Failure to settle the course fees within this period may result in legal action.

A refund of the remaining payment applies as follows:

- 75% of the remaining course fee is refundable within the first two weeks of starting the course and deciding not to continue, thereafter...
- 50% of the remaining course fee will be refundable if you leave the course within a further 2 weeks
- Nil thereafter

Request to Defer

A written request to defer onto a similar course in the same academic year (September to July) may be considered due to medical reasons that were not known to ACE Courses before the course started; subject to receipt of a Medical Certificate. Availability of a similar course will be dependent on sufficient registrations and therefore there is no guarantee the course will run. Payment of a further full CPCAB Registration Fee payable will apply a month before the course is due to start.

The same policy applies for courses starting other than the academic year i.e. courses starting between January through until May to November of the same year.

In an event of any concern / grievance and or complaint this refund policy applies and is final

3. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (EDI)

Academy of Counselling Education (ACE Courses) is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our training and learning environment, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We recognise that in society certain groups and individuals are oppressed and disadvantaged by institutional and individual discrimination and prejudice.

ACE Courses - in providing training and learning - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of training staff and/or the public.

Definitions:

Equality means that everybody has the same opportunities and is treated with the same respect. Equal Opportunity is not about treating everyone the same but ensuring that people have the same opportunities in life as others, including the right to be treated without discrimination.

Diversity means difference. It recognises that though people have things in common with each other, they are also different and unique in many ways. Diversity is about accepting, respecting & valuing those differences, and is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms, based on principles such as dignity and respect.

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Inclusion means ensuring that everybody has a voice and a means to participate, which may involve making reasonable adjustments to our usual processes. The goal of inclusion is to help everyone feel accepted and able to share their opinions and thoughts without hesitation or fear of discrimination.

BACP Good Practice

ACE Courses is guided by the BACP's Good Practice in Action document 062, sets out the so called '4 A's' to help practitioners to consider ways in which they can become more inclusive in their practice:

Awareness: Be aware that we all have differences, but some of those differences can lead to barriers and oppression. Make sure that you are educated about the social and cultural aspects of different characteristics, including the discrimination and oppression that people are likely to have experienced. Do not wait for your client to educate you about their characteristic or difference. Inform yourself through CPD and individual learning, at the same time as being aware that each client's experience and perspective are unique.

Assumptions: It is only by recognising that we all carry assumptions and prejudices that we can start to challenge them and be inclusive. Whether or not we have protected characteristics ourselves, we are likely to have spent most of our lives in environments which foster prejudice towards anyone perceived as 'different'. In each of the following sections we will have a look at some damaging assumptions we might make without realising.

Allyship: Taking on the role of an ally does not always mean actively campaigning on behalf of a group of people. It can just mean creating a safe and accepting space where they know they can be themselves and be heard and understood. For those who do not identify as having a particular characteristic, being an ally for an individual or community is a vital part of fostering inclusivity.

Ask: Each person is a unique individual whose needs might be different from someone else who identifies as belonging to the same group. Even if you share the same characteristic, your experience of it might be quite different. While knowledge of their community is helpful, it is important to find out about their individual experience and needs. (BACP-GPIA 062: 7)

This policy's intent is to enrich the training and learning environment by maintaining the following ethos:

1. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all our students and training staff, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
2. Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation

ACE Courses recognises that 'While the Equality Act has been an imperative in enhancing awareness of EDI its structure around certain protected characteristics does risk facilitating the development of a 'silo approach' where the characteristics are viewed and addressed in isolation. This approach can result in a presumed need and detract from relating to the person holistically' (BACP GPIA 063,2016:6).

In addition, ACE Courses students and training staff should be aware that, focusing solely on the 'protected characteristics' can result in other barriers to inclusion and equanimity such as disparity in wealth or the availability of support services going unseen. Therefore, it is important to understand that there can be an overlap/intersection of the different characteristics and any one individual can fall into multiple oppressed identities.

3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes:

- Selection of students and other developmental opportunities
- Carrying out all aspects of teaching practice (including training staff)
- Embrace individual uniqueness
- Feedback and assessment processes

The organisation commits to:

- Encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion in our training practices as they are good practice and make for a positive learning environment
- Create a training environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all students are recognised and valued. We will make provision for appropriate reasonable adjustments for learners in order if applicable.
- This commitment includes training managers and all other training staff about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include training staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment/victimisation/unlawful-discrimination.

All students should understand they, as well as ACE Courses, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow students and any others in the course of the organisation's training activities
- Further, sexual harassment may amount to a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all students and training staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential.

- Make decisions concerning students and training staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review training practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of ACE Courses regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in this equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, in all aspects of training practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

This equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the ACE Courses. For further information please contact studentsupport@acecourses.org.uk

4. Extenuating Circumstances

Academy of Counselling Education (ACE Courses) wants all students to undertake and pass all their assessments at the first attempt and progress appropriately through their course. We are aware that failure to progress normally can lead to financial difficulties for both the student and ACE Courses. However, there may be occasions during the year where students are affected by extenuating circumstances and are unable to complete their assessments by the scheduled time.

ACE Courses operates a “fit to sit” extenuating circumstances policy. This means that if you sit an examination or submit an assignment on time, you are declaring yourself fit to sit the assessment and no extenuating circumstances will be accepted. You can only submit extenuating circumstances if you have failed to submit or feel that due to extenuating circumstances you will be unable to submit coursework on time; fail to attend a class, miss an examination, were taken ill during an examination, or feel that due to extenuating circumstances you know that you would not be able to attend an examination.

ACE Courses operates a “fit to sit” extenuating circumstances policy. This means that if you sit an examination or submit an assignment on time, you are declaring yourself fit to sit the assessment and no extenuating circumstances will be accepted. You can only submit extenuating circumstances if you have failed to submit coursework on time, missed an examination or were taken ill during an examination.

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances relating to your health and /or personal life which are of a sufficiently serious nature to result in your being unable to attend, complete, or submit an assessment on time.

Problems with course management that have affected your performance, either individually or as part of a group should be remedied by following the student complaints procedure.

The key words are serious and significant. Life, unfortunately, is full of difficulties, irritations, and worries that would not be expected to have a significant effect on your performance or to prevent you from attending, completing, or submitting on time an assessment. We all face difficulties and problems that we normally are expected to overcome. Only serious problems that can reasonably be expected to have had a significant effect will be considered valid. So circumstances such as a cold, feeling under the weather, a few sleepless nights, the illness of a relative, financial worries, difficulties with a computer, the pressures of sitting exams or meeting deadlines, will not be considered to be valid reasons for failing to attend, complete on time, or submit assessments.

Generally speaking, serious long-term circumstances that have a significant effect on your ability to study will be expected to result in you requesting a suspension of your studies or withdrawing from your course rather than claiming extenuating circumstances.

In line with ACE Courses, students with a disability or learning difficulty should have

declared these and secured an agreement as to what additional help ACE Courses can reasonably provide as part of the admissions process. The disability or learning difficulty cannot be regarded as an extenuating circumstance.

Therefore, any diagnosable conditions which could significantly affect your studies with us cannot be regarded as an extenuating circumstance. If part way through the course of study, a new and previously unknown condition is diagnosed, we request that you contact us as soon as reasonably possible so that we can discuss suitable adjustments for you.

If you have been affected by an extenuating circumstance, you should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances at least 2 weeks before an assessment is due.

To submit a claim, you need to email Student Support –
studentsupport@acecourses.org.uk

When you submit your claim, you should include the following details:

1. Your name
2. Your course
3. The module(s)/course content affected
4. The criteria for your extenuating circumstances
5. The evidence required for that criterion

Evidence required to support your claim will be advised by ACE Courses Tutor who will be able to advise you on submitting your claim. When you submit your claim, you should take care to record exactly which assessment artefacts have been affected (by assessment artefact we mean the examination, course work, essay, presentation etc). You must link these assessment artefacts to the assessment(s). Most importantly, you must clearly state a case that explains why the circumstances were serious and how they affected your ability to attend or submit the assessment artefact. You will need to relate the dates of the circumstance(s) and the assessment(s) carefully to the reasons you give. The end product needs to be convincing. Finally, you need to be able to provide some evidence to back up your case. Documentary evidence must either be in English or accompanied by an official translation in English.

The criteria explain what types of evidence are acceptable. In cases of illness, you should obtain a medical certificate if your illness prevents you from attending ACE Courses for more than two consecutive LIVE webinars/Lectures or if you have a severe medical condition that means you have been unable to complete a coursework assignment or attend an examination - if your illness or condition did not last that long or the medical condition was not severe, you will need to submit a note of self-certification. Please note that medical certificates should be signed whilst the symptoms of your illness or condition were still evident to the Doctor. Repeated cases of self-certification will mean that ACE Courses will ask you for a signed release so

that your doctor can provide information about your state of health. Repeated cases of self-certification where there is no such supporting evidence may be judged to be invalid.

Reference to a professional relationship in the criteria may be to a doctor, a counsellor or other or other professional person who, through the nature of their professional relationship with you, knows about your difficulties and can confirm what you are claiming.

Your claim will be judged by ACE Courses to consider who will decide whether they consider your claim to be valid and, if so, which assessment artefacts in which modules have been affected. The decision will be checked to confirm that it is reasonable, and you will be informed of the outcome within ten working days of submission.

Should you fail to submit a coursework assessment on time and an assessment penalty has been applied, that penalty will be lifted if you have submitted within ten working days of the original date of submission. You cannot submit a further extenuating circumstance claim within this period to extend the time further. If you have valid extenuating circumstances and cannot submit within 10 working days of the original deadline, you may be allowed a Deferral.

ACE Courses may decide that even if you were to pass the Deferral, you would not be able to achieve the pass mark required to complete the course. In such cases ACE Courses will make the decision as if you did not have valid extenuating circumstances.

Should you fail your Deferral, you will be deemed to have failed the entire course and will not be eligible to progress your studies with ACE Courses.

5. Student Code of Conduct

Scope and context

This policy sets out the code of conduct to which learners of ACE Courses are expected to adhere to and applies to all students registered with ACE Courses.

ACE Courses Code of Conduct is expected to be adhered to and the process when the Code of Conduct is breached. This statement reflects the organisations values of respect, fairness, equality and diversity.

Breach of the code of conduct may lead to disciplinary action being taken against a student and repeated breaches or a single very serious breach may result in a student being suspended or permanently excluded from ACE Courses.

Student group contracts

ACE Course students agree a group contract and Training Agreement on their course, and they are expected to adhere to these contracts throughout their training. The group and Training contract is essentially based on the values and standards expected of counsellors in training and are subject to review during the course.

In addition to the agreed course group contract and Training Contract students must:

- Behave respectfully (to peers, tutors, administrators, and anyone else employed by or connected with the centre (both ACE Courses and CPCAB) in line with the spirit and ethos of the profession.
- Respect equality of opportunity and promote anti-discriminatory practice. Attend regularly and inform the course tutor if late or absent. Note that if attendance falls below 85% then you will not be entered for the exam and will be withdrawn from the course.
- Confidentiality in alignment with GDPR (2018) with the caveats of drug trafficking, terrorism. Unlawful activity, disclosure of domestic violence, risk of harm to self or others, child protection issues.
- Be punctual and maintain time boundaries as agreed on the course.
- Complete course assignments as scheduled on the course. Extensions on assignments may incur an additional marking fee (please request further information from ACE Courses) and/or apply for extenuating circumstances (i.e., family bereavement during the course).
- Introduce unauthorised material in external assessment or passing off work by someone else as if it was their own (plagiarism).
- Altering assessment documents or certificates, falsifying evidence or documentation.
- Any act that could convey an unfair advantage over others in the same situation, such as recording a taped session for additional practice before the subsequent written paper.

- Follow Health and Safety, Fire procedures at training venue and carry out any instructions given by tutors in respect of venue safety procedures
- Act safely and not put themselves and others at risk by their own actions
- Take care of ACE Courses and training venue property and personal belongings
- Provision will be made for comfort and meal breaks during the day: please refrain from eating outside of these times during the training day unless medically necessary.

Students must not:

- Be violent or deliberately harm or cause injury to other persons.
- Use threatening, passive aggressive, sarcastic or directly aggressive behaviour.
- Bully or harass others.
- Disrupt teaching and learning.
- Use contact numbers or emails from group members contact list without consent.
- Where a candidate has withheld or withdrawn consent to being contacted then this must be respected.
- Deliberately damage ACE Courses or training venue property. Indulge in any criminal behaviour.
- Use mobile phones, recording or photography equipment during training unless specifically agreed with the course tutor.
- Use social media sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) in a way that is offensive or denigratory to others and ACE Courses.
- Consume or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at ACE Courses venues/Virtual Interactive Platforms.
- Smoke or use electronic cigarettes while in training venues.

Note:

Unacceptable behaviour or any act of gross misconduct, may lead to action under the Student Disciplinary Procedures.

Where students damage ACE Courses or training venue property (if applicable), they are liable for payment of the costs of any repairs or replacements.

Student Disciplinary Procedures

Academic misconduct, unsuitability for counselling type work and/or unacceptable behaviour by students may lead to action under the Student Disciplinary Procedures.

- Academic misconduct also includes plagiarism, cheating or collusions in permitting copying of assignments among students.
- Unsuitability for counselling type work can include capability, emotional or behavioural concerns that may impact or impede on safe, ethical and effective helping or counselling work.

- Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour that is in breach of the Student Code of conduct.

The Student Disciplinary Procedures each have three stages. It is expected that most cases will be dealt with in Stage 1. However, in more serious cases, ACE Courses may go straight to Stage 3, which could lead to exclusion.

Student Disciplinary Procedure for Academic Concerns and Misconduct

Stage 1 – Cause for concern

Your Tutor will tell you if they are concerned about academic issues or your suitability for engaging in helping or counselling client work.

A way forward will be agreed during a one-to-one meeting or tutorial with action points to address the concern, which will be reviewed.

Stage 2 – Continuing cause for concern

If the Tutor is still concerned, you will be required to attend a further action and review meeting with your Tutor. A way forward will be discussed, and you may be set a remediation plan which will be reviewed. Your Tutor may hold concerns (e.g., due to your ability, capability, behavioural or emotional issues, impeded fitness to practice, malpractice) regarding your readiness to start helping or counselling (and / or counselling supervision work) in a placement agency and / or private practice? Your Tutor will not provide a letter or readiness to practice to a placement agency until satisfied that you are suitably capable and emotionally stable enough to begin client work. If a Tutor is concerned about your suitability to continue with supervision work, then your Tutor &/or course Coordinator may contact your placement agency coordinator flagging up the cause for concern to be addressed with you and your supervisor. This concern will be reviewed and followed up by the course Tutor & or Coordinator with the candidate's agency Coordinator & Supervisor.

Stage 3 – Final cause for concern and misconduct

If the Tutor is still concerned, your continuation on the course will be subject to review by the course Coordinator. The process at this stage may lead to exclusion or other such conditions or measures such as deferring your studies.

You must attend regularly and inform the course tutor if late or absent. Note that if attendance falls below 85% then you will not be entered for the exam and will be withdrawn from the course.

Student Disciplinary Procedure for Unacceptable Behaviour

Stage 1 – Cause for concern

If your behaviour is causing concern, your tutor or the course Coordinator may give you a verbal warning and set actions for improvement. Examples of causes for concern include:

inappropriate language or behaviour / lack of care or awareness of others and the learning environment / eating or drinking in class without permission / unauthorised use of mobile phones, recording or photography equipment.

You will be given the chance to explain why you behaved in the way that you did. The incident will be recorded and any further action to take forward will be reviewed. If the concern is around upholding the boundaries of the group learning environment and contract, then your course tutor will facilitate reviews of the group contract with a view to individuals within group taking ownership of disruptions they are causing to effective learning and then taking action to uphold and further maintain the group contract. The group process will then be reviewed periodically by the course tutor and concerns addressed on a one to one and/or group basis.

Stage 2 – Continuing cause for concern or serious misconduct

If your behaviour is still causing concern or is of a level that cannot be dealt with informally, you will be required to attend a further action and review meeting with your tutor/s. A way forward will be discussed and set with action points for improvement in conduct and you may receive a formal written warning, which will inform you that further misconduct may result in further disciplinary action. Examples of more serious causes for concern include non-compliance with disciplinary action plans / offensive and abusive language or behaviour / serious or persistent disruption to teaching and learning failure to comply with Health and Safety regulations / serious or persistent disruption to others by bullying or on-going harassment

Stage 3 – Further misconduct and gross misconduct

Further misconduct as indicated above or gross misconduct. Examples of gross misconduct include offensive and abusive language or behaviour / violence or serious threat of violence / threatening or aggressive behaviour / deliberate damage to property endangering the health or safety of others / any criminal activities “othering” or behaviour which is out of alignment with ACE Courses EDI policy. It is emphasized that this is not meant as an exhaustive list of the types of cases that ACE Courses regard as gross misconduct. At this stage you may be suspended or immediately excluded. You will be informed in writing of this, and the coordinator will investigate your behaviour. You will not be able to attend ACE Courses training venues or premises until further notice by the coordinator. The coordinator will consult your course tutor or tutors and investigate incidents and review any witness evidence/testimony. The coordinator will then inform you of the outcome of this investigation. The outcome may include permanent exclusion or other measures as recommended. For incidents where offensive and abusive language or behaviour, threatening or aggressive behaviour, violence or criminal activity, endangering the health or safety of

others, has taken place there is appeal against the decision made to exclude. ACE Courses reserves the right to contact Candidate's placement agency where misconduct has occurred or where there are concerns about candidate suitability and readiness for client work.

6. Grievance, Complaint or Concern Policy

Introduction

We hope that every learner enjoys their training experience and every centre is able to provide the service they wish to. However, we understand that disagreements happen and we want to help you offer a fair and supportive process to deal with these disagreements which tend to fall into two categories:

· Disagreements tend to fall into two categories:

1. Complaints

Learners may raise a complaint about any aspect of their learning experience which they feel has fallen short of their expectations. We will endeavour to ensure the complaints process is conducted fairly to the learner and include at least one person who is independent of the complaint and competent to make a fair judgement on the complaint which will be other than those who are involved i.e. those who have a vested/personal interest or are too closely linked with the person being complained against e.g. a family member, close friend or colleague.

2. Internal Assessment Appeals

Candidates can appeal against an internal assessment decision if they believe that the processes and procedures which led to this decision have been unfair or discriminatory in some way (not just because they disagree with the decision). A staged process applies. The individual making the decisions will be a subject specific specialist who is suitably qualified to make an accurate judgement on the work which is under scrutiny. **Refer to Section 1 of this handbook - Internal Assessment and Appeals Process.**

Complaints Process:

Stage 1: INFORMAL:

If possible, you should try to resolve your complaint informally by discussing it with the person concerned or with your tutor.

Stage 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT:

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 or if Stage 1 is not appropriate for your circumstances, you should put your complaint in writing to Catherine Jones, Course Director in the first instance. Your complaint will be investigated, and a written response given within (28) working days.

Stage 3: COMPLAINT APPEAL:

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 and want to appeal the decision you should raise your appeal in writing with supporting evidence to substantiate your reason for appeal within 14 working days of the outcome of Stage 2. The complaint processes and procedures will be reviewed by a panel made up of people not involved with the complaint including an independent person. A final written response will be given within 28 working days. This decision is final.

If you feel at the conclusion of this process that your complaint has not been properly handled in accordance with this policy, you may raise this for review with the awarding organisation CPCAB www.cpcab.co.uk

7. Malpractice/Maladministration/Plagiarism

Malpractice/Maladministration is closely monitored to prevent contravening of the awarding bodies (i.e., CPCAB) requirements pertaining to the assessment process), which puts at risk the integrity, credibility and validity of a qualification, its assessment and candidate certificates.

Malpractice/Maladministration may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems, to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates. Plagiarism is the incorporation by a candidate's material which is not their own for purposes of assessment. This may include copying all or substantial parts of their assessed work from other sources and presenting this work as their own, whether intentional or not.

Candidate malpractice in assessment examples:

- The compilation of portfolios.
- The presentation of practical work.
- The preparation and authentication of evidence.
- Conduct during an internal or external assessment

Examples of learner/student malpractice can include:

Plagiarism, in simple terms presenting the ideas, work or words of other people and passing off the work as the learner's own, whether whole or part(s) of another's work, however, students should not be discouraged from group work, as this is an important skill. However, the following will be considered as malpractice:

- Failure to abide by instructions or advice given by a Tutor /Assessor / supervisor / invigilator, or Awarding Body conditions in relation to an assessment, test or examination.
- Introduction and/or use of unauthorised material or instruments in the examination room or assessment session, e.g., study guides, notes, mobile phones, tablets or other similar electronic devices.
- Disruptive, offensive or inappropriate behaviour.
- Misuse or attempted misuse of examination/assessment material. The College retains at its discretion to identify further areas of malpractice beyond the areas identified above.

8 Privacy Notice / Data Protection (GDPR)

Introduction

ACE Courses is registered as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and, from 25 May 2018, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Registration is renewed annually:

Data Protection Register Registration Number: Z3334988

Data Controller: Academy of Counselling Education Ltd. (ACE Courses)

Further details regarding the registration are available via www.ico.org.uk

ACE Courses (The Company) is legally required to keep certain information about employees, contractors, learners and other users to allow it to monitor performance, achievements, and health and safety, for example. It is also necessary to process information so that contracted staff can be recruited and paid, courses organised and legal obligations to funding bodies and government complied with. To comply with the law, information must be used fairly, stored safely and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully. To do this, we must comply with the Data Protection Principles which are set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and, from 25 May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (hereafter referred to as the GDPR).

The Types of Information Covered by Data Protection Legislation Personal Data

Data Protection legislation applies to personal information relating to a living person. It applies not only to computerised or automated personal data, but also to information held in manual filing systems. Included are such items of information as name, date of birth, contact details, title and gender, but also less obviously personal data such as IP addresses, online identifiers and pseudonyms. The legislation also applies to any records where an individual can be directly or indirectly identified from the information present, even where the name is not included. Sensitive Personal Data also known as Special Category Data, this is the subset of Personal Data where the data items are especially sensitive and need a greater level of protection. These include ethnic origin, health data, religion and sexual orientation.

ACE Courses UK's Responsibilities

Under the Data Protection Act and the GDPR, the data protection principles set out the main responsibilities for the company. These require that data shall be:

- a) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals
- b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes

- c) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed
- d) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed
- f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing. ACE Courses must have a lawful basis for processing any personal information and must make this clear in the privacy notice.

The Data Controller and the Data Processors

ACE Courses is the Data Controller under the Act, 2018 and the Director are therefore ultimately responsible for compliance with the statutory legislative requirements.

The Director takes this overall responsibility for compliance and delegates the overseeing of the implementation, giving advice and dealing with the subject access requests to the Compliance Manager. There are also designated Data Processors within ACE Courses who deal with data on a day-to-day basis relating primarily to learner data and staff data matters. For example, admin staff / Tutors / Contractors. The majority of subject access requests will be dealt with through individual Data processors. The Director is the Data Officer for all data issues relating to staff and is the Data Protection Officer.

The Rights of Individuals Whose Data is Processed by ACE Courses

1. The right to be informed.

ACE Courses is obliged to provide fair processing information and does so through its privacy notices at enrolment.

2. The right of access

Individuals have the right to access their personal data, and this access will be provided as quickly as possible – we are legally bound to provide the data within one calendar month. This data will usually be provided free of charge.

3. The right to rectification

Individuals are entitled to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete.

4. The right to erasure

An individual is entitled to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing. It should be noted that ACE Courses is legally obliged to process and retain much of the personal information it holds.

5. The right to restrict processing

Individuals have the right to restrict ACE Courses from processing certain aspects of their personal data if one of the following circumstances applies:

The accuracy of the data is contested

The individual objects to the processing of the data in principle

ACE Courses processing of the data is unlawful

ACE Courses wishes to delete the data, but the individual has need of the data for legal purposes.

6. The right to data portability

Individuals may request an electronic copy of their personal data to use for their own purposes. ACE Courses will make every effort to provide the data in a form that is useable and acceptable to the individual, and this will be done without charge.

7. The right to object

Individuals have the right to object to:

- Direct marketing – ACE Courses will stop processing for this purpose on receipt of an objection.
- Data processing for research or statistics – ACE Courses will engage with the individual to come to an agreement within the law.
- Data processing in the Company's legitimate interests – ACE Courses will engage with the individual to come to an agreement within the law.

8. Rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling

Individuals who have any concerns about automated or computerised decision making should refer them to the Data Controller.

Responsibilities of Staff

- To ensure that any information that they provide to the Company in connection with their employment is accurate and up to date.
- To inform ACE Courses of any change to information which they have provided.
- To check the information that ACE Courses will send out from time to time, giving details of information kept and processed about staff, and change any information that is incorrect or incomplete.
- To comply with the guidelines for data collection and processing when, as part of their responsibilities, they collect information about other people, (for example learners' course work, opinions about ability, references to other academic institutions, or details of personal circumstances).

Responsibilities of Learners

- To ensure that all personal data provided to ACE Courses is accurate and up to date.
- To ensure that changes of address, next of kin etc. are notified to ACE Courses Training UK Ltd.
- To ensure that they keep their passwords to e-portfolios and online systems secret and secure.
- To report to ACE Courses if they suspect their account security has been breached.

Data Security

In order to ensure the security of personal information, ACE Courses will:

- Maintain security guarding the Company's network and systems.
- Prevent users from storing data on local drives of non-portable IT hardware
Ensure staff maintain safety of their passwords.
- Wipe hard drives and memory of all equipment before disposal in order to ensure the security of personal information, staff are required to:

- Lock their IT device when leaving their PC/Laptop unattended
 - Avoid opening emails on a projected screen – private information may be displayed to anyone else in the room or even outside via the window
 - When emailing personal data, password protect in an attachment and phone the password through to a trusted number
 - Refer all requests for disclosure of personal data from external sources to be dealt with via the central register
 - Contact the Director if in doubt about any data security matter
 - Check the email addresses of intended recipients before sending any email, as email programs often incorrectly predict email addresses you are typing in
 - Consider using BCC to restrict visibility of other recipients' addresses when emailing to a group of recipients (especially where there are large numbers of recipients or some external addresses). Where ACE Courses process data on behalf of other organisations, e.g., conducting external DBS checks, it will comply to ICO requirements.
- Loss or Theft of Personal Information All incidences of loss or theft of personal information must be reported immediately to the Company's Data Controller (Melanie Phelps). A data or IT security incident relating to breaches of security and/or confidentiality could range from computer users sharing passwords, to the loss or theft of personal information either inside or outside ACE Courses. A security incident is any event that has resulted or could result in:
The disclosure of personal/sensitive/confidential information to any unauthorised person.
 - The integrity of the system or data being put at risk
 - Threat to personal safety or privacy.
 - Legal obligation or penalty. All incidents must be reported to the Data Controller in the first instance, as soon as possible after the event. In the case of a potential breach, the Data Controller will instigate an investigation into the incident and will decide whether it needs to be reported to any regulatory bodies, in particular the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). If a breach has occurred, the ICO will be informed within 72 hours of the incident, and if appropriate all data subjects concerned will also be contacted and informed. If possible, the offending paperwork, data or communication will be retrieved as soon as possible.
 - The Data Controller will retain a central register of all such incidents occurring within ACE Courses, whether or not they resulted in a breach. The following is a list of examples of breaches of security and breaches of confidentiality. It is neither exclusive nor exhaustive and should be used as a guide only. If there is any doubt as to what constitutes an incident, you should consult the Data Controller who will decide what action should be taken.

Examples of a breach of confidentiality:

- Finding confidential/personal information either in hard copy or on a portable media device outside company premises.
- Finding any records about a staff member, student, or applicant in any location outside ACE Courses premises.
- Passing information to unauthorised people either verbally, in writing or electronically. Subject Consent In many cases, ACE Courses can only process personal data with the consent of the individual. In some cases, if the data is sensitive, express consent must be obtained. Agreement to the Company processing some specified classes of personal data is a condition of acceptance of a learner onto any course, and a condition of employment for staff. This includes information about previous unspent criminal convictions (all convictions in the case of staff/contractors). Therefore, all prospective staff and learners will be asked to sign a Consent to Process form, regarding types of information when an offer of employment or a course place is made. A refusal to sign such a form can result in the offer being withdrawn.

Conclusion

Compliance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, and from 25th May 2018 the GDPR, is the responsibility of all members of ACE Courses. Any deliberate breach of the Data Protection Policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken or even a criminal prosecution. Any questions or concerns about the interpretation or operation of the policy should be taken up with the Director.

Please note for those candidates who are undertaking the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) Approved Practitioner Qualification (APQ) candidate and student membership numbers will be shared between CPCAB and BACP.

If you require any further information on the Data Protection Act 1998, the superseding General Data Protection Regulation, or how any aspect of either is implemented at ACE Courses, please make contact with: Melanie Phelps: melanie@acecourses.org.uk

Useful Links:

Information Commissioner: www.ico.gov.uk

ICO GDPR Resources: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>

JISC GDPR Resources: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/gdpr>

**Academy of Counselling Education
(ACE Courses)**



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