



GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATION OF COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS IN BHUTAN

Bhutan Board for Certified Counselors (BBCC)
Thimphu, Bhutan
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Introduction

These guidelines provide information on the **Bhutan Board for Certified Counselors (BBCC)** and its mandates including requirements of certification, registration, advancement through counseling certification levels, continuing education, clinical supervision and ethical requirements.

History

The BBCC was officially launched on August 9, 2013, under the benevolent guidance of **Her Majesty Galyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck**. It was endorsed by the Cabinet Secretariat, Royal Government of Bhutan on September 1, 2015. The BBCC is an important step towards professionalization of the counseling profession and mental health professionals in Bhutan. The BBCC, presently, operates under the umbrella of the **RENEW** (Respect Educate Nurture & Empower Women) Secretariat.

The BBCC is the national-level certification body for the certification and credentialing of counseling professionals in Bhutan. It is supported by the **National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)**, USA, and by the concerted support from stakeholders like the Royal Civil Service Commission, the Gross National Happiness Commission, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, the Bhutan Narcotics Control Agency, the Royal Bhutan Police, the National Commission for Women and Children, Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMS), the Bhutan Medical and Health Council (BMHC), and UNICEF-Bhutan.

Vision

To support the wellbeing of the community by safeguarding a vibrant counselling profession.

Mission

Board Certified Counselors are dedicated to providing accessible, inclusive, quality counselling services delivered with integrity to the people of Bhutan.

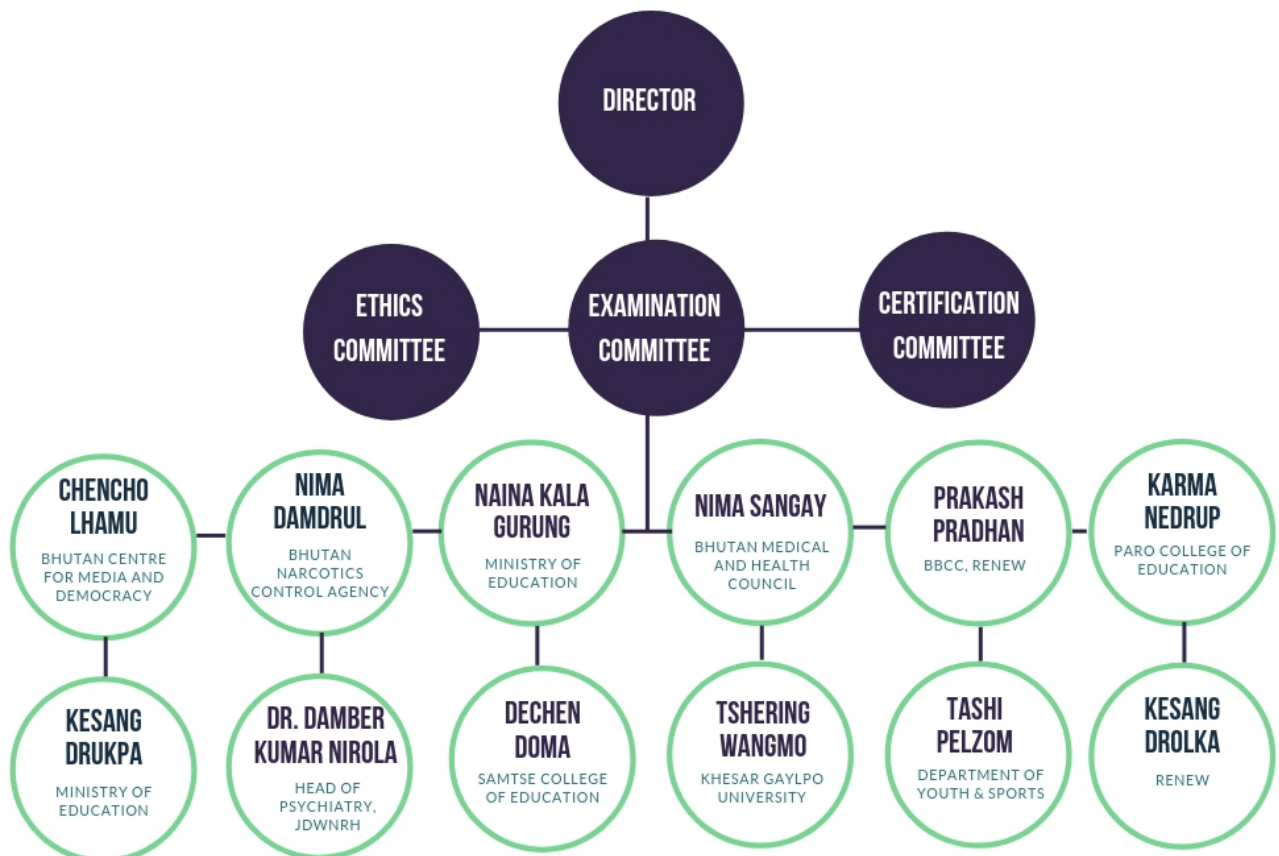
Purpose

The Bhutan Board of Certified Counsellors provides support, supervision, continuing education and international linkage for the counselling professionals of Bhutan as well as safeguarding the community by insisting ethical standards be maintained by certified counselors.

The activities of BBCC include but not limited to:

1. Establishing policy, practice and ethical standards to protect clients accessing counseling services
2. Maintaining an Ethical Committee to investigate breaches of the Code of Ethics and respond to queries from the general public
3. Advocating for the counselling profession and providing advice and guidance to universities to meet minimum training requirements
4. Accrediting counsellor wishing to practice in Bhutan and providing clear guidelines for professional advancement and development
5. Promoting counseling in the general public for better utilization of services, complementary to other culturally legitimate forms of support, including ethomedicine or religious coping strategies
6. Facilitating continuing education and accrediting courses
7. Offering training in clinical supervision and maintaining a register of clinical supervisors
8. Providing advice and support to counseling practitioners
9. Maintaining a nationwide network of counselors across all sectors by publishing newsletters, disseminating information and providing a platform upon which the peer community can interact
10. Facilitating international cooperation, transfer of knowledge and experience
11. Supporting research in the field of counseling

Organisational Chart



Administration of BBCC Certification

All counseling professionals and mental health providers are mandated to register with the BBCC before practicing in the government and private services.

Certification with the Board is scheduled twice a year—in January and July.

All applications for registration are required to be received **10 days prior** the end of the month to be considered by the committee. Late applications will be considered in the next sitting.

Provisional Certification

Provisional certification will be issued between Certification Committee sittings or to applicants who have not fully met accreditation standards for the level they are applying for. For example, if a new graduate is applying for NCC(A) but has yet to sit the accreditation exam, they will be known as NCC(A) Provisional until such time as all requirements are met.

Provisional registrants are required to access clinical supervision at Level 1 until accreditation is obtained. Until such time as full certification has been issued by the Certification Committee, the counselor must refer to themselves as 'provisional'.

Expectations of BBCC Certification

Code of Ethics

Applicants applying to register with the Bhutan Board of Certified Counselors are expected to abide by the Code of Ethics outlined by the BBCC. It is recommended all applicants and members familiarise themselves with this document (available on the website). Breaches of the code of ethics are reportable to the Ethics Committee, by members of the public, clinical supervisors or peers. The Ethics Committee will follow the Guidelines for the Investigation of Breaches of the Code of Ethics (available on the website) to will make a decision regarding whether the applicant will continue to be able to practice and/or outline the continuing education requirements required for the applicant to continue to practice.

Scope of Practice

Practitioners must not operate outside their scope of practice, that is, practice outside an individuals' specific education, experience, and demonstrated competency. However, applicants can further their academics based on BBCC-approved subjects of professional development or study for higher levels of certification credentials.

Clinical Supervision

All BBCC certified counselors are required to clinical supervision as outlined in the Supervision Policy (available on the website). Supervision will be accessed and provided based on the experience of the practitioner. No clinician may provide clinical supervision without first being approved by the BBCC to do so.

Continuing Education

Certified Counselors are expected to engage in continuing education to update their counseling skills and knowledge, as per the Continuing Education Policy (available on the website). This includes the knowledge of client assessment, counseling skills, and special areas of knowledge, including mental health, addiction treatment, special needs children and others with regard to mental health counseling. This will be assessed every three years at recertification.

Those failing to meet clinical supervision or continuing education requirements risk having their certification suspended.

Process of BBCC Certification

Applicants are required to complete the **BBCC Registration Form** (available on the website) before submitting it to the BBCC Director for consideration by the board.

New applicants are requested to familiarise themselves with the eligibility criteria for the requested certification level, and to submit evidence to support their application. If the applicant does not meet all criteria or submit requisite evidence, application approval may be postponed, pending completion of requirements.

The following should be submitted along with the Registration Form.

- Latest security clearance
- Photocopies of academic transcripts (applicants will produce original documents if and when asked for by the board)
- References from supervisors or professional colleagues
- Professional development certificates and/or documents which specify professional experience/education.
- Current curriculum vitae

National Certification Exam

The national certification exam ensures a consistent professional standard of counsellors nationally. Passing the exam is required in order to gain certification with the BBCC. The examination consists of both written and interview components.

The exam will assess 8 core competencies:

1. Knowledge of the discipline
2. Ethical, legal and professional matters
3. Assessment and measurement
4. Intervention strategies
5. Research and evaluation
6. Communication and interpersonal relationships
7. Working with people from diverse groups
8. Practice across the lifespan

Please see National Certification Examination Policy document for more information.

Recency of Practice

Certified counselors are required to demonstrate recency of practice to ensure, if career breaks occur that the practitioner has maintained an adequate connection with, and recent practice in the profession since qualifying for, or obtaining registration. Minimum standards for recency of practice are 300 hours of practice in a three-year period. Counselors who are out of the workforce or allow their registration to lapse for a period of 3 years or more will be required to re-sit the national certification exam.

The inclusion of an updated copy of a curriculum vitae with applications for higher levels of accreditation informs the Board of recency of practice, registration history and years practice experience.

Levels of National Counseling Certification

Levels of credentialing for counseling professionals, based on:



Counselors, irrespective of their educational qualification and professional experiences, are required to complete the Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) training (30 hours) prior to certification.

Progression through Certification Levels

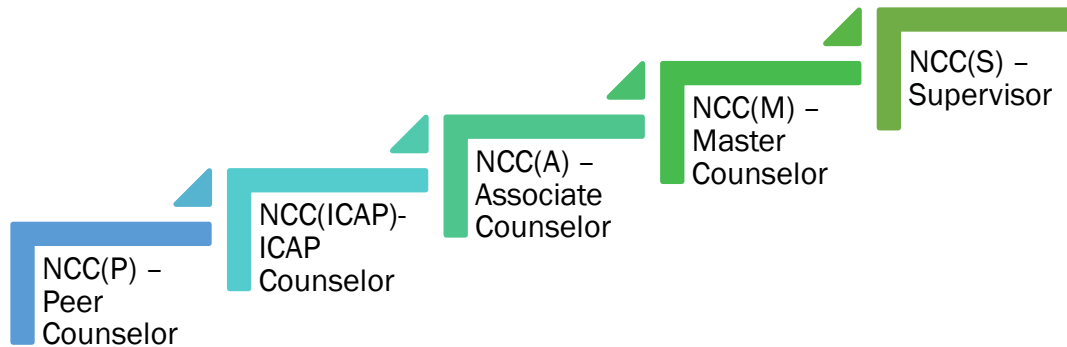
Progression from one level of certification to the next can be achieved by completing further education, as required by the next certification level's eligibility criteria. The applicant may apply to the BBCC Director after achieving the required academic and professional qualifications. Promotion to the highest level, NCC(S), can be obtained only after achieving NCC(M) and fulfilling the NCC(S) eligibility criteria.

It is to be noted that short duration training and workshops cannot lead to promotion to the next levels of certification. The applicants are required to complete formal degrees along with counseling experiences to qualify for

promotion. However, trainings and workshops may aid in a stronger comprehension of counseling and smoother facilitation in one's own work arena.

All counseling, mental health, and psychosocial professionals are expected to pursue continuing education for promotion and efficiency in their profession.

The five levels of credentialing presently awarded to counseling professionals in Bhutan are:



Level 1: NCC(P) – Peer Counselor

Academic Qualification: The applicant must have attained a minimum of a high school diploma (i.e., grade 12 or higher) as well as basic counseling training, diploma, certificate course, and Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) training.

Professional Experience: any obtained during the course of study through placement.

Training: Nil requirements.

Supervision: The applicant is expected to have secured a clinical supervisor prior to application.

Documents to be submitted at the time of application:

- Academic Transcripts from educational institution(s) previously attended
- Certificates/documents from trainings or workshops attended, if any, in the fields of mental health and psychosocial counseling or related fields
- Current curriculum vitae
- Letter from clinical supervisor confirming supervision arrangement
- Letter of recommendation from applicant's lecturer/placement supervisor

Level 2: NCC(ICAP) – ICAP Counselor

Academic Qualification: The applicant must have attained a minimum of a high school diploma, attended basic counseling training (eg: diploma, certificate course) and completed Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) training.

Professional Experience: any obtained during the course of study through placement.

Training: Must have passed International Certification for Addiction Professionals (ICAP) Level 1

Supervision: The applicant is expected to have secured a clinical supervisor prior to application.

Documents to be submitted at the time of application:

- Academic Transcripts from educational institution(s) previously attended
- Certificates/documents from trainings or workshops attended, if any, in the fields of mental health and psychosocial counseling or related fields
- Current curriculum vitae
- Letter from clinical supervisor confirming supervision arrangement
- Letter of recommendation from applicant's lecturer/placement supervisor

Level 3: NCC(A) – Associate Counselor

Academic Qualification: The applicant must have attained a minimum of an undergraduate degree in any one of the following subjects of study:

- Psychology
- Social Work
- Human Services
- Organizational Behavior
- Counseling Psychology
- Clinical Counseling
- Guidance & Counseling

If any other undergraduate degree, applicant also requires one year counseling focused study PGDGC.

Professional Experience: minimum three years' experience in the field not inclusive of placement required by study. The applicant must have also completed Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) training.

Training: minimum 100 hours of continuing education

Supervision: weekly clinical supervision for a minimum of two years (level 1) and one-year fortnightly supervision (level 2).

Documents to be submitted at the time of application:

- Current Curriculum Vitae
- Academic Transcripts from educational institution(s) attended since securing NCC(P)
- Evidence of minimum 100 hours of continuing education (certificates/documents from trainings or workshops attended, CE Log)
- Evidence of clinical supervision
- Letter from clinical supervisor confirming supervision arrangement
- Letter of recommendation from applicant's immediate supervisor

Level 4: NCC(M) – Master Counselor

Academic Qualification: The applicant must have attained a minimum of a postgraduate degree/Master’s in Counseling or related field (M.A/M.S.).

Professional Experience: Minimum 6 years’ experience in the field

NCC(M) certificate holders can participate in **Supervision Training** to enable them to provide competent clinical supervision. However, this supervision training will not guarantee a promotion into the NCC(S) tier. The level of certification will be based largely on the eligibility criteria of qualification and experience.

Training: minimum 200 hours of continuing education

Supervision: minimum Level 3 clinical supervision

Documents to be submitted during application:

- Current Curriculum Vitae
- Academic Transcripts from educational institution(s) attended since securing NCC(A)
- Evidence of minimum 200 hours of continuing education (certificates/documents from trainings or workshops attended, CE Log)
- Evidence of clinical supervision
- Letter from clinical supervisor confirming supervision arrangement

Level 5: NCC(S) – Supervisor

Academic Qualification: The applicant must have attained a minimum of a postgraduate degree/Master’s in Counseling or related field (M.A/M.S.) and MHF.

Professional Experience: a minimum of 6 years post qualification counselling experience, inclusive of individual counseling, family therapy, group therapy, and psycho educational sessions.

Training: completion of a Supervisor training course that meets BBCC standards; minimum 200 hours continuing education

Supervision: evidence of a minimum of 50 counseling supervision hours undertaken at the NCC(M) level.

Documents to be submitted with application

- Current Curriculum Vitae
- Academic Transcripts from educational institution(s) attended since securing NCC(M)
- Evidence of minimum 200 hours of continuing education (certificates/documents from trainings or workshops attended, CE Log)
- Certificate confirming completion of recognized Clinical Supervisor training course
- Evidence of clinical supervision
- Letter from clinical supervisor confirming supervision arrangement

- Counseling case conceptualization on any five clients in which the counselor has seen the client for a minimum of four sessions

Honorary Certification

The Certification Committee shall receive the honorary certification of NCC(S) and will henceforth play a supervisory role after undergoing the Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) and supervision training. NCC(S) certificate holders must have at least a master's degree with specific training in mental health and psychosocial education.

Continuing Education (CE)

All NCCs wishing to uphold their certification or upgrade at the end of the three-year period must acquire 100 continuing education clock hours on the BBCC-approved topics of continuing education, as per the Continuing Education Policy. Some examples of appropriate activities are college/university courses, seminars, workshops, conferences, and in-service programs. Please see Appendix A for more information.

Application for Continuing Education Approval

The BBCC is required to endorse Continuing Education activities to ensure learning objectives are identified and training will benefit members and the community. Continuing education approval does not imply endorsement of any particular counseling theory or method.

For endorsement of any continuing education program, the facilitator may complete an Approval Form which will make participants eligible for CE points through attendance (please see approval form on the website).

N.B.: Any program, conference or course attended by counselors should be recorded in a CE Log to assist in the recertification process.

University and Study Courses

The BBCC works closely with its continuing education providers, like the Royal University of Bhutan and Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences, to ensure the highest standards in mental health and psychosocial topics are maintained in all of the programs and activities that are offered as continuing education for NCCs. Further, the BBCC will provide guidance and support for continuing education providers to ensure core competencies are met by graduates.

Clinical Supervision

All NCCs wishing to uphold their certification or upgrade at the end of the three-year period must adhere to the clinical supervision requirements as outlined in the Clinical Supervision Policy. Weighting factors and expected frequency are dependent on the skills and experience of the applicant and must be signed off by an accredited clinical supervisor. Please see Appendix B for more information.

Practice Hours

All NCCs wishing to uphold their NCC(P), NCC(ICAP) and NCC(A) certification must engage in a minimum of 1500 client contact hours per recertification period (3 years).

Fee Structure

Registration	Nu1000 payable upon receipt of application
Annual	Nu500
Recertification (every 3 years)	Nu1000 payable upon receipt of application
National Accreditation Exam	Nu1000 payable upon sitting of examination
CE Course Endorsement	Nu500

Appendix A: CE Requirements

All practicing members of BBCC are required to complete 100 points of Continuing Education per certification cycle (3 years). An event is defined as any one activity regardless of how many hours or days the activity goes for. Breaks for lunch etc. must not be included when defining how many hours an event runs for. Only completed events will attract CE points. Each event can only be claimed once.

Event/Description	Event Length	Points Approved	Evidence Required
Workshops/Presentations workshop or presentation provided by an experienced practitioner.	No less than 90 minutes and no more than six hours or one day.	5 Points	Certificate of Attendance.
	More than one day.	10 Points	
Online training program: structured training offered online.	No less than one hour and no more than six hours	5 Points	Certificate of completion/attendance
	Six hours or more.	10 Points	
Conference: formal program of learning and information sharing.	No less than six hours and no greater than one Day.	6 Points	Certificate of Attendance.
	Not less than two days.	12 Points	
Home Study: including reading peer reviewed journals and texts which may be accessed over the internet access.	1 Point per hour	Max 50 points per certification cycle	Must provide a reflective journal of learnings from the reading/s.
Courses and qualifications	Only completed units are eligible for CE	8 Points/Unit	Transcript of training, grade report or verification form for each unit
Imparting knowledge related to counselling through formal presentations, peer reviewed research and publications*	Researching or preparing information for presentation – 1 point per hour (max 12 points per certification cycle)	Maximum 24 points per certification cycle	Summary of evaluations from the event, copy of research/publication

For more information, please refer to the Continuing Education Policy on the BBCC Website

Appendix B: Supervision Requirements

	Level of Clinical Supervision	Weighting Factors	Minimum Expected Frequency	Minimum over 3-year period
Level 1	High frequency clinical supervision	Novice practitioner with less than two years of clinical experience Clinicians with limited practice experience in mental health	Four hours of individual or group supervision monthly. At least 50% of supervision should be on an individual basis.	~120 sessions
Level 2	Medium frequency clinical supervision	Sole practitioners and rural and remote clinicians Clinicians with a higher caseload, more complex casemix and focus of care	Two (2) hours of individual or group supervision monthly. At least 50% of supervision should be on an individual basis.	~60 sessions
Level 3	Low frequency clinical supervision	Experienced clinicians with more than five (5) years of practice as a mental health practitioner	One (1) hour of individual or group supervision monthly. At least 50% of supervision should be on an individual basis.	~30 sessions

For more information, please refer to the Supervision Policy on the BBCC Website

**In collaboration with UNICEF-Bhutan and
National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)- USA**