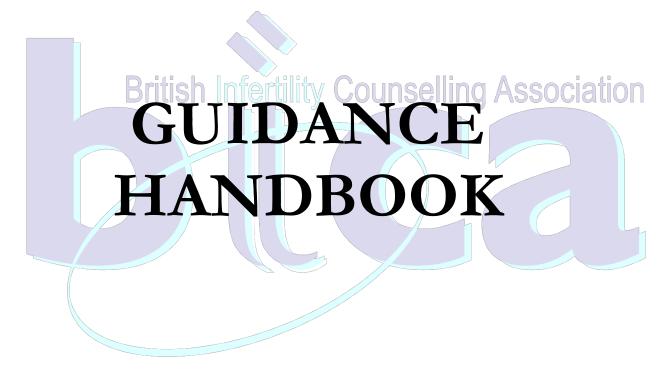


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www.bica.net

BRITISH INFERTILITY COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION COUNSELLOR ACCREDITATION SCHEME



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1. SUMMARY

PLEASE READ ALL RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THIS GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE APPLYING TO AVOID UNNECESSARY DELAY.

YOU MUST USE THE LATEST VERSION OF THE FORMS AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE

This Handbook explains the BICA Fertility Counselling Accreditation Scheme; the first of its kind in the world when it was launched in 2005. It enables counsellors with professional involvement in fertility issues who are full members of BICA, after assessment of an individual application, to receive professional accreditation in one of four categories:

- a Accredited Member ~ AMBICA
- b Accredited Member of BICA (Independent Practitioner) ~ AMBICA (IP)
- c Accredited Member of BICA (Overseas) ~ AMBICA (O)
- d Senior Accredited Member ~ SAMBICA

Applications must be made electronically, except in the case of SAMBICA., using the **latest, current version of the forms** published on the BICA website

The British Fertility Counselling Association (BICA) is a professional membership organisation for counsellors in reproductive health care, founded in 1988, the first of its kind in the world. It welcomes into membership all those who support the aims of BICA. The accreditation scheme, also a world first, and one of the first specialist counselling accreditation schemes for any counselling speciality in the UK, was fully established in 2008. It serves the twin purpose of encouraging the highest standards of professional practice in this specialised area and meeting the requirements of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (HFE) Act. Together with post-adoption record access counselling, fertility counselling is the only form of counselling which must be made available in the UK, by law - the HFE Act, to those who wish to use it.

All fertility counsellors are expected by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA Code of Practice 9th ed.) to be accredited under a suitable scheme 1. This approach was agreed in outline after consultation with the membership during 2005/6; piloted and formally introduced by BICA Executive in 2008. It replaced an earlier scheme based on academic and professional assessment which led to the Fertility Counselling Award, which was awarded to only a few BICA members from 2003, but is recognised as equivalent to SAMBICA under this scheme. It reflects the BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling 2 and is modelled on that of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

The BICA scheme fully acknowledges the skills, accreditation and of established fertility counsellors. In its early days a grandparent route was offered to those established fertility counsellors who did not hold formal counselling qualifications; many had taken up the early posts through experience of social work or nursing. As fertility counselling is a secondary level specialism, BICA requires those aspiring to BICA accreditation to have first acquired professional counselling training and accreditation, or the BACP Certificate of Proficiency. It is on the basis of these that BICA considers the awards of S/AMBICA. We wish to maintain and encourage the highest standards in this specialist area, including a professional development route which acknowledges seniority and special expertise, and does not devalue either BACP or other counselling accreditations, including BICA's own Fertility Counselling Award (ICA).³

Counselling BICA uses the title in line with the BICA 'Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling' and the terms of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act and HFEA Code of Practice. Some will also use the title 'psychotherapy' which for our purposes is regarded as equivalent. In BICA's context 'counselling' is the appropriate title for the present as it is enshrined in the HFE Act.

¹ Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (as amended 2008) and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority Code of Practice, 9th ed. 2019

² BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling (BICA, 4th Edition, York, 2019; ISBN 1–901406-35-0) and also on the BICA website www.bica.net.

³ Infertility Counselling Award was established with Sheffield Hallam University as a specialist, Masters' level award for infertility counsellors. 7 awards were made 2001 – 2003 and are equivalent to SAMBICA accreditation.

'BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling 4th Edition' All members are required to accept and, if as fertility counsellors, practise within the BICA 'Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling' (referred to as BICA Guidelines) and the specific Codes of Practice relating to Ethical Practice, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Fitness to Practise and Appointment of an Executor, Complaints and Equal Opportunities. The requirements reflect those in the Act and Code.

HFEAct The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990) established the HFE Authority which licenses all assisted conception units (ACUs) in the UK. It regulates these clinics by inspections guided by a Code of Practice which it publishes; this defines standards in fertility treatments. The Code specifies suitable qualifications for fertility counsellors in licensed clinics as:

- 2.14 All counsellors should have specialist competence in fertility counselling and:
- a) hold a recognised counselling, clinical psychology, counselling psychology or psychotherapy qualification to the level diploma of higher education or above, **and**
- b) be accredited under the scheme of the BICA (or an equivalent body) or show evidence of working towards such accreditation.
- 2.15 A member of staff appointed to the role of counsellor should be able to provide evidence of being an accredited member of, or working towards accredited membership of, a recognised professional counselling body. The body should have a complaints/disciplinary procedure, and the individual should have agreed to abide by an appropriate code of conduct or ethics.

'Equivalent body' para. 2.12

There is <u>no equivalent body to BICA</u>, and BICA does not accept that a counselling qualification or generic accreditation is equivalent to S/AMBICA which is the only specialist fertility counselling accreditation available in this or any other country. Nor is there any other body equivalent to BICA but in certain circumstances the HFEA will accept that a counsellor who is not BICA accredited may meet demonstrating specialist adequate 'equivalent' standards of professional practice and specialist knowledge and skills. Details of the expectations in such cases have been agreed between HFEA and BICA and are designed to be comparable and no less onerous than those of BICA accreditation. The HFEA and BICA believe that the BICA accreditation is the straightforward and most acceptable route, and the 'gold standard' competence.

3. REGISTRATION & 'Working Towards Accreditation'

Accreditation under BICA's scheme meets the requirements of the HFEA that fertility counsellors working in, or attached to a treatment centre with a third-party agreement in place shall have specialist competence in fertility counselling or be "working towards" such accreditation. BICA has agreed with the HFEA that the phrase 'working towards accreditation' means that the counsellor concerned has registered for accreditation with BICA and will submit a full application by a specified date, normally within 2 years. (This time limit may be extended if a reasonable case is put to the Accreditation Chair. This case may be put to a Special Cases Panel if the Chair feels it appropriate) In order to register the appropriate fee must be paid and evidence submitted demonstrating that they meet the requirements of the HFEA Code of Practice 2.14;

- a) practise as a fertility counsellor,
- b) belong to a counselling professional body like BICA with its own complaints and disciplinary procedures,
- c) adhere to a suitable code of conduct or ethics,
- d) hold professional indemnity insurance,
- e) hold suitable counselling, clinical or counselling psychology or psychotherapy qualifications,
- f) have been accredited by a recognised generic counselling body (or are seeking this) OR hold the BACP Certificate of Proficiency OR be on the BACP Register

Accreditation This refers to counsellors or psychotherapists who are either accredited or working towards accreditation by professional organisations listed on the BICA website and in this Handbook Annex 1

See Annex 1 for a list of recognised, generic counselling and psychotherapy bodies.

4. ACCREDITATION ROUTES

There are several routes to BICA accreditation. These are SAMBCA, AMBICA, (Independent Practitioner - IP) and AMBICA (Overseas - O). In each case, before applying to be accredited by BICA, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- a) Individual Member of BICA in good standing (and remains so whilst accredited) and has completed a 1 year full-time, or 2 year part-time (or at least the equivalent) counselling, clinical or counselling psychology and/or psychotherapy qualification including a supervised placement;
- b) **Supervision** having a contract for counselling supervision for a minimum of one and a half hours per month for each month in which practice is undertaken. If an accredited member of another recognised counselling/psychotherapy body, the number of hours' supervision should meet its requirements. BICA recommends that the supervisor should hold a qualification in supervision.
- c) Insurance covered by professional indemnity insurance, personally or through an employer
- d) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) undertakes a minimum of 30 hours CPD activity in each year of which at least 10 hours should relate directly to fertility counselling practice.

All of these criteria must be met. A Special Cases Panel has the power to recommend individual exceptions to be made to any of these criteria if a case is made out by the candidate which is supported by the Accreditation Board Chair.

The following categories of accreditation have been agreed, with the associated special criteria:

4.1 Accredited Member of BICA (AMBICA)

- a) Is a counsellor <u>accredited</u> by a nationally recognised accrediting body for counselling / psychotherapy / clinical or counselling psychology (see 3 above and Annex 1) **or** the BACP Certificate of Proficiency (see below 5.5 for details of the additional evidence required for such applicants) <u>and</u>
- b) has completed the <u>BICA Foundation Course for Fertility Counsellors or</u> equivalent formal programme of learning about fertility counselling *or* can produce a specialist experience report to show how specialist knowledge of assisted conception has been achieved <u>and</u>
- c) has completed <u>150 hours per annum</u> of supervised fertility counselling practice over 2 of the last 3 years <u>and</u>
- d) has normally received the guidance of a **mentor** during the period of supervised fertility counselling practice.
- e) who expects to be working for a minimum of <u>50 hours p.a</u>. in fertility counselling during the period of accreditation.

These counsellors when accredited may use the title AMBICA

4.2 Accreditation Route for Independent Practitioners – AMBICA (IP)

- a) Counsellor <u>accredited</u> by a nationally <u>recognised accrediting body</u> for counselling / psychotherapy / clinical or counselling psychology or the BACP Certificate of Proficiency (see 5.5 below for details of the additional evidence required for such applicants) and
- b) completed the <u>BICA Foundation Course for Fertility Counsellors</u> <u>or</u> equivalent formal programme of learning about fertility counselling <u>and/or</u> experience which focuses on the role of the counselling on the implications of licensed treatments <u>and</u>
- c) submits a <u>specialist experience report</u> in assisted conception counselling explaining how this has been achieved and will be sustained including detailed knowledge of implications counselling and the requirements of the HFEA Code of Practice and the HFE Act <u>and</u>
- d) has completed 50 hours per annum of supervised fertility counselling practice over 2 of the last 3 years and
- e) does not primarily practice in a licensed clinic but has received the guidance of a <u>licensed clinic-based</u> <u>mentor</u> during this period of supervised fertility counselling practice who is able to advise on the demands of practice in a licensed treatment centre <u>and</u>
- f) who expects to be working for a minimum of <u>50 hours p.a</u>. in fertility counselling during the period of accreditation.

These counsellors when accredited may use the title AMBICA (IP)

4.3 Accreditation Route for Overseas Practitioners - AMBICA (O) COLON

- a) Counsellor <u>accredited</u> by their local, nationally <u>recognised</u> <u>accrediting body</u> for counselling/psychotherapy/clinical or counselling psychology <u>and</u>
- b) has completed the <u>BICA Foundation Course for Fertility</u> <u>Counsellors or equivalent formal programme of learning about fertility counselling and/or experience which focuses on the role of counselling on the implications of fertility treatments <u>and</u></u>
- c) submits a specialist experience report in assisted conception counselling explaining how this has been achieved—and will be sustained including detailed knowledge of implications counselling and the requirements of the local regulatory body [if any] and its Code of Practice and Act if appropriate and
- d) submits a detailed account as part of the **practice report** of the regulatory system under which assisted conception treatments operate in their country of practice
- e) has completed <u>50 hours per annum</u> of supervised fertility counselling practice over 2 of the last 3 years <u>and</u>
- f) does not primarily practice in a UK licensed clinic and
- g) who expects to be working for a minimum of <u>50 hours p.a</u>. in fertility counselling during the period of accreditation.

These counsellors when accredited may use the title AMBICA (O)

4.4 Senior Accredited Member of BICA (SAMBICA)

- a) A Senior Accredited Member of BICA is one who is <u>either</u> already a current practising AMBICA.
- b) <u>OR</u> a current Member of BICA, meeting all the criteria for Accredited Membership Paras 4 and 4.1 or 4.2, who submits those parts of the AMBICA application necessary to demonstrate this.

And in both cases

c) Who submits a **Portfolio** of evidence demonstrating fertility counselling practice at a senior, experienced level, which shows a theoretically informed understanding of fertility counselling. Such evidence might include transcripts of a postgraduate diploma or degree in counselling in which a significant proportion of the assessed elements relates to fertility counselling. Material with clear relevance to the competence concerned from another accreditation exercise may also be used. **Candidates are strongly encouraged to use existing material they have produced or to which they have made a significant, identified contribution.** Material produced by others may be included, to give necessary context, but only as illustration of the way in which the candidate demonstrates competences in practice; it cannot of itself comprise evidence. The portfolio is not intended to comprise only or even mainly newly written or produced material.

Experienced AMBICAs are encouraged to seek SAMBICA at re-accreditation if not before. Qualified and experienced fertility counsellors of sufficient seniority may seek SAMBICA without previously achieving AMBICA providing they demonstrate through the additional material and support of a mentor that they also meet the requirements of AMBICA

These counsellors when accredited may use the title SAMBICA

Mandatory Publication - A full list of all accredited counsellors and those registered as working towards accreditation is a requirement of membership and accreditation. It is maintained on the BICA website open to public consultation. This list is also used by the HFEA Regulation Department when checking that the staffing requirements for licensed treatment centres are being met.

British Infertility Counselling Association

5. APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION

Application packs are available via the members area of the website. Electronic application is a necessary part of the process to minimise administrative costs and delays. Only in the case of SAMBICA portfolios is a hard copy acceptable. Applicants may have issues which make submission by electronic means difficult. These must be discussed confidentially with the Chair and agreed before submission if the application is to be accepted. Significant postage incurred by BICA may be reclaimed from the candidate in such cases. All candidates for accreditation should download the full details in this Handbook and the forms they need to complete on the BICA website https://www.bica.net/members/downloads.php All the necessary forms are Word documents which automatically expand as text is input. The HFEA and BICA expect all clinic counsellors to be accredited or 'working towards' accreditation. Forms should be completed fully and all questions answered. BICA can only refer members of the public for fertility counselling if they are accredited members or working towards accreditation. Candidates should keep an identical copy themselves. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the application.

5.1 SIGNATURES & VERIFICATION

As material must normally be submitted electronically, the Accreditation Board expects that where the candidate puts her/his name to the application, and others complete required reports, this has the equivalent force of a signature. The Proposer is in effect verifying the material so far as they are able. **Random checks might be made** if it is felt necessary for any reason or as part of a routine audit.

5.2 COMPLAINTS / OFFENCES / CONVICTIONS

BICA owes a duty of care to the clients of fertility counsellors which makes it necessary for us to ask the questions, marked with * on the application form, about complaints, criminal convictions, cautions and bind-overs. Possessing such a history does not disbar candidates from applying, but does require that it be discussed in confidence with the Accreditation Board Chair prior to applying for accreditation who may need to consult the Accreditation Board. Any details recorded will be retained under strictest confidence only for as long as the candidate is an applicant or accredited member of BICA [see Para 8 below].

5.3 QUALIFICATIONS & PRACTICE MATERIAL

Proof that candidates are fully qualified counsellors who have completed a 1 year full-time, or 2 year part-time (or at least the equivalent) counselling, clinical or counselling psychology and/or psychotherapy qualification including a supervised placement and that they are accredited by a recognised body must be provided, verified as follows:

- Copy the original;
- Write on the copy 'this is a true copy of the original document' and sign it.

Email scanned copies DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS. If your name has since changed, please include a letter of explanation or a document such as a marriage certificate, deed etc. A certificate of attendance is only acceptable if a course is a non-assessed course. Further detail may be required if the course/provider concerned is not known to the assessors. This also applies to case material offered as equivalent evidence of specialist training.

5.4 RECOGNISED ACCREDITATION

This accreditation scheme is not free standing; BICA does not have the resources to sustain the full assessment system this would require, and would run the danger of repeating, a demand for evidence already provided in another, relevant context. It relies on evidence that the counsellor has already achieved a level of post-qualification experience and knowledge which has enabled her/him to have achieved other counselling/psychotherapy accreditation. BICA's view is that only the bodies listed in the Annex 1 meet the requirement of holding a recognised accreditation for BICA accreditation purposes (others may be considered on production of relevant paperwork, (especially where foreign organisations are concerned) and thus meet one of the criteria to apply for BICA accreditation or may be considered by the HFEA as meeting one of the requirements of the HFEA Code of Practice 2.13.

A verified copy of the certificate of accreditation or registration will be required.

5.5 BACP CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY, REGISTERED TRAINING COURSE OR BACP REGISTER OR NCS ACCREDITATION

For candidates who do not hold current generic counselling/psychotherapy accreditation from one of the organisations listed in the HFEA Code of Practice, but do hold the BACP Certificate of Proficiency, or have attended a BACP registered course, or are NCS accredited (i.e. but <u>not</u> a NCS Professional Accredited Registrant) BICA requires additional case material. The case material should demonstrate the application and understanding gained through supervision of the theory/theories described previously in the Practice Report. If the candidate has completed a BACP recognised course and is on the Register they may also apply if they also complete the case material. The same is true for those who have qualified for NCS Accreditation.

Such candidates should submit one or two pieces of case material amounting to <u>no more than 3000 words in total</u>. No more than 2 clients should be used to provide this evidence.

The case material should demonstrate:

- a) How your practice is consistent with your described way of working
- b) How you use your self-awareness in the therapeutic relationship
- c) How your practice demonstrates your awareness of issues of difference and equality and the impact they have on your counselling / psychotherapy relationships
- d) Use of the 'BICA Guidelines for Fertility Counselling Practice'
- e) The awareness you have gained through reflection in and on supervision
- f) How you apply that awareness in your practice with your clients
- g) Key literature references should be included (but not as part of the word count)

This case material should be derived from fertility counselling practice. Whilst it is preferred that the case/s should derive from assisted conception work, it may be appropriate to use work related to clients with issues in **closely allied** work. We would encourage candidates to discuss carefully using such material with their mentor first to

ensure the fit is suitable for BICA accreditation. We encourage candidates to use/adapt material they have produced for another purpose where appropriate, subject to its meeting the criteria above.

Maximum word count = 3,000 words in total



5.6 ETHICS & CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

All Members of whatever category must adhere to an acceptable code of ethics and BICA's complaints and other policies and procedures in so far as they apply to their own specific situation. All members in counselling practice must work in accordance with BICA's 'Guidelines for Fertility Counselling Practice'. A declaration form is required with the completed application for accreditation.

All evidence submitted, including that for the SAMBICA portfolio, must pay the greatest attention to confidentiality in order to ensure that clients, staff and others cannot be identified. Where the candidate is an employee of an agency providing the counselling service from which she or he is drawing evidence, or where the candidate is a member of a professional association, any relevant guidelines in relation to confidentiality must be adhered to. Where there are no guidelines in place, candidates are expected to pay the highest regard to confidentiality. A Statement of Confidentiality is required which indicates how this requirement has been met. The following guidelines should be observed:

- a) Real names must not be used including people, places and the centres where the service is being provided. The use of false names is preferable to initials. This only applies to case studies and client related work, not to service protocols, publicity material, conference papers etc. in which colleagues and clinics may be identifiable.
- b) Dates of birth should not be included; approximate ages may be used instead
- c) If in exceptional permission has been granted for paper material to be submitted by the Chair, then using correction fluids or markers to obliterate names is not acceptable as they rub off and only partly conceal the text below. If using this method of anonymising evidence, photocopies of the masked original should be used.
- d) No client used in this way should be identifiable by way of internet or other research.

Clients' permission to use work with them in evidence such as case studies must be sought wherever possible, and must conform to the BICA Guidelines on Codes of Ethics [Annex A]. The statement on confidentiality contained within the portfolio must explain how this was addressed.

5.7 PRACTICE REPORT

A detailed report of the candidate's practice, including an audit and clients' evaluation must be provided. The audit and evaluation, and other clinic literature may be in the form in which they have been provided to the HFEA for inspection; however, it must be clear what refers to the candidate's own practice. Members must comply with the guidance published in the 'BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling' whilst being free to use the format they find most helpful. BICA publishes on the website examples of formats for both audit and evaluation; however, these are for guidance only.

- a) a summary of all fertility counselling practice is required, using a separate form for each setting, including private practice; (however it is expected that the candidate will use her/his judgement and if the hours criterion is more than met and the private practice is not large, a reference to it might be sufficient); retain full records for the purposes of audit if requested.
- b) explain your situation on a separate sheet of paper, if it is not easily reconciled with this form.
- c) you may use a similar report written for other accreditation or HFEA inspection if suitable
- d) guidance and suggested templates are available on www.bica.net.

Whilst detailed continuous audit is normally expected, evaluations by clients of your practice should be undertaken in accordance with your practice; at minimum counsellors should seek clients' views periodically e.g. over a period of 6 to 8 weeks every 12 to 18 months. The Supervised Fertility Counselling Practice Hours claimed to meet the practice criteria must relate to actual direct counselling practice; this might be counselling which is face-to-face, on the telephone, via the internet etc. It must be clear what is being claimed. This is normally intended to mean counselling of clients where fertility issues are a primary focus of their work with the counsellor. This practice will include fertility treatment but also counselling where the focus is on related matters e.g., obstetric issues with fertility implications, fertility or pregnancy loss, oncology-related fertility preservation, couple issues within which fertility plays a significant

part etc.. When asked to specify hours of work this means the number of hours for which the candidate is employed in the clinic (if appropriate). If the counsellor works as an independent practitioner, the practice hours would be direct work plus hours for CPD, supervision, administration etc. in accordance with the BICA Guidelines for Good Practice, at a ratio of approx. 6 hours to 4 hours related professional activity.

This report must be <u>complete and accurate</u>. Applications not meeting these requirements may be returned for amendment at any point of the assessment procedure.

5.8 SPECIALIST EXPERIENCE REPORT

This report should be completed if the candidate is **not** offering <u>either</u> completion of the BICA Foundation Course for Fertility Counsellors <u>or</u> equivalent formal training <u>or</u> offering case or practice material in fertility counselling. (Independent Practitioners <u>must</u> complete this report in addition to attending specialist training). If the candidate does not hold a recognised accreditation but is offering the Certificate of Proficiency instead then the practice report outlined at 5.7 should be submitted <u>in addition</u> to this report. The candidate should describe in **approximately 2000** words how detailed knowledge of the special skills and knowledge required for fertility counselling has been obtained. Reference is expected to the BICA 'Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling', the most recent HFEA Code of Practice and the work of a known assisted conception unit, in addition references to literature may be appropriate to clarify professional experience and knowledge.

5.9 PRACTICE MATERIAL

To demonstrate specialist expertise candidates may use material produced for other purposes such as other accreditations or training courses as long as it is verified as being their own work and normally refers to the last 5 years. We encourage SAMBICA applicants to use such existing work for their portfolio.

5.10 INSURANCE

All fertility counsellors must be covered by adequate, current professional insurance. (Guidance currently suggests a figure of £2m cover is 'adequate'). Those in private practice or work independently must have their own indemnity insurance; others are expected to be covered by appropriate insurance through their employers. All candidates for accreditation **should explain clearly** how this requirement is met in their own situation. If an individual policy, a copy of the document should be provided. In other instances, candidates should be prepared to provide documentary evidence.

5.11 SUPERVISION

Candidates must detail all supervision arrangements whilst practising as a counsellor. All candidates must have individual supervision and may also use group and/or peer supervision. BICA recommends that the individual supervisor should hold a qualification in counselling supervision, but need not have direct experience of fertility counselling themselves. Group supervision is where group members receive supervision and there is a group facilitator, who is not supervised within that group. Peer supervision is where all members of the group give and receive supervision. You may add hours from different supervision arrangements together to give the minimum required which is 1.5 hours per calendar month. Supervision hours are calculated like this:

- a) Individual supervision claim total hours per month, and give qualifications of supervisor.
- b) **Group** supervision claim total <u>hours divided by number</u> of group members
- c) **Peer** supervision group claim total <u>hours divided by number</u> of group members

If you are in peer or group supervision, you should give the name of ONE person who assumes clinical responsibility for the group; the hours allowed are divided by the number of group members in each case. Each supervisor should see your completed application in order to complete his/her Supervision Report

If your supervisor is also your line manager, you must show your arrangements for independent consultation. Candidates and their supervisor/s should demonstrate that they understand issues which arise from duality of role. All counsellors, psychologists, psychotherapists, supervisors and trainers are expected to receive supervision /consultative support independently of any managerial relationships.

5.12 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

CPD activity including HFEA recognised update training (HFEA Code of Practice) should be documented in the prescribed format (or in a similar form used for other professional accreditation) for each of 2 years in the last three years to meet this requirement. Members must comply with the guidance published in the 'BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling'. For accreditation purposes a summary only is required; members should retain full records for the purposes of audit if requested. If a similar summary is available from another accreditation process, providing it gives the required information and clearly indicates which are the necessary fertility counselling practice hours (ICP), that form may be submitted instead. CPD activity should be focused and relevant to professional counselling/psychotherapy and fertility counselling specifically. The form must show at least 30 hours per year, 10 hours relating directly to Fertility Counselling Practice (FCP) for each of two years in the last 3. Your CPD should include a balance of -

AT LEAST TWO of the following:

- a) Short Courses on Professional Issues
- b) Seminars and Conferences Attended
- c) Study for Further Qualifications
- d) Encouraging the Development of Others
- e) Committee Work / Representing BICA

See BICA Guidelines Annex F for a detailed list of examples; this is not however exhaustive).

Acceptable CPD does not include routine administration or multi-disciplinary team meetings.

If the period documented does not match that of the practice report, an explanation for this should be included. All S/AMBICAs are expected to maintain regular peer contact through training and BICA regional groups etc.

6. BICA TITLES

Those who meet the requirements to become Associate Members or Members of BICA may only refer to themselves as such for the purposes of curricula vitae etc. Only three titles, approved by BICA, may be used by those who meet the published criteria as formal titles. These Members may use the initials after their names, thus meeting the aim for transparency and accountability which underlies this development.

Accredited Member - AMBICA (Accredited Member of BICA)

Accredited Member - AMBICA (IP) (Accredited Independent Practitioner)

Accredited Member - AMBICA (O) (Accredited Overseas Practitioner)

Senior Accredited Member - SAMBICA (Senior Accredited Member of BICA)

A non-member or member using these initials who is not entitled to do so would be the subject of a complaint by the BICA Executive Committee under the BICA 'Complaints & Appeals Policy & Procedures'

⁴, and liable to sanctions (as allowed for and determined by the Accreditation Board) to preserve confidence in the meaning and validity of these titles.

7. FEES

A fee is charged for the initial accreditation application. Where re-submission is required and submitted within the time scale suggested by the assessors no further fee is required. However, a re-submission fee of 50% of the full fee is payable for a late resubmission. If a further re-submission is required, the full fee must be paid again. The full fee

⁴ BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling (BICA, 4th Edition, York 2019; ISBN 1–901406-35-0) and also on the BICA website <u>www.bica.net</u>.

may also be required if accreditation lapses. The intention is that the fees are set at a level which makes the scheme self-financing and no more. Fees will not be refunded regardless of outcome. Fees are advertised on the website and are reviewed as necessary.

Payment may be made by PayPal on the BICA website (paypal@bica.net) or bank transfer (account details available upon request)

8. CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY POLICY, RECORDS, GDPR & ICO

Candidates will apply in confidence, although the results of successful application will become public as above; all parties to the assessment process, including the identity of the candidate her/himself, will be accorded full confidentiality

All assessment proceedings are confidential; and this is binding on all assessors. This means that their discussions and those of the Board are private and may not be revealed to outsiders including candidates. The identity of the assessors is confidential and not to be given to candidates as the decision is that of the Board not of an individual

The GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation 2018) applies to all materials submitted during the accreditation process and are covered by the procedures described in the BICA Privacy Policy and Data Protection Procedures both of which are available on the BICA website. https://www.bica.net/privacy-policy All application documentation is retained during and after the application under conditions of security described in the procedures. If successful the documents are retained whilst the application is processed and whilst the member is accredited and for a period of six years following their ceasing to be accredited. If the application is withdrawn or rejected the documentation is retained for a period of six years. In both cases the material is available only to members of the Accreditation Board and Assessors unless specific agreement is obtained from the member concerned. In such cases agreement would be sought for clearly stated purposes such as training workshops. Records are mainly retained in electronic form on personal computers of members of BICA who manage the accreditation scheme. These computers are password protected. Whilst the names of accredited members are a matter of public record, the personal details of their applications and reaccreditation are covered by these procedures.

All counsellors with a private practice must be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office [ICO], paying the required annual fee. Candidates including material from such independent practice must provide evidence of this registration. The ICO provides clear guidance if the applicant is in doubt on this matter. https://ico.org.uk/fororganisations/data-protection-fee/

9. PROPOSER

The Proposer must be a BICA member, preferably a current BICA accredited / senior accredited member. The Proposer should know the candidate well enough to confirm that the candidate is:

- a) A responsible person
- b) Someone who maintains a professional standard of integrity
- c) Someone who is of good standing within their professional community.

The Proposer may, but does not also have to be the mentor. The Proposer should not be \sim

- d) The supervisor who has submitted a report for this application.
- e) A client or an ex-client of the candidate.
- f) The spouse, partner or a close relative of the candidate.

The role of the proposer is:

- > to read the completed application
- > countersign the declaration when the full form has been completed, prior to submission.
- > sign the forms to confirm that the contents of the application are to the best of their knowledge accurate and complete, and the Declaration has been suitably signed.

As Proposer, your name on the form shows that you support the candidate in their application to become a BICA Accredited Member. A Member intending to seek accreditation in due course is recommended to seek a Mentor who will provide mentorship and guidance whilst the Member develops their expertise in the field. The Proposer may also [but need not] mentor a candidate following the expectations described in 10 below.

10. MENTOR

Applicants for S/AMBICA are expected to use a mentor.

BICA attaches great importance to the role of mentorship in professional development. Those members seeking accreditation for the first time will be expected to seek a professional mentor to facilitate their entry into the speciality, gaining the knowledge and understanding which will enable them to transfer their generic skills of counselling to this specialist area of practice. This person will normally be a BICA accredited counsellor (AMBICA) and preferably a senior accredited fertility counsellor (SAMBICA). Where a non-accredited member as mentor is to be used, it is important that the candidate consult the Board first. In locating a mentor, candidates should consult the list of accredited counsellors published on the BICA website.

Those wishing to be recognised as having senior standing in the profession, applying to become SAMBICA, should demonstrate their ability and willingness to hand on their expertise to those more recently joining fertility counselling, having less experience. They might indeed use their experience of offering mentorship, as a part of the evidence for competence they submit in their application. Where possible names of potential mentors will be provided but arrangements as to how this relationship is managed, including payment, are for the participants to negotiate. From experience, we understand that mentors normally charge a fee in line with supervision. BICA naturally hopes that clinics will make time available for members to offer and receive mentoring as part of their professional development.

The role of a mentor is to

- Support the candidate's application, pointing out any loop holes
- Ensure they are following BICA guidelines
- Be alert to safe practice throughout the application contents
- Check that they are following the accreditation process, all their documentation
- Enhance their work in any way i.e., if they were not using support groups like DCN, Infertility Network UK, HFEA guidance, clinic SOPs, etc. encourage them to use these resources
- > Support them in any clinic obstacles they may be facing and to audit their work
- idiscuss the applicant's practice to ascertain any issues with them offering the evidence required.
- identify any shortfall in practice experience and discuss ways in which these might be rectified.
- discuss with the applicant any doubts they have about meeting the requirements or understanding fully the regulations.
- read each section of the application as they are completed and offer guidance on issues which might need clarification
- read through the final, complete application prior to submission, giving any further guidance required.

It is NOT the role of the mentor to supervise the applicant's practice, but to ensure that supervision, amongst all the other regulations, takes place and that the applicant is using it in a professionally appropriate manner.

All candidates must be **proposed** as note 9 explains. <u>NB a proposer is not the same role as a mentor (see above) but might be the same person.</u> Those who are less experienced are expected to maintain contact with their mentors for the first period of accreditation at least.

11. PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT FOR ACCREDITATION

It is the responsibility of the candidate to send material safely by email unless previously agreed and keep copies. Where the candidate suffers from a <u>diagnosed condition</u> (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia) which is likely seriously to affect the quality of the written submission, s/he should discuss this with the Chair of the Board prior to submission to ensure that the process of application and assessment is entirely fair and appropriate. When it is aware of such a condition, the Board will communicate with the applicant wherever possible in ways that are appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the individual. BICA is aware of and will use the helpful guidance of the BACP in such situations. In order to be transparent and fair to all applicants, the Board may seek confidential guidance on the impact of any such condition with the agreement of the applicant.

- 1. The process of application is a confidential one; only the Accreditation Board and BICA Executive Committee may receive details of candidates' applications. Normally information will be restricted to only the Chair and Assessors themselves.
- 2. Candidates will seek BICA Membership and/or Accreditation by completing the prescribed application forms.
- 3. Assessment of applications will be undertaken by SAMBICAs appointed to act as Assessors by the Accreditation Board, with the aim of completing assessment within 3 months of receiving everything required.
- 4. Forms should all be submitted by email to <u>accreditation@bica.net</u>. This normally should include SAMBICA applications; although in that case BICA can accept some materials in hard copy. BICA will retain e-copies of all relevant material subject to provisions of Section 8.
- 5. Decisions on accreditation will normally be made by an Accreditation Sub-Committee consisting of the Chair and the two Assessors (both of whom must be SAMBICA). Exceptionally, or at the request of the Assessors, the Chair may decide to consult with another Assessor.
- 6. Two Assessors will vet each application, (only one Assessor for re-accreditation) making a decision as under S12.
- 7. 'Accredit' or 'not yet ready for accreditation' (not fail) are the only decisions made; if the latter decision is reached, recommendations are made as to the areas in which the application was deemed insufficient enabling the candidate to remedy these, with or without mentorship, within an agreed timescale.
- **8.** A Special Cases Panel (see below) will adjudicate if the Accreditation Sub-Committee is unable to reach a decision or the application falls outside usual guidelines (this might include foreign qualifications). The SCP will report to the AB.
- **9.** All decisions are given in confidence to the candidate and the Board.
- **10.** The Board may call for any further information concerning referred applications as it sees necessary before reaching a decision, including the possibility of interviewing the candidate.
- 11. The Accreditation Board reserves the right to vary the regulations governing accreditation at any time, with the agreement of BICA Executive Committee, giving notice to the BICA membership and other affected parties so long as the general philosophy of accreditation is consistent with these regulations. No candidate will be disadvantaged by a change to the requirements during the period in which they have registered for accreditation.
- 12. AMBICA candidates are expected to seek and use mentorship (see above) which should wherever possible be provided by those who are already accredited. As BICA is not able to fund this formally,

it is dependent on goodwill which BICA hopes will be reciprocated by successful candidates to their successors in due course. It is hoped that clinic managers will accept the importance of allowing for this responsibility.

- 13. Fertility counsellors will be regarded as 'working towards accreditation' for the purposes of the HFEA if they have been accepted as members and have confirmed that they will seek full accreditation within the prescribed period and have paid the appropriate registration fee or having been deemed 'not yet ready for accreditation', are complying with the requirements of the Accreditation Board prior to reapplication which will include a timescale.
- 14. The decision of the Board is given in writing or email by the Chair in a confidential assessment report, although the simple 'accredit/not yet ready' conclusion may be given verbally in advance of the written confirmation. The decision of the Board may only be further discussed as broad clarification; if detail is needed this will come from the Chair.
- **15.** Names of all accredited members are publically available on the BICA website. The candidate has the option to include (or not) further personal or contact details they wish.
- **16.** Certificate is issued giving the level and period of accreditation achieved.

12. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assessment of fertility counselling practice will be according to the following criteria (the difference between AMBICA & SAMBICA is in the rigour of the assessment, and the detail required which is naturally greater for SAMBICA and also focusses on the defined competences for SAMBICA).

- 1. comprehensive and thorough knowledge and understanding of the fertility counsellor's role and practice including compliance with the requirements of the most recent BICA Guidelines;
- detailed knowledge of the professional requirements of the latest HFE Act and Code of Practice as they apply to the role of fertility counsellor;
- 3. demonstrated commitment and capacity to contribute to the specialist discipline of fertility counselling;
- 4. analytical and critical approach to relevant knowledge;
- 5. ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with practice experience,
- **6.** ability to exercise initiative, develop skills of critical self-awareness and act autonomously in the performance of the professional role;
- 7. professional level of competence in the application of skills and techniques;
- **8.** knowledge and understanding of relevant theories, legislation, debates etc. and the ability to present these to cognate professionals and other counsellors as required in training, consultancy etc.;
- 9. attention to issues of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice;
- 10. explicit adherence to the values of counselling and to the provision of ethically sound practice;
- 11. ability to work effectively in the multi-disciplinary team (not relevant to IPs however) and with service users in the delivery of a professional counselling service
- 12. capacity for personal responsibility in complex and unpredictable professional contexts.
- 13. contribution to the profession of fertility counselling

Proper, careful presentation of an application is regarded as an important demonstration of professional practice. Poorly presented, incoherent or unclear material may be returned for amendment prior to assessment. Applications may only use material from the last 5 years.

13. SAMBICA PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The key qualities of a good enough portfolio are that it should represent understanding and experience at final year undergraduate level, being:

- 1. Analytical not just descriptive; what theoretical perspectives informed this practice?
- **2. Reflective** shows critical thinking about events; was the most effective outcome achieved? With hindsight what might I do differently?
- **3.** Clear contains no ambivalence or vagueness; the claims of evidence unambiguously relate to the competences.
- **4. Current** presents evidence of practice during the last 5 years
- 5. Relevant evidence relates directly to the competence being claimed
- **6.** Valid can be checked if necessary, for reliability and validity
- 7. **Concise** avoids excessive or irrelevant detail; does not include large amounts of background detail or description beyond what is necessary to contextualise the evidence.
- 8. Comprehensive covers all the required competences; all the necessary elements of the portfolio are included, and can be found easily. Infertility Counselling Association

The AB will form a judgement based on its overall assessment of the candidate as to whether these criteria are met or otherwise. This will permit exceptional situations to be considered and compensation allowed for individual pieces of evidence if it is felt that the overall quality of the application merits this.

SAMBICA candidates must provide 2 pieces of evidence (any more will not be considered) for each of the 17 competences specified in 'Requirements for Portfolio' which is attached to SAMBICA Form. This DOES NOT necessarily mean 17 separate pieces of evidence or material. Candidates are encouraged where appropriate, to use existing material, originally produced for other purposes, whether other accreditations, publication, material for patients/clients, clinic material, conference presentations, academic work etc. rather than produce new work. It will be especially important in such materials to be clear how much is the candidate's own work. The evidence log is the key whereby the assessors can find where, in the view of the candidate, it is possible to find satisfactory evidence that the candidate meets each of the competences.

14. REASSESSMENT & 'NOT YET READY' CANDIDATES

- 1. If a candidate is found to be 'not yet ready for accreditation' s/he would be invited to remedy identified weaknesses in their application and resubmit within a specified timescale; if necessary, after further supervised practice including mentorship or study.
- **2. No limit** would normally be applied to the number of times a candidate might choose to present themselves for accreditation.
- **3.** The Accreditation Board may **only refuse further assessment** if, in its view, recommendations made at an earlier assessment had not been taken up or there was *prima facie* evidence of unprofessional, fraudulent or dishonest practice which ought to be taken up with the BICA Executive Committee as a complaint, in which case the Chair of the Accreditation Board would act as the Complainant. All complaints or appeals concerning such decisions must be made using the BICA 'Complaints & Appeals Policy & Procedures'
- **4.** A candidate being reassessed would remain a Member of BICA unless they failed to meet the requirements of membership or were required to relinquish membership under the above complaints procedures.

- 5. A candidate working in a **licensed clinic** who has been refused accreditation would in any event be subject to inspection under the terms of their licence with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. It would be for that process to determine how it might proceed in a case of a counsellor who appeared unable or unwilling to complete the accreditation process satisfactorily.
- **6.** An **employer** would only be contacted by the Accreditation Board to report assessment results, if the AB felt the application suggested unsafe or unethical practice, as prescribed within the BICA Complaints Procedures.
- 7. A reassessment fee will normally be charged except for a first-time request for additional information. The full fee would usually be charged for a second, substantial re-submission.
- **8.** A **resubmission** should follow the instructions given in the assessment report, answering all of the questions raised. Candidates are not expected to address issues which have not been raised in the assessment report, unless there are exceptional reasons for this.
- **9.** The **same assessors** will normally consider a resubmission, unless there are exceptional reasons which require a change to be made. The Chair, possibly after consulting a SCP, would take such decisions.

15. SPECIAL CASES PANEL (SCP)

Three SAMBICAs who are also experienced assessors, appointed by the Accreditation Board, and replaced as required, comprise a SCP. One of their number will act as Chair as required. The Chair of the Accreditation Board or the Board itself will seek the guidance of the Panel in certain situations:

- 1. Candidate does not meet the stated requirements for whichever route they are applying but the margin is such that a case might be made for exemption e.g., hours practice, CPD hours, period of supervision etc. The SCP will decide if the deficit is not unreasonable or is within acceptable limits taking the application overall.
- 2. Assessors cannot agree a recommendation on an application and wish a further view; the SCP will decide either to discuss the issue in dispute or undertake a final, binding assessment.
- 3. Candidate claims exemption in some regard from the requirements of the route they wish to follow.
- 4. Regulations are ambiguous and assessment requires acceptance of one particular interpretation within the regulations.
- 5. SCP will decide on acceptability of qualifications or other accreditations which are not known to the Chair or assessors.
- **6.** Such other matters as the Chair or Board consider the guidance of the SCP is required.

SCP will report to the Chair who will seek further guidance or a decision from the full Accreditation Board if s/he or the SCP consider it is necessary.

16. ACCREDITATION BOARD

16.1 Role of the Accreditation Board is to:

- a) Manage criteria and process of both accreditation and re-accreditation
- **b)** Appoint Assessors
- c) Endorse assessment decisions
- d) Review and evaluate regulations as required
- e) Agree precise requirements for format and timetable of claims for accreditation
- f) Handle appeals and complaints
- g) Establish fees with BICA Executive Committee
- *h*) Establish equivalence of other counselling accreditations

- Adjudicate on special cases i)
- Oversee conditions and arrangements in relation to any reassessment j)
- k) Prepare and publish appropriate listings

16.2 Accreditation Board Membership

The Executive Committee of BICA appoints from the following invited nominations:

- a) 5 BICA Members including 1 to Chair, at least one member of the BICA Executive Committee, 1 SAMBICA and 1 who acts as an Assessor;
- b) 2 service users nominated by BICA or national representative groups e.g., FNUK, DC Network;
- c) 2 representatives of cognate professions e.g., medicine and/or embryology and/or nursing.

Conduct of Accreditation Board Meetings

The Board will meet twice annually in normal circumstances to consider relevant business. The quorum required to transact business will be:

- Chair (or Acting Chair appointed by those present) a)
- b) 1 service user representative or cognate professional
- 2 fertility counselling Members including an Assessor Ounselling Association c)

Where a vote is requested and that vote is tied, the Chair will have a second, casting vote. Tele-conferencing and e-mail may be used to transact business, subject to the same principles.

The business of all meetings is entirely confidential; revealing the content of such discussion will render a member liable to a complaint being made under BICA Complaints Procedures and appropriate sanctions determined by the Board and approved by the BICA Executive Committee,

17. COMPLAINTS & APPEALS

All complaints or appeals will be dealt with as provided for by the procedures described in the BICA "Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling" Annex J. A refusal to offer the opportunity to be re-assessed will be treated as a complaint by the Accreditation Board. A candidate who feels that their application has been adjudicated unfairly should use the same procedures. An Adjudications Chair has been appointed by the AB to supervise these procedures as required.

ACCREDITATION REGISTER 18.

Fertility counsellors who are Accredited Members, AMBICA, AMBICA (IP) AMBICA (O) or SAMBICA, will have their names entered on a Register which is available to the public on the BICA website. This will also comprise the list of those to whom BICA is able to refer clients. All accredited members will be given a certificate of accreditation which indicates the period of validity. This certificate is the property of BICA and must be returned if, in the view of the Accreditation Board the member no longer meets the requirements of S/AMBICA. Such a decision would only be made in accordance with the published regulations and subject to the usual rights of appeal.

19. RENEWAL & RE-ACCREDITATION

Members who are accredited with BICA are required to renew their-accreditation every 3 years. The details of this process are currently being reviewed by the Board and will be announced in due course. For quality purposes, and in line with BACP practice, BICA will conduct an audit of 10% (rounded to the nearest whole number) of re-accreditation applications, randomly selected, which will seek further information to ensure that all requirements are still being met. The sample audit will be assessed in accordance with current accreditation criteria and regulations, usually by assessors not involved in any previous assessment:

- a) they still meet fully the requirements for the category of accreditation to which they were admitted
- b) and if in fertility practice, they provided a minimum of 50 hours per annum for 2 of the 3 years since accreditation and they maintain audits and evaluations of their practice in a form which may be inspected if required
- c) and circumstances have not changed, or issues arisen, which might require more detailed reexamination of the member's practice to be undertaken
- d) and that they continue to meet the requirements for 30 hours counselling CPD annually 10 hours of specialist fertility counselling opportunities of which they maintain a register/file/log available for inspection if required.

Where Members are no longer undertaking fertility counselling practice to the required extent, they are permitted to renew their accreditation for period of three years only, provided they maintain membership and the requisite level of CPD activity, and, if they are still in practice, supervision and insurance.

S/AMBICAs are reminded when their re-accreditation is due; they must submit an application for re-accreditation within 1 month. BICA will charge a fee for re-accreditation made in the same way as for accreditation; the completed form should be returned to accreditation@bica.net

If the fee is not received in time, the fee not paid, or membership lapses, accreditation will be withdrawn and the member's name removed from the website. If a request is later received for accreditation to be reinstated a further fee will be payable. If an application is received between 1 and 12 months of its lapsing for whatever reason, it will be accepted and treated in the usual way subject to an additional fee of £20 to reflect the additional administrative work incurred by BICA. Thereafter an application for reaccreditation will be treated as a new application, with the appropriate fee chargeable. These regulations are subject to variation by the Board in special circumstances using the mechanisms of The Special Cases Panel and Appeal.

Members may apply to take a break or sabbatical in their accreditation for professional or personal reasons. Members should continue in membership and resume accreditation within 3 years. Any other counselling practice must of course be conducted under usual professional conditions of supervision, CPD, insurance etc. The Chair of the Board must be given notice of the date on which it is intended to resume accredited practice, and a statement providing detail of any changes to the intended practice context and confirmation that the Member has maintained awareness of any significant professional or regulatory changes since the break. An application will be requested seeking to apply for re-accreditation [paying the appropriate fee] providing a practice audit, record of CPD, supervision report and proof of insurance within one year of resumed practice.

These procedures are subject to the usual appeals policy of BICA.

20. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF THE S/AMBICA SCHEME

BICA is fully aware that this scheme can and should improve with experience. We always welcome suggestions from colleagues of improvements or changes that could be made whether to the regulations themselves or the procedures by which they are implemented. Suggestions should be made via the website or direct to: accreditation@bica.net or chair@bica.net

21. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

A FAQ sheet has been prepared to give further guidance in addition to these notes. It is included as Annex 2.

22. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people both members of BICA and colleagues from the cognate professions in ART have contributed to the development of this accreditation scheme over a lengthy period of time, especially members of British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA). BICA wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy who have kindly agreed to our building on their own accreditation scheme to ensure broad professional concordance.

23. CONTACTS

All correspondence should go to the Chair of the Accreditation Board by email to: accreditation@bica.net

If any material cannot be scanned and emailed and needs to be sent it should be posted to the BICA address given on the website. This should only happen in rare cases and with the agreement of the chair.



ANNEX 1

A C D

Recognised Professional Counselling / Psychotherapy Accreditation Schemes

These organisations certify an accreditation/registration scheme sufficient to meet the requirements outlined in this Handbook 5.4. They would then be able to register for BICA specialist accreditation following the guidance provided.

NB HFEA currently provides a list which includes all schemes on the Professional Standards Authority approved list. This includes specialist areas which are neither psychotherapy nor counselling and would not be acceptable for BICA fertility counselling accreditation.

Registrant

(Association of Child Psychotherapy)

ACP		(Association of Child Psychotherapy)	Registrant
A	CC	(Association of Christian Counsellors)	Accredited Member
В	ICA	(British Infertility Counselling Association)	Senior / Accredited Member
В	ACP	(British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)	Accredited Member *
В	PS	(British Psychological Society)	Chartered/Registered
В	ASRT	(British Association for Sexual and Relationship Therapy)	Accredited Member
В	ABCP	(British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies)	Accredited Member
В	PC	(British Psychoanalytic Council)	Registrant
C	OSRT	(College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists)	Senior/Accredited Member
C	OSCA	(Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)	Accredited Member
Н	(SG	(Human Givens College)	Accredited Member
IA	АСР	(Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy)	Accredited Member
N	ics	(National Counselling Society)	Professional Accredited Registrant
U	КСР	(United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy)	Registered Member
U	KRCP	(UK Register of Counsellors / Psychotherapists)	Registered Member
U	KAHPF	(UK Association for Humanistic Psychology Practitioners)	Accredited Member

^{*}BACP Certificate of Proficiency, BACP Registered Member & NCS Accreditation – will be accepted as an accreditation under regulation 5.4 providing the applicant provides further evidence of generic competence in counselling to support the AMBICA application see Section 5.4 & 5.5.

ANNEX 2

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ~ FAQs

Q and A to help Members with their applications for accreditation to augment the BICA Handbook

NB These should be read alongside the most recent editions of the Accreditation Handbook and BICA Guidelines for Good Practice in Fertility Counselling

Q: When I apply, can I send in my application handwritten?

A: No. Applications must be sent in electronically, unless hard copy is accepted by BICA for special reasons [see Para 5]. Candidates for SAMBICA may especially wish to retain a hard copy of their portfolio. Guidance can be given on content for SAMBICA portfolio if required.

Q: I have counselling qualifications but I am not an accredited counsellor. Can I still apply? BILLS | The counselling qualifications but I am not an accredited counsellor. Can I still apply?

A: Only if you hold the BACP Certificate of Proficiency *or have completed a BACP recognised course.* The Grandparent route ended in February 2011. You now need to apply for a generic accreditation with one of the nationally recognised accrediting bodies for counselling/psychotherapy or clinical/counselling psychology before you can apply for the specialist accreditation that BICA offers. The BACP Certificate is acceptable as an alternative (see Handbook 5.5)

Q: A counselling colleague has agreed to propose me. Does my <u>proposer</u> have to be a member of BICA, and have to see my application before I send it in?

A: They do have to be a member of BICA, preferably accredited, and the assessors recommend that your proposer reads your application before you send it in.

Q: I am not sure if I need a <u>mentor</u>, but I am confused by some of the application questions. How do I find a mentor?

A: Any BICA Member who has achieved the AMBICA or preferably SAMBICA will be able to mentor you; you can find the names of S/AMBICAs on the website.

Q: Can I still use the <u>application forms</u> I took off the website a couple of years ago?

A: No. You should only use the most up to date application forms from the website, as there has been continuous reviewing and improving of these forms. You should also read the most recent version of the Handbook before you start filling in any forms.

Q: I work in two <u>different clinics</u>. Do I just use the audits and summary of client evaluations from one clinic?

A: You will need to provide audits and a summary of regular client evaluations for each clinic you work in and a record of your private, independent practice (how detailed this is will depend on the nature and size of that practice

Q: How should I complete my <u>practice audit?</u>

A: There are guidelines and a template on the website

Q: I am new to the clinic; can I use the previous counsellor's figures?

A: No. You should only submit your own figures.

Q: There are <u>two or more counsellors</u> working at my clinic. Can I send in a joint summary of client evaluations and audit?

A: No. Only send in the summary of your own client evaluations and audit.

Q: I haven't kept a <u>full audit</u> for the two years that I am using to apply for accreditation, what should I do?

A: The assessors would firmly recommend that you start keeping figures from now on as part of good practice and wait to re-present your accreditation in 6 to 12 months with full audit and evaluations

Q: My <u>clinic's annual evaluation</u> of patient satisfaction with the service offered includes counselling. Is this sufficient evidence of client evaluation?

A: No. You need to evaluate separately your clients' satisfaction with the counselling **you** provide. The assessors recommend that you use the BICA Client Evaluation Questionnaire or an adaptation of this (see BICA website). You are not necessarily expected continually to evaluate your practice, but as a minimum to ask clients to complete a questionnaire periodically e.g., over a period of 6 to 8 weeks every 12 to 18 months.

Q: What if my actual hours do not match my audit?

A: They need to!

Q: The Practice Report asks about the number of <u>contracted hours</u> I have. Do I just put down the client contact hours I have?

A: No. You need to put down your client contact hours and any additional hours allocated to administration etc.

Q: What do you mean by 'later counselling'?

A: This is when clients have the opportunity to revisit the clinic for counselling sometime after treatment is completed; this may be years later.

Q: My clinic does not feel that counselling for <u>donor insemination</u> is necessary, but it is required for egg donation. Should I mention this?

A: You will need to explain the rationale for the clinic's policy on implications counselling for treatment using donated gametes and for surrogacy; you should also discuss the implications of this policy for you as a counsellor and any action that you have taken in relation to your clinic's policy or why you have taken no action. BICA considers it to be good practice that all people who are considering donating gametes, or having treatment with donated gametes, have implications counselling, with their partner if they have one.

Q: I see people who are considering or having <u>cross border treatment.</u> Should I mention this in my audit and practice report?

A: It is important to mention all the fertility counselling work you do and explain the specific implications that are raised in the counselling as well as any actions that you have taken related to your clinic's approach to cross border treatment.

Q: I don't know what the form means by 'other roles'?

A: This is when you take on other relevant roles that can promote counselling, such as teaching other members of staff, presenting courses that will help develop awareness and or/counselling skills of other staff, etc.

Q: Should I just describe the <u>therapeutic model</u> I learned on my Diploma Course, even though I use other models in my practice? Do the assessors want explanations of the theory?

A: You should describe whatever theoretical models you currently use. Please note it is crucial to relate your approach and your rationale for using it, to describe how it may be of benefit to clients. The assessors need to be able to gauge, from the 1000 words, how you actually work and to get a sense of your process with clients, which would include contracting, confidentiality and boundaries.

Q: I tend always to write more than is asked. Can I write more than x000 words?

A: If you submit more than the required material it is likely that your application will be returned to you for revision before it will be accepted for assessment.

Q: Do I have to reference any <u>quotations</u> I give?

A: Yes

Q: I have <u>2 supervisors</u> as I work in another counselling role as well. Should I get two reports?

A: No. You only need to ask the supervisor who supervises your fertility work to write a report.

Q: I have a lot of group supervision. Will this do instead of individual supervision?

A: No. You should include your hours of group supervision, but you will also need to show that you have a current arrangement for the required proportion of individual supervision and that this has covered the counselling practice hours you are claiming in your application.

Q: Do I need to send in 3 years of <u>CPD</u>, as I have only been working in the clinic for 2 years?

A: No, you need to submit evidence of CPD for the two years you are claiming that cover your total hours.

Q: I am not sure what covers 'Fertility Counselling' CPD?

A: Anything that relates seriously to your specialist practice and improves your understanding of the work you are doing. Your CPD log needs to show robust evidence of learning. There should be a balance of learning from for instance relevant courses, conferences, BICA Study days and training etc. You also need to show how you have made up the rest of your CPD to the required 30 hours per year. The following activities, for example, cannot be included in your CPD log: attendance at staff meetings, emailing, auditing your figures, having complementary therapy or supervision. There is more, detailed guidance in the Guidelines.

Q: I can't work out what would count as <u>evidence</u> for some of the competencies for the SAMBICA?

A: It would be worthwhile obtaining the help of a mentor, and read the portfolio guidance carefully.

Q: I am an <u>independent practitioner</u> and I don't really understand what implications counselling is in relation to the different treatments; what should I do?

A: It is expected that, as an independent practitioner, you will find a mentor attached to a licensed clinic to help you understand more about implications counselling. You may also like to consider attending the BICA Foundation Course where this area of a fertility counsellor's role is covered.

Q: Should I check my spelling, and get someone to verify my figures?

A: Most definitely! Always try and put yourself in the assessors' position, and think: 'does my application make sense, add up, and look professional?'

BICA Renewal & Re-accreditation

Q: Once I am accredited, do I need to apply for re-accreditation every year?

A: No, you are only required to apply to renew your accreditation with your membership and then seek re-accreditation over a longer period. This is being reviewed currently by the Board. It is

essential however that you maintain accurate records of supervision, CPD, client evaluations and any key issues of personal practice changes as you would for a HFEA inspection.

Q: How will I know when to apply?

A: You will receive an email from BICA, with the necessary forms attached, asking you to submit an - application by a specified date. There will be a small fee to pay

Q: Will I have to complete another <u>practice report</u> and submit an audit and summary of client evaluations?

A: No, there is no formal re-assessment unless you are required to provide more detailed information as part of BICA's audit process. You will normally only have to confirm your practice settings, professional indemnity insurance and supervision arrangements, as well as provide a summary of your fertility counselling related CPD for each year in practice since accreditation.

Q: If I am <u>audited</u>, what information will I need to provide?

A: BICA will be auditing 10% of the applications for re-accreditation (rounded up to a whole number). If your application is audited, you will be asked to provide the audits you keep for routine monitoring. The audit should cover each annual period since you became accredited. Client evaluations of your service should be available, collected at a minimum period of 6 to 8 weeks every 12 to 18 months. You will also be asked to provide evidence of 10 hours of specialist fertility counselling CPD and describe why each activity was chosen and how it has benefited your practice.

Q: I have not been a fertility counsellor for all of the last three years, am I still eligible for re-accreditation?

A: Yes, as long as you have maintained your annual 10 hours of specialist fertility counselling practice CPD within 30 hours generic CPD, you can still apply for re-accreditation but only for one further period of three years. If in counselling practice you must also be receiving supervision and have insurance.

Q: My fertility counselling practice hours have significantly reduced over the last three years, am I still eligible for re-accreditation?

A: Yes, as long as you can evidence >50 hours of supervised fertility counselling practice over one 12 month period in the last three years.

Q: Can I take a break from accreditation [sabbatical, sickness, maternity leave etc.]?

A: Yes, with the agreement of the Board. Normally you should continue in membership and resume accreditation within 3 years. Any other counselling practice must of course be conducted under usual professional conditions of supervision, CPD, insurance etc. The Chair of the Board must be given notice of the date on which you intend to resume accredited practice. You will be asked to apply for reaccreditation [paying the appropriate fee] providing a practice audit, record of CPD, supervision report and proof of insurance.

Q: What if I am retiring soon or leaving fertility counselling practice, can I be re-accredited?

A: Yes, but you may be re-accredited for just one period of three years providing you maintain your CPD, and, if you are still working as a counsellor, you must also maintain your supervision and indemnity insurance.

