

دائرة تنمية المجتمع  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT



# DCD Standards for Education & Practical Experience

Licensing of Social Care Professionals

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Second Edition - 2025



معاً لمستقبل أفضل

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## Chapter 1: Definitions

### 1. Definitions

1.1. The following words and expressions shall bear the meanings assigned thereto herein respectively, unless the context otherwise requires:

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>THE COUNTRY</b>	The United Arab Emirates
<b>THE EMIRATE</b>	The Emirate of Abu Dhabi
<b>DCD</b>	Department of Community Development
<b>APPLICANT</b>	An individual seeking licensure under the provisions of this manual.
<b>APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYST (ABA)</b>	A professional seeks to understand the cause of a particular behaviour and apply interventions based on applied behavior analysis to address a wide range of social problems and behavior disorders.
<b>COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT</b>	The process of evaluating the professional's ability to achieve a standard of competency pertaining to the practice of a specific Social Care Profession.
<b>CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)</b>	The formal, self-led or profession-related learning activities that Social Care Professionals undergoes in order to advance their skills, enhance the quality of practice and qualify to renew a License.
<b>DISCONTINUITY OF PRACTICE (DOP)</b>	A term used to describe a situation under which an individual has departed from practicing their scope of work as a licensed Social Care Professional in Abu Dhabi for two or more years.
<b>LICENSE PERIOD</b>	Is a time-bound duration starts on the date of license issuance and ends by the license expiry date. During this period, a Social Care Professional and/or Facility are authorized to provide Social Care Services to a Beneficiary.
<b>LICENSE</b>	Refers to the permission granted to social care professionals to practice a social care profession including the Provisional License and Professional License.

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<b>PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE</b>	Hands on experience gained by a licensed social care professional during a salaried employment contractual period.
<b>SUPERVISED PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE</b>	Time-bound period of supervised hands-on work. Experience that aim to enhance the practice and competency of the Provisional Licensee in a specific area of social care. Such experiences are carried out in social care relevant settings under the supervision of a Licensed Social Care Professional.
<b>PRIMARY SOURCE VERIFICATION (PSV)</b>	An activity undertaken to verify an individual's credentials and practical experiences and ensure their authenticity
<b>PROFESSIONALS LICENSE</b>	The permission given by DCD to a social care professional who meets the qualification and experience and allows the professionals to practice the profession in the Emirate and does not include the Provisional License.
<b>PROVISIONAL LICENSE</b>	A license granted by DCD to applicants upon fulfilling part of the licensing requirements such as the educational qualification requirements only. This license grants them the ability to practice a social care profession whilst being supervised by a Social Care Professional with a Professional License. This license is granted to applicants who seek to complete an advanced educational degree and/or are pursuing to fulfil the practical experience requirements in order to qualify for a Professional License.
<b>PSYCHOLOGIST (NON-CLINICAL)</b>	A professional who is involved in helping individuals address psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems without the capacity of prescribing medication. For the purpose of this document, this includes professionals outside a medical setting who focus on helping individuals in evaluating the problem(s) they face and supporting them through developing and administering non-medical treatment plans to cope with the problem(s).
<b>SOCIAL CARE FACILITY</b>	The private, governmental or third sector entity or institution licensed by DCD to provide social care services in the Emirate including Supported Accommodation Facilities, Day Care and Therapy, Community Service Facilities and Digital and Teleservices.
<b>SOCIAL CARE PROFESSION</b>	Social Worker, Counselor, Applied Behaviour Analyst (ABA), Psychologist (Non-Clinical), or Psychotherapist in the specializations mentioned in <b>DCD standards for Education and Practical Experience</b> , or all these professions together.
<b>SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONAL</b>	Is the licensed individual by DCD to practice a Social Care Profession in the Emirate.

<b>LICENSING REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS</b>	A term to describe the group of requirements mentioned in which an applicant must meet in order to qualify for a Professional License or a Provisional License.
<b>SOCIAL WORKER</b>	A Professional who supports individuals, families or groups of people (including Children, the Elderly and People of Determination) with social problems, by conducting an assessment of their needs, causes and impact, and working with them and/ or their caregivers to identify, coordinate and manage appropriate solutions to enhance their personal, social, and economic competencies.
<b>SPECIALIZATION</b>	The scope of practice within the bounds of a specific Profession.
<b>COUNSELOR</b>	A Social Care Professional who supports individuals or groups (couples, families or larger audiences) in identifying and/ or analyzing their mental health disorders or social conflicts and in assessing the need for treatment. This involves working collectively with them through conversational sessions to explore methods and solutions which can help them adapt or integrate into society or enhance their professional development, social and or personal well-being.

## Chapter 2: Introduction

### 2. Purpose

The Professional Licensing Standards and Education & Practical Experience Requirements has been developed to:

- 2.1. Detail the educational qualifications and practical experience a Social Care Professional must possess in order to be licensed to practice in a Social Care Profession in the Emirate.
- 2.2. Define the categories of Social Care Professionals who will be licensed by DCD.
- 2.3. Detail the licensing requirements to be fulfilled by each profession.

### 3. Scope

The requirements stipulated throughout the provisions of this manual apply to:

- 3.1. All DCD Licensed Social Care Profession in the Emirate.
- 3.2. Applicants looking to get DCD license to practice Social Care Profession in the Emirate including the four categories mentioned in chapter 4.
- 3.3. Social Care Facilities, Facility Managers and Support Staff due to their involvement in the provision of Social Care Services.

## Chapter 3: Standards of Education & Practical Experience

The following sections outline the standards with which all professionals must comply when fulfilling their educational and practical experience requirements

### 4. Educational Qualifications

#### 4.1. Educational qualifications required for a Social Care Professional License

- 4.1.1. Applicant seeking a provisional or professional license must comply with the requirements set out in Chapter 4 or their equivalent in addition to any other DCD requirements.

#### 4.2. Source of an Educational degree

- 4.2.1. Qualifications must be obtained from:

- 4.2.1.1.A recognized educational institution in the applicant home country's educational regulators as well as the relevant educational regulators in the country.

- 4.2.1.2.An educational program that is nationally accredited.

#### 4.3. Evidencing and verifying Educational Qualifications



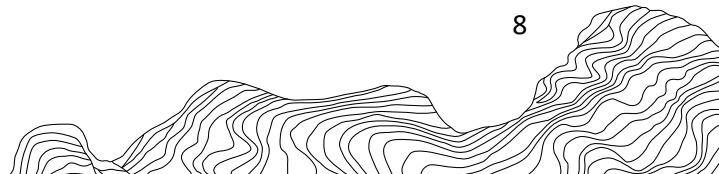
#### 4.3.1. Educational qualifications must

- 4.3.1.1. Be attested by the relevant regulatory bodies for each of the educational qualifications obtained and as per the procedure followed in the country.
- 4.3.1.2. Be attested and equalized by the relevant regulatory bodies for each of the educational qualifications obtained from an educational institution outside the country and as per the relevant procedures.
- 4.3.1.3. Comply with any requirements requested by DCD in relation to verifying the educational qualifications and information.

## 5. Practical Experience

### 5.5 Characteristics of a Practical Experience

- 5.1.1. To successfully apply for a Professional License an applicant must obtain practical experience for the duration specified by the provisions of the Chapter 4 and chapter 5.
- 5.1.2. Applicant must ensure that practical experience:
  - 5.1.2.1. Is relevant to the profession and license type applicant is seeking to practice.
  - 5.1.2.2. Has been carried out in a relevant setting.
  - 5.1.2.3. Recognized in a formal contractual employment arrangement.
- 5.1.3. For Provisional License holders applying for Professional License should provide an evidence of Supervised Practical Experience by a Licensed Professional who:
  - 5.1.3.1. The supervised practical experience is in an area that is relevant to the Profession the individual is seeking to be licensed under.
  - 5.1.3.2. Has been practicing the Profession as a Licensed Professional for not less than 3 years – equating to 4,500 hours of practice under the license.
  - 5.1.3.3. Supervised Practical experience is recognized in any of the following:
    - 5.1.3.3.1. Postgraduate hands-on training.



5.1.3.3.2. Postgraduate temporary or part-time work placements.

5.1.3.3.3. Recognized in a formal contractual employment arrangement.

## 5.2 Evidencing Practical Experience

Applicant must ensure:

- 5.2.1 The appropriate evidence is obtained to validate practical learning experience. Evidence to include Name of the Organization, Date of issue the certificate, Period of employment "the start and end date of employment", Designation or position, Roles and Responsibilities of the employee, workplace contact details, location and all activities conducted by the social care professional and and the relevant experience he has gained.
- 5.2.2 The supervising Licensed Professional (who satisfies DCD Standards for Education and Practical Experience and the Professional Licensing Manual) signs off the evidence.
- 5.2.3 Compliance with any requirements requested by DCD in relation to verifying practical experiences.

## 6 Professional Competency

### 6.1. Proof of Competency & Eligibility to Practice

Applicant must:

- 6.1.1. Not be issued a disciplinary sanction by a professional body or regulator resulting in results including, but not limited to, penalties, restrictions or conditions for the exercise of the social profession.
- 6.1.2. Must not currently be subject to disciplinary action by a professional body or regulator.
- 6.1.3. Ensure that all information disclosed as part of a license application is accurate and complete.

## Chapter 4: Education and Practical Experience License Requirements for Social Care Professionals

### 7 Categories of Social Care Professionals

- 7.1. DCD will regulate the following Social Care Professions:
  - 7.1.1. Social Workers.



- 7.1.2. Psychologists (Non-Clinical) .
- 7.1.3. Counselor.
- 7.1.4. Psychotherapist.
- 7.1.5. Applied Behaviour Analyst (ABA).
- 7.2. The definitions of each Social Care Profession included within definition list and under the 'Definitions' Section.
- 7.3. All Social Care Professionals in the above-mentioned categories must comply with all professional standards published by DCD.
- 7.4. The professionals listed above must comply with the Education and Practical Experience Social Care Professional Licensing Requirements as defined in the following tables, in order to attain a Provisional or Professional license from DCD, which authorizes them to provide Social Care Services in the Emirate.

## 8 Applicability of the Social Care Professional Licensing Education and Practical Experience Requirements

- 8.1. The table below lists the eligibility requirements which must be fulfilled in order for an applicant to be issued a Professional License or a Provisional License.
  - 8.1.1. **Provisional License** - A permission is granted to applicants upon fulfilling part of the licensing requirements such as the educational qualification requirements.
    - 8.1.1.1. Provisional License allows professionals to practice only under an onsite supervision of a professional holding an active DCD Professional License.
    - 8.1.1.2. Provisional license will support professionals to fulfil the practical experience requirement to be eligible for a Professional License.
  - 8.1.2. Professional License - the permission granted by DCD to professionals who meet the educational and experience requirements to practice a regulated Social Care Profession in the Emirate.
  - 8.1.3. DCD reserves the right to issue detailed requirements regarding the categories of license which can be applied for.
  - 8.1.4. DCD reserves the right to introduce 'Specializations' within each profession, where Specializations' will be subject to different requirements.



8.1.5. The Department has the right to issue a license to practice the social care profession whenever the applicant meets the educational and practical experience requirements, in accordance with the academic qualifications and practical experience mentioned in Clause (9) below in the relevant or relevant specializations and as it deems appropriate.

## 9 Education and Practical Experience License Requirements for each profession

9.1. SOCIAL WORKER	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	CPD HOURS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL	LICENSE RENEWAL
PROFESSIONAL LICENSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree in Social Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,000 hours of practical experience (2 years full-time) or equivalent within a related field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>
PROVISIONAL LICENSE*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree in Social Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not Required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>It can be renewed only once.</li> </ul>

**\*\*Note:** The Provisional license allows its holder to practice the social care profession under the field supervision of a social worker who holds a professional license issued by the department.



9.2. PSYCHOLOGIST (Non-Clinical)	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	CPD HOURS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL	LICENSE RENEWAL
<b>PROFESSIONAL LICENSE</b>	Doctoral Degree or Master's Degree in psychology or one of the disciplines of psychology listed below*	3,000 hours of practical experience (2 years full- time) or equivalent within a related field	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>• Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>

<b>PROVISIONAL LICENSE**</b>	Bachelors' Degree in Psychology in one of the areas of specialization in Psychology listed below**	Not Required	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>• It can be renewed only once.</li> </ul>
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**\*\*Note:** The Provisional license allows its holder to practice the social care profession under the field supervision of a psychologist (non-clinical) who holds a professional license issued by the department.

**\*Note:** Specializations can be specified as a specific branch of psychology (as shown in the table below).

**\*Note:** If the psychologist is licensed based on a bachelor's degree in one of the fields indicated in the table below, the department issues the license to practice the social profession restricted to the limits of his specialization stated in the academic certificate only.

DISCIPLINES IN PSYCHOLOGY		
1- Educational/Academic Psychology	2- Marriage & Family Psychology/Marriage Psychology	3- School Psychology
4- Counseling Psychology	5- Forensic Psychology	6- Child Psychology
7- Organization Psychology	8- Cognitive Psychology	

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9.3. COUNSELOR	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	CPD HOURS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL	LICENSE RENEWAL
PROFESSIONAL LICENSE	Master's Degree in Counselling or one of the areas of specialization in counselling listed below	3,000 hours of practical experience (2 years full-time) or equivalent within a related field	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>
PROVISIONAL LICENSE**	Bachelors or Master's Degree in Counselling or one of the areas of specialization in counselling listed below	Not Required	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>It can be renewed only once</li> </ul>

**\*\*Note:** The Provisional license allows its holder to practice the social care profession under the field supervision of a Counsellor who holds a professional license issued by the department.

**\*Note:** Specializations can be specified as a specific branch of Counselling (as shown in the table below).

DISCIPLINES IN COUNSELLING		
1- School & Educational (Academic) Counselling	2- Family & Marriage Counselling	3- Elderly & Geriatric Counselling
4- Addiction & Substance Abuse Counselling	5- Forensic (Legal) Counselling	6- Rehabilitation Counselling
7- Psychological Counselling	8- Career Counselling	



9.4. PSYCHOTHERAPIST	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	CPD HOURS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL	LICENSE RENEWAL
PROFESSIONAL LICENSE	Doctoral Degree or Master's Degree in one of the specialties in psychotherapy listed below*	3,000 hours of practical experience (2 years full-time) or equivalent within a related field	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>
PROVISIONAL LICENSE**	Master's Degree in the fields of specialization in Psychotherapy listed below*	Not Required	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>It can be renewed only once.</li> </ul>

**\*\*Note:** The Provisional license allows its holder to practice the social care profession under the field supervision of a Psychotherapist who holds a professional license issued by the department.

**\*Note:** Specializations can be specified as a specific branch of Psychotherapy (as shown in the table below).

DISCIPLINES IN COUNSELLING		
1- Psychotherapy	2- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	3- Behavioural Therapy



**9.5. APPLIED  
BEHAVIOUR  
ANALYST  
(ABA)**

	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	CPD HOURS REQUIRED FOR LICENSE RENEWAL	LICENSE RENEWAL
Applied Behaviour Analyst -Doctoral (Professional license)	Doctoral Degree in Applied Behavior Analysis in addition to passing the proficiency test from one of the professional associations accredited in the specialty	1500 hours of training under the supervision of specialized professional	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>
Applied Behaviour Analyst (Professional license)	Master's Degree in applied behavior analysis with passing the proficiency test from one of the professional associations accredited in the specialty	1500 hours of training under the supervision of specialized professional	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>
Assistant Behaviour Analyst (Professional license)	Bachelor or Diploma of Applied Behavior Analysis with the passing the proficiency test from one of the professional associations accredited in the specialty	1500 hours of training under the supervision of specialized professional	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>Unlimited renewals whilst professionally active</li> </ul>

PROVISIONAL LICENSE**	Doctoral Degree in Applied Behavior Analysis of Provisional License of the Applied Behavior Analyst - Doctoral Level. Master in the treatment of Applied Behavior for	Not Required	20 hours per year (40 hours throughout the license period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>License valid for 24 months from date of issuance</li> <li>It can be renewed only once.</li> </ul>
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	Provisional License of the Applied Behavior Analyst. Bachelor or Diploma in Psychoanalysis for Provisional License of Assistant Behavioral Analyst			
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**\*\*Note:** The provisional license allows its holder to practice the social care profession under the field supervision of an applied behavior analyst who holds a professional license issued by the department

## Chapter 5 Discontinuity of Practice (DoP)

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## 10 Applicability of the DoP requirements

- 10.1. An individual is deemed to have 'Discontinued Practice' if any of the following conditions apply:
- 10.1.1. A Social Care Professional who has been previously licensed by a relevant authority (Including DCD or its international equivalent entity) and have not practiced their profession for two or more years.
- 10.1.2. A Social Care Professional who has been previously licensed by a relevant authority (Including DCD or its international equivalent) and whose license has been expired for two or more years.
- 10.2. Those who are deemed to have discontinued their practice are required to submit an application for a new license; they will not be allowed to renew a previous license (if issued by DCD).
- 10.3. Those who are deemed to have discontinued their practice must satisfy the requirements set out in the SCPLR in addition to those set out in the 'DoP requirements Schedule' below.
- 10.4. Professionals who fail to meet the additional requirements for those who discontinued their practice must apply for a Provisional License in order to be able to fulfil such requirements.
- 10.5. The table below lists the requirements which will be applied to individuals who have discontinued their practice.

## 11 Dop Requirement Schedule

PERIOD OF DISCONTINUED PRACTICE		
Duration of interruption of profession	Continuing education requirements	Additional Practical Experience Requirement
Less than two years	Does not require additional training requirements	Does not require additional training requirements
Two years to less than five years	20 hours of continuous professional development	750 hours of supervised practical experience and through obtaining a Provisional License (6 months)
From 5 to 10 years	50 hours of continuous professional development	1,500 hours supervised practical experience under a Provisional License (1 year full-time)

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