

CURRICULUM Policy

1.1 Introduction

Each campus is required to make a clear statement of *the philosophy of its training program* and demonstrate that the guidelines of this document are met by the design and implementation of the course.

The effective practice of Gestalt Therapy requires *significant personal development, sound theoretical learning and the acquisition of practical skills*. The training program is required to provide to students a description of the skills and competencies (personal, theory and practice) to be achieved.

The training program needs to *comprise a minimum of 600 hours spread over a minimum of four years* to allow trainees to integrate their personal and clinical learning.

Learning needs to occur in an integrated program that invites students to continually deepen and extend their knowledge and skills from the basic to the more subtle and complex. *The four-year training program cannot be completed by a student doing four first year courses with different training providers*. Nor can a student fulfil the requirements of training through an accumulation of basic workshops.

In line with current adult learning principles, appropriate prior learning accrued by applicants may be recognised. As providers of specialist rather than generic therapy training programs Gestalt training providers are encouraged to quantify prior learning in terms of prior Gestalt Therapy training. It is the role of the training provider to assess whether the prior learning submitted fulfils any of their course requirements.

2.1 Principles of Learning

The learning environment is to be informed by the following principles:

- the encouragement of self-support and the generous provision of environmental-support so students feel supported emotionally and in the learning process
- the use of a range of learning methodologies including didactic presentations, experiential learning activities, trainer demonstrations and discussion, student practice with supervision, and personal development and self-reflection
- an active partnership between trainers and trainees that supports co-operative enquiry and includes opportunities to reflect interactively on theory and practice, to experiment in the learning process, and to receive regular feedback on performance
- the articulation and publication of specific learning outcomes to which the content and process of the training program are congruently related
- the provision of adequate physical facilities to enable the learning experience to occur

3.1 Personal Development

Gestalt Therapy places special emphasis on the practitioners use of self in the therapeutic relationship. The centrality of awareness, phenomenology and the dialogic relationship in the Gestalt approach require that the personal development of the trainee needs to be in the foreground of the training experience and a significant element when assessing competent practice.

Since the therapy process requires professionally appropriate relationships between practitioners and clients, students need to be able to form constructive relationships with their clients, peers and teachers and be able to manage themselves in such a way as to enhance rather than interfere with the relevant clinical process. There needs to be a clear emphasis on the development of trainees self-awareness and relational openness as an essential requirement of therapeutic competence.

An understanding of how to use oneself self in the therapeutic relationship needs to be integrated within the training program.

While not easy to quantify it is necessary for a training provider to hold in mind a range of personal qualities that are desired in both applicants and graduates of the training program. These qualities, while subjective in nature, include students demonstrating integrity, authenticity, respectfulness, humility, self-acceptance, openness, flexibility, creativity, and compassion.

Therapy for the trainee, in addition to opportunities for personal growth that occur in the course, is considered a minimum requirement of a training program..

4.1 Theory

The following are considered core theoretical concepts that would need to be present in a course curriculum to meet the minimum standards of a GANZ accredited Gestalt Training program.

Field theory and its elaboration of the contextual and relational principles that inform Gestalt practice.

Phenomenology and the phenomenological method and their relationship to subjectivity and awareness.

The *dialogic relationship*, and its distinguishing features, as the relational stance of the Gestalt practitioner.

The relational art of contact and the associated contacting processes that both facilitate and interrupt contact.

The Gestalt experiment, and its related principles, as the enactment of Gestalt's deep appreciation and valuing of creative process.

The paradoxical theory of change and other Gestalt perspectives on the place and production of change in the process of therapy.

The historical and philosophical origins of Gestalt therapy and its relationship to psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

Gestalt approaches to assessment and diagnosis and their relationship to other diagnostic and assessment tools.

The ethics of clinical practice and current ideas on the necessity of ongoing personal and professional development, including self-care such as clinical supervision and personal therapy.

Since Gestalt therapy is a practical art, theoretical components are ideally taught in ways that relate to practice situations.

5.1 Clinical Practice

The inseparable link between theory and practice needs to characterise clinical practice experiences in the training program. Assisting students to connect their Gestalt Therapy practice to theoretical concepts is a key developmental task of the training program.

5.1.2 Where the purpose of the training program is to produce competent practitioners well grounded in theory, teaching methods contain a substantial component of experiential learning activities (at least 60%).

Clinical training is considered to rely substantially on the following methods:

Modeling by clinicians: Students learn by watching other competent clinicians such as trainers, visiting therapists, and video presentations. The learning experience is enhanced by priming students about skills to look for and by discussing the process observed. Modeling is followed by opportunities for individual practice, including the possibility of two students working as therapist/client with each other. This methodology is particularly emphasised in the Gestalt tradition where intrapersonal, interpersonal and group work is the fertile ground from which theoretical concepts are taught.

Helper-Client practice: One of the best forms of experiential learning occurs when the student is actually engaged in the process of helping a client. A student observer and/or trainer supervisor may be present to enhance the learning process, or the session videotaped for later replay either with a supervisor, or in a supervision group, or for self-assessment. The training course is geared towards providing feedback for the trainee. Appropriate guidelines for feedback include:

Feedback is given as soon as possible after the session

Feedback is framed so as to be helpful to trainees, i.e. related to their stage of development, emphasising already acquired competencies, and indicating directions for further development

Feedback is specific and concrete

Clinical experience is gained by *placement under the direction of approved supervisors* or as a structured part of the course through *live supervision* of students' work with clients.

Role-play: Role-plays provide students with experience in dealing with particular issues or types of clients, but cannot substitute for clinical involvement.

Certain core skills that distinguish a Gestalt practitioner are developed through the training program and assessed as part of establishing the trainee's practice competence. The core clinical practice skills required for assessing a trainee as a competent Gestalt practitioner emerge from operationalising the core theoretical concepts listed under 4.1. Students are required, as a minimum standard, to demonstrate the acquisition and capacity to competently apply practice skills that are related to the core theoretical concepts specified in 4.1.1 to 4.1.9.