

Approval Date: 7 September 2021

Introduction of Approved Supervision Standards: 1 January 2022

1. Introduction

- a. Financial counselling is a national profession, underpinned by national standards.
- b. Professional supervision for financial counsellors is a formal relationship between supervisor and supervisee designed to promote wellbeing, facilitate reflective practice, explore ethical issues, develop casework skills and foster best practice.
- c. A key objective of FCAT is to support its members to develop and maintain their professional knowledge and skills to a level that, as a minimum, meet the national standards.
- d. Rule 5(12) of the FCAT Constitution states that all members agree to abide by the Association Constitution, the Australian Financial Counselling Code of Ethical Practice and agree with FCAT Rules and Objects, and policies and procedures as approved and amended by the Association.
- e. Further, Rule 5(13) of the FCAT Constitution states that ongoing membership eligibility and membership category is to be reviewed and assessed by the Committee in accordance with the National Standards for Membership and Accreditation Financial Counselling Australia and approved policies and procedures of the Association.
- f. This document provides a summary of the National Policy and provides detail as to how FCAT implements the National Policy.
- g. This document will identify practices and standards adopted by FCAT that exceed the National Standards.
- h. This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the FCA National Supervision Policy, of which FCAT is a signatory.
- i. Unless otherwise stated all requirements in this policy are mandatory. In some cases requirements are classified as either best practice or acceptable practice.

2. Approval of Supervision Courses

- a. FCAT will establish and maintain a procedure for the approval of supervision courses
- b. The procedure for the approval and ongoing review of supervision courses will be based on a set of criteria, which is to be published on the FCAT website.
- c. The list of currently approved supervisor training courses will also be published on the FCAT website.

3. Approval of Financial Counselling Supervisors

- a. FCAT may approve financial counselling supervisors who are:
 - i. Accredited members of FCAT or
 - ii. Other suitably qualified persons
- b. To gain approval from FCAT to become a supervisor, accredited members of FCAT must satisfy the following criteria:
 - i. be a current full member of FCAT
 - ii. have 3 or more years FTE experience as a financial counsellor working with clients since holding the Diploma of Financial Counselling
 - iii. provide proof of being insured for professional indemnity (either as an employee of a Agency or as an individual policyholder)
- c. To gain approval from FCAT to become a supervisor, persons who are not financial counsellors must satisfy the following criteria:
 - i. be a lawyer with current qualifications who holds consumer law experience or currently qualified counsellor, psychologist or other professional with discipline specific skill set (appendix 1 of national policy)
 - ii. provide proof of being insured for professional indemnity
- d. An applicant to become an approved supervisor can be provided pre-approval by FCAT if they meet all criteria other than being cleared to provide supervision in-house by their employing Agency (and thereby be covered under the organisation's professional indemnity insurance) or the applicant does not yet have ABN and professional indemnity insurance. Approval would only be provided once the final condition is met
- e. An approved supervisor can retire from full time financial counselling and remain operating as a qualified supervisor for a maximum of two years
- f. FCAT will publish a procedure for the approval process for financial counselling supervisors
- g. The FCA website holds the **only** authoritative list of approved supervisors across all States/Territories.
- h. Professional supervisors will be expected to continue the development of their supervision skills and knowledge in order to maintain their accreditation with FCAT
- i. All approved supervisors as at the commencement date for this policy will be expected to submit an application under the rules and procedures of the policy in order to maintain their accreditation.

4. Supervision Agreements

- a. Agreement between Supervisor and Supervisee
 - i. It is **mandatory** for a formal written agreement between supervisor and supervisee
 - ii. FCAT is to maintain a draft agreement consistent with the National Policy (Appendix 2)
 - iii. FCAT is to publish the draft agreement on the FCAT website
- b. Agreement between Supervisor and Agency
 - i. It is **mandatory** for formal written agreement between supervisor (internal/external) and agency
 - ii. FCAT is to maintain a draft agreement consistent with the National Policy (Appendix 3)
 - iii. FCAT is to publish the draft agreement on the FCAT website
- c. As supervision is an integral part of employing a financial counsellor, agencies accept the cost of professional supervision as part of the overall costs of employment.

5. Choice of Supervisor

- a. It is **best practice** for supervisees to have their professional supervisor of choice
- b. It is **best practice** for supervisors to be external to the Agency
- c. It is **acceptable practice** for supervisors to be employed by the Agency provided:
 - i. the supervisor is not their direct line manager or another manager/team leader within the same line management structure; and
 - ii. the supervisee has chosen the supervisor or the Agency has chosen the supervisor after agreement from the supervisee
- d. It is **best practice that** before financial counsellors change supervisors that there be open communication between the financial counselor and their supervisor as to why the change is being sought.

6. Professional Supervision Standards

- a. All supervision is to be provided by:
 - i. financial counselling supervisors approved and currently accredited with FCAT
 - ii. financial counselling supervisors approved and currently accredited with any other State or Territory association
- b. It is the responsibility of members to confirm that their supervisor is approved by checking the FCA website prior to having supervision
- c. Full members must participate in the following minimum hours of professional supervision per year
 - i. For members employed 0.5 FTE or more: 10 hours
 - ii. For members employed less than 0.5 FTE or more: 6 hours
- d. In order to provide greater support for new financial counsellors, Associate members must participate in the following minimum hours of one-to one professional supervision per year
 - i. For members employed 0.5 FTE or more: 10 hours
 - ii. For members employed less than 0.5 FTE or more: 6 hours
- e. Supervision may be delivered one-to one or in a group setting (no more than 8 members per group)
- f. It is **best practice** for supervision to be provided one-to-one
- g. It is **mandatory** for at least one one-to-one supervision session per year to be conducted face to face - in this context face-to-face includes video communication.
- h. It is **acceptable practice** for supervision to be provided by telephone and video
 - i. At least 50% of professional supervision must be provided by a financial counsellor
 - j. No more than 50% of supervision is to be provided in a group setting
- k. It is **best practice** for supervision to be conducted during work hours

Professional Supervision Standards		
Employed	0.5 FTE or greater	Less than 0.5 FTE
Minimum total supervision hours for all Members	10	6
Minimum one-to one supervision hours for Associate Members	10	6
Min. % of total hours conducted one to one	50%	
Min. sessions per year conducted face to face (includes video)	1 session	
Max. in all group sessions	8 members	

7. Compliance

- a. Compliance with this policy will be monitored by requiring supervisors to provide an annual return of their supervision and professional development activities
- b. Members will be required to provide details of their professional supervision as part of the Continuing Professional Development and Supervision Return
- c. Procedures for the above two reviews are to be developed and maintained by FCAT

Documents relevant to Policy

- FCAT Approval of Supervision Courses Procedure
- FCAT Continuing Professional Development and Supervision Return
- FCAT Continuing Professional Development and Supervision Return Procedure
- FCAT Professional Supervisor Annual Return
- FCAT Professional Supervisor Annual Return Procedure