



# The CPCA Student Guide

for all CPCA Student Members

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### 1. What is a CPCA Student Member?

A **CPCA Student Member** is a **non-practicing** member of the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association, who is currently in a clinical counselling educational program. The program needs to meet the [CPCA Core Competencies](#) to practice clinical counselling. This Student Membership gives recognition that this person is in a competent educational program which will lead to their goal to be able to practice in the profession upon completion of their counselling educational program.

### 2. What are the Criteria to become a CPCA Student Member?

To be eligible to become a Student Member of the CPCA, an individual must:

1. Complete and submit a [CPCA Student Application Form](#) with signed attestations that they will abide by the CPCA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.
2. Be enrolled in an accredited college or university counselling educational program.
3. Submit a Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check not older than 6 months.

### 3. How do I become a CPCA Student Member?

Fill out the [CPCA Student Application](#), save it to your computer, and submit it to [application@thecpca.ca](mailto:application@thecpca.ca). In the same email as the application form, attach:

1. Copy of the Course Description/Training Program Outline
2. Proof of Enrollment in the described course/program (example: a letter of enrollment from institution)
3. Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check – not more than 6 months old - original or a certified copy from the college\ if they received an original, can be mailed from the school. Photocopies can be emailed but original must be mailed to CPCA Admissions Office. The address is on the first page of the application form.
4. Submit the application fee (\$75 + \$5 Admin Fee + applicable taxes) on same day as you submit your application. (Details of how to do this are on the application form)

Note:

### 4. How long does it take to become a Student Member?

Upon submission of both your application, documentation, and application fee, you will receive your member number and Student Membership by email within 2 weeks of submission. Applications are **not** processed until the application fee is submitted.

## 5. What types of Education Programs are eligible for Student Membership with the CPCA?

Your educational program or combination of education must include the following:

1. Minimum of 1100 hours of counselling psychology theory, knowledge, and skill training.
2. A minimum of a 120-hour counselling practicum under the supervision of an RQS (Registered Qualified Supervisor) or qualified counselling supervisor.
3. All instructor's in the program and as clinical supervisors must have a minimum of a Master's level or equivalency in the counselling field and a minimum of 8 years of counselling experience.

There are a number of Canadian Clinical Counselling Diploma programs who meet these criteria as well as many master's degree programs in counselling therapy. The CPCA lists [Approved Counselling Education Programs](#) on the CPCA website, but this is not an exhaustive list. If you are not sure whether your program meets the [CPCA Core Competencies](#) to be approved as a CPCA clinical counselling program, please write the CPCA National Registrar at [registrar@thecpca.ca](mailto:registrar@thecpca.ca) asking whether you would be eligible to become a CPCA Student Member attending your specific educational program.

## 6. What is the purpose of Student Membership?

CPCA Student Membership is an important step in the development of your professional identity and professional status. You are identifying yourself with a national professional counselling association which is dedicated to:

1. [The CPCA Competency Model](#) – which explains that competency is not based on a specific degree or educational program but is a more wholistic approach to competency in clinical practice throughout one's professional practice.
2. [Voluntary Self-Regulation of Our Counsellors](#) – which explains the components of competency.
3. [The CPCA Code of Ethics](#) – ethical code to follow to the protection of the public.
4. [The CPCA Standards of Practice](#) - ethical practice to follow to the protection of the public.
5. [The CPCA Core Competencies](#) – a clear description of what someone needs regarding their education to be eligible for a CPCA practicing membership.
6. [Standards for Continuing Education \(CE\) and Clinical Supervision](#) – explains the criteria for CE and Clinical supervision on a yearly basis to maintain competency over one's career.
7. [The CPCA Qualifying Exam](#) – which is an online exam which even member of the CPCA takes for entry to practice. For students upgrading to an RPC-C practicing designation, it validates that you are ready for clinical practice.

### **Becoming a CPCA Student Member gives you:**

1. A solid, well-established national counselling association to which to belong.
2. A beginning relationship with the CPCA and a connection with your future professional counselling association to support you in your professional development.
3. Access to other counselling professionals through being able to become part of one of more provincial CPCA Facebook groups – a community of professionals to learn vicariously from other working professionals.
4. A door to developing a professional network of clinical counselling colleagues who may one day support you or provide clinical supervision to you down the road in your career.
5. A great deal in saving money on the Qualifying Exam. Check out the “Early Bird Special” on page 1 of the [CPCA Student Application Form](#). If you become a student member and then upgrade to an RPC-C once you have completed your educational program, you save **\$150** off the price of the qualifying exam. If you apply to be a student member within the first 90-days of your educational program, you get your qualifying exam for free.

Please check out the [“Why become a Member of the CPCA” video](#) to understand more about the CPCA, regulation, and the many benefits of becoming a member.



### **7. How do I set up my CPCA Member Dashboard?**

After your Student Membership has been approved, you will be sent an email with your student documentation attached (Letter of Welcome, Membership Card, and Member Number). You will receive **a second email from the Dashboard** asking you to **set up your login and password** for the Dashboard. If this doesn't show in your email inbox, please check your email junk folder. You can then login to your dashboard using your email address and password.

Once you are able to access you Dashboard, you will be able to:

- Review Bulletins that are on your Dashboard to keep up-to-date with what is happening.
- Change Personal Information.
- Enter your Educational Institution.
- Renew your membership (Oct-Dec) each year.

Can make credit card payments for renewal and for upgrading to **RPC Provisional** or **MPCC Provisional** when ready.

## 8. Does a Student Member need to Renew their Membership every year?

**Yes.** All student members need to renew their Student Membership annually at the end of every calendar year (even if you became a Student Member in September. **Renewal is open in October - December of each year.** Renewals must be **complete before December 31<sup>st</sup>** of every year. This renewal process continues even after you upgrade to an RPC-C full practicing designation. Being a part of a Professional Counselling Association has membership dues submitted annually. The student renewal fee is **\$50** (plus \$5 Admin Fee and Taxes) and is paid through your [CPCA Membership Dashboard](#).

## 9. How do I renew my CPCA Student Membership?

To renew, simply go to your [CPCA Membership Dashboard](#), which is available at: <https://members.thecpca.ca>. Once in your dashboard:

1. Review and update your contact information.
2. Review and update your Current Enrollment information – which is simply entering which educational institution you are attending and the anticipated date of completion.
3. Click on “Membership Renewal” and fill in your Initials to each of the attestations. These are declarations of commitment to certain requirements to maintain your Good Standing with the CPCA. At the bottom fill in your name to sign off on the attestations. Once the above is complete, log out of the system. Wait 1 minute. Log back in and your invoice will be available for you.
4. Then you pay your membership dues in one of two ways:
  - a. You may **pay online with a credit card** (which includes a credit card surcharge).
  - b. Or **e-transfer to [payment@thecpca.ca](mailto:payment@thecpca.ca)** using the password: **renewal**

**NOTE:** Please be sure to deduct the credit card surcharge amount from the total amount you e-transfer.

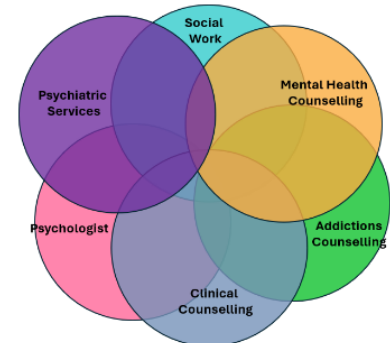
That’s it. If you are unable to pay the renewal fee, please email [membersupport@thecpca.ca](mailto:membersupport@thecpca.ca) with an explanation of your situation and we will work with you to ensure that you are able to maintain your Student Membership.

## 10. Once graduating from my program, how long is my Student Membership with the CPCA valid?

Your Student Membership with the CPCA is only **valid for 6 months after your graduation** from your educational program. Beyond 6 months, you will not be able to upgrade to **RPC Provisional** or **MPCC Provisional**, but rather will need to go the [application route](#).

### 11. What is the difference between RPC Provisional and MPCC Provisional?

The CPCA recognizes two different counselling scopes of practice. A **Scope of Practice** refers to the specific activities, procedures, and responsibilities that a professional is permitted to perform based on their qualifications, training, and regulatory guidelines. A scope of practice defines the boundaries of what that professional may do and what they may not do. A scope of practice for a nurse is very different than that of a doctor even though both may have roles in the care of an individual. In healthcare, there are many overlapping scopes of practice.



The two scopes of practice recognized by the CPCA are:

- The **Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice** - the **RPC Provisional**
- The **Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice** - the **MPCC Provisional**

The **RPC Provisional** is the internship full-practicing counselling designation for the Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice. And the **MPCC Provisional** is the internship full-practicing counselling designation for the Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice.

### 12. What are the two different Scopes of Practice for Counselling Designations?

The 2 Counselling Scopes of Practice are: (1) the Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice and the (2) Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice. These two scopes of practice overlap, however the clinical counselling scope of practice is understood to be a larger scope of practice.

On the next page is a chart that gives a quick overview of the differences between these two scopes of practice. Clinical Counselling works with a large scope of problems and issues which include moderate to severe and longer-term mental health issues, while the Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice targets more moderate mental health issues and focuses on wellness.



Scope:	Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice	Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice
<b>Population:</b>	Mental <b>illness</b> , able to address severe and complex disorders and <b>severe</b> symptoms	Mental health <b>wellness</b> , emotional distress, <b>moderate</b> symptoms
<b>Type of Issue:</b>	Works with clients <b>diagnosed</b> or not diagnosed with <b>moderate to severe</b> , long-term mental health issues. Depression, anxiety, complex grief, trauma and complex trauma, abuse, neglect, family issues, suicidal ideation, relationship problems, addiction, and stress management.	Works with clients facing <b>common life challenges</b> rather than severe, long-term mental health issues. Depression, anxiety, grief, trauma, abuse, neglect, life transitions, family issues, suicidal ideation, relationship problems, addiction, and stress management.
<b>Type of Relationship:</b>	A therapeutic relationship rooted in a positive therapeutic attachment	A therapeutic relationship rooted in a positive therapeutic attachment
<b>Focus &amp; Approach:</b>	<p>Focuses more on <b>symptom reduction and managing diagnosed disorders</b>. Does <b>not</b> diagnose but may <b>assess mental health symptoms</b>.</p> <p>Treatment and management of <b>more intensive and complex mental health symptoms</b> through evidence-based therapeutic approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychodynamic therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, solution focused therapy and person-centered therapy, etc.</p> <p>Practitioners support and help clients cope with depression, anxiety, life transitions, relationship problems, spirituality, identity, and stress management.</p> <p>Helps clients develop/improve coping strategies and achieve personal goals and growth.</p>	<p>Significant emphasis on <b>clients' strengths</b>, resources, and <b>personal growth</b>. <b>Uses preventative</b> rather than pathology-oriented <b>approaches</b>, encourages <b>personal development</b>, and improves quality of life.</p> <p>Uses evidence-based and emerging therapy approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, person-centered therapy, faith-based therapy, and motivational interviewing, and other counselling therapies tailored to clients' needs.</p> <p>Practitioners may support and help clients cope with depression, anxiety, life transitions, relationship problems, spirituality, identity, and stress management. <b>Does not diagnose or assess mental health disorders</b> but helps clients develop/improve coping strategies and achieve personal goals and growth. Works with clients facing common life challenges rather than severe mental health issues.</p>
<b>Education:</b>	Completed a min. 1100-hour counsellor training program with <b>Advanced Mental Health training*</b> from an accredited college or university. A master's degree in counselling psychology or equivalent counselling diploma program.	Completed a minimum 1100-hour counsellor training program with a supervised practicum from an accredited college or university.
<b>Regulation:</b>	If you reside in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, or PEI, you <b>must be a member of the Regulatory College</b> to choose this Scope of Practice.	Not yet regulated in regulated provinces.

### 13. What educational competency must I have to upgrade to MPCC Provisional?

Because the Clinical Counselling Scope of practice includes severe and complex disorders with severe symptoms, the counsellor needs to have specific clinical education which would include:

- DSM-5-TR Training\*
- Assessment with Differential Diagnosis Training\*
- Pharmacology for Mental Health Training\*
- And other optional training in addictions, treating PTSD, and group therapy.

\*This training is mandatory for working in the Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice

#### 14. What is the purpose of a Provisional Status Membership?

Occasionally we come across applicants who want to avoid the Provisional designation. This is usually due to a misunderstanding of what the nature and purpose of what the Provisional status is for. To answer this, it first must be understood that a Provisional RPC designation is a **full practicing designation**. A person can choose to go into private practice with these provisional designations, if they feel ready to do so.

But why does the CPCA have Provisional designations? The Provisional designation is for: (1) foundational support, (2) increased client success, (3) professional development, and (4) greater protection.

- 1. More Foundational Support** – the provisional designation ensures that a new mental health professional, whether a Provisional RPC, or Provisional MPCC, has a contract with a qualified supervisor who takes on responsibility to ensure that the mental health professional is getting more regular supervision when an individual is starting their professional career. Experience while in school is great learning, but it is a very different experience in the real world. Many new mental health professionals are surprised by what is thrown at them once out in the world. Ensuring they have more clinical support as they start their career is not only kind, but wise.
- 2. Increased Success with Clients** – Often times new mental health professionals are unaware of their own knowledge gaps. It is through supervision where one learns (in more specific detail) issues that might need to be addressed that they were not aware of before their supervision. This improves the competency of the provisional member and improves their success with clients. A contracted qualified supervisor is dedicated to the provisional mental health professional's success. It is so valuable for a new mental health professional to feel success when starting with new clients.
- 3. Greater Professional Development** – There is so much professional growth that happens for a new mental health professional in their first year of practice. This growth happens as a result of experiences of working with clients. But it also comes because of having that supervision support in working with very different types of people and unique situations. A provisional mental health professional also receives guidance in how to grow their practice, what types of CE might be valuable for their continued development and as a result growth. All this growth and learning is supported and thus becomes more affirmed and incorporated into one's growing identity as a people helper. All professionals need affirmation, reassurance, guidance, refined critical thinking, and skill development to feel like they are growing in their competency. The Provisional status is there to ensure that this happens.

- 4. Greater Protection** – a MPCC Provisional, and RPC Provisional are all full practicing designations. We encourage you to inform their clients that you have a CPCA qualified supervisor when explaining limits of confidentiality. As such, having that supervisor, helps to provide greater liability protection if something were to go sideways with a client and a lawsuit results. As a provisional mental health professional, your liability insurance helps you, but you are also protected further by the fact that you have a qualified supervisor who also has their own liability insurance.

The CPCA is dedicated to supporting competency, for all our members and the Provisional status is a mechanism to have the support in place to ensure that the clinician builds a strong foundation in their emerging identity as a people helping professional. Why would the CPCA not want to provide (1) more foundational support, (2) increased clinical success, (3) greater professional development, and (4) greater protection for new mental health professionals entering the profession? (Yes, this is rhetorical question)

**15. After Graduating, how do I obtain my RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional designation?**

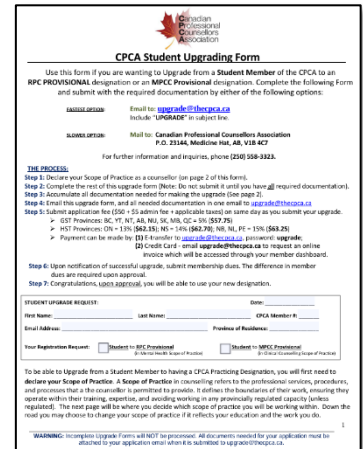
If you are currently a student member of the CPCA, do **not** use CPCA Application Form. Rather, you would use the [Student Upgrade Form](#) which has all the steps for upgrading to an Practicing Designation for either CPCA counselling scope of practice.

Student members upgrading to either RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional will email the upgrade form to [upgrade@thecpca.ca](mailto:upgrade@thecpca.ca) with the following:

1. E-transfer upgrade fee the same day as you submit your upgrade request or email [membersupport@thecpca.ca](mailto:membersupport@thecpca.ca) requesting an online link to pay by credit card.
2. A copy of education Diploma/Degree/Certification
3. A copy of official educational transcripts (Sending original in mail)
4. A copy of Resume or CV (Curriculum Vitae)
5. Two letters of recommendation from professional attesting to your character
6. A recent Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check (under 6 months old)

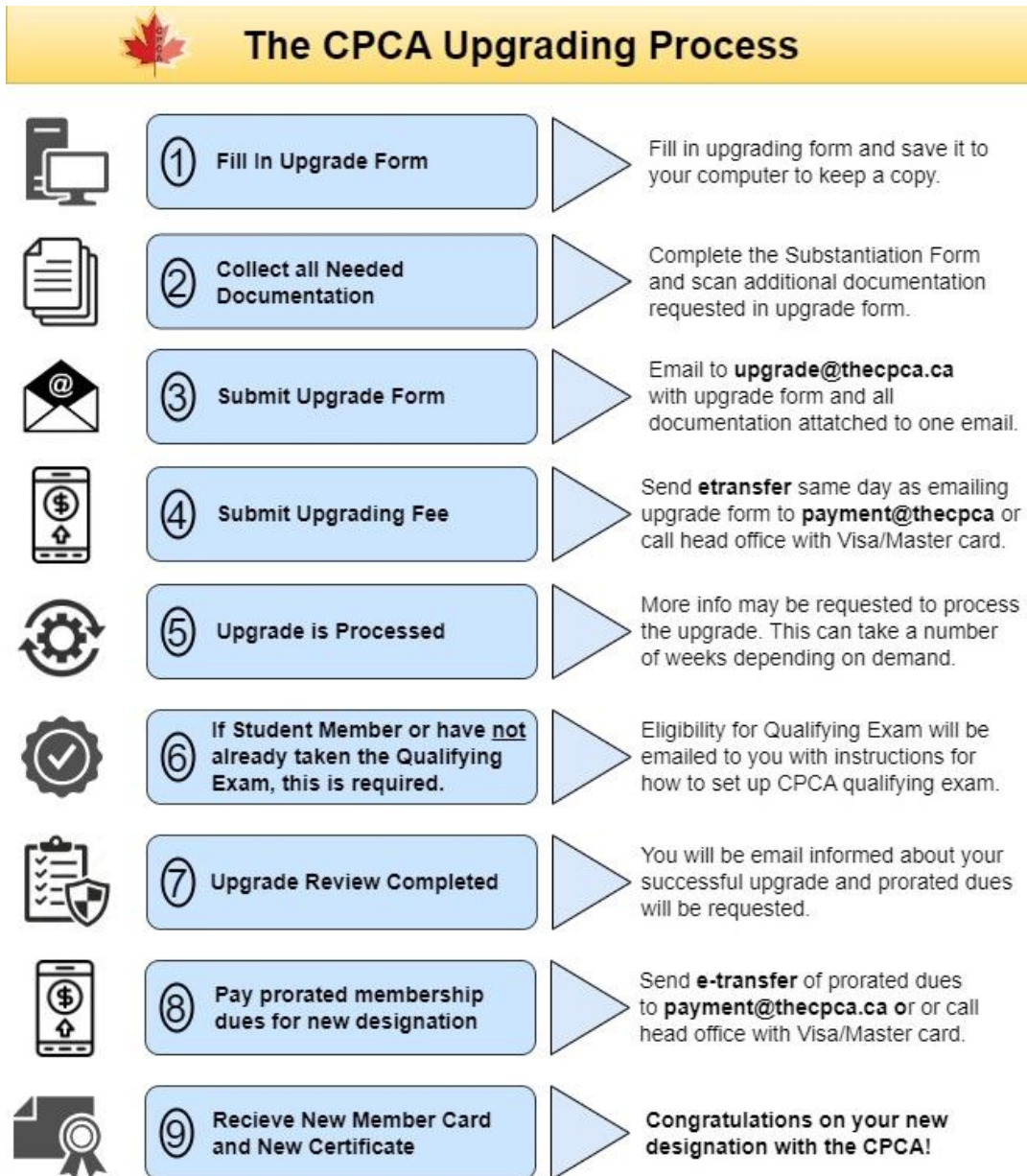
After submitting the above, you will receive information on how to arrange to take the CPCA Qualifying Exam for either the Mental Health scope or Clinical Counselling scope of practice.

There are two different Qualifying Exams – one for the Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice and one for the Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice.



The screenshot shows the 'CPCA Student Upgrading Form'. It includes instructions for students wanting to upgrade from a Student Member to an RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional designation. The form lists contact information for email and mail, and provides a list of upgrade fees for various provinces: BC, YT, NT, AB, NB, SK, MB, QC, and PE. It also outlines the steps of the process, from declaring the scope of practice to receiving the new designation. There is a section for 'STUDENT UPGRADE REQUEST' with fields for name, email, and address, and checkboxes for the type of designation requested (RPC or MPCC). A warning at the bottom states that the form is not for non-students and that all documents must be submitted together.

## 16. What is the Process for Upgrading to RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional?



## 17. Do I need a new Criminal Record Check & Vulnerable Sector Check to Upgrade?

Yes, you will need to obtain a **new Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check** from your local police department. This document can many times be requested online through your local police department. It is critical to have the Vulnerable Sector Check completed with the criminal record check for the upgrade process to take place smoothly.

**18. When is the earliest am I allowed to start to be able to Obtain my Provisional designation?**

Whether a CPCA Student Member or if you are applying to the CPCA without being a Student Member, the earliest a CPCA Student member could upgrade is dependent upon when you are able to obtain the documentation needed for upgrading. Once you have the following documentation, you can submit it with your CPCA Upgrading Form:

1. A copy of education Diploma/Degree/Certification
2. A copy of official educational transcripts (Sending original in mail)
3. A copy of Resume or CV (Curriculum Vitae)
4. Two letters of recommendation from professional attesting to your character
5. A recent Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check

So, **if you are in the last month of your educational program**, it would be a great strategy to (1) get your resume updated, (2) obtain two letters of recommendation, (3) and go to your local police department and get a new Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check. Then you are only waiting for documents from your educational institution, and you can apply as soon as you have their documents.

**19. Once graduating from my program, how long is my Student Membership valid?**

Your Student Membership with the CPCA is only **valid for 6 months after your graduation** from your educational program. Beyond 6 months, you will not be able to upgrade, but rather will need to go the application route. This is more costly, so be sure to upgrade when you can.

**20. After my practicum, can I volunteer to work with clients while waiting to complete program?**

**No.** It is important to understand that a Student Member is a **Non-Practicing Membership**, which means that students are not to engage in any form of counselling outside of their practicum. The CPCA Student Member completed a [CPCA Student Application Form](#) which includes 8 attestations or commitments of holding membership with the CPCA and one of them is to not provide counselling (whether paid or as a volunteer) outside of their educational program or practicum.

8. I confirm and agree that while a counselling student, I will not provide counselling services outside of my educational program or practicum, whether paid or as a volunteer, as to do so would be a breach of the CPCA Code of Ethics and could result in loss of my CPCA Membership.

Print form and initial here: X \_\_\_\_\_ or fill in your initials here as verification:

The CPCA is a self-regulated body, dedicated to the [Competency Model for Clinical Practice](#), and to the **protection of the public**. The CPCA holds that competency is more than just a specific degree or program completion. Competency in clinical practice is the primary means of protecting the public. Thus, the CPCA takes competency very seriously and thus, has several measures to ensure competency of a counselling from

the start of their professional career and throughout it. But, for anyone to start their counselling practice, the CPCA holds that they must have an entry-to-practice minimum [Counselling Core Competencies](#) before they can receive a **Practicing Designation with the CPCA**. This is established through the successful completion of the [CPCA Qualifying Exam](#).

#### 21. Can I keep counselling my practicum clients once my practicum is over?

**No.** Your practicum experience has a specific set of criteria and guidelines which must be abided by. Every client who sees a practicum student clearly knows that it is a practicum experience. They sign off on it as a part of their consent process with the understanding that this cannot be a long-term therapy relationship. Ending the therapeutic relationship is essential as it is abiding by the terms of the client-counsellor-clinic consent agreement. Learning to maintain clear boundaries and commitments is essential for ethical practice in one's professional career. As such, it is important to stress that the clients you see in your practicum are not **your** clients, but rather clients of the clinic or agency in which you completed your practicum.

It is also extremely valuable to learn how to successfully end a counselling relationship. Having a limited number of sessions can increase the effectiveness and focus of each session. Learning how to say goodbye, and how to end the counselling relationship well with good closure, support, and resources for the client, is valuable for your future career.

Practicum clients should never be encouraged to seek you out after you become an RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional. However, **occasionally** a client may find you in your new work role or private practice. In this case, your new role will have different consent forms with different rules and boundaries for the nature of the relationship (i.e.: confidentiality, counselling fees, missed appointments, etc.). Having a clear ending to the practicum relationship establishes a clean break and boundary for this relationship. However, **if** they become your client in the future, there are now new rules, boundaries, consents, expectations, and professional fees.

#### 22. Can my Counselling hours in my Practicum count towards for my Provisional Intern hours?

**No.** Your practicum is **part of** your educational program and counselling training to gain all the competencies required to be a clinical counsellor. The CPCA is a Competency-Based Counselling Association. As such, the purpose of your (1) education and (2) educational practicum is to build the many counselling related competencies for entry-to-practice as a counsellor. Knowledge of a skill is very different than being able to use the skill in the correct context. This is the purpose of your practicum – for the integration of knowledge and skills in live-counselling experience.

From the CPCA's perspective, a person proves their competency by (1) successfully completing the needed education and (2) the CPCA Qualifying Exam. It is only after successfully completing this exam that your **entry-to-practice competency has been established**.

Supervised practicums are essential training for developing clinical competency. It is great learning within the context of your educational program. However, it is a very different experience than an RPC Provisional or MPCC Provisional internship, with the responsibilities of being a practicing professional. Many new clinicians are surprised by what is thrown at them once they become a practicing professional. The Provisional internship ensures all Provisional members have the clinical support needed to start their career and is essential for long-term career success.

### 23. Where Can I Learn more about the CPCA Qualifying Exam?

The CPCA requires a Qualifying Exam to help measure competency and readiness for safe practice as a Counsellor or Therapist. The CPCA has two counselling Scopes of Practice - the (1) **Mental Health Counselling Scope of Practice** and the (2) **Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice**. As a result, the CPCA has two different exams, one for each scope of practice.

The two Scopes of Practice overlap; however, the Clinical Counselling Scope of Practice entails more specific educational competency in clinical mental health. Therefore, the Clinical Counselling Qualifying Exam has more questions that relate to clinical assessment, understanding DSM-5-TR, some understanding of pharmacology, and mental health treatment.

Below shows the different types of Qualifying Exams depending on the designation applied for:

- **RPC Provisional** - Mental Health Counselling Qualifying Exam - a 4-hour open-book exam, but with no electronic devices.
- **MPCC Provisional** - Clinical Counselling Qualifying Exam - a 4-hour open-book exam, but with no electronic devices.
- **RPC (full designation)** - Mental Health Counselling Qualifying Exam - a 4-hour closed-book exam, and no electronic devices.
- **MPCC (full designation)** - Clinical Counselling Qualifying Exam - a 4-hour closed-book exam, and no electronic devices.

The documents that are useful to review for preparing for the Qualifying Exam are:

- [The CPCA Core Competencies](#)
- [The CPCA Code of Ethics](#)
- [The CPCA Standards of Practice](#)

The following are 2 Videos and a Resource for Preparation for the CPCA Qualifying Exam:

- [Preparing for your CPCA Qualifying Exam - Part 1](#) (35 min)
- [Preparing for your CPCA Qualifying Exam - Part 2](#) (24 min)
- [Resources for Dealing with Test Anxiety](#)

For more information on the CPCA Qualifying Exam, go to the [CPCA Qualifying Exam page](#).

#### 24. Can I become a member of the CPCA Members Facebook Group?

Yes, we would encourage you to become a member of your provincial CPCA Facebook group. If your province does not yet have a CPCA Facebook page, you are welcome to join any of the CPCA Facebook communities. Here are links to the CPCA Facebook groups:

- [BC CPCA Members](#)
- [CPCA Counsellors of Alberta & NT](#)
- [CPCA Saskatchewan Counsellors](#)
- [Ontario CPCA Members](#)

Please allow time for Group Administrators to verify your CPCA membership as these groups are only open to CPCA Members.

#### 25. Is there a CPCA Guide for Provisional Members?

Yes, we want to support you through your Provisional internship, so please feel free to check out [The CPCA Guide for all Provisional Counselling Members](#).

