

April 2009 db



Association of Reflexologists

Bridging Course Information

Dear Potential Student,

You have taken the first step towards becoming a Full member of the Association of Reflexologists. Congratulations!

Early in 1984 ten Reflexologists met to form an organisation. Their aims were to create an independent, fully democratic association of qualified practitioners; providing members with support; ongoing education through seminars and workshops; and a regular Newsletter for the exchange of news and ideas.

Further aims were added as the Association grew: A Register of Qualified Practitioners was needed; insurance cover for members; Area Groups for local support; and promotional material for distribution to the media and general public.

By the first AGM in 1985 the membership had increased to 150. Since then the membership graph has continued its upward curve to approximately 7,500 members today.

Originally, membership was open to Reflexologists who had trained at schools recognised by the Association. Although these schools were 'recognised', there was no overall consensus regarding the length of courses, the syllabus or general requirements. In 1989 the Association developed guidelines and these guidelines were adopted as the basic minimum requirements for the training of a practitioner in reflexology. The Association now endorses the Diploma in Reflexology offered by ABC Awards and this qualification sits on the National Qualifications Framework published by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority.

The AoR is seen as THE body for Reflexologists and our members are held in high regard by the industry and with external colleagues. The letters MAR is much sought after and as a result of this we offer those with other qualifications and opportunity to acquire membership of the AoR via our bridging process.

What is a bridging course?

April 2009 db

In short: it is where students study for the ABC Awards Diploma qualification at an AoR accredited centre, but where any relevant previous learning or assessment **that meets ABC standards** is taken into account.

Bridging courses have been run by some AoR centres for quite a few years. It is where a person, who has already qualified on another reflexology course, either wants access to full AoR membership or they wish to pass the recognised qualification the Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology. Undertaking a bridging course means that students undertake the ABC Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology. However, bridging can allow for the student to spend less time training or to carry out fewer assessments. This is possible if the student has demonstrated to the tutor that they have the knowledge required, and/or they have assessed work that meets ABC Awards standards.

Bridging enables a person who has already achieved a reflexology qualification to achieve the ABC Awards qualification in less time or with less work. This process is known in the education sector as Accredited Prior Learning (APL) or Accredited Prior Achievement (APA). It recognises what students have done before (where it meets required standards). It is part of any students' equal opportunities rights to have prior learning or achievement recognised. Most colleges have an Accredited Prior Learning policy which covers this. Please ask your centre for a copy.

Is the bridging course just an easy short cut?

It is not an easy short cut. It recognises where students are already meeting standards due to the training and assessment they have already received. Some people will have for example produced excellent case studies for another qualification. If, on re-assessment by an accredited tutor, their assessed work entirely meets the ABC assessment criteria then it can count towards the ABC qualification. Equally if the student demonstrates an excellent knowledge of for example A&P because they have already studied/qualified in it, then at the discretion of the tutor they could be exempted from certain lessons.

Who gets referred to attend a bridging course?

Applicants for full membership to the AoR need to have achieved ABC Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology. The AoR receives many enquiries about full membership with the AoR but unfortunately may not have the qualifications that we recognise. Most of these people are referred to centres for bridging or for the full course.

People do not need to bridge if they have achieved a substantial Reflexology qualification (whose assessment is relatively close to the ABC standards) is at least 100 contact hours, at least 9 months duration and has an external theory exam. Applicants with the above qualification are normally eligible to go through

April 2009 db

the Confirmation of Professional Standards (CPS) process. This process is administered by the AoR.

Applicants do need to undertake bridging if they have achieved a reflexology qualification which does not meet all of the criteria above. A typical example would be someone has achieved the VTCT Diploma in Reflexology. This course does not meet the above criteria because there is not an external exam. They therefore need to achieve the ABC qualification, but may have some prior knowledge or assessment that allows some exemption – i.e. bridging.

Currently the AoR are undertaking a specification mapping exercise of the ITEC and VTCT qualification and it is likely that we will offer a new bridging course at some point in the future.

What if a VTCT qualified applicant is of an exceptionally high standard?

If a candidate for bridging clearly demonstrates exceptionally high skills in terms of their knowledge, application of that knowledge and their practical skills the tutor may refer that candidate to the AoR to be considered for going through the Confirmation of Professional Standards process rather than the bridging process. The final decision on the recommendation will be made by the AoR at its discretion.

What assessments are required?

Bridging students need to pass the ABC Level 3 Diploma in Reflexology course. They need to pass all assessment components of the course including the theory exam. If they have previously completed assessments that meet ABC standards then these can be counted towards the qualification.

For example if the student has already completed two very good case studies on their previous course, these can be re-assessed by the tutor against the ABC case study assessment criteria. If those case studies pass then there will be four further case studies to do to make up the minimum ABC requirement of 6 case studies. The student will also need to complete the quota of 60 treatments. If the case studies did not quite meet ABC standards the tutor can ask the student to do further work on them, or if the case studies are clearly below standards the tutor may ask the student to develop them further or to start some fresh case studies. That decision is at the discretion of the tutor who needs to guide and support the student to meet all standards in the same way as any other student.

What teaching is required?

Students undertaking the ABC course need to complete at least 100 hours of tutor contact. If on initial assessment it is clear that the student has good knowledge of all or certain parts of the course, such as A&P, then the tutor at their discretion may allow the student to miss certain lessons. In this case the

April 2009 db

100 hour requirement will have been contributed to by some of the hours of the previous course.

If on initial assessment it is clear to the tutor that the student's knowledge in all areas is insufficient then the student will be required to attend all the lessons. If having marked some case studies or other set work it is clear that the student's knowledge is not as comprehensive or deep as was originally thought then the tutor may ask the student to attend further sessions. It will be made clear to the student from the outset that their progress is being monitored and the attendance that is agreed at the start may need to be revised.

Do they become Student Members?

Bridging students need to become student members of the AoR in the same way as full course students. When they pass the qualification they can upgrade to Full membership. As student members they can enjoy the many benefits of AoR membership, including receiving Reflexions journal; access to the members' area on the web site; attendance at Seminars, conferences and Area Groups. Students will also receive insurance at no cost to them while studying. We are the only organisation to offer this.

How long does a bridging course last?

There is not a fixed period. Many students that undertake bridging at an accredited centre quickly see the difference in standards and identify improvements needed for Reflexology practice. Very often students need to (and are happy to) undertake the full ABC course. It is up to the accredited centre to determine how they will run their bridging courses. They may run them as part of the usual scheduled courses or they run a separate programme. The course should involve at least a further 40 hours of study, however the experience of those ACs that do bridging courses for VTCT qualified students is that at least 60 hours is usually needed.

How much does a bridging course cost?

The charges are set by the accredited centres for the service that they provide. Although applicants may have completed the same qualification, each person comes with their own individual experience, knowledge and assessed material. The amount of sessions that the tutor believes that a student can be exempt from and the amount of case studies that may meet ABC criteria will vary between individuals. So the cost will vary as well.

Do the bridging students receive a qualification?

Yes the students study and achieve the ABC qualification. They have to meet all the assessment requirements of the qualification including the theory exam.

April 2009 db

The student has passed their bridging course - how do they become a full member?

People that undertake a bridging course must become student members and be registered for the ABC qualification in the same way as students doing the full course. So they receive their ABC certificate and apply for full membership in the same way. Please note that the AoR does not have direct access to examination results and therefore it is the student's responsibility to inform us of the outcome of the exam.

A student has done a VTCT/ITEC course at an AoR accredited centre, surely that's good enough for full membership?

No. ABC's scheme approval and AoR's accreditation processes only cover delivery of the ABC Course. Students studying on non-ABC courses are outside of the quality assurance processes carried out by ABC or AoR.

What do accredited centres need to do to carry out bridging courses?

- They need to confirm to AoR that they wish to run bridging courses
- Carry out an initial assessment of the student. This could involve interview; an initial review of case studies; a practical assessment
- Determine whether the student can be exempt from any teaching or assessment or whether they actually need to undertake the full ABC programme.
- Agree with the student what attendance they need to do adhere to
- Agree with the student the fees that they need to pay, including ABC registration fees
- Put all of the above details in writing to the student to ensure that the student knows exactly what is required
- Register the student with ABC, and enter them for an exam
- Take students through all of the training and assessment that is needed to enable them to pass the ABC course
- Advise students of their exam date
- Provide bridging students with the same high quality service, support and contractual agreements that they give to students on the full course.

Can any accredited centre run bridging courses?

Yes but as from 2009 they are required to provide details how they administer the course.

Do bridging courses run at the same time as main practitioner courses?

That's up to the centre. Some centres infill bridging students onto their main courses, whilst others run them as separate courses. The centre can devise a programme that suits their own, and their students' needs.

April 2009 db

Do centres need to inform ABC about bridging students?

There is no need to inform ABC. The bridging students will be administered by ABC in exactly the same way as students on the full course. The external moderator will expect to see (sample from) marked case studies, practical assessments and assessment records for all registered students, including bridgers. They shouldn't notice the difference! It may be helpful to point out to the external moderator that a student has been given accredited prior learning, because the dates on their case studies will not match with the ABC course duration.

What if the student has already met all ABC's internally assessed requirements from what they've completed on their earlier course?

In further education accredited prior achievement can normally only be given for no more than 50% of a course. This will also apply to bridging. This ensures: that the tutor is able to more rigorously authenticate any assessment evidence presented; that potential fraudulent activity by a student is reduced and that students can't just attain several qualifications having only completed one course. See below for clarification how this equates to minimum requirements for the reflexology programme.

Minimum Teaching and Assessment Requirements of the Bridging Course

When studying at the accredited centre the bridging students will need to complete at least the following:

- **Minimum case studies** – 30 treatments comprising of at least 3 case studies and evidence of a total of 60 treatments.
- **A minimum of 1 supervised clinical reflexology practical session using non-students.**
- **A minimum of 1 client study based on an assessed reflexology practical session using non-students.**
- **Final examination to take place after completion of minimum course requirements.**
- **Minimum hours – 40 hours** and a total contact teaching of all certificated reflexology study of 100 hours minimum.
- **Minimum length of course** – 3 months and a total contact teaching time of all certified reflexology study of 9 months
- **A recognised current 1st Aid Certificate** to be attained outside of the minimum 40 hours contact teaching. While this is not a requirement of AoR membership we do encourage students and members to hold a current First Aid Certificate.

April 2009 db

- **Student Membership** – as a student you will each need to become student member in the same way as those doing the full course.

The final decision on how much additional tutor time and assessment a bridging student needs to do is at the discretion of the tutor.