



Becoming a Counsellor

Things You Should Know
Before Study

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Becoming a Counsellor - Things to Know Before Study

Before embarking on a journey to become a counsellor in Australia, there are several key things to consider.

Considering Your Career Aspirations:

- **Identify Interests:** Reflect on which populations or issues you are most passionate about (e.g., children, substance abuse, trauma).
- **Evaluate Work Environment:** Consider whether you prefer a structured setting like a school or a more flexible environment like private practice.
- **Understand Qualification Requirements:** Research the specific qualifications required for your desired role and setting and plan your education and certification accordingly.
- **Explore Growth Opportunities:** Investigate the potential for career advancement within different settings. Choosing a course and provider.

[More Information](#)

Qualifications & Accreditation

Understand the educational pathway required to become a Counsellor in Australia. This typically starts with an entry-level Diploma in Counselling, progress to a Bachelor's degree and ultimately to a Master's and then Doctorate in Counselling. Ensure that the program you choose is accredited by Australian Counselling Association (ACA) so you can register as a counsellor. The Australian Qualifications framework sets out qualification descriptors for Australian training providers.

[AQF Qualifications](#)

The ACA list all Accredited Providers on their website. So, whether you are looking to undertake a Diploma, Bachelor or Master's degree, be sure to select one that is eligible for membership.

[ACA Website](#)

Pursuing a counselling degree involves financial investment in tuition fees, textbooks, and other educational expenses. Costs can vary depending on the institution, program duration, and whether you study full-time or part-time. It will also require an investment of your time to complete your assessments as part of your studies.

Specialisation & Modalities

Counselling offers various specialisations and therapeutic modalities such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), psychoanalysis, and humanistic therapy. Counsellors typically participate in core training as part of their course and then go on to complete additional training in specific modalities. Explore different modalities to find which aligns best with your interests and career goals.

Grow Your Clinical Experience by Volunteering

Practical experience is essential. Your course might offer placements where you can gain supervised clinical experience. Additionally, we recommend exploring volunteering opportunities. Volunteer work provides invaluable practical experience, even after completing training, for several reasons. Firstly, it allows you to apply the theoretical knowledge gained during your training in real-world settings, enhancing your skills and confidence as a counsellor. Furthermore, volunteering exposes you to diverse client populations and issues, broadening your understanding of counselling.

Supervised clinical experience through volunteer work provides an opportunity for ongoing feedback and mentorship, facilitating continuous learning and professional development. ACA encourages volunteering during your studies to build your experience and job-readiness. This may also open pathways for placement opportunities during your studies.

Finally, many employers and professional organisations value volunteer experience, seeing it as a demonstration of commitment to the field and a willingness to contribute to the community. While training equips you with foundational knowledge, volunteer work complements this by offering practical, hands-on experience essential for becoming a competent and effective counsellor.

Websites like [GoVolunteer](#), [NSW Volunteering](#) and [Seek Volunteer](#) are examples of sites looking for volunteers that potentially align with your personal interests and career goals.

Navigating the Job Market

Navigating the job market for counsellors involves considering various factors such as geographical location, specialisation, and experience level. It's essential to research what qualifications are considered entry-level in the sector, as this can vary depending on whether you plan to open a private practice or seek a paid role. Spending time exploring the job market can help you make informed decisions about which course to pursue initially. While entry-level positions may exist, many employers often require a minimum of three years' experience. Despite potential challenges, the counselling sector's expansion offers opportunities for career growth. ACA strongly encourages paid employment following completion of your studies.

This will help you to:

- Establish your professional identity building your reputation and credibility.
- Opportunities to build your stakeholder and referral networks.
- Understand the various funding models presented.
- Gain exposure in working in a multi-disciplinary team and understanding the roles and responsibilities of other professionals in provide person-centred care.
- Opportunity to undertake workplace supervision.
- Secure income.

Join a Peak Body for Counselling & Psychotherapy

The ACA is Australia's largest peak body for Counsellors and Psychotherapists in Australia. You can join for free as a student and we will support you through your journey of study. Being part of the ACA means more than a credential, it signifies a commitment to the highest standards, ethical practices, and professionalism. We believe in creating a transparent and accountable framework through a consistent [Code of Ethics](#) and comprehensive [Scope of Practice](#).

Ongoing Costs

After completing your course, it's crucial to consider ongoing costs to maintain ACA registration. These include fulfilling annual requirements such as Ongoing

Professional Development (OPD), engaging in supervision sessions, and paying a registration fee. Additionally, obtaining public liability insurance, including Professional Indemnity insurance, is essential to safeguard both you and your business. For further details, refer to "Building Your Private Counselling Practice."

Ongoing Professional Development

Ongoing Professional Development is indispensable for maintaining ACA registration. It ensures that counsellors stay abreast of industry trends, acquire new skills, and uphold their professional competence. OPD encompasses various activities:

- **Workshops and Seminars:** These intensive sessions focus on specific topics relevant to the profession, offering hands-on learning and direct interaction with experts.
- **Conferences:** Providing a broader scope of learning, conferences feature multiple sessions, keynote speeches, and networking events. They enable professionals to stay updated on the latest research, trends, and best practices.
- **Online Courses and Webinars:** Offering flexibility and accessibility, online courses and webinars allow professionals to learn at their own pace. Many organizations offer accredited courses that fulfill OPD requirements.
- **Professional Reading:** Staying informed about new developments through industry journals, articles, and books is crucial. Many professions have designated reading lists contributing to OPD hours.
- **Peer Learning and Mentoring:** Engaging with colleagues through discussion groups, peer reviews, and mentoring relationships fosters shared learning and knowledge exchange.

Commitment to ongoing learning through workshops, seminars, conferences, and other OPD activities enhances counsellors' skills, and advances their careers.

Supervision

While supervision in counselling undoubtedly entails costs, it's essential to view these expenses as investments in professional growth and client welfare rather than mere financial burdens. Supervision fees vary depending on factors such as the supervisor's experience, qualifications, and the frequency of sessions. However, the benefits gained from supervision, including skill refinement, ethical guidance, and ongoing professional development, outweigh the associated costs.

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"Disclaimer: While the information provided in this fact sheet is current as of the date written, it is essential for counsellors to stay updated with the latest regulations, resources, and practices specific to their state within Australia. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to ensure compliance and effectiveness in their work. Seeking guidance from a supervisor is advised to navigate regional requirements. This disclaimer underscores the counsellor's responsibility to stay informed and adhere to relevant standards and guidelines."



ACA

**AUSTRALIAN
COUNSELLING
ASSOCIATION**

Unit 2/42 Finsbury Street
Newmarket QLD 4051
Australia – Yuggera Country

P : 07 3356 4255
E : aca@theaca.net.au
W : www.theaca.net.au

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