

Report to NZAP Council from the NZAP Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) Committee

From: John O'Connor, ACP Chairperson on behalf of the ACP committee.

Date: 7 November 2021

Introduction

The period since the June 2021 NZAP Council meeting has been both productive and a time of some consolidation for the ACP committee.

Committee Membership

Since my last report in June 2021 we have farewelled Charlotte MacLachlan, as a committee member and the registrar. Charlotte has been a valued colleague and contributor to the work of the committee and will be much missed. The remainder of the committee remains the same, with Alisa Hirschfeld having picked up the role of registrar as well as continuing as secretary, Sue Morrison has provided excellent service as the receiver and coordinator of initial applications to the ACP. I remain as chair, and Diane Zwimpfer and David Cartwright as committee members. At our meeting in December, we are considering possible new committee members and we would like to bring our number committee members to seven.

New ACP applicants

The ACP continues to receive regular and frequent enquiries regarding training within the ACP pathway. Sue Morrison has ably fielded these many enquiries, with five new candidates being interviewed since June 2021. We are confident that the ACP will continue to receive regular enquiries. We currently have 18 candidates in training, an increase of four from June. In addition, one candidate is scheduled to sit the final ACP panel interview on 21 November, Covid lockdown restrictions permitting.

ACP and the Psychotherapy Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ)

As you will be aware, PBANZ released its finalised accreditation standards for psychotherapy training providers in September 2021 (see attached). These standards are the standards that will be applied to the process of accreditation of training providers such as the ACP. Overall, the accreditation standards appear at first reading to place significant additional demands, particularly administrative demands, on the ACP as a small training provider.

In brief, additional requirements the accreditation standards place on training providers such as the ACP are as follows:

1. Workload and resourcing increase: There is a significant increase in the need for documentation, training and complaints processes, administration and record keeping et cetera (see details below), that will place an increased administrative burden on our training pathway.

2. Requirement of 250 supervised clinical hours of practice within the training pathway prior to the granting of any form of registration: Unsurprisingly, given that the Board indicated the

direction of their thinking at our meeting earlier in 2021, they have included a requirement of “Clause: 6, B, iii “a minimum of 250 supervised clinical hours is to be completed during the training program/pathway.” This means, as we have discussed before, that interim registration will not be granted at the commencement of our training pathway, as it currently is, but only after the completion of these training hours and assessment of this.

This is a significant change, with several implications including:

This raises the possibility of either a two-stage (as we currently have) or a three-stage training process. The two or three stages would be:

- i. An entry application and interview process (similar to that which we currently have in the ACP).
- ii. Assessment at the completion of 250 hours of clinical supervised hours (which we could implement as a requirement concurrent with completing the case study as in the current ACP). OR,
- iii. Assessment of the 250 hours of clinical supervised practice occurs at some midway point in the ACP process, but with the final case study being undertaken sometime after the 250 hours. (Note: this would necessitate some form of “assessed mini case study” being undertaken at the midway point, once 250 hours of clinical practice has been completed).

The ACP has not yet made a conclusive decision about these options. Rather, we are wanting to dialogue with the Board, before finalising any decisions, and of course doing so in consultation with Council. However, as I mentioned in my last report to Council, the ACP committee is unanimous in its desire to maintain a very high standard of training and does not want to take on candidates at the first entry point who are completely brand-new to therapeutic work. Therefore we are in favour of retaining our current entry point requirements; namely that the candidate has prior to the initial entry, a qualification relevant to psychotherapy (for example counselling, clinical psychology, psychology, psychiatry, counselling social work et cetera), two years of prior individual therapy close in time to when they apply to undertake the ACP, and 200 hours of supervised clinical (though not necessarily psychotherapeutic) practice (for example counselling experience, experience as a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist et cetera).

Other implications:

As well as the two main implications above, I highlight several others that both the ACP, and Council, need to think through:

1. **Accountable to an external authority:** The requirements of the accreditation standards documentation mean the ACP will be required to meet the demands of an external authority (the Registration Board), in a more comprehensive manner than currently.
2. **Attractiveness of the ACP training pathway:** We believe the attractiveness of the training pathway can be retained but will need to think carefully about the implications of any additional requirements.

3. Increased requirements on supervisors: The document seems to gesture towards the likelihood of needing the completion of specific requirements and/or qualifications for ACP supervisors in the future, and these will need to be thought through carefully.

4. Expenses: Possibility that additional administrative requirements will lead to an increase in costs for candidates.

5. Resourcing: The resourcing of all the requirements below, both in terms of staffing and in terms of physical resources, for a training program administered by volunteers, will also need to be thought through carefully.

ACP committee's initial thoughts and actions in response to the accreditation standards

Initially we had concerns about whether these demands would be realistic for a small training provider such as the ACP to be able to meet. Whilst these concerns remain, we are wanting to work collaboratively with PBANZ to explore how we might meet the accreditation standards. As a beginning point to this, we have written to the Board expressing our surprise that the accreditation standards seem not to have taken into account the difference between a course-based training approach (such as that at AUT University) and an apprenticeship training pathway such as the ACP and He Ara Māori ACP. We have therefore requested that the Board, when approaching the accreditation of training providers such as the ACP and He Ara Māori ACP, take into account their 2018 PBANZ consultation document, which much more fully considered apprenticeship training pathways in relation to accreditation standards. We are hopeful that this is the beginning of a dialogue with the Board, that might assist us eventually to meet the accreditation standards in a manner which is realistic for the resources of the ACP.

Timeframe regarding accreditation standards

It is important to note that these standards are unlikely to be implemented for at least 18 months, which gives us some time to prepare. In addition, we have been advised, that current candidates and supervisors, who have entered our training pathway under the current system, will be grand parented under the current system, and will not be affected by the accreditation standards, when they come into effect. The standards will apply only for candidates who enter a training pathway once accreditation standards come into effect.

Summary

The ACP committee is unified in its view that whatever form the ACP takes in the future, it remains a training qualification that maintains:

1. Its current high standard
2. That it is a training not for trainees who are completely new to the practice of therapy, but rather for those who already have significant therapy experience (both their own and with clients) and relevant training experiences, prior to commencement of the ACP, and

3. That it is for candidates who are committed to seeing through the entire ACP training process, including completion of the final work practice description, case study and final assessment panel.

Communicating with interested NZAP members

We have written to all current candidates and supervisors updating them regarding the accreditation standards and assuring them that they will be grandfathered under the current arrangements. In addition, as you will be aware, we are hosting a zoom meeting for all current interested NZAP members, to consult and provide information regarding the accreditation standards and implications for the ACP, and for He Ara Māori ACP at 7 PM on Monday 8 November.

Conclusion

The ACP committee remains dedicated to maintaining the integrity and standard of the ACP training pathway. The regularity of enquiries regarding this training pathway, and the quality of candidates demonstrated in final panels and in initial interviews, is very satisfying. We are therefore aiming to ensure that the ACP will continue to be a rich and valuable learning process for psychotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand