

# **International Society of Professional Counsellors**

## **Membership Information**

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## 1. Introduction

The International Society of Professional Counsellors (ISPC) is an independent educational and research body, which provides professional membership for Hypnotherapists, Counsellors, Psychotherapists and Counselling Psychologists. The ISPC employs the services of a highly qualified board of administration that founded the ISPC to promote professional recognition for Counsellors through qualification and experience.

The ISPC is involved in three main activities. Firstly, it facilitates research and the exchange of information in the field of counselling psychology. Secondly, it provides assessment and certification of existing experience in the field of counselling psychology and its related disciplines. Professionals, who are successful in their line of work, whether voluntary or otherwise, are able to obtain recognition through subscription & membership without the need to disrupt their existing work. Thirdly, it provides a supportive body to which professional people can belong.

The ISPC recognises that accomplished Counsellors and other professionals using counselling skills will already possess valuable skills and qualifications. The ISPC provides public and professional recognition of these achievements by granting membership. A prospective application for membership into the Society's Roll of Honour is assessed according to specific criteria. Criteria taken into account on application for membership include:

- Formal counselling related qualifications already achieved.
- Self directed study that the applicant has and is pursuing to increase their level of knowledge and skills.
- Personal therapy.
- Practice experience.
- The amount of supervision that the applicant has already received or is receiving.

The ISPC seeks to help Students, Associates, Members and Fellows in their counselling careers and assignments. A newsletter and papers are published twice per annum, for members to exchange ideas and thoughts and offer or receive advice. Members may also submit papers, essays or reports from time to time for publication in the newsletter or elsewhere.

### ISPC Values

1. The ISPC believes that counselling contributes to the well being of individuals and society.
2. The ISPC believes that counselling is a valued profession.
3. The ISPC believes that Counsellors should receive professional recognition for the benefit of their personal development and ultimately to the benefit of their clients.
4. The ISPC believes that professional recognition should be through fair and independent assessment and not tied to training offered by any particular organisation.
5. The ISPC will keep these values above pecuniary interests.

## **2. Administrative Board**

The purpose of the administrative board is principally to ensure that the ISPC's values are maintained. The board will, amongst other things, promote research and development opportunities both within and outside the ISPC, administer the code of ethics and complaints procedure and administer the membership process.

Suitably qualified individuals are invited from time to time to serve on the administrative board of the society whose membership presently includes:

**Dr Graham Cocking** PhD Psychology BA Counselling Psychology MIC FFMSc

**Mr John Smejka** BSc (Hons) CEng MICE

**Mr Derrick Williamson** MA Counselling Psychology

**Dr Peter Cooke** MA MRCS LRCP MRCGP DIH DPM (Psychiatrist)

**Dr Kenneth Bryden Wood** PhD Management FFMSc

**Miss Tina Wright** BSc (Hons) Marketing & Design

**Mr J.G. Mannering** BMA ACMA ACIS (who serves in an advisory capacity in financial matters.)

### 3. Membership Entry Programme

Now you can have your counselling qualifications and experience **independently recognised by assessment**. All of that hard work and that bit extra, which you give to others and which often goes unrecognised, can now be recognised and, if appropriate, become part of your professional development programme.

You may well already be fully committed to good counselling practice and feel that you have undertaken the necessary learning and/or training and development to equip you for the role of Counsellor. However others, particularly vulnerable clients, often want more assurance of a persons abilities and professional status, and will look for more outward (and independent) demonstrations of capability, such as letters after your name. The ISPC, among its other services, provides this independent evidence. Sometimes your worth and achievements in the field of counselling are often only recognised if you have completed training that is accredited by a particular organisation or association. Often these same organisations are only interested in furthering their own importance and status, and may adjust the qualification requirements for existing members to ensure regular income through their own training process. Furthermore you may have been working hard on a counselling course or in academic study and find that accreditation by that particular organisation is not available. These circumstances lead to either elitism within the organisations or potentially can deprive the counselling fraternity of capable and committed Counsellors. The ISPC care about this and want to ensure your worth and achievements are appropriately acknowledged. Your qualifications, training and experience will be evaluated by the ISPC when we assess your portfolio (please see the application form) and your achievements will then be certified by the ISPC, thus providing evidence of your ability.

With instantly recognisable evidence of your ability and achievements, such as letters after your name, your credibility increases. Where previously you may have been ignored, or little heed paid to your opinions, you should now at least be given a fair hearing and as your credibility increases, more doors open. This is crucial for both personal development and for the development of counselling practice.

Membership of the ISPC is not open to everyone. Candidates for membership are required to demonstrate an appropriate level of attainment in their work and qualifications. This may seem, to some extent, elitist but we need to protect our clients as well as the organisation and ourselves. We **will not**, however, move the goal posts for current members once enrolled.

Membership of the ISPC provides independent recognition of attainment through assessment, or where appropriate, by examination.

#### **4. Membership Benefits**

There are several membership benefits, which are available to Students, Associates, Full Members & Fellows:

- 1) Public recognition of your commitment to the support and promotion of good counselling practice and to further learning and knowledge in the field.
- 2) A membership/fellowship certificate giving evidence of your counselling ability and achievements.
- 3) A licence to use the ISPC's designatory letters after your name.
- 4) A licence to describe oneself as an Associate, Full or Fellow Member of the International Society of Professional Counsellors.
- 5) The ISPC will answer enquiries on behalf of members and provide references on your counselling ability.
- 6) Members will receive a biannual newsletter with news, research and other matters of interest in the field of counselling.
- 7) Members are able to exchange information with each other and present their own views and experiences through the society.
- 8) The ISPC from time to time conducts research in the fields of counselling and philosophy and shares the results with members.
- 9) The ISPC produces a counselling directory listing all members, which is mailed to local authorities, medical practices, libraries, Citizens Advise Bureaus, hospitals, police stations and other relevant bodies.
- 10) Where members require a letter of introduction, internationally or otherwise, the ISPC will supply this at a nominal cost.
- 11) Members are able to place advertisements or notices in the newsletter for substantially less than the regular commercial rates.
- 12) All members will have their details registered on the worldwide web, if they wish, at no extra cost.

**\*SPECIAL OFFER TO ISPC MEMBERS\***

***\*Free Indemnity Insurance Cover with Membership  
up to £1,000,000.00 {£1 Million} for any one claim\****

Please see section 10 for further details of insurance cover.

## 5. Membership Grades

**5.1 Student Member:** Entry is open to students undertaking training in counselling and who are receiving supervision and personal therapy as required by their training organisation. Students must provide evidence of their training.

**5.2 Associate Member:** Entry is open to counsellors who have qualified up to the level of Advanced Certificate in counselling skills and whose studies included counselling theory and who are involved in counselling. This involvement can be counselling in private practice, within an agency, whether paid or unpaid, or within a charity on a voluntary basis. The Counsellor must be receiving supervision and personal therapy as required by their training organisation. Evidence of qualifications and a supervisor's reference must be sent with applications. All evidence presented with application will be checked. Associates must show their willingness to keep up to date with counselling theory in an ever-changing society. Associates are entitled to describe themselves as an Associate of the International Society of Professional Counsellors and adopt the ISPC's designatory letters AMISPC as appropriate.

**5.3 Full Member:** Entry is open to all Counsellors meeting the above criteria and who also hold the minimum qualification of Diploma in counselling skills and whose studies included counselling theory. Full members are entitled to describe themselves as a Member of the International Society of Professional Counsellors and to adapt the ISPC's designatory letters MISPC as appropriate.

**5.4 Fellow Member:** Entry is open to all Counsellors meeting the above criteria and who also hold the minimum qualification of a counselling/counselling psychology Degree and whose studies included counselling theory. Fellow Members are entitled to describe themselves as a Fellow of the International Society of Professional Counsellors and adopt the ISPC's designatory letters FISPC as appropriate.

## 6. Membership Upgrades

Student members may apply for Associate Membership upon qualifying with a minimum qualification of Advanced Certificate.

Associate Members may apply for their membership level to be upgraded to Full Membership upon obtaining their Diploma if they can provide evidence that they have been practising as a Counsellor for at least two years. Alternatively, Associate Members who hold the minimum qualification of an Advanced certificate in counselling and can provide evidence that they have been practising as a Counsellor for a total of five years can apply for their membership to be upgraded to Full Membership.

Full Members may apply for their membership level to be upgraded to Fellow Membership upon obtaining their Degree if they can provide evidence that they have been practising as a Counsellor for a total of five years. Alternatively, Full Members who hold a minimum qualification of a Diploma in counselling and can provide evidence that they have been practising as a Counsellor for a total of ten years can apply for their membership to be upgraded to Fellow Membership.

The ISPC believes that qualifications and experience are both equally important in the professional lives of the Counsellor. We therefore allow for membership upgrades to be accessible for all members. The purpose of permitting access to a higher grade of membership through the five and ten year system allows for experienced Counsellors who hold recognised qualifications to gain higher status based on previous experience rather than recent qualifications.

The ISPC recognises that Counsellors, like clients, are individual people. Therefore, it is possible that a highly qualified Counsellor may not in reality be as effective as a more experienced Counsellor who holds a lower qualification. Likewise, if the experienced Counsellor does not keep up to date with counselling training and theory they too may become less effective. Bearing this in mind the ISPC will treat each application as an individual application and awards of membership are therefore awarded at the grade deemed appropriate within the current rules and practices of the ISPC. However, unlike some organisations, once an applicant has been elected to a certain level of membership the qualification requirements are not changed. The assessment will be based on the information and evidence supplied by the applicant and after each individual application has been thoroughly validated.

| Grade         | Entry requirements              |                     | Upgrade requirements to next level                                                                          |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | Qualifications                  | Experience          |                                                                                                             |
| 5.1 Student   | Undertaking training            | N/A                 | Advanced certificate                                                                                        |
| 5.2 Associate | Advanced certificate            | N/A                 | Advanced certificate with 5 years experience or Diploma with 2 years experience                             |
| 5.3 Member    | Advanced certificate<br>Diploma | 5 years<br>2 years  | Diploma with a further 8 (total 10) years experience or Degree with a further 3 (total 5) years experience* |
| 5.4 Fellow    | Diploma<br>Degree               | 10 years<br>5 years | N/A<br>N/A                                                                                                  |

\*Please note that it is not possible to transfer to the grade of Fellow with only an Advanced certificate qualification.

## **7. Code of Ethics and Practice: Preface**

The ISPC, like other professional bodies, recognises the importance of having a code of ethics and practice that all members and prospective members must agree and adhere to. The purpose of the code is primarily to protect the interests of clients and Counsellors (members) and secondly to protect the reputation of the society.

The ISPC acknowledges and respects that some prospective members may already be guided by codes or standards of other counselling organisations. Accordingly, we have drawn up a code of ethics and practice that we believe all Counsellors and those employing counselling skills would be able to agree to. By agreeing to this code of ethics and practice Counsellors will be accepting that they have a duty to clients, to other Counsellors and to those employing counselling skills within the counselling profession.

By agreeing to this code of ethics and practice, Counsellors will not be prohibited from following the code of ethics and practice that they had followed previously. In the unlikely event that there should be a conflict of interest between the code of ethics and practice that the Counsellor adheres to and the code of principle of the ISPC, the Counsellor should take up the matter with the Society to try to resolve the issue(s). We believe that this is the fairest way to allow for flexibility and at the same time offer protection to the public, clients and Counsellors alike.

One of the conditions of joining the Society will be that the prospective member must sign an agreement to be bound by the code of ethics and practice and they must state which, if any, codes of practice they already adhere to.

The code of ethics and practice is designed to enable the Counsellor and client to maintain a professional relationship. This relationship must be safe for both parties.

**The rules in sections 8 and 9 comprise the Society's code of ethics and practice.**

## **8. Code of Ethics and Practice: Rules**

8.1 The counselling relationship is for the benefit of the client. The emotional well being of the client will be the paramount concern of the Counsellor.

8.2 The Counsellor must ensure that they do not abuse the client's vulnerable situation. The term abuse includes the following: sexual, emotional, psychological, intellectual and physical.

Note on rule 8.2: Sexual abuse is possible where a Counsellor and client may feel attracted to one another. Where such feelings are present the Counsellor should take these issues to supervision making every effort to protect the clients identity. Emotional, psychological and intellectual abuse sometimes takes place where a power struggle builds up in the counselling relationship. Counsellors would be aware of these possibilities. Physical abuse is more obvious and is the less likely. However, this too has been reported to happen in the counselling room in some circumstances. Counsellors should take any abuse issues that they have or that may arise in counselling to supervision. These issues should also be discussed in counselling with the client at appropriate times.

8.3 The number of counselling sessions will be kept to the minimum required to meet the Client's requirements.

Note on rule 8.3: Where a Counsellor deliberately prolongs the counselling relationship this is one example of financial abuse. It is the responsibility of the Counsellor to agree a fee with the client at the start of counselling that the client can afford. If the Counsellor is unable to lower the fee to suit a particular client, the Counsellor should consider options for referral.

8.4 The Counsellor must ensure that total confidentiality is maintained subject only to the following exceptions:

- a) Disclosures with the express permission of the client.
- b) Disclosures which lead the Counsellor to believe that serious harm may befall a third party.
- c) Disclosures that would leave the Counsellor liable to civil or criminal court procedure if not disclosed.

8.5 Members will have their qualifications and experience checked by the Society before their membership is awarded. However, it is the responsibility of the member to maintain their level of competency by training and/or study and practice.

8.6 Counsellors will be subject to the ISPC complaints procedure.

## **9. Code of Ethics and Practice: Complaints Procedure**

The purpose of this procedure is:

- a) To provide an impartial and demonstrable means of hearing clients' complaints against members.
- b). To prevent members who do not comply with the code of ethics and practice of practicing under the ISPC designation.

Counsellors agreeing to abide by the ISPC's code of practice, and who are subsequently awarded membership are also subject to the following complaints procedure.

9.1 The only person who is entitled to make an official complaint about the standard of work of a particular Counsellor is a client, or someone acting on behalf of a client.

9.2 All complaints must be made in writing to The Administrative Board, ISPC, Greetwell Place, Greetwell Road, Lincoln LN2 4US.

9.3 The client will be sent an acknowledgement. The Counsellor will be sent a copy of the complaint and asked to respond directly to the Administrative Board.

9.4 Members of the Administrative Board will examine the details of the original complaint together with the Counsellor's response and will seek clarification where required.

9.5 If the complaint is upheld, the Counsellor will have their membership cancelled, have their name deleted from the counselling directory and lose the right to use the Society's designatory letters after their name. They will not be entitled to a refund. In extreme circumstances the Administrative Board may, without prejudice and having obtained the express permission from the client, refer the matter to the police or legal authorities.

9.6 In the event that the complaint is found proved, the Counsellor will be informed of the length of time that the above sanctions will apply, and any conditions required for their lifting.

9.7 The client will be notified of the decision in writing.

9.8 The Counsellor may appeal against the decision of the Administrative Board. In this event the client will be notified in writing and three members of the Society will be requested to serve as outside assessors to the case. A vote will then be taken from three members of the Administrative Board and the three outside assessors and the majority vote will decide the sanctions (if any) to be taken against the Counsellor. This will then be the final decision.

9.9 The final decision will be notified to the client and the Counsellor in writing.

## 10. Membership Fees

All the fees listed below include the benefits listed under 'Membership Benefits' and indemnity insurance. (\*Excluding overseas members.)

### Insurance Details

**The proposed policy will be written on the 'civil liabilities' wording, which has been specially devised by Smithson Mason Ltd to meet such needs. (Cover includes but is not limited to):**

**Professional Indemnity (Malpractice)**

**Public Indemnity (Errors & Omissions)**

**Public Liability**

**Libel & Slander**

**Cover is for up to £1,000.00 for any one claim.**

### Membership Fees

Student: £25.00 renewable annually

All other membership levels: £103.43 renewable annually\*

Please note that the fee for all membership levels other than student is at the same rate as it is not the policy of the ISPC to reflect members' ability in the amount paid in membership fees to the ISPC. The reduced rate for students reflects (in many cases) their lower earning power. Student members are excluded from applying for a licence to use the ISPC's designatory letters and do not receive insurance cover. Insurance cover for students is usually provided by their training body/agency.

Prospective members who already hold insurance should contact the ISPC for a separate quotation.

### **\*OVERSEAS MEMBERS**

Unfortunately due to the differences in International Law our insurers are unable to provide insurance for overseas members. (Except Eire) We therefore advise that you seek insurance cover locally. Overseas members will therefore pay a reduced fee of £45.00.

We are able to provide insurance cover for members in Eire. However, this would increase membership fees for Eire members to £242.50 annually\*. We feel therefore that it would be more economical for Eire members to also seek local insurance cover. Membership fees to Eire members without our insurance would then be reduced to £45.00 as with other overseas countries. We apologise to all overseas members who may experience inconvenience because of these legal complications.

\*Please note this figure can increase at any time due to rising insurance premiums. However, members will be informed of any increase wherever possible in the renewal process.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE ISPC**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Work Tel. Number \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation and employer \_\_\_\_\_

|                |
|----------------|
| Qualifications |
|----------------|

|          |
|----------|
| Training |
|----------|

|            |
|------------|
| Experience |
|------------|

Other relevant information

Level of Membership Applied for: Student/Associate/Full/Fellow. (Delete as appropriate)

Code of ethics you are currently adhering to \_\_\_\_\_

Have you included evidence of qualifications/training? Yes/No (Delete as appropriate)

Have you included a letter from your supervisor? Yes/No (Delete as appropriate)

Supervisors Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tel Number \_\_\_\_\_

All awards of membership are subject to the confirmation of qualifications from the prospective members training agency and supervisor.

Any prospective member whose application is rejected will receive a full refund.

Please sign below to confirm that you agree to the ISPC's code of ethics.

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to be bound by the ISPC's code of ethics as described in sections 8-10 of this membership information.

Signature: .....

Please send completed application form with any relevant evidence of qualifications in the stamped addressed envelope and a cheque to the amount of £25.00 (student) / £103.43 (Associate Member or Fellow) or £45.00 (for overseas membership without insurance).

Cheques should be made payable to: The International Society of Professional Counsellors.