



RCAA

Rehabilitation Counselling
Association of Australasia

**Accreditation Manual for
Rehabilitation
Counselling
Education Programs**

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Preamble

The Australian Council of Professions (Professions Australia) defines a profession as:

‘A disciplined group of individuals who adhere to high ethical standards and uphold themselves to, and are accepted by, the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised, organised body of learning derived from education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and these skills in the interest of others’ (*Professions Australia, 1997*).

Accreditation of rehabilitation counselling programs ensures the continuing high standards of tertiary education of Rehabilitation Counsellors. It seeks to support protection of the public by ensuring that practitioners are suitably trained and competent. It aims to ensure that training programs provide rehabilitation counselling students with the environment, content and practice necessary for them to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours central to the profession.

The Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia (RCAA) has previously provided provisional accreditation to rehabilitation counselling education programs, which met the provisional accreditation requirements detailed in an earlier publication. RCAA is now inviting all Australasian tertiary education programs in rehabilitation counselling, including those currently awarded provisional accreditation, to apply for full accreditation for a period of 5 years. In regularly reviewing accreditation of tertiary courses, RCAA seeks to ensure that accreditation requirements remain relevant over time.

Why the change from provisional accreditation to full accreditation? In the past 10 years there have been a number of major changes in the delivery of rehabilitation services, particularly vocational and personal injury rehabilitation. These include the increased movement from public to private sector service provision and changes in insurance and government policies, including Heads of Workers Compensation Authority (HWCA) and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The skill and knowledge base of qualified Rehabilitation Counsellors is now increasingly in demand by a wider variety of service delivery settings. Until recently, this expansion in employment settings and contexts of service delivery for Rehabilitation Counsellors had not been accompanied by an analysis of the continuing relevance of competencies seen as core to the profession. RCAA initiated research in this area and information on current competencies required by Rehabilitation Counsellors has been sourced from practicing Australasian Rehabilitation Counsellors and takes account of international standards. This research has been completed and the findings now inform contemporary competency standards for rehabilitation counselling practice in Australasia. It is now essential that rehabilitation counselling education programs hold these current professional competencies at the core of their curriculum.

The new requirements for full RCAA accreditation of professional programs in rehabilitation counselling contained in the following sections are drawn from the RCAA Code of Professional Ethics, current empirical research that defines competency standards for Rehabilitation Counsellors, and consultation with representatives of the rehabilitation counselling profession. Consultation with RCAA membership, tertiary institutions and key stakeholders such as HWCA and DEEWR form part of the accreditation process.

The Profession of Rehabilitation Counselling

A Rehabilitation Counsellor is an allied health and human service professional who works with individuals experiencing injury, disability and/or social disadvantage to achieve occupational, personal and social goals. To achieve this, Rehabilitation Counsellors work with individual strengths and facilitate change in both the person and their environment.

Rehabilitation Counsellors work with goal oriented decision-making models to achieve systems and individual change, promoting client outcomes. Rehabilitation Counsellors have evidence based expertise in vocational assessment and evaluation, vocational planning, vocational and careers counselling, job development and placement, case management, injury management, and workplace disability case management, intervention and program management. As well as being employed in vocational rehabilitation and disability management practice areas, Rehabilitation Counsellors work in varied settings, including career counselling, life coaching, mental health and community-based rehabilitation.

Internationally, rehabilitation counselling academics and practitioners conduct research and publish in peer-reviewed academic journals including the Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling, Work, Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, International Journal of Disability Management, Disability and Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Education, Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, International Journal of Rehabilitation Research, and the Journal of Rehabilitation.

About RCAA

RCAA is a professional body representing the interests of Rehabilitation Counsellors in the Australasian region, who have completed formal tertiary qualifications in rehabilitation counselling.

RCAA's focus is maintaining the integrity and standards of the rehabilitation counselling profession and ensuring the recognition of rehabilitation counselling as a unique profession in its own right.

RCAA represents the interests of the rehabilitation counselling profession on an Australasian level, and is formally incorporated in both Australia and New Zealand. RCAA seeks to influence policy direction by actively lobbying on its members' behalf for reforms that will positively impact on the field of rehabilitation.

RCAA and its members are recognised by workers' compensation jurisdictions, such as WorkCover Queensland, WorkCover New South Wales and Comcare, enabling members to provide services under those legislations, as well as under the current HWCA Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers. RCAA is recognised as a professional association by vocational rehabilitation services, such as CRS Australia and government authorities such as DEEWR. The major employer of Rehabilitation Counsellors (CRS Australia) employs rehabilitation counselling professionals on an equal footing to professions such as social work, psychology and occupational therapy.

RCAA is a foundation member of the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) and has contributed to the development of CICA's Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners (www.cica.org.au). RCAA is formally affiliated with the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) and the UK Vocational Rehabilitation Association (VRA), and is contributing to the development of international rehabilitation counselling education standards via the International Rehabilitation Counseling Association (IRCA). RCAA has its own code of professional ethics (available on request), in line with ARCA's code of ethics, which is supported by US national certification requirements for Rehabilitation Counsellors (www.cccertification.com).

The Principal Aims of RCAA are to:

- Promote the profession of rehabilitation counselling and its unique contribution to health and human service delivery in Australasia.
- Represent the interests of the profession of rehabilitation counselling.
- Maintain the professional integrity of rehabilitation counselling through setting and safeguarding the fields of:
 - Rehabilitation counselling profession and practice,
 - Vocational and avocational rehabilitation,
 - Disability and injury management,
 - Disability service delivery, and
 - Other human service areas.

RCAA Membership

RCAA is committed to ensuring that every full member of RCAA is appropriately qualified. Section 12 of the RCAA constitution regarding membership criteria states that an RCAA member shall “possess a tertiary qualification in rehabilitation counselling from an accredited degree program at an institution recognised by the Association for the purpose of awarding qualifications in rehabilitation counselling, as determined by a majority vote of directors” (RCAA, 2003).

Applications for professional membership to RCAA are invited from persons who are able to demonstrate that they meet the following membership requirements:

Member

The applicant shall identify as a Rehabilitation Counsellor; and possess a tertiary qualification in rehabilitation counselling from an accredited degree program at an institution recognised by the Association.

Student Member

The applicant shall be a bona fide student enrolled in a tertiary degree in rehabilitation counselling in an accredited degree program at an institution recognised by the Association.

For applicants from countries that do not have fully accredited rehabilitation counselling programs, full membership may be considered for people who have a relevant university qualification and demonstrated knowledge and skills in all rehabilitation counselling competency areas as outlined in this document. These applications will be assessed and determined by a majority vote of the directors of RCAA.

Rehabilitation Counselling Core Knowledge and Competencies

Recent rehabilitation counselling competency research conducted in Australia has found that Rehabilitation Counsellors currently identify vocational counselling, professional practice, personal counselling, rehabilitation case management, workplace disability case management, and workplace intervention and program management as important and frequently used job functions and knowledge areas (Matthews, Buys, Randall, Biggs & Hazelwood, 2010). These findings add to those of earlier rehabilitation counselling competency studies undertaken in the Australasian region (e.g., Biggs, 1996).

This recent research, involving a comprehensive survey of practicing Rehabilitation Counsellors, extends our understanding of contemporary job function and knowledge areas within the Australasian rehabilitation counselling context. It provides important insight into the demands of professionals in the growing and changing industry of vocational rehabilitation. While many of the traditional knowledge and skill areas remain central to vocational rehabilitation practice, the research suggests a growing emphasis on disability management competencies, and an expansion of rehabilitation counselling service delivery into areas such as mental health, career counselling and life coaching. Consequently, it is now imperative that rehabilitation counselling education programs respond to these developments to ensure their graduates are well equipped with the skills and knowledge that reflect the current needs of their chosen field.

The core competencies presented in the following section should therefore be considered essential course work in any rehabilitation counselling education program in the Australasian region. The knowledge and competencies section is divided into two parts, dealing firstly with the general competencies required by Rehabilitation Counsellors similar to other health and human service professionals (adapted from the School of Human Services General Field Placement Competencies Guidelines, Griffith University). The second part provides the specific professional competencies required by Rehabilitation Counsellors, as identified in recent empirical research (Matthews et al., 2010).

General Knowledge and Competencies for Rehabilitation Counselling

Interpersonal and Communication Skills

This competency area addresses the key interpersonal and communication skills possessed by Rehabilitation Counsellors to ensure effective relationships with clients and colleagues, including:

- Appropriate and effective use of interpersonal skills;
- Cooperative and transparent communication with colleagues and clients;
- Empathic listening skills to most effectively understand, and respond to, client needs.

Service Delivery

This general competency addresses the core of rehabilitation counselling practice: the delivery of the program, service or supports in order to meet client needs. It includes skills in relation to:

- Implementation of the service delivery role;
- Assessment of needs at the individual, group and community level;
- Coordination of resources;
- Provision of appropriate supports and interventions;
- Adherence to relevant legislative, policy and organisation guidelines around service delivery;
- Awareness of the importance of inter-professional practice in rehabilitation;
- Capacity to work effectively in an interdisciplinary environment.

Values in Practice

Rehabilitation Counsellors face the challenge of translating fundamental values such as consumer participation, empowerment, and human rights into realities for service users, and they therefore should possess the following:

- Awareness of personal values and their relationship to professional, organisational and sector values;
- Effective utilisation of strategies to realise fundamental values and principles to assist clients.

Organisational Knowledge

Rehabilitation Counsellors require a sound knowledge of the roles, functions and limits of the agencies and organisations in which they work, including:

- Understanding of the role and function of the organisation within the broad human service sector;
- Understanding of the organisational culture and how to operate within it;
- Knowledge and competency in maximising opportunities and services for clients taking into account organisation constraints;
- Ability to develop cooperative peer relationships within the organisation.

Ethical Frame of Reference

The nature of work undertaken by Rehabilitation Counsellors presents a number of complex ethical issues. More than ever, Rehabilitation Counsellors need to take a proactive approach to ethical issues and maintain the following:

- Ability to work within the ethical guidelines of the RCAA Code of Professional Ethics ([available to download at www.rcaa.org.au](http://www.rcaa.org.au));
- An understanding of the principles of ethical practice;
- Thorough consideration of ethical decision making processes, along with sensitive and appropriate actions in response to ethical issues that arise.

Work Practices

This element addresses work practices needed by professionals to operate successfully in the contemporary world of work. It includes knowledge and skills in:

- Effective negotiation and management of time and workload;
- Upholding professional standards of conduct;
- Appropriate utilisation of available organisational resources.
- Awareness of organisational occupational health and safety requirements.

Professional Education

Rehabilitation Counsellors should demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional development and continuing education in their areas of expertise, along with the following:

- Acceptance of critique and guidance in the spirit of aspiring to excellence;
- Responsibility for ongoing education and improvement e.g., reading journals, attending workshops and conferences, and seeking feedback from peers and colleagues;
- Responsibility for maintaining a record of continuing professional development undertaken.

Specific Rehabilitation Counselling Knowledge and Competencies

The following competency areas are central to contemporary rehabilitation counselling practice in the Australasian region. Within each of these core competencies are specific skills and knowledge considered essential attributes of Rehabilitation Counsellors, and these are presented below.

Professional Practice

Professional practice refers to the knowledge and skills required by Rehabilitation Counsellors in relation to professionalism. It includes competencies relating to ethical behaviour, professional advocacy and marketing, legal aspects of their work, and the evidence-base for professional practice.

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Explain the roles of Rehabilitation Counsellors, and values and aims of the rehabilitation counselling profession;
- Describe the roles of other professionals involved in service provision to people with disability or disadvantage;
- Follow professional and ethical standards (including RCAA Code of Professional Ethics);
- Explain the legislation relevant to rehabilitation counselling practice, and the legislation affecting employment of people with disabilities;
- Describe disability, rehabilitation and psychosocial philosophies, theories and models, and apply these to the development of strategies for intervention;
- Design work situations for observing specific behaviours;
- Identify community resources, government bodies, and employment agencies relevant to people with disabilities and rehabilitation counselling practice;
- Understand policy and policy development and how this process can be influenced;
- Promote change in attitudes and stereotypes regarding people with disabilities, particularly addressing the concerns of employers in relation to hiring people with disabilities;
- Promote public and corporate awareness of rehabilitation programs and services;
- Engage in client advocacy and marketing, including negotiation with employers or union representatives;
- Report appropriately to referral sources regarding progress of cases;
- Demonstrate grant and proposal writing skills;
- Read professional literature relating to medical conditions, injury management, vocational rehabilitation, and job markets, and apply findings to professional practice;
- Conduct research and publish results of studies related to injury/disability management programs and return to work outcomes, as well as vocational evaluation and counselling practice.

Rehabilitation Case Management

To facilitate timely and effective rehabilitation outcomes, rehabilitation counsellors require essential knowledge and skills in case management processes. This competency domain therefore includes management processes for identifying, coordinating, and supplying the resources needed for effective rehabilitation.

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Build rapport and link with major stakeholders;
- Interact with a client to identify emotional reactions to disability;
- Utilise assessment data to highlight a client's abilities for the purposes of rehabilitation planning;
- Consult with medical professionals regarding functional capacities, prognoses, and treatment plans for a client;
- Identify, access and coordinate resources for effective rehabilitation, including selection of appropriate rehabilitation or educational services;
- Utilise research methods, including literature reviews on business and job markets, and rehabilitation literature for a specific topic or case problem;
- Demonstrate an awareness of funding and regulator requirements and constraints, and an understanding of claims processing procedures;
- Apply principles of appropriate rehabilitation legislation to daily practice;
- Apply relevant theories and resources to improve social participation, including community programs and assistive technologies;
- Interpret relevant legislation, policy, and regulations to clients and other key stakeholders;
- Explain regulations and procedures regarding disability determination and benefits;
- Clarify mutual expectations with clients and educate them on their rights and responsibilities under law;
- Collaborate with other providers so that services are coordinated, appropriate and timely;
- Provide a clear and relevant explanation of a client's disability upon referral to service providers;
- Demonstrate effective caseload management and individual case management including clear case note reporting;
- Undertake thorough rehabilitation planning, reporting and data management;
- Monitor and review rehabilitation progress;
- Action effective case closure.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation Counsellors require a high level of understanding and proficiency in the area of vocational rehabilitation. Central to this competency area are three aspects: vocational assessment and planning; career development and counselling; and vocational training, job matching and job placement.

Vocational Assessment and Planning

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Explain vocational assessment;
- Utilise new and emerging technologies in vocational assessment;
- Administer and interpret vocational assessments, including occupational interests, work values and work personality, and vocational attributes and abilities tests;
- Review medical information with clients to determine vocational implications of their functional limitations;
- Identify transferable work skills by analysing clients' work history and functional assets and limitations;
- Generate job options consistent with client interests, abilities, and functional capacities, along with work environments, legislative restrictions and organisational policies;
- Match client needs, characteristics and aptitudes to job characteristics and requirements;
- Discuss with clients the educational and vocational implications of assessment and interview information;
- Interpret vocational assessment results to clients and others;
- Utilise assessment data to highlight a client's ability for the purposes of rehabilitation planning;
- Utilise behavioural observations to make inferences about work personality characteristics and adjustment;
- Write vocational assessment reports;
- Conduct labour market analysis/research;
- Apply job market information to locating and securing employment for clients;
- Advise clients on job market conditions that may influence job opportunities;
- Facilitate congruent and realistic client goal setting in job-seeking.

Career Development and Counselling

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the abilities listed above, as well as the ability to:

- Explain career development theories;
- Work with clients to select jobs consistent with their abilities, interests, rehabilitation goals, and career goals;
- Provide career counselling services to clients;
- Provide advice to clients regarding desirable work behaviours to improve their employability;
- Match client stated interests and values to realistic vocational choices;
- Develop mutually agreed vocational counselling goals.

Vocational Training, Job Matching and Placement

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Assist clients on job search skills;
- Identify educational and training requirements for specific jobs;
- Identify and arrange the required training to maintain a client's successful job placement;
- Identify client work personality characteristics to be observed and rate on an actual job or simulated work situation;
- Determine the level of intervention necessary for job placement;
- Utilise local resources to assist with placements;
- Utilise supportive counselling techniques to prepare clients for the stress of job hunting;
- Provide prospective employers with appropriate information on a client's work skills and abilities;
- Monitor clients in employment to determine needs for additional services.

Personal Interactions and Counselling

Personal interactions and client counselling focuses on essential knowledge and skills in areas such as psychosocial aspects of behaviour and theoretical frameworks relevant to counselling, which are central to this competency area.

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Describe and utilise major counselling theories and models;
- Demonstrate advanced communication skills, including skills in:
 - developing rapport;
 - verbal communication skills;
 - active listening;

- awareness of body language;
 - conflict resolution;
 - appropriate decision making techniques;
 - motivational interviewing;
 - stress management counselling;
 - group facilitation;
 - adjustment to disability counselling
- Assess the significance of clients’ disabilities taking into account medical, psychological, social, educational, and family status;
 - Evaluate a client’s social support systems (family, friends and community relationships);
 - Identify social, economic and environmental factors that may adversely affect a client’s motivation for rehabilitation;
 - Respond appropriately and effectively to physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of clients;
 - Apply psychological and social theories to develop strategies for intervention;
 - Understand psychological, social and other issues impacting on the rehabilitation process;
 - Assist a client to determine their specific behavioural goals for personal adjustment;
 - Counsel a client to help him/her appreciate and emphasise their personal strengths;
 - Determine appropriate community services for a client’s stated needs, and explain the services and limitations of these resources to clients;
 - Determine a client’s need for individual, group, or family counselling;
 - Adjust counselling approaches and styles according to the cognitive and personality characteristics of the client;
 - Recognise psychological problems that require consultation or referral/s.

Workplace Disability Case Management

Disability management practices have increasingly become integral to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation in Australasia. The competencies in Workplace Disability Case Management focus on the retention and management of injured workers in their workplace.

Knowledge about Injury and Disability

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Explain the medical aspects and implications of disability, and common medical interventions;
- Explain the implications of disability for physical, cognitive, psychological, social and vocational functioning;

- Describe the roles and functions of treating practitioners in diagnosing and treating clients;
- Understand medical terminology and apply medical information to case management planning and coordination.

Return to Work Assessment, Planning, and Management

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Provide early intervention strategies to facilitate early return to work outcomes for clients;
- Communicate with treating practitioners to facilitate return to work planning for clients;
- Understand industrial relations issues and their potential impact on return to work planning;
- Understand and assess workplace factors and employment practices within worksites and their potential impact on return to work planning and outcomes for clients;
- Understand cultural differences and how they may impact on injury/disability management programs and interventions;
- Coordinate individualised and cost effective injury/disability management programs;
- Prepare and manage a budget for the administration of an injury/disability management program;
- Identify the individual, employer, environmental, societal, political, economic and family factors that may impact return to work;
- Develop written return to work plans for clients;
- Implement strategies for accessing personal, community, and employer resources relevant for return to work;
- Coordinate functional capacity assessments for clients with restrictions and apply assessment results to demands of jobs;
- Evaluate personal and work adjustment needs of clients;
- Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for injured workers who are unable to return to their original employer;
- Perform job analyses to identify physical demands and other job requirements;
- Organise worksite assessments to identify suitable return to work duties;
- Provide workplace evaluations, including assessment of appropriate worksite accommodations;
- Identify assistive technology and worksite accommodation resources to facilitate return to work planning for clients;
- Utilise ergonomic principles and strategies to reduce work injury risks and to accommodate restrictions of clients;
- Develop transitional work programs at worksites to facilitate the return to work process;
- Monitor progress of clients with injuries/disabilities to achieve return to work goals.

Workplace Intervention and Program Management

Workplace intervention and program management is a set of competencies that focus on administrative and managerial functions of disability management, with a focus on the organisational rather than the individual level. It represents the knowledge and skills necessary to create the organisational environment for prevention and injury management initiatives to flourish in the workplace.

Injury and Disability Prevention

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Describe accident and injury prevention processes and practices;
- Describe evidence-based practices in injury and disability management;
- Identify the prominent causes of injury and disability in the workplace;
- Understand accident and illness reporting systems at worksites;
- Utilise ergonomic principles and strategies to reduce work injury risks and to accommodate restrictions of clients;
- Facilitate healthy workplace practices and injury prevention initiatives, including provision of workplace education and training on worksite injury/disability management and return to work programs;
- Manage health promotion and wellness programs in organisations;
- Use management information systems to monitor patterns of injury and disability, costs, and service outcomes.

Injury and Disability Program Management

Competency in this area is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Promote legislation that supports injury/disability management and reintegration principles for clients;
- Develop worksite policies, procedures, and guidelines for injury/ disability management programs and return to work activities in organisations;
- Facilitate joint worker–management collaboration at worksites to develop and implement injury/disability management programs;
- Provide consultation and leadership to worksite representatives and others regarding injury/ disability management programs and return to work activities;
- Promote and market injury/disability management and return to work programs to unions, management, and other stakeholders;
- Explain cultural differences and how they may impact on disability management programs and interventions;

- Facilitate attitudinal and behavioural change among worksite representatives and others to support return to work goals;
- Develop business plans and strategies for effective injury/disability management programs;
- Prepare and manage a budget for the administration of disability management programs;
- Coordinate and evaluate disability management programs;
- Conduct cost–benefit analyses of worksite injury/disability management programs;
- Evaluate processes and/or outcomes of injury/disability management programs;
- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of rehabilitation providers and treating practitioners;
- Provide supervision to other professionals within injury/disability management programs;
- Read professional literature relating to medical conditions, injury management and rehabilitation;
- Conduct research and publish results of studies related to injury/disability management programs and return to work outcomes;
- Demonstrate grant and proposal writing skills.

Checklist of Education Program

The following checklist is for use by rehabilitation counselling education program convenors in applying for RCAA accreditation, and by the RCAA accreditation sub-committee in assessing accreditation eligibility. The checklist combines elements of the RCAA Core Competencies detailed above and the RCAA Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counsellors. The RCAA Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counsellors details education program requirements in orientation; evaluation; teaching ethics; peer relationships; theoretical positions; field education, and; program diversity. This information will assist you in developing or redeveloping your program, and with ensuring the program is well placed to meet the requirements for accreditation outlined in the checklist below. Please refer to the RCAA Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counsellors available from www.rcaa.org.au.

Program

The rehabilitation counselling program will:

- Be a recognised program within a school/department of an established university;
- Have a dedicated and adequate budget provided to allow the program to continue;
- Have adequate resources available to and accessible by staff and students i.e. library, student administration, student welfare, student funding schemes, academic advisors, and computing facilities.

Faculty

Staff convening and teaching in the rehabilitation counselling program will demonstrate that they:

- Hold a tertiary degree in rehabilitation counselling or a closely aligned field, and professional experience in areas in which they teach. The Program Convenor and the majority of staff should possess a tertiary degree in rehabilitation counselling and be eligible for full membership with RCAA;
- Participate in ongoing professional development activities in rehabilitation counselling and/or undertake research in the areas in which they teach;
- Are suitably qualified to supervise research students if this is part of their role.

Field Education

The rehabilitation counselling program will include university-coordinated field education experiences in industry based settings that allow for appropriate supervised activities of Rehabilitation Counsellors to be undertaken by the student.

- Students to complete a minimum of 200 hours field education in any year, which includes a minimum of 80 hours in direct service provision and direct client contact, as appropriate to the program;

- Students to receive a minimum of one hour of individual supervision each week of their field education placement;
- A dedicated university staff member to be responsible for the field education program.

Curriculum

Course duration

Undergraduate programs: a minimum of 3 full time academic years (6 semesters) of tertiary study.

Postgraduate programs: a minimum of 1 full time academic year (2 semesters) of tertiary study.

Course content

All content will be informed by current research and the Rehabilitation Counselling Core Competencies detailed in section two of this manual. For the purposes of the accreditation checklist, and in accordance with the outlined core competencies of rehabilitation counsellors, education programs should facilitate learning of the following knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours:

1. Professional Practice

- rehabilitation philosophy and principles:
 - disability, rehabilitation and psychosocial philosophies, theories and models.
- policy and legislation relevant to rehabilitation including:
 - Federal and State legislation relevant to rehabilitation counselling practice;
 - understanding of how policy is developed and how this process can be influenced.
- professional and ethical standards:
 - the role of rehabilitation counsellors and the values and aims of the rehabilitation counselling profession;
 - the roles of other professionals involved in service provision to people with disability or disadvantage;
 - knowledge of the RCAA Code of Ethics;
 - the role of community resources, government bodies, and employment agencies in rehabilitation counselling practice;
 - appropriate client advocacy and marketing techniques and employer negotiation and awareness raising strategies;
 - appropriate reporting methods for informing referral sources of case progress;
 - research methods, including literature searches to inform professional practice, and knowledge of how to plan, design, conduct and report research that is consistent with pertinent ethical principles.

2. Rehabilitation Case Management

- ways to establish rapport with client, employer, and other stakeholders, including medical professionals;
- effective interaction with a client to identify emotional reactions to disability, and clarify mutual obligations, rights and responsibilities;
- identification and coordination of major stakeholders, sources of information and resources for effective rehabilitation, including selection of appropriate rehabilitation or educational services;
- research methods, including literature reviews on business and job markets, and rehabilitation literature for the purposes of addressing specific case problems;
- awareness of funding and regulator requirements and constraints, and an understanding of claims processing procedures;
- understanding of relevant theories and resources and how these are used in daily practice and to improve social participation, including community programs and assistive technologies;
- knowledge of regulations and procedures involved in disability determination and benefits;
- understanding of the need for collaboration with other service providers so that services are coordinated, appropriate and timely;
- strategies for effective caseload management and individual case management, including clear case note reporting and provision of information upon referral to service providers;
- rehabilitation planning, reporting and data management;
- monitor and review rehabilitation progress;
- effecting case closure.

3. Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Assessment and Planning

- vocational assessment theory and practice, including new and emerging technologies in vocational assessment;
- use and interpretation of vocational assessment tests, including:
 - occupational interests
 - work values
 - work personality
 - vocational attributes and abilities tests
- analysis of a client's transferable work skills, work history and functional assets and limitations;
- vocational assessment report writing
- vocational planning, including techniques to generate realistic job options consistent with:
 - client interests
 - client abilities
 - client functional capacities
 - client work personality and aptitudes
 - work environments
 - legislative restrictions
 - organisational policy
- job market information, including the hidden job market, and conditions that can influence employment opportunities for people with a disability;
- congruent and realistic goal setting in job-seeking
- labour market analysis/research

Career Development and Counselling

- career development and career counselling theory and practice;
- techniques to encourage clients to select jobs consistent with iii. their abilities, interests, rehabilitation goals, and career goals;
- work behaviours and employability;
- matching client stated interests and values to realistic vocational choices;
- developing mutually agreed vocational counselling goals.

Vocational Training, Job Matching and Placement

- job search skills, including résumé writing, addressing selection criteria, canvassing and interviewing skills;
- educational and training requirements for specific jobs;
- identifying and assessing work personality characteristics;
- vocational training and placement, including interventions and resources to facilitate this;
- strategies to support a client through the stress of job-seeking;
- marketing and reporting strategies involved in placement;
- monitoring clients in employment to determine needs for additional services.

4. Personal Interactions and Counselling

- major counselling theories and models;
- advanced communication skills, including skills in:
 - developing rapport;
 - verbal communication skills;
 - active listening;
 - awareness of body language;
 - conflict resolution;
 - appropriate decision making techniques;
 - motivational interviewing;
 - stress management counselling;
 - group facilitation;
 - adjustment to disability counselling.
- medical, psychological, social, educational and family issues that can impact on disability, the rehabilitation process and motivation for rehabilitation;
- social support systems;
- responding appropriately and effectively to clients' physical, emotional, and cognitive needs;
- psychological and social theories used in strategies for intervention;
- determining specific personal strengths and behavioural goals with clients;
- matching a client's needs with appropriate community services;
- determining appropriateness of individual, group, or family counselling, and adjusting counselling approaches according to client characteristics and needs;
- identifying psychological problems that require consultation or referral/s.

5. Workplace Disability Case Management

Knowledge about Injury and Disability

- medical aspects of disability, including aetiology and common medical interventions;
- implications of disability for physical, cognitive, psychological, social and vocational functioning;
- individual, employer, environmental, societal, political, economic, cultural and family factors that may impact on injury/disability management programs, interventions and return to work outcomes;
- roles and functions of treating practitioners in diagnosing and treating clients;
- medical terminology and the application of medical information to case management planning and coordination.

Return to Work Assessment, Planning, and Management

- early intervention strategies to facilitate early return to work outcomes;
- strategies for communication with treating practitioners and other stakeholders to facilitate return to work planning;
- workplace factors and employment practices that can impact on return to work planning and outcomes for clients;
- industrial relations issues and their potential impact on return to work planning;
- development and management of individualised and cost effective injury/disability management programs;
- budget management principles in the administration of injury/disability management programs;
- developing return to work plans for clients;
- strategies for accessing personal, community, and employer resources relevant for return to work;
- the role of functional capacity assessments in return to work planning;
- evaluating and responding to personal and work adjustment needs of clients;
- coordinating vocational rehabilitation services for injured workers who are unable to return to their original employer;
- job analyses;
- worksite assessments;
- workplace evaluations;
- assistive technology and worksite accommodation resources;
- ergonomic principles and strategies;
- transitional work programs;
- monitoring return to work progress.

6. Workplace Intervention and Program Management

Injury and Disability Prevention

- accident and injury prevention processes and practices;
- evidence-based practices in injury and disability management;
- prominent causes of injury and disability in the workplace;
- accident and illness reporting systems at worksites;
- ergonomic principles and strategies;
- healthy workplace practices and injury prevention initiatives;
- health promotion and wellness programs in organisations;
- management information systems used in monitoring patterns of injury and disability, costs, and service outcomes.

Injury and Disability Program Management

- injury/disability management programs and return to work activities;
- legislation that supports injury/disability management and reintegration principles;
- policies, procedures, and guidelines for injury/ disability management programs and return to work activities in organisations;
- joint worker–management collaboration in the implementation of injury/disability management programs;
- marketing and promotion strategies in relation to injury/disability management and return to work programs;
- attitudinal and behavioural changes relevant to injury/disability management and return to work goals;
- business plans and strategies for effective injury/disability management programs, including budget administration;
- coordination and evaluation of disability management programs;
- cost–benefit analyses of worksite injury/disability management programs;
- evaluation of processes and/or outcomes of injury/disability management programs;
- evaluation of rehabilitation providers and treating practitioners;
- the value of professional literature relating to medical conditions, injury management and rehabilitation;
- conducting research and publishing results of studies related to injury/disability management programs and return to work outcomes;
- grant and proposal writing skills.

Applying for RCAA Accreditation

To be awarded full accreditation by RCAA you will need to write to RCAA requesting accreditation of your program. In your application you will need to provide supporting documentation, such as program description, program structure and course outlines, as evidence that your program meets the above requirements.

There is a fee associated with the accreditation. This fee will need to be paid prior to the review of your application. This fee will be advised by RCAA at the time of your application.

The RCAA Accreditation sub-committee will review the application and, if satisfactory, will issue provisional accreditation. Full accreditation will be determined following a site visit. You will be advised in writing of the outcome of your application within 30 working days following the visit.

Where you are provided full RCAA accreditation, this accreditation will be valid for five (5) years. RCAA may decide to conduct periodic reviews, and you will be notified of this at least 90 days in advance.

Where a decision is made not to grant full accreditation, Universities have a 90 day period to make changes to their program and then resubmit evidence that the program is in compliance with the requirements. Longer timeframes for provisional accreditation may be negotiated.

The initial review of your application for accreditation will be conducted by two RCAA directors from the accreditation sub-committee. Should a further review be required, or the university is dissatisfied with the accreditation team, two other directors will do a subsequent review of your application. The decision/s of RCAA regarding full accreditation will be based on the information contained in this document and are to be considered final.

Appeals Process

In the event you are not satisfied with RCAA's decision, the university should contact the RCAA Accreditation sub-committee outlining the concerns and making a case for why for the decision regarding RCAA accreditation should be changed. RCAA (the accreditor) will undertake one of two courses of action:

The Accreditor (RCAA) Accepts the Appeal

- In this case RCAA will secure a further review making available confidentially the relevant information for the assigned Reviewer/s
- The Reviewer/s on receiving the review will either accept the appeal and therefore invite a resubmission for further review; or reject the appeal and no further action will be taken.
- If an appeal is rejected there will be no further right of appeal.

The Accreditor (RCAA) does not uphold the Appeal

- If the Accreditor does not accept the appeal and is not prepared to secure further review the decision will be referred to the RCAA President and one other director for independent consideration. In the case of the RCAA President being the Reviewer, two other RCAA Directors will undertake independent consideration.
- The RCAA President (or substitute Director) will either confirm the decision or recommend that a further review be obtained.
- If both the original Reviewer/s and the Independent Reviewer recommend that the appeal should not be upheld there will be no further right of appeal.

References

Biggs, H. (1996). *A validation of the rehabilitation skills inventory in four Australasian rehabilitation organisations and its relationship with occupation measures*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Massey University, New Zealand.

Matthews, L.R., Buys, N., Randall, C., Biggs, H., & Hazelwood, Z. (2010). *Evolution of vocational rehabilitation competencies in Australia*. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, 33, 124-133.

Professions Australia. (1997). *Definition of a Profession*. Presented by Dr John Southwick of Professions Australia at a conference on competition law and the professions, Perth, April 1997, and adopted at the AGM of Professions Australia on May 26 1997. Available at: <http://www.professions.com.au/defineprofession.html>

Further information about RCAA
accreditation can be obtained by
contacting RCAA administration:
admin@rcaa.org.au
www.rcaa.org.au



RCAA

Rehabilitation Counselling
Association of Australasia