



Association for Family Therapy (AFT)

Criteria for Becoming a Qualified Therapist

Information Sheet P7

November, 2002

QUALIFIED LEVEL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The candidate should have:

1. professional qualifications or equivalents which are:
 - relevant to practice in social welfare (such as psychology, psychiatry, nursing, social work and general practice); *and*
 - at graduate level of competence.
2. a minimum of two years' practice post-core professional qualification.
3. Foundation level training, study and practice which demonstrate that they have:
 - a range of basic practice and enquiry skills in working with families;
 - an understanding of different models for analysing life-cycle development within the diversity of family forms;
 - awareness of their own values/life experience and how these contribute to their therapeutic practice;
 - an ability to articulate their professional development needs and goals, and the capacity to benefit from further training;
 - adherence to the AFT code of ethics, including an appreciation of discrimination in society and methods for combating it in all its forms;
 - an ability to apply a range of theories in practice.

REQUIREMENTS OF A QUALIFYING-LEVEL TRAINING IN FAMILY THERAPY

Length and amount of training

Qualified family therapists should have undertaken a minimum of 320 hours of therapeutic practice and 320 hours of academic study over a period of not less than 2 years and not more than 5 years.

Therapeutic practice

Assessed and supervised practice component (see definition of 'supervision' below) or clinical work of at least 320 hours. This clinical time will be in the presence

of patients/clients and the clinical team. As part of the 320 hours, the trainee will spend a minimum of 40 hours as the primary therapist working in face-to-face contact with families, their social networks and wider systems. This practice should demonstrate the following:

- capacity for independent and accountable clinical practice;
- ability to transfer skills between client groups and settings;
- capacity to take the initiative in the supervision/consultation arena;
- development of confidence, fluency and flexibility in the therapeutic arena;
- ability to use, elaborate and critically evaluate theoretical frameworks to enhance practice;
- awareness of personal development processes and how these may constrain and/or enhance therapeutic practice;
- experience of a range of family forms and related social systems, at different developmental stages and displaying a variety of therapeutic issues;
- ability to recognise the limits of their own expertise, and skill in referring to appropriate resource(s);
- ability to use a range of methods to evaluate the process and outcomes of their clinical practice.

Academic study

A minimum of 320 hours of academic study (see definition of 'academic study' below) at postgraduate level which is assessed. The study should demonstrate:

- secure assimilation and understanding of systemic theories including an appreciation of their location within the arena of all psychotherapies;
- ability to use these theories to explain, analyse, evaluate and provide a critique of practice;
- comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of the literature in systemic theories and practices;
- ability to compare and contrast different schools within systemic theories and knowledge of their relationship with other theories of therapy and change;

- appreciation of the social, political and institutional context within which families and their helping, systems function, including knowledge of the research and theory relevant to these contexts;
- ability to critically evaluate relevant research methods and findings;
- in-depth understanding, within relevant theoretical frameworks, of the psycho-social developmental processes within families and their social systems.

Ethics

Demonstrate that they have rigorously explored their values and have a clearly articulated code of ethics which is congruent with AFT's code (Information Sheet A4) and which they continue to review and evaluate.

Where appropriate, demonstrate an appreciation of their agency's values and codes of practice and an ability to contribute to the development of them.

Personal development

Demonstrate that they are using live supervision, video review, peer consultation, reflection, analysis and self-exploration to develop awareness of the personal contribution their unique combination of values, experience, knowledge and skills enables them to make to the therapeutic process.

Research and evaluation

Use a systemic reflective approach to practice in order to design and implement validated evaluation / research which is relevant to the nature of their theoretical approach, practice settings and populations. This should include methods of gaining service users' feedback on therapy and the implementation of relevant changes.

Applications

Show capacity to use systemic practice in a range of settings and with a wide variety of family groupings. Demonstrate an ability to practise in a collaborative way with a variety of professional, community and user groups. Show capacity to contribute to the practice of colleagues through consultation processes.

DEFINITIONS

'Supervision'

The 320 hours of supervised clinical practice needed to achieve qualified status means practice directly supervised by the course staff and/or approved supervisor (see below). The 40 hours as the primary therapist in the presence of the client do not include time spent with

the team and/or supervisor planning the session and debriefing but may include the mid-session time out. All the 40 hours must be available for direct scrutiny by the course team.

The 320 hours of clinical practice usually take place in teams led by an approved supervisor where the therapist, team, supervisor and family work together to conduct a therapeutic process. This process is aided by the use of observation screens, video and other linkages and methods of co-working between the participants. The primary purpose is to provide a therapeutic experience for the family; the secondary purpose is to have direct access to the skill development of the therapist. The majority of the practice should be with families and their immediate networks.

Using these methods, it is possible for trainees to be involved in therapeutic work with a large number of families, in a variety of roles using a range of learning methods and types of supervision. These methods include team review of videotapes of clinical sessions, live supervision of family sessions, team preparation, mid-session consultation, debriefing and evaluation of the family sessions. This supervised clinical time excludes individually-oriented work: e.g. individual reviewing of videotapes; writing records, letters and reports etc; preparing for supervision sessions; administrative activity associated with receiving referrals, convening and liaising etc. and other case management activities which occur outside the sessions with families.

'An approved supervisor'

An approved supervisor is a UKCP-registered family therapist who has met the AFT criteria for recognition as an approved supervisor.

'Academic study'

Refers to structured learning usually in group situations under the supervision of the course team. Not more than 40% of the 320 hours necessary for qualified status may be through independent study, which is defined as working alone or in groups without the presence of course staff. It is expected that this structured time will be supplemented by private study (i.e. working along on self-directed tasks) which is equal to a further 50% of the total hours in structured study, making a minimum total of 480 hours of academic study time.

The Chair of the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) welcomes general feedback and suggestions on Information Sheets and can be contacted via Sue Kennedy, the Executive Officer, at 7 Executive Suite, St James Court, Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 6PS. Tel: 01925 444414. Fax: 08701383881 Email: s.kennedy@aft.org.uk

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