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Policy Title PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION – PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION POLICY

Financial Counselling Victoria (FCVic), as the peak body for financial counsellors in Victoria, has a responsibility to ensure that the professional practice of financial counsellors in Victoria is maintained at the highest possible standard.

FCVic agrees to apply and uphold a series of national standards for the professional supervision of financial counsellors in Australia. The *National Professional Supervision Policy* (National Policy) sets out the minimum requirements and best practice approach for professional supervision of financial counsellors.

The FCVic Board, following recommendations from its Professional Standards Committee (PSC), has agreed to adopt a policy to provide direction around additional provisions beyond what is detailed in the National Policy, and to guide the implementation of the principles outlined in the National Policy in Victoria.

2. PURPOSE

This policy is adopted to manage the implementation of the *National Professional Supervision Policy* in Victoria, and to ensure financial counsellors in Victoria are supported to provide consistent, safe and high-quality service to clients, while maintaining the practitioner’s own well-being.

This policy sets out the prescribed requirements for Professional Supervision for FCVic members, above and beyond the requirements outlined in the National Policy.

This policy also sets out the prescribed requirements for FCVic accreditation as an Accredited Professional Supervisor.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all practising members of FCVic, namely Accredited, Associate and Student (Intern) members.

4. DEFINITIONS

Accredited Professional Supervisor is an individual who meets the criteria and ongoing requirements prescribed in this policy to provide financial counselling professional supervision.

FCVic Members’ Portal refers to the password-secured area of the FCVic website, with access restricted to FCVic members and staff only. It provides information and resources specific to financial counsellors and enables members to record professional supervision hours completed throughout the membership year, view a list of accredited financial counselling professional supervisors, and apply to become an accredited professional supervisor.

Professional Standards Committee (“PSC”) is a sub-committee of the FCVic Board established to consider and undertake assessments of professional standards issues, make relevant policy recommendations to the Board on professional issues, and to take any other actions in relation to professional issues delegated to it by the Board.

Professional Supervision is a formal relationship between supervisor and supervisee (financial counsellor) designed to promote wellbeing, facilitate reflective practice, explore ethical issues, develop skills and foster best practice.

5. PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION POLICY

5.1 Face to face professional supervision

For the purposes of implementing the National Policy, FCVic regards supervision provided via video technology (e.g. Zoom, Skype, Facetime) as equivalent to face to face supervision.

5.2 Professional supervision sessions

No individual professional supervision session should be more than 2 hours.

It is considered best practice that professional supervision sessions are planned to be spread throughout the year, as opposed to an ad hoc manner or loaded towards the end of the year.

5.2.1 Reciprocal professional supervision

Where two professional supervisors provide professional supervision to each other in a reciprocal arrangement, each supervisor can claim no more than 50% of the total time towards their supervision requirements (e.g. 2 hours of reciprocal supervision, each supervisor can only claim 1 hour of supervision each). Best practice is to schedule separate sessions for each participant to act as professional supervisor so that there is a clear delineation between the role of supervisor and supervisee.

5.3 Financial counselling professional supervisor accreditation

To become an FCVic accredited professional supervisor, a person must satisfy the Professional Requirements, Key Selection Criteria, and any other requirements contained within the Professional Supervisor Position Description. The PSC shall be responsible for approving or amending the Professional Supervisor Position Description. The Professional Supervisor Position Description must be maintained as a Schedule to this policy and reviewed by the PSC at least annually.

5.3.1 Application process

The Executive Officer shall be responsible for approving an application process that enables the assessment of applicants against the requirements for professional supervisor accreditation pursuant to this policy.

The Executive Officer shall approve or amend guidance on the application process for accreditation pursuant to this policy and must ensure that any guidance is accessible to all eligible members. Any guidance approved by the Executive Officer shall be maintained as a Schedule to this policy.

The Executive Officer shall be responsible for communicating with members regarding the requirements and processes for accreditation and the outcomes of decisions made by the FCVic Board, any of its sub-committees, or the PSC regarding applications for accreditation.

5.3.2 Application interviews trial (Transitional arrangements – through to June 2025)

FCVic will conduct a trial interview process as part of the application process, commencing in September 2024 through to 30 June 2025. This trial will allow for refining the process, testing set questions, and assessing model answers. The PSC Chair will attend the interviews as an observer for the purpose of evaluating the process.

Interviews will be conducted by an interview panel including one FCVic staff member nominated by the Executive Officer and one member of the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) nominated by the PSC. The members of the interview panel must manage conflicts of interest in accordance with the **FCVic Conflict of Interest Policy**.

The interview panel shall conduct the interview process in accordance with interview guidelines prescribed by the PSC and contained as a schedule to this Policy.

The interview panel shall determine whether an applicant for accreditation as a professional supervisor has met the requirements for accreditation and shall notify the PSC of the panel’s decision. The PSC shall note the interview panel’s decision at the next meeting of the PSC, and applicants will be notified of the interview panel’s decision within 1 week of the PSC meeting.

Where an applicant has not been successful in satisfying the requirements for accreditation, they will be provided with written feedback from the interview panel, including recommendations to address skills or knowledge gaps. The applicant will have the opportunity to reapply after addressing the feedback.

5.3.4 Appeals

Any individual that has their application for accreditation rejected may formally appeal the decision in accordance with the **FCVic Appeal Rights Policy**.

5.3.5 Special circumstances

Where a member has difficulty completing their application in the manner prescribed, they may apply in writing to the PSC for special consideration. Under this policy, the Board grants the PSC the authority to apply exemptions or special conditions to any applications it receives.

5.3.6 Maintaining accreditation as a professional supervisor

To retain accreditation, all professional supervisors must comply with the ongoing professional requirements contained within the Professional Supervisor Position Description.

FCVic will issue accreditation certificates annually to professional supervisors who satisfy the requirements for ongoing accreditation, subject to an administrative determination by the Executive Officer or their delegate.

5.3.7 List of accredited supervisors

FCVic will maintain a list of accredited financial counselling professional supervisors. FCVic will regularly update the accredited list, and review it annually.

A list of accredited financial counselling professional supervisors will be made available to FCVic members via the FCVic Members’ Portal. Accredited professional supervisors have the option to add or remove their name and contact details from the list available to members.

5.3.8 Interstate professional supervisors

Under the National Policy, a supervisor does not have to be located in the same State/Territory as a financial counsellor they supervise, provided the supervisor has been approved by their State/Territory association to provide supervision. Evidence of a professional supervisor’s accreditation with their State/Territory association must be provided to FCVic upon request.

5.4 Professional supervision requirements for professional supervisors not currently practising as a financial counsellor

All non-practising financial counsellors providing professional supervision shall engage in professional supervision in accordance with this policy.

The minimum requirement of professional supervision for supervisors not currently practicing as a financial counsellor is **4 hours per year**. To maintain their professional registration they must also complete the sector professional development requirements.

5.5 Record keeping and audit compliance

The professional supervisor and supervisee will keep a record of all supervision hours. The supervisee is responsible for submitting their supervision records to FCVic.

Supervision records are to be submitted via the FCVic Members’ Portal, and can be added at any time throughout the year, along with evidence. All supervision records for the membership year must be submitted prior to applying for renewal of membership with FCVic.

In accordance with the FCVic CPD and Professional Supervision Audit Policy, FCVic members are expected to keep evidence of their professional supervision records for a period of up to 12 months from the conclusion of each membership year. FCVic provides a pro forma to enable professional supervisors to validate the supervision records submitted by the supervisee, in the event that the supervisee is selected for audit.

A range of tools and resources are available from the FCVic Members’ Portal to assist with record keeping and compliance.

5.6 Supervision notes and reporting

Professional supervision is a confidential process, and as such, it is not appropriate for any professional supervisor (internal or external to the agency) to report on the details of any professional supervision sessions to the supervisee’s agency.

The supervision session notes belong to the supervisee and supervisor only. The only exception to this is where there is a duty of care if there is a risk to clients. Refer to the National Professional Supervision Policy regarding extraordinary circumstances.

5.7 Professional Indemnity Insurance

As per the National Professional Supervision Policy, “A supervisor may wish to consider professional indemnity insurance.” (p.8)

Professional supervisors who facilitate group supervision under the auspices of FCVic are covered by FCVic’s professional indemnity insurance policy.

5.8 Cost of professional supervision

There may be a cost for professional supervision; however, FCVic does not determine that cost. It is the responsibility of the supervisee to confirm with a potential supervisor about the cost and method of payment before engaging the professional supervisor.

Details about professional supervisors’ fees, including those that do not charge fees, are available from the list of accredited professional supervisors published in the FCVic Members’ Portal.

6. COMPLIANCE

In accordance with the FCVic CPD and Professional Supervision Audit Policy, FCVic will conduct an annual audit to ensure compliance with this policy. Each year, 10% of professional supervisors will be randomly selected for a review of their supervisor training and professional supervision records for the preceding membership year.

7. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in July 2023.

8. RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Australian Financial Counselling Code of Ethical Practice

FCVic CPD and Professional Supervision Audit Policy

FCVic Appeals Policy

FCVic Membership Policy

FCVic Constitution

National Professional Supervision Policy

National Standards for Membership & Accreditation

9. IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Officer for FCVic is responsible for the implementation and management of this policy.

10. APPROVED

Approved by FCVic Board: 21 July 2021

Enquiry Contacts

For questions about this policy, contact the FCVic Executive Officer.

Zyl Hovenga-Wauchope

zylhw@fcvic.org.au

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Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	20/11/18	New	Dr. Sandy Ross	FCVic Board
2	30/04/19	Revision	Dr. Sandy Ross	FCVic Board
3	18/08/20	Revision	Dr. Sandy Ross	FCVic Board
4	21/7/21	Revision to align with National Professional Supervision Policy.	Dr. Sandy Ross	FCVic Board
4.1	4/11/2021	Update following constitutional changes	Dr. Sandy Ross	FCVic Board
5	5/12/2023	Revision	Professional Standards Committee	FCVic Board
6	17/09/2024	Amendment following professional supervisor accreditation review	PSC	FCVic Board
7	18/2/2025	Extension to trial interview process (5.3.2)	PSC	FCVic Board

Schedule 1 – Professional Supervisor Position Description (PSC)

1. Overview

Financial Counselling Victoria (FCVic) is the peak body and professional association for financial counsellors in Victoria. We provide membership services and support to financial counsellors to assist them maintain professional services to vulnerable clients. On 1 January 2024, FCVic adopted the National Standards for Supervision which is the minimum standard.

Our vision is to support the Victorian financial counselling workforce to strive for personal and professional excellence and to provide safe and best practice services to their clients. The professional supervision framework assists financial counsellors to seek support outside of agency line management functions to develop professionally and personally.

Professional supervisors approved by FCVic can charge a fee for their services. Fees are not determined by FCVic. Approved professional supervisors may also **not** charge for their services. Any fees (charged or not) are not reflective of the quality of the professional supervision service provided.

FCVic Accredited financial counsellor professional supervisors are not employed by FCVic and generally determine their own working conditions.

2. Role description

2.1. Professional supervision is:

- provided by a professional supervisor approved by FCVic pursuant to the FCVic Professional Supervision Policy¹ and related procedure
- a requirement for practicing financial counsellors and professional supervisors.
- driven by the supervisee as a part of their professional responsibility.
- a 2-way professional relationship between a financial counsellor professional supervisor (supervisor) and a financial counsellor (supervisee) that supports the development, practice and personal wellbeing of the financial counsellor.
- a relationship that supports the supervisee to enhance their capacity, identify professional challenges and discover pathways to identify and manage challenges, build resilience, work productively, and maintain a professional and safe approach to their financial counselling practice.
- an opportunity for the financial counsellor to seek balance in their working life by giving them an opportunity to reflect on casework, plan for education and discuss ethical and personal challenges related to their work.

2.2. A Professional Supervisor is:

- a current FCVic Accredited member with a minimum of 4 years full time equivalent financial counselling experience
- self-aware, respectful, empathetic, focuses on the financial counsellor without distraction, non-judgemental, treats all matters confidentially and genuinely wants the individual to provide “best practice” for their clients.

2.3. Key responsibilities of the professional supervisor

To

- assist the supervisee(s) to develop in their profession independently of the supervisee’s employing agency.
- strong empowering skills and the ability to motivate and inspire.
- establishing the focus of the supervising relationship and creating an agreement (contract) that: a) reflects the needs of the supervisee; and b) clearly states what the supervisor and supervisee agree to contribute.
- creating a safe and supportive environment built on mutual respect and trust.
- promoting a culture in which supervision is treated as part of the core business of contemporary financial counselling professional practice.
- reviewing casework from a formative perspective
- the development of skills, knowledge and value base by reflecting on the financial counsellor’s work.
- having a focus on the restorative aspect of professional supervision by supporting wellbeing and resilience.
- implementing the educative aspect of professional supervision through identification of development needs, interests, goals and developing action plans.
- providing an opportunity to reflect more generally on the financial counselling experience.
- assisting supervisees to develop a reflective practice approach to their work and their individual approach to that work.
- providing avenues to discuss and manage difficulties related to their work.
- conducting group based professional supervision sessions.
- contracting with potential supervisees before and throughout the professional supervision relationship
- maintaining the confidentiality of the supervisees, including client and organisational information discussed in supervision, unless circumstances arise which limit such confidentiality.

3. Professional requirements

3.1. Initial application

- Meet all requirements of Accredited membership
- Complete a specified e-learning related to professional supervision prior to commencement of the role

3.2. Ongoing requirements

- Attend annual refresher for professional supervisors scheduled by FCVic, including one face-to-face session within a 2-year period.
- Meet their own professional supervision requirements as outlined in the FCVic Professional Supervision policy
- Meeting annual renewal requirements

4. Key selection criteria

Essential

4.1. Qualifications

- Holds current FCVic Accredited Membership with a minimum of 4 years full time equivalent financial counselling experience

- Successful completion of FCVic approved professional supervision training
- Current professional development according to FCVic membership policy
- Completion of essential checks as defined in the Policy

4.2. Technical and professional knowledge

- Extensive and varied casework experience including credit law, consumer law and other related areas.
- Understanding of the counselling aspects of professional supervision and potential psychological impacts of casework
- Understanding of the application of legal frameworks to assist clients in financial difficulty
- Working understanding of some of the specialist areas of financial counselling e.g., problem gambling, family violence

4.3. Personal attributes

- Self-awareness and emotional intelligence
- Excellence in communication at all levels
- Ability to motivate and inspire
- Understanding of the normative, formative, educative and restorative aspects of professional supervision
- Commitment to the development and wellbeing of the supervisee
- Available to meet personally with the supervisee on an agreed and regular basis
- Demonstrates ability to explore ethical issues and foster best practice
- Demonstrate unconditional positive regard for others

Desirable

- 4.4. Working understanding of the challenges for agencies
- 4.5. Experience with different financial counselling agencies
- 4.6. Willingness to explore issues and research casework information to assist their supervisee
- 4.7. Willingness to seek personal supervision to manage this role.

5. Insurance

Refer to the FCVic Professional Supervision Policy for information about insurance requirements and considerations for financial counsellor professional supervisors.

Version History				
Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	17/09/2024	New	PSC	PSC

Schedule 2 - Interview process, samples questions, and model answers (PSC)

Initially, the PSC will hold a trial period until the end of 2024 in which PSC members will rotate into the interviewer role. This allows for the refinement of the process and testing of the set questions and model answers. The Chair of the PSC will also attend the interviews during the trial period as an observer and “process information” gatherer.

The PSC proposes a pre-set schedule with interviews occurring on a set day per month by zoom. This removes the need for making individual arrangements. This day will be determined in collaboration with FCVic to ensure that a staff member can be involved.

During the interview key questions/model answers will be applied for consistency.

All interviews will be scheduled for approximately 45 minutes to allow a 30-minute interview and 15 minutes for post interview collaboration to decide whether the applicant is suitable or not. Once a decision is made, the applicant is notified in writing pursuant to the Policy.

Once the trial period is completed, it is envisaged that the interviews will be conducted by a FCVic administration staff member and financial counsellor/professional supervisor.

During the trial period, expressions of interest will be sought from financial counsellor professional supervisors who wish to be part of an interview roster for 2025. This will also facilitate further development of the skills of the financial counselling sector, growing capacity to drive a quality professional supervisor program.

Sample interview questions and model answers

Questions	Model Answers
Describe the difference between professional supervision and line management.	The response should include that professional supervision is an independent relationship to build professional support and guidance and line management supervision is about risk management and employee support within a risk management context. The two are innately different but related.
Imagine a person in your team contacts you for professional supervision. You are not the line manager but act in a line management role in the line manager's absence. Describe your response	We would want the person to identify the situation and then describe that potentially this would be a conflict of interest as you would be privileged to management information even though you are not working as the line manager all the time.

Version History				
Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	17/09/2024	New	PSC	PSC

Schedule 3 – Guidelines for Members (Executive Officer)

Professional Supervisor Application Procedure

Background

FCVic encourages the development of financial counsellors to become professional supervisors so that financial counsellor members can be appropriately supported to develop their career and professional expertise and manage their wellbeing.

FCVic receives professional supervisor applications and works with the Professional Standards Committee with regard to approval of applications and communicates outcomes to applicants.

This procedure applies to

- i. All financial counsellors applying to be accredited by FCVic as a professional supervisor
- ii. FCVic as the accrediting party
- iii. FCVic Professional Standards Committee

The procedure

1. Applicant self-assessment

Applicant deems that they are eligible to apply to be recognised as a professional supervisor after developing a full understanding of the framework of professional supervision and completing related requirements as outlined below:

Reading the FCVic Position Description for a Professional Supervisor, the Professional Supervision Policy, National Standards for Membership and Accreditation, and the Professional Standing Policy Completion of approved professional supervision course and required FCVic e-learning package.

2. Applicant submits application

- 2.1. Completes the online application form
- 2.2. Uploads required documents as stated in form
- 2.3. Submits online form

3. FCVic

- 3.1. Receives form and attachments
- 3.2. Keeps register
- 3.3. Assesses the application for completeness and attachments
- 3.4. Responds to the applicant advising of outcome and timeline

4. Reasons for declined application

- 4.1. Lack of information as set out in the application instructions
- 4.2. Training not completed
- 4.3. Professional Supervision e-learning not completed
- 4.4. Cover letter not provided
- 4.5. Resume not provided

4.6. Areas of form not completed

5. Response to complete application

5.1. FCVic notifies applicant that the application has been accepted and confirms date /time for the interview

6. Interview process

6.1. Conducted by FCVic administration staff member and financial counsellor/professional supervisor

6.2. Uses key questions and model answers for consistency

6.3. Time is taken post interview to decide suitability, after which the panel will determine whether to approve or reject the applicant along with reasons and guidance if necessary

7. Response to successful applicant

7.1. PSC notified of interview panel’s decision

7.2. PSC records the decision of the interview panel

7.3. Candidate is notified by FCVic in writing

8. Response to unsuccessful applicant

8.1. FCVic notifies PSC of unsuccessful candidate, along with interview panel’s recommendations

8.2. PSC discusses recommendations, and determines any other options for candidate

8.3. FCVic notifies unsuccessful candidate in writing with feedback

8.4. Unsuccessful candidate offered opportunity to reapply after rectifying challenges

9. Suggestions for unsuccessful candidates

9.1. Recommendations for accessing a mentor

9.2. Skills gaps identified by interviewers are shared with the applicant in a constructive way

9.3. Identification of relevant education to assist the development of further understanding of professional supervision

9.4. Coaching for interviews

Version History				
Version Number	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment	Developed by	Approved By
1	17/09/2024	New	PSC	Executive Officer