

The Blue Book

Training Standards and Course Accreditation

4th edition (revised 2015)



AFT

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Introduction

The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK (AFT) has been promoting high levels of training and practice in Systemic Family Therapy (SFT) and Systemic Practice with Families (SPF) for over 30 years. With changes in society, employment contexts, research and client needs, it is necessary to update training standards from time to time. This 4th edition reflects a wish to ensure that training standards continue to fit with the competencies required to carry out systemic practice. It is expected that all systemic courses will be accredited against these new standards by the end of 2019.

These standards provide a framework and procedures for accrediting courses in Systemic Practice with Families and in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy.

Systemic Practice with Families refers to the work of practitioners who have completed Foundation and

Intermediate Level Training, or the work of practitioners who have completed an accredited CYP IAPT training in Systemic Family Practice (SFP) following the IAPT curriculum for Children and Adolescents. Systemic Practitioners trained at Intermediate Level use systemic approaches, methods and techniques as a development of their work in a broad range of social and health care settings.

Family and Systemic Psychotherapy refers to the therapeutic practice of those who have completed the Qualifying Level Training as well as the Foundation and Intermediate Level Training as laid out in this booklet. Qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapists work with families, individuals, couples, and others in close relationship. These practices can extend to wider organisational settings that may involve working with or consulting to groups, teams and management structures.

Training Framework and Scope

AFT promotes training in systemic approaches for all those working with adults, children, families, individuals, couples and other relationship groups, and also sets standards and accredits training in supervision and evidence based approaches. This particular set of standards covers the four-year part time training to become a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist. Those entering the training will usually have a qualification in a recognised mental health or social care related profession. The four-year training is designed to qualify students to work with families, couples, individuals, other systems and relationship networks and includes training relevant to work with children and adolescents. Successful completion of the full training leads to registration with UKCP. The registration per se refers to registration as a Psychotherapist. The titles below are descriptors that people are entitled to use on completion of the qualification.

Family & Couple Psychotherapist
Family Psychotherapist
Family & Systemic Psychotherapist
Family Therapist
Systemic Psychotherapist

It also entitles graduates to be included on the UKCP Children's Register. We are aware that these descriptors may change over the course of time so please check with UKCP.

These training requirements are designed to fit with those of UKCP (College of Family, Couple and Systemic Therapy) and the training standards of the European Family Therapy Association (EFTA), which is a member of the European Psychotherapy Association. They are based on the Competence Framework developed by Roth, Calder and Pilling (2011), 'A Competence Framework for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services'. The competences are designed to be accessed online and can be downloaded from www.ucl.ac.uk/CORE

Section 1: *Principles Underpinning Training Standards and Procedures*

1. Meeting the needs of Clients

The main purpose of systemic training is to equip professionals to use systemic theory and practice to meet the psychotherapeutic needs of clients presenting with a wide range of difficulties. Clients may come from a range of backgrounds and cultures and present at different points in the family life cycle. In consequence there is a strong emphasis on the formation of the therapeutic relationship and adaptation of therapy to meet specific needs and preferences.

2. Choice and Accessibility

The training is divided into three levels (Foundation, Intermediate and Qualifying), each with its own accreditation process. This provides for the possibility of exit from the training at the end of Year 1 (Foundation Level) or Year 2 (Intermediate Level) with knowledge and a skill set which can be used to enrich current professional practice. It also allows for transfer to an alternative course or an opportunity to have a break in training.

There is no specified time limit to a break in training between Years 1 and 2 or between Years 2 and 3. Should there be a break after the completion of one level of training, a student's entry to the next level will depend on interview and meeting any additional APEL requirements of that course.

A maximum of a five-year gap between the two years of qualifying training (Years 3 and 4) is recommended as the time allowable for students to complete the full course i.e. the two years of qualifying training should be completed in a maximum of seven years.

AFT works closely with bodies developing associated training requirements and, for example, the CYP-IAPT Systemic Training has been designed to include some of the requirements of the Foundation and Intermediate years and provides a stepping-stone to Qualifying Level Training. In addition the Foundation Level Training can be delivered as part of a professional qualification.

3. From specific skill sets to adaptation and flexibility across client groups

At Foundation and Intermediate Levels students are taught basic principles and skills and are required to apply them to their current areas of clinical practice (i.e. undertaking Systemic Practice with Families). During the final two years of training, students acquire the knowledge and skills to adapt their therapy to different client groups and to problems arising across the family life cycle, as well as to work with more complex presentations.

4. An integrative approach drawing from a range of different theoretical and practice approaches

In order to meet the needs of clients of all ages, from different social and cultural backgrounds, with different preferences for ways of working and with different presenting problems and time scales for intervention, it is necessary to draw from a wide range of systemic approaches and other relational and contextual frameworks.

5. Importance of research, clinical evidence, and client feedback

From the beginning of training there is a focus on evidence-based approaches and critical thinking about research methodology. This includes evaluation of service provision and ways of eliciting feedback from clients in assessing progress towards agreed goals. It is expected that these activities are also present in the structure and process of courses so that student feedback and assignments reflect systemic values in generating feedback and showing its usefulness.

6. Design and delivery of courses

Courses are encouraged to develop their teaching and course delivery in innovative ways and course accreditation is an effective way of sharing good practice. However courses will be required to meet the standards laid out in this document. Teaching methods must be appropriate for the course content as well as reflecting systemic theory and philosophy and accepted principles of adult learning.

All courses must be delivered and assessed with transparency and fairness and in line with the AFT code of ethics.

Section 2: *General Requirements for All Courses*

Courses at all levels must demonstrate the following:

1. Adherence to the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice
2. Adherence to the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice for Supervisors
3. A clear philosophy and aims
4. The active promotion of anti-oppressive practice throughout the teaching and organisation of the course, together with the implementation of an equal opportunities policy
5. Information on criteria for eligibility and selection in line with AFT requirements, including an APEL policy and associated procedures. Information concerning access to further levels of training should be included.
6. A curriculum that reflects theory, practice and research in the field and is relevant to current practice in the public and voluntary sectors
7. A teaching staff, the majority of whom are registered, or eligible for registration as Family and Systemic Psychotherapists with UKCP and membership of the College of the Family, Couple and Systemic Therapy of UKCP
8. A clear description of how the AFT Learning Outcomes are both reflected in the curriculum and assessment processes
9. A range of teaching methods appropriate to adult education and the teaching of systemic ideas and practice
10. Good course organisation and clear information for students
11. Appropriate facilities, including access to written materials
12. Clear guidelines to students for any practice requirements as part of the course
13. Appropriate management of clinical materials as they relate to different levels of the training
14. Support and guidance in the development of a learning portfolio
15. Effective ways of gathering student feedback and evidence that it is taken into account
16. A fair and accessible complaints procedure with clear opportunities for appeal
17. A policy for supporting students who require reasonable adjustment to allow access to training courses
18. A policy for students who fail to make due progress on the course and who may not complete training
19. A qualified Systemic Family Psychotherapist appointed as an external examiner/moderator who can quality assure the course including marking standards and procedures.

Section 3: *Foundation Level Training* (*Year 1*)

These standards and requirements are for Foundation Level only but some course providers may choose to run a two-year, combined Foundation and Intermediate Course. If this is the case they must demonstrate that the combined course covers requirements for both years and that successful students have met all of the learning outcomes. Courses should be taught at a postgraduate level.

Aims of Foundation Level Training are to:

- Provide an introduction to the underlying theory and principles of systemic practice with families, couples and other systems
- Provide an overview and framework of different approaches and models of systemic family therapy
- Enable students to develop basic practice skills and apply these in their practice, including convening, engaging and working with families, couples and other systems
- To facilitate critical reading of practice and research texts
- Provide an opportunity for students to become familiar with research into systemic practice
- Enable and support the development of students' self-reflective practice

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, graduates will have:

1. A basic understanding of systemic theories and principles underpinning systemic practice with families and organisations
2. A knowledge of a range of systemic approaches and applications to practice with different client groups
3. Familiarity with key pieces of research on family and couple therapy especially in current areas of practice, including client feedback and service evaluation
4. Some basic understanding of systemic approaches and an ability to critique their application in the light of research
5. A knowledge and awareness of the influence of the wider social context (including gender, race, age, ability, culture, education, sexuality) on self and clients, with an ability to consider how inequalities and power differentials impact on people's lives and systemic practices

6. A knowledge of the AFT code of ethics and an ability to use ethical decision making, especially in relation to safeguarding, confidentiality and consent
7. An understanding of the practice skills and knowledge required to convene a systemic interview, and to make a good therapeutic relationship
8. Confidence to effectively interview more than one person in the room using a range of questioning techniques
9. Capacity to make use of systemic theory to draw together a systemically informed intervention plan based on a systemic hypothesis/formulation
10. The skills to construct a genogram in a way that leads to better understanding the complexities of family relationships, strengths and vulnerabilities
11. An ability to describe and critique the concept of the family life cycle perspective and its application to different family forms
12. An ability to identify and work with individual and family strengths
13. An ability to begin to consider their own personal family and cultural experiences from a systemic perspective, and to explore how these influence their professional practice
14. An ability to reflect on their own learning and their positioning in their professional system.

Entry Requirements

Selection

Criteria for selection should be clear and transparent. Procedures should be designed to promote equal opportunities, and courses must have a policy for meeting the needs of students with a disability and those from non-traditional academic and professional backgrounds. Applicants should be required to provide one and preferably two references.

In order to maximise access to training in systemic practice, entry requirements for Foundation Level Training are kept to a minimum as follows:

- A relevant professional training in a mental health related discipline or social care or equivalent. Courses should carry out an equivalence procedure in order to assess individuals who may fall out of the above remit. This should be clearly available at point of enquiry

- Opportunity to apply systemic ideas to practice in a current work setting.

Placements

Some students may need to find additional practice opportunities to their usual work place, on a placement basis, and courses should provide clear guidelines for both students and placements concerning the requirements of such an arrangement.

Length and Structure of the Course

1. Minimum of 60 hours of study in direct contact with course staff
2. Minimum of 120 hours of independent study
3. The Foundation Course will usually run over one academic year but where it is delivered as part of a professional training or in other exceptional circumstances the time scale of delivery may vary. A rationale for this must be presented when the course is put forward for accreditation.

Assessment

Courses will be required to describe their methods of assessment and the underlying rationale. Assessments must cover all learning outcomes and include a reflective learning portfolio documenting learning during the time of the course. At this level the expectation is of two assessed pieces of work, including at least one written assignment.

Competency Benchmark

By the end of the Foundation year it is expected that individuals will be able to:

- Use systemic ideas to think about and contribute to their current practice
- Convene more than one person within the client system within their own area of practice and interview in a way that pays attention to the therapeutic relationship with family members
- Show an awareness and an ability to describe working in a way that is ethical and takes account of difference and power
- Apply a systemic perspective to an assessment of the problem and the need for family work, understanding the limitations of the method and limits of their own expertise
- Use a range of systemic questions and techniques (such as

hypothesising and circular questioning) to clarify goals and gather systemic information

- Use basic interventions including verbal and non-verbal methods to improve communication and help families to achieve their goals
- Construct a genogram with clients, using this to identify patterns of relationship, historical influences and stressors on the family, and to consider how these may impact on the problem/difficulty referred
- Identify and consider how their own personal family experiences, beliefs and assumptions influence the work undertaken.

Clinical skills may be evaluated through role-play and case presentation and at this level there is no requirement for direct observation of clinical work.

Section 4: *Intermediate Level (Year 2)*

Intermediate training should be delivered at Postgraduate level. Intermediate Courses may be presented for accreditation together with Year 1 if they are run as a two-year course.

Aims of Intermediate Level Training are that students:

- Are provided with knowledge of theories underpinning systemic family practice and their application to specific areas of work
- Develop critical reading and knowledge of the theoretical and research literature relating to systemic family practice
- Develop understanding of the links between systemic theory and practice and other therapeutic approaches
- Develop the ability to integrate the core principles of systemic family practice into systemic practice in the context of a therapeutic relationship with at least one client group; formulate a therapeutic plan; carry out systemic interventions and manage therapeutic endings
- Develop ability to work systemically taking into account evidence based systemic practice models
- Develop a self-reflexive and ethical approach to systemic work
- Develop sound foundations of systemic knowledge and practice for those students wishing to undertake Qualifying Level and further training.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge

At the end of the course graduates will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of a range of theories from systemic practice and family therapy including their theory of change and main interventions in current systemic practice
2. Critically discuss issues of power and difference in all aspects of systemic practice and describe responses to these issues informed by the *AFT Code of Ethics and Practice*
3. Articulate the theoretical basis, research and evidence base for systemic practice in their current professional practice
4. Effectively use supervision and take a reflective and pro-active approach to personal learning
5. Have a basic understanding of at least one manualised evidence based approach and the principles of its application to practice.

Theory into Practice

At the end of the course graduates will demonstrate abilities in systemic practice which include:

1. Convening systemic practice meetings with individuals, couples, families and other relationship groups including children
2. Working collaboratively to identify overall goals and the agreed focus for systemic interventions
3. Developing and maintaining the therapeutic alliance with more than one family member
4. Conducting a systemic assessment of presenting issues including identification of different perspectives, patterns of responses and meanings held in relation to the problem, the history of the presenting problem in relation to family relationships, family events, external contexts and wider social discourses
5. Helping clients to identify their own strengths and resources (including problem solving skills) and explore with clients how they may be of use and strengthen them
6. Developing a broad systemic hypothesis of the presenting problems in relationship to the individual/s or family and their context including their own observer perspective, and reviewing this throughout the work
7. Using visual presentations of relationships and contexts including family genograms, eco-maps and timelines in systemic practice
8. Gaining new perspectives through techniques including questioning, reflection, reframing, externalising and scaling
9. Tracking and working with behavioural processes and problematic communication patterns within the session
10. Understanding and managing ethical issues relating to systemic practice with individual/s or families including consideration of the impact of their own personal and professional issues on the work and issues of power and difference
11. Providing progress reviews using formal measures and in session review
12. Managing endings effectively including collaborative decision making about timing and reviewing of the work with the individual/s or family.

Entry Requirements

As with the Foundation Level Training, criteria for selection should be clear and transparent. Procedures should be designed

to promote equal opportunities, and courses must have a policy for meeting the needs of students with a disability and those from non-traditional academic and professional backgrounds. Applicants should be required to provide one and preferably two references. Students will require the following:

- A relevant professional training in a mental health or social care related discipline
- Successful completion of an AFT accredited Foundation Level Course. Courses may carry out an APEL procedure in order to assess individuals who may fall out of this remit. This should be clearly available at point of enquiry.
- Opportunity to apply systemic ideas to practice totalling 60 hours in a current work setting or a placement with satisfactory arrangements for the supervision of practice under the *AFT Code of Ethics and Practice*.

Placements

Where students need to find additional practice opportunities, perhaps on a placement basis, courses will need to provide clear guidelines for both students and placements concerning the requirements of such an arrangement.

Selection

Criteria for selection should be clear. Procedures should be designed to promote equal opportunities, and courses must have a policy for meeting the needs of students with disability. Applicants should be required to provide two references. At least one referee should be professionally qualified and UKCP registered as a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist and able to comment on the applicant's current practice. Students should have current clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service to work with vulnerable groups and children.

Length and Structure of the Course

- A minimum of 60 hours of study in direct contact with course staff
- 60 hours of direct clinical practice
- A minimum of 240 hours of independent study. (This will include the 60 hours of clinical practice above.)
- The Intermediate Course will usually run for 9-12 months and a rationale must be presented for any differences from this schedule.

Clinical Supervision

It is expected that students should access a minimum of 10 hours of systemic supervision. Supervision can be accessed individually or in a small group. Supervision is expected to cover the individual student's systemic practice during the course. Students must receive supervision for the required 60 hours of clinical practice. Ideally a qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapist or Supervisor should undertake this within their agency. Where there is a resource issue courses must work with

the student to set up the best supervision arrangements possible. Supervision could be supplemented by supervision from suitably qualified course tutors or independent Family and Systemic Psychotherapists or Supervisors.

The Supervisor should be named and in agreement to supervise the student according to the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice and provide confirmation of practice hours and use of clinical supervision.

The relationship between the Supervisor and the course will be worked out on a course-by-course basis.

Assessment

Courses will be required to describe their methods of assessment and the underlying rationale. Assessments must link to all learning outcomes and include a reflective learning portfolio documenting learning during the time of the course. The assessment strategy must include at least one theoretically focused assignment and one case study drawn from the systemic practice completed as part of the course.

Clinical Assessment

This must include:

- A letter of confirmation of the use of supervision from the Supervisor
- A presentation that creatively demonstrates the application of systemic ideas to clinical practice
- A recorded interview with commentary.

Competency Benchmark

By the end of the Intermediate Year it is expected that graduates will be able to:

- Work in a way that is ethical, take account of difference and power and enable useful conversations around difficult topics
- Convene families or couples within their own area of practice, set joint goals and maintain a collaborative relationship, open to formal and informal feedback
- Assess the need for family work, understanding the appropriateness and limitations of the method and limits of their own expertise
- Use a range of interventions to assist families to reach their goals
- Use supervision including the ability to think about personal and professional self as a resource and a possible constraint
- Have a developed understanding of systemic family practice in at least one area of work
- Have an understanding of the application of systemic ideas to the wider context of their organisations of which they form part.

Section 5: Requirements for Qualifying Level Training

Aims of a Qualifying Course are to:

- Provide a professional training at postgraduate level in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy leading to UKCP registration. This professional qualification will be accredited by AFT and linked to an academic institution.
- Assure that graduates are fit for safe practice as Systemic Psychotherapists in the NHS, social care, voluntary or independent practice in order to undertake systemic psychotherapeutic work with individuals and people in family and relational groups in accordance with the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice.

Learning Outcomes

Below is a list of learning outcomes associated with competent, independent practice. Courses should be able to demonstrate how their curriculum and assessment procedures relate to these. By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate the following:

1. A sound and up to date knowledge and understanding of the range of theories underpinning Systemic Psychotherapy and their applications to different situations and client groups.
2. An ability to carry out a collaborative assessment, develop a systemic formulation and plan Systemic Psychotherapy
3. Being able to revise the therapeutic plan as appropriate during the work with clients, including anticipating and planning for endings and dealing with unplanned endings
4. A robust working knowledge of a range of interventions used in Systemic Psychotherapy and an ability to apply them with flexibility and creativity, adapting them to suit different client needs
5. A sound and up to date knowledge and understanding of the range of research methods underpinning Systemic Psychotherapy and their applications to different situations and client groups
6. Knowledge of the current evidence base for Systemic Psychotherapy and relevant research findings from other areas
7. A knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods, which will enable the psychotherapist to evaluate research evidence and take an evidence based approach to their own work
8. Sufficient knowledge of research methods to be able to plan and carry out a piece of research relevant to the field
9. A critical approach to the knowledge and understanding of the range of theory, practice and research referred to in the above points
10. A sound knowledge of common mental health problems, their presentation and treatments, the ways in which they may affect relationships and an ability to adapt their work with families to take account of these difficulties
11. A sound understanding of child and adult development processes including those in later life, paying attention to the life cycle of families and other systems
12. An ability to develop and maintain effective therapeutic relationships with all members of the client group, even when there are differing views and goals and high emotional intensity showing a sound therapeutic alliance even in the face of difficulties
13. An ability to gauge and manage emotions within sessions, including their own, so that vulnerable members are protected in situations of discomfort and tension and important issues which may be contentious or distressing can be explored safely
14. An ability to understand and manage personal connection with the work and reflect on changes that could be made
15. The ability to keep up to date with relevant legislative frameworks together with an understanding of how these can be taken into account in the relationship with clients
16. An up to date and comprehensive understanding of actions needed in relation to Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults and the role of the Systemic Psychotherapist in relation to this
17. A commitment to anti-oppressive and culturally sensitive practices taking into account differences in relation to the social GGGRRACCEESSS (John Burnham and Alison Roper-Hall)
18. A working knowledge of at least one manualised approach to family therapy
19. An ability to be able to administer appropriate outcome measures and take a critical stance as to their use
20. An ability to organise the work maintaining required notes and documentation
21. An ability to be able to recognise the limits of personal expertise, skills and approach and refer clients appropriately

- 22.** An ability to take an active role in the development of personal learning and be able to identify areas of personal strength as well as areas for future professional development. This will include reflexive abilities about self and self in relationship.
- 23.** A capacity to use supervision and consultation processes and ability to consult constructively with colleagues.
- 24.** An ability to communicate the process of therapy in both oral and written forms to psychotherapy colleagues as well as other professionals
- 25.** An ability to apply the *AFT Code of Ethics and Practice* to clinical work and an awareness and ability to consider and respond appropriately to ethical dilemmas.

Entry Requirements

- A relevant professional qualification or equivalent.
- A first degree or evidence of ability to study at a postgraduate level.
- Successful completion of an accredited Foundation and Intermediate Level years of training in systemic practice. Those who have completed the CYP-IAPT (SFP) Practitioners Course are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must be working in an appropriate NHS, Social Care, statutory or voluntary organisation where they will have regular therapeutic contact with suitable clients. They will need to be able to meet the requirements of clinical hours of systemic practice in their work or placement setting.
- Students should have current clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service to work with vulnerable groups and children.

Selection

- Courses must have a clear selection policy with opportunities for unsuccessful applicants to receive feedback.
- Selection should be made on a range of information and must include an interview. At least two references should be sought, one of which should be from someone with knowledge of the candidate's systemic practice and another from a previous training course. Attention should be given to assessing the candidate's suitability for the profession of psychotherapy and this could be given priority over academic prowess.
- Clear procedures must be laid down for the accreditation of prior learning. These will be done in accordance with AFT guidance on

entry requirements for courses and also where applicable with the academic institution validating the course.

- An equal opportunities policy must be implemented in relation to selection and courses must have policies for addressing the needs of students with disability.

Length and Structure of the Course

Length of Course

The two years of qualifying training should be completed on a part-time basis within two to a maximum of seven years including any breaks in training.

Courses which run on a full-time basis and which fulfil all of the criteria laid out in this document may be considered for accreditation. However, they must clearly demonstrate that graduates achieve an accepted standard in all areas of learning, including clinical progress and personal and professional development.

Study Hours

In a course of this nature there is a strong emphasis on developing effective practice and the application of theory to practice. Learning takes place in many different domains. Requirements are expressed in minimum total study hours for particular aspects of the training.

Courses will be required to demonstrate how students will achieve a minimum of 1800 hours of study that will include the five aspects of clinical training outlined below.

Five aspects to the clinical training experience

- 1. Face-to-face clinical work with clients** i.e. hours of supervised direct work with clients within the confines of the course, the supervision process including live supervision, recorded review and other supervisory activities.

These must comprise 40 hours of face-to-face work with clients preferably supervised by a Supervisor accredited by AFT or fulfilling the criteria for accreditation by AFT (please see *The Red Book*). Where no AFT accredited Supervisor is available, a UKCP accredited Family and Systemic Psychotherapist will be expected to be the Supervisor.

Of these 40 hours at least 35 should be live-supervised by the appointed Supervisor. The remaining hours can be peer supervised and presented to the Supervisor through recorded material. This will usually occur at later stages of the training. The 40 hours of live clinical supervision will include up to 30 minutes of discussion time per therapy session: each session usually being up to 1.5 hour's duration.

It is important that students acquire substantial experience in working with couples and families, including families with young children and families across two-three generations. It is also advisable that they have some experience in working systemically with individuals. At least 75% of the live-supervised hours (i.e. a minimum of 30 hours) should be with more than one person of the significant system in the room. Courses should ensure that all students have experience with a range of clients. All students should have some experience of working with families with school-age children.

2. Clinical practice within a supervision group i.e. experience of working in a clinical supervision group within the context of the course. Students learn a great deal from observing and participating in the work and supervision of fellow students.

Students should complete a minimum of 300 hours within a supervision group. They can include the hours they work directly with clients.

Students should have the opportunity to experience a range of supervision methods, which must include live supervision, recorded review, and work on personal and professional development.

3. Clinical practice hours in own organisation/agency/workplace (health and/or social care setting). Students should complete a minimum of 200 hours in their workplace (or occasionally a dedicated placement). Ideally this should be undertaken within their agency and supervised by a qualified Systemic Psychotherapist/Supervisor. Where there is a resource issue courses must work with the student to set up the best supervision arrangements possible.

Supervision could be supplemented by supervision from suitably qualified course tutors or independent systemically trained Supervisors.

The Supervisor should be named and in agreement to supervise the student according to the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice and the AFT Code of Ethics and Practice for Supervisors; provide confirmation of practice hours and use of clinical supervision. The relationship between the Supervisor and the course will be worked out on a course-by-course basis.

Courses should lay down clear guidelines and expectations for any placements. The course should provide opportunities for discussion of students' work outside of the course.

If students have not had the experience of working in a health or social services setting or equivalent, they should at least have had the experience of some observation placement in such a setting.

4. Direct teaching hours and Personal and Professional Development (PPD). In addition to the minimum of 180 direct teaching hours, exploration of the contribution of 'self' (both personal and professional) to direct work with clients and other aspects of professional work is the fourth aspect of the clinical training. This should be addressed in all domains of the course but particularly in the supervision group and personal and professional development groups. Of the 180 direct teaching hours 25 hours will be expected to be dedicated to PPD.

5. Independent study time. This individual study time (a minimum of 1175 hours) includes the hours related to supervision and the associated documentation required in the workplace; study on assignments for assessments; preparation for seminars and independent work on research.

Minimum Number of Expected Hours of Teaching, Clinical practice and Independent study

- Face-to-face clinical work with clients seen with live supervision in a supervision group: 40 hours
- Clinical Practice within a supervision group: 300 hours (this does not include the required 200 hours of clinical practice in own organisation. See point 3)
- Clinical practice hours in own organisation/agency/workplace (health and/or social care setting): 200 hours
- Direct teaching hours and Personal and Professional Development: 180 hours. Of this direct teaching time 25 hours must be dedicated to PPD
- Independent study time: 1175 hours

Assessment

Principles of Assessment

Courses may choose to organise their assessments in a variety of ways but the assessment process should be based on the following principles:

- Clear information for students on methods of assessment
- Clear information on what is being measured
- There should be a mixture of summative assessment (i.e. assessment which measures attainment) and formative assessment (which allow feedback to students to help them improve their performance)
- Clear and open marking systems should be in place
- Clinical standards of assessment should ensure that graduates are able to operate independently and provide sensitive, ethical and effective therapy
- An External Examiner who has knowledge and experience of the field will form part of the assessment process e.g. in reviewing written submissions and participating in the examining process of students with a focus on fairness and the maintenance of course standards.

The Assessment Process

The assessment process should include:

- A final report from the Course Supervisor that describes the level of practice of the student and makes clear recommendations about readiness for independent practice.
- Written and verbal presentation of clinical work.
- Written work will be expected to include one extended paper or dissertation.
- Ways of assessing research knowledge, and an ability to plan and carry out a project will need to be evidenced. This might be through the requirement of a research-based dissertation, the preparation of a detailed research protocol or the carrying out of a small research project.
- The completion of a learning portfolio.
- Students will keep a log documentation and verification of clinical work completed outside of the course. The Workplace Supervisor will be required to confirm the completion of the expected supervised hours.

Competency Benchmark

These National Occupational Standards for Psychological Therapies (NOS) that describe what is expected of someone working in their occupation are sourced from The Digest of National Occupational Standards for Psychological Therapies edited by Peter Fonagy 2010 (pp. 12 and 13). These were derived from research reported in Roth, A., Pilling, S. and Stratton, P (2009). Fonagy and his working group summarised the NOS for the modality of Family and Systemic Psychotherapy and they are adopted and presented here in summary as the Benchmark for Qualifying Training:

- To undertake an assessment for Family and Systemic Psychotherapy as a therapeutic activity. This requires taking sensitive account of the client's needs as information is gathered enabling the client's wider perspective.
- To promote constructive patterns in relationships within and across systems. Through the promotion of open communication and the engagement of relevant people in the therapeutic alliance clients are assisted to focus on their actions, resources and the impact on their own lives and the wider system.
- To be able to use the resources of a team in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy. This requires collaboratively reflecting the team's contributions and adjusting the direction of the therapeutic work.
- To be able to explain the rationale for systemic approaches explaining to the individual, the family and the significant system how one change in the system leads to another.
- To be able to intervene in patterns within and across systems.
- To be able to explore differences across and within cultures in family and systemic therapy. The therapist will recognise when extra consultation is required to support client well-being and

that it involves respectfully challenging beliefs, behaviours and practices within the logic of the cultural system.

- To promote change through tasks between Family and Systemic Psychotherapy sessions. This will include developing effective tasks, eliciting feedback helpful to the client and adjusting the pace and direction of therapy in response to the tasks.
- To be able to develop a formulation in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy, which includes themselves and, the professional systems of which they are a member. This involves sharing multiple narratives, contexts and perspectives with the family recognising that it evolves during the progress of therapy.
- Being able to work across different languages in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy. Interpreters have an important role in the system and the therapist demonstrates to the client their desire to achieve a shared conceptual agreement.
- To be able to monitor and review progress in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy. This requires that the therapist and client together highlight progress or when direction may need to change. The therapist works self and relationally reflexively.
- To be able to engage significant members of the client's system.
- To be able to promote the engagement of children and adolescents in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy.
- To be able to manage the ending of Family and Systemic Psychotherapy.

Everyone involved in training Psychotherapists and Systemic Practitioners recognise the complexity and responsibility of the task of setting standards for training. The requirements set out in this *Blue Book* are minimum standards designed to encourage courses to develop increasingly effective ways of training individuals to be able to make positive contributions to clients' lives and to be effective systemic practitioners in a variety of practice settings. A detailed curriculum is not laid down but the course curriculum must provide the opportunity for students to reach the required learning outcomes.

Section 6: *Procedures for the Accreditation of Courses*

A. APPLYING FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Step 1: Making an Application

1. Courses are required to run one cohort of students before applying for accreditation. If the course is accredited, students from the first year will be considered to have completed an accredited course. If courses apply for accreditation when they have been in existence for a number of years, the committee will decide the extent to which graduates of previous years can benefit from the accreditation.

2. Courses are advised to use *The Blue Book* as a reference when setting up their course or making substantial changes. Consultation can be arranged at this stage and a fee will be charged. The consultant will read and comment on documentation and be available for telephone discussion. If a site visit is required the course will be expected to bear the cost of expenses.

3. Application forms can be obtained from the CRED Administrator and should be completed and submitted with a cheque to cover the cost of accreditation. The application form will list the range of course documentation required. One hard copy and one electronic copy of the documentation should be submitted to the AFT Office.

Step 2: Agreement of Panellists

Following the receipt of the accreditation fee up to three panellists will be appointed. The names of these panellists will be sent to the course for agreement. If the course reasonably objects to a particular panellist, a replacement will be suggested.

Once the panellists have been agreed, copies of the documentation will be sent to them by the administrators and they will proceed with the accreditation. One panellist will be designated the 'lead panellist' and will communicate with the course leaders and the administrators during the accreditation and take the lead in writing the final report. If a chair of proceedings is appointed for the accreditation day, their role will be limited to helping the proceedings to run smoothly and advising panellists.

Step 3: The Assessment Process

The panellists will read the documentation and inform the course if more information is required. Arrangements will be made for formal presentation of the course. This formal presentation is usually completed in one day and usually takes place at the course venue. Courses are free to present themselves in any way they wish but the format should be agreed ahead of time by the lead panellist and the presentation should include the following:

- Presentation of the course philosophy
- Overview of course structure, curriculum, and teaching staff
- Organisational issues relating to the course
- The sustainability of the course in terms of succession planning, teaching, administration and resources
- Evidence of value for money, enabling as wide a range of students as possible to benefit from the course
- Evidence of student feedback and an opportunity for panellists to meet students
- The course's policies in relation to equal opportunities and ethics
- Areas for future development.
- An opportunity to view teaching (live or from video) or to see a role-play of a typical teaching event
- A selection of written work completed by students
- It is helpful for the course to involve a number of key people in the presentation. The people involved should represent the breadth of the curriculum and include Clinical Supervisors where appropriate. When an academic institution or other organisation or stakeholder is involved in validating the course a representative of that body should be invited to attend the accreditation meeting.

Step 4: Feedback and Report

The course leaders will be given some immediate feedback following their presentation and should receive a written report within four weeks. Current practice is that this report is sent first to the course team for any misunderstanding or inaccuracies to be identified. This report will include a recommendation about accreditation. There are three possibilities:

- Full accreditation for five years, or three cohorts in the case of biannual intakes
- Qualified accreditation: The course will be required to make small specified changes within a certain time limit before full accreditation is recommended. These amendments will need to be reported on in the first annual review.
- Accreditation refused. Where this may occur courses will need to take account of feedback and reapply if they wish.

In all situations a full report will be provided. This will include feedback, highlighting good practice and often making recommendations for the future. It is hoped that the accreditation process will be a useful focus for course development. Once the course leaders have had the opportunity to review the report it will then be presented to the CRED Committee for ratification. The course will receive a formal letter with the recommendation about accreditation. Once accredited a certificate will be issued.

The Annual Review

Following accreditation, courses are required to complete an annual review indicating any changes to the course and any complaints that have been upheld. If the changes are considered so great that they change the nature of the course, CRED reserves the right to bring forward the re-accreditation date.

Satellite Courses

The CRED definition of a Satellite Course is a course that has the same overall managing organisational context as the main accredited course. The Satellite Course will usually have the same marking, teaching topics and awards as the main course and take place at a site remote from the main course.

The accreditation process of a Satellite Course includes the course completing an application form to CRED for accreditation. Should the course meet the requirements above, a letter to the course convenors will confirm that the course will be accredited in line with the accredited main course.

These courses are accredited separately in order to ensure equivalence between the centres and that all students have parity and equal opportunities in line with the main course. The satellite course/s will need to be included in the main course annual review and re-accredited in line with the main course re-accreditation for up to a maximum of five cohorts. Thereafter the course will need to apply for accreditation in its own right.

Associate Courses

The CRED definition of an Associate Course is a course that has the same overall managing organisational context as the main accredited course. It may not have the same marking; teaching topics; award or core course structure as the main course taught. The course will usually take place at a site remote from the main course.

Associate Courses need to be separately considered for accreditation, as they are sufficiently different from the main course. The accreditation of an Associate Course is similar to the processes involved with other courses except that it can qualify for a two-stage accreditation process.

Stage 1: A written application form together with required paperwork is submitted prior to or during delivery of the course to which the application pertains. The paperwork is allocated to a CRED panel for a paper review. Once reviewed CRED will inform the course convenors/organisers if the course, once completed as described, is in line to meet AFT requirements for accreditation.

Stage 2: Once the course is completed a second set of paperwork will need to be submitted to the CRED panel for paper review. Should the panel be satisfied that the course has met all requirements, the course will be recommended for full accreditation for that cohort.

Post accreditation: Should the same course be required to run for a second or further time, new requests will need to be made to CRED in order to consider the following:

- An application for an extension of the accreditation for a further year up to a maximum of five cohorts. Should an extension be granted the course would need to complete an annual review form
- Application for a full accreditation after five years
- A review of the status of the course i.e. does the course still maintain its status as an Associate Course.

B. RE-ACCREDITATION

Re-accreditation usually takes place by paper review and courses will be notified that their annual submission is due in the year preceding expiry of the accreditation of their course. Any changes in the course should be highlighted in these reviews. Should the changes prove extensive a new and fuller accreditation process may be required. This full paper re-accreditation is usually required after five years. A full accreditation with a visit from the CRED panel is required at the end of ten years. If courses have not begun the re-accreditation process by six months after their accreditation runs out they will be considered to be non-accredited and will have to apply for a full accreditation.

Step 1: Submission

Courses will be required to complete one hard copy and one electronic copy of the application form and relevant documentation, and submit a cheque for the fee to the CRED Administrator. The application form will list the range of course documentation required. In addition, any other material that the applicants think would be helpful to the panellists, including any external examiner/annual reports on the course since the accreditation, should be included.

Step 2: Agreement of Panellists

Two panellists will be appointed. The course leaders will be notified of their names and if they agree with the proposed panellists the accreditation will go ahead. If there are any reasonable concerns or objections, alternative panellist/s will be appointed.

Step 3: The Re-Accreditation

A review is usually a paper exercise and panellists will read the documentation and talk to course leaders by telephone when necessary. Panellists reserve the right to request a face-to-face meeting if they feel it is required. Where it is thought that major changes have occurred in the course, panellists can request a full accreditation. This decision would be taken in collaboration with the CRED Committee.

Step 4: Report and Feedback

Panellists will write a report and make one of the following recommendations:

- To re-accredit the course for a further five years
- To give qualified re-accreditation. In this situation courses will be

required to make minor specific changes before they can be re-accredited

- Not to re-accredit. In this situation courses will have to apply to go through the initial accreditation process when they have made the required changes.

Course leaders will have the opportunity to correct any factual errors in the report. It will then go to the CRED Committee for ratification. A formal letter of accreditation will be sent to the course.

C. FEEDBACK

The course team will be invited to complete and return a feedback form on the process of their experience to CRED. This feedback will be used to review the accreditation process and to develop on-going practices.

D. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE PROCESS

These should be addressed in the first instance to the Chair of the CRED Committee and if it is not possible to resolve matters satisfactorily then the complaints should be brought before the AFT Board.

Section 7: Guidance Notes and Information

AFT

This is the commonly used abbreviation for The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK

AFT Code of Ethics and Practice

This can be obtained from the CRED Administrator. All courses, staff and students must abide by this code.

Anti-oppressive Practice

AFT requires that all its members and accredited training courses work towards a position in which they actively oppose discrimination. This involves recognising and challenging individual and institutional practices which lead to oppression and discrimination. It also involves actively developing practices which respect and are accessible to all groups in society.

APEL

This is the acronym for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. It is a way of claiming recognition for previously acquired learning and relevant experience. This may be for academic credits or for professional recognition. Entry requirements to intermediate and Qualifying Level family therapy training courses specify achievement of the previous training or equivalent. Courses must have clear means for determining equivalence.

To that end courses are being required to have a written APEL policy, guidance to applicants (including clear information on equal opportunities and facilities for applicants who may be in any way disadvantaged) and procedures for determining equivalence.

Complaints about the Accreditation Process

These should be addressed in the first instance to the Chair of the CRED Committee and if it is not possible to resolve matters satisfactorily, then the complaint should be brought before the AFT Board.

Course Handbook

The Handbook sets out the requirements that must be satisfied for a student to be eligible for course completion and graduation. Most handbooks include a description of the aims and philosophy of the course; the course structure and content and all administrative guidelines regarding assignment submissions; referencing; reading lists; accessing reading and so on.

The Blue Book

Specific recommendations:

- It is expected that the *AFT Codes of Ethics and Practice* are included in the handbook.
- Where students are accepted on a course without prior professional qualification they should be made aware that on this account they might not be employed as a Family and Systemic Psychotherapist in the NHS. This needs to be stated in the handbook.
- In addition to the competencies laid out in *The Blue Book*, courses will find it helpful to refer to National Occupational Standards (Skills for Health) and Systemic Competences (UCL) as well as European standards in showing how and where they draw from in determining the appropriate competencies required for the stage and level of their training being offered.

The style and extent of inclusions in the handbook are, in the main, left to the course to develop in line with specific course requirements and the creative thought of course leaders.

CRED

This subcommittee of AFT is entrusted with the task of assessing family therapy courses and making recommendations for accreditation based on the criteria laid down in *The Blue Book*. AFT has the responsibility for assessing systemic courses on behalf of the Family, Couple, and Systemic Therapy College of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy, and the standards laid down by CRED are designed to fit with UKCP requirements. CRED also has the responsibility for writing and reviewing training standards, contributing to discussions about training and identifying and sharing good practice.

CRED Administrator

The Administrator for the CRED Committee: This is the person to contact at AFT (see useful addresses) for application forms and further information.

CRED Panellists

Experienced family therapists, involved in training, who have been appointed by CRED to form a panel of assessors. It is from this pool that panellists will be chosen to accredit a particular course. The choice is made on the basis of experience, knowledge and impartiality. In most circumstances two panellists will be involved in the accreditation or re-accreditation of a training course.

The lead panellist is the panellist appointed to liaise with the course and takes responsibility for completing the report.

Entry Requirements

Traditionally training has been designed on the assumption that entrants will already have completed training in another relevant profession (e.g. psychology, social work, psychiatry, teaching or nursing). The assumption is that entrants will have some knowledge of the workings of the health and social services, experience in working with other health and social services professionals and a grounding in child development and psychology.

In recent years individuals without this background have sought to train as Family and Systemic Psychotherapists. This poses difficulties for courses that are not set up to cover the whole range of knowledge and skills required. It may be that courses wish to admit the occasional outstanding applicant who does not have a traditional background. Courses must demonstrate their method of assessing which areas of knowledge need to be covered in addition to the course, and discuss how the candidate will be able to cover this. Courses must also demonstrate that prospective students are made aware of potential additional study or experience requirements.

The Portfolio

All courses are encouraged to expect that students compile a portfolio of their learning. This can include all components of the course including teaching materials; support materials and assignments. An important element of the portfolio involves the critical analysis of teaching and learning. Personal reflections on learning will include the on-going course feedback from supervisors and teachers providing the context for mutual feedback and reflexive and self-evaluation.

Practice or Clinical Placements

The training courses in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy and Systemic Practice are usually set up for those working in a setting in which they are able to apply the training in their own workplace. However, students may sometimes have to find their own placement to gain more experience. In these cases the contract is between the student and placement but the course should support the placement with information about the course and some guidelines for students on what they will need to get from the placement experience.

It is possible that a course might use placements as part of the requirements of the course, with regard to practice hours and supervision experience. In these cases Supervisors will usually be registered as UKCP Family and Systemic Psychotherapists and/or Supervisors and should be well connected with the course and key course staff.

Qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapist

This usually refers to an individual who has successfully completed an accredited four-year training in Family and Systemic Psychotherapy.

Qualified Supervisors

The Red Book provides a framework and lays down the requirements for registered Supervisors. It is expected that courses will ensure that the Supervisors they use meet those requirements. The Association for Family Therapy maintains a register of accredited Supervisors. Suitably trained Family and Systemic Psychotherapists who are supervising can apply for registration.

The Red Book

Criteria and guidelines for the registration of supervisors and the accreditation of supervision training courses. These are published and administered by AFT.

Requirements for Direct Practice Hours:

Foundation Courses: No specific requirements apart from that of having the opportunity to apply theoretical ideas in the workplace.

Intermediate Courses: The completion of a minimum of 60 hours of systemic practice.

Qualifying Courses: A minimum of 40 hours within the context of the course and 200 hours outside the course.

Supervision of Practice Hours

Supervision of practice hours should be undertaken as stipulated in the relevant sections of *The Blue Book*.

Systemic Practitioners at Intermediate Level

Individuals who have completed both Foundation and Intermediate Level Training may be referred to as systemic practitioners at intermediate level. Please refer to AFT Guidance on expected practices at this level. This level of training does not confer eligibility for UKCP registration as a Qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapist.

UKCP

This is the commonly used abbreviation for the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. This body represents a range of different psychotherapies and sets standards in all areas of psychotherapy practice and training. It keeps a register of approved psychotherapists and those who have successfully completed an approved four-year training programme are eligible to apply for registration.

The Family, Couple, and Systemic Therapy College of the UKCP is the section to which Family and Systemic Psychotherapists belong. AFT is a member of the section and in addition to accrediting courses it puts forward therapists for registration.

USEFUL ADDRESS

The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK (AFT)

Sue Kennedy, Executive Officer, 7 Executive Suite, St James Court Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington WA4 6PS

Tel: 01925 444414

E-mail: s.kennedy@aft.org.uk

Alternative Foundation and Intermediate Course Frameworks

Two-year Courses

Some course providers may choose to run a two-year combined Foundation and Intermediate Course. If this is the case they must demonstrate that the combined course covers requirements for both years and that successful students have met all of the learning outcomes.

Embedded Foundation Courses

Foundation Level Training may be delivered as part of a professional training in social care or mental health e.g. Clinical Psychology, Social Work or Psychiatry. It is necessary for all requirements for Foundation Level Training to be met. The Foundation Course will usually run over one academic year but where it is delivered as part of a professional training or agency based provision, or in other circumstances, the time scale of delivery may vary. A rationale for this must be presented when the course is put forward for accreditation.

Children & Young Persons Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYP-IAPT) Systemic Family Practice

CYP-IAPT is accredited by the CYP-IAPT National Accreditation Council. AFT is well represented in the accreditation process. The CYP-IAPT Systemic Family Practice Curriculum states that *"The CYP-IAPT training is a route into the year 3 of the 4 year training"*. CYP-IAPT

Systemic Family Practitioners therefore are eligible to apply for Qualifying Level Training and to be considered on interview.

Entry to MSc Level Training

Entry to MSc Level Training depends on applicants showing a sufficient level of clinical experience and breadth of systemic knowledge needed in line with the APEL policies of the MSc courses concerned, in order to enter this level of training. This will be assessed through application form and interview, in addition to completion of an AFT accredited Intermediate Course or CYP-IAPT Systemic Family Practice Training.

Satellite Courses

A Satellite Course is a course that has the same overall managing organisational context as the main accredited course. The Satellite Course will usually have the same marking, teaching topics and awards as the main course and take place at a site remote from the main course. See page 15 for further information.

Associate Courses

An Associate Course is a course that has the same overall managing organisational context as the main accredited course. It may not have the same marking; teaching topics; award or core course structure as the main course and will usually take place at a site remote from the main course. See page 15 for further information.

