



Foundation Studies in  
Relational Gestalt Counselling

Advanced Clinical Training in  
Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy

ConnectGround Clinic Student Internship

2021

Student Information Pack



## Relational Gestalt Values

<b>Embodied Awareness</b>  Relational Gestalt Theory (RGT): Phenomenology Personal Ability Framework (PAF): Self-Recognising & Embodying	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> supports a deepening interest in immediate experience - in becoming aware of our embodied responses, we have access to vital information and can be more responsive (flexible & creative) in the here-and-now.	<b>The GTA student</b> becomes practised at bringing their embodied experience into awareness and dialogue. In turn, this supports others to become more curious about their lived experience.
<b>Enlivened Relationships</b>  RGT: Dialogue PAF: Responding & Interrelating	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> supports deepening the personal and interpersonal skills that promote resilience, flexibility and health in individuals and supports better relating. Relational gestalt philosophy provides a major support in this capacity building.	<b>The GTA student</b> deepens their capacity for meaningful relationships and understands the power of connection in restoring spontaneity and joy in life. Supporting healthy relationships is the cornerstone of all we do at GTA.
<b>Experimental &amp; Dynamic</b>  RGT: Field Theory & Paradoxical Theory of Change PAF: Experimenting	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> offers a model of change that starts with acknowledging the 'what is'. Therefore, meaningful change is always congruent and supports authenticity. Gestalt is also dynamic and experimental; it challenges fixed ideas and energetic blockages and helps to create movement and growth.	<b>The GTA student</b> learns a model of change that is both supportive and challenging. Current behavioural and emotional issues can be understood contextually and developmentally, as well as having a present-day utility. Experiments help to move awareness and restore spontaneity and volition.
<b>Culturally &amp; Environmentally Situated</b>  RGT: Field Theory PAF: Contextualising	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> offers a meaningful critique of dominant individualistic and pathologising approaches. Gestalt therapists understand that experience is <i>always</i> contextual (i.e. is relationally derived). Re-contextualising experience is generous and non-shaming. It allows for the inquiry: 'How does this make sense?'.	<b>The GTA student</b> learns to contextualise experience by looking through the various lenses of environment, culture, history, current need, expectations etc. Sensitivity to context is a profoundly compassionate stance and is a support to meaningful change.
<b>Transformative Presence</b>  RGT: Dialogue PAF: Presence	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> promotes deep listening, compassion and courage as part of a transformative awareness process. The training is offered as a developmental process, that deepens the student's capacity to be present to another, and to notice how this presence confirms the others' humanity.	<b>The GTA student</b> deepens their capacity for presence, emotional attunement, and self-regulation so that they can bear witness to another's experience (distress or suffering) without the reflexive need to 'fix'. Instead, understanding is built together, and space is made for the unique expression of each individual.
<b>Connection &amp; Community</b>  Integrated RGT & PAF	<b>Relational Gestalt Theory</b> acknowledges the fundamental human longing for belonging throughout the training program. Space is also made for the vulnerability and shame that these longings surface. In this way, the GTA student is immersed in a community building experiment and develops gratitude for, and skills to enhance, all the communities they belong to.	<b>The GTA student</b> is immersed in a learning community. They grapple with longings around connection and shame. Understanding belonging in this way, they become shame sensitive practitioners and vital contributors to the broader social worlds from which they come.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN OUR TRAINING PROGRAM

Gestalt Therapy Australia (GTA), an activity of the Gestalt Centre, offers a comprehensive training program that explores and deepens the relational capacities of psychotherapists within the framework of gestalt theory and practice. Trainees are invited into an experiential process that will expand their self-awareness as a means to developing their therapeutic presence. This relational gestalt training provides significant opportunities for professional and personal development.

More information about gestalt therapy and GTA is available on our website [www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au](http://www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au).

## OUR TRAINING COURSES

**Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling** (years 1 & 2). Introduces students to relational gestalt counselling through the exploration of gestalt theory and practice.

**The Advanced Clinical Training in Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy** (Years 3 & 4). Expands on the relational gestalt therapy of the previous two years (Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling is a pre requisite for entry).

**ConnectGround Clinic Student Internship** (Years 3 & 4) From the beginning of Year 3 GTA students are invited to apply for an internship in our low cost, long term counselling clinic as a way of both developing their skills and knowledge while providing a much needed service to the community. You can read more about the ConnectGround at [www.connectground.com.au](http://www.connectground.com.au)

Full course descriptions are available on the GTA website [www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au](http://www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au).

## WHY DO OUR COURSE?

At GTA we are committed to lifelong learning and our program will suit people at different stages of their professional development. The course becomes a life affirming way to grow your personal and interpersonal capacities within a sustaining and vibrant community of practice.

GTA students are often social workers, psychologists, nurses, teachers, occupational therapists etc. They have had good training and experience, and they want more...

Students come to GTA to extend their clinical thinking, and to deepen their presence – a fuller capacity to be with themselves and others. GTA students go on a journey of discovery to develop their embodied awareness and deepen their capacity for compassion, curiosity, relational courage and intimacy. You can read the Relational Gestalt values that underpin the whole program on page 2 of this Information Pack.

Relational gestalt therapy is offered as a counterpoint to a dominant medicalising world view that sets mental health (and by extension mental illness) in a pointless polarity that pathologises, simplifies and shames human suffering.

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN IN THE FOUR YEARS?

While the training cannot be structured into a neat and linear progression, each of the training years focuses on developing a specific set of competencies that aim to develop the emerging gestalt therapists.

In first year, students are invited and encouraged to explore and deepen their self-awareness. The focus is on building their capacity for a nuanced appreciation of their embodied experience, the sensations, feelings and thoughts that make up their moment-to-moment experience, as well as an understanding of their capacity for emotional arousal and affect regulation. This self-awareness is the ground on which the ongoing development of the therapist is built.

In second year, the development of this awareness process moves from a focus on self-process to focusing others, and in particular understanding how self-experience is shaped by this engagement and interaction.

In third year, the focus returns to the experience of the individual, but with a specific focus on better understanding how developmental contexts shape and influence individual experience. This 'field' focus also seeks to take into account the complex social and cultural situations in which we are all embedded.

Fourth year aims to integrate the learning of the three previous years, supporting students to weave together self-awareness, awareness of other and sensitivity to how our situatedness shapes our experience can be applied in therapeutic practice. In this student's engage with what they know of their own relational patterns and explore their developmental edges as emerging therapists.

In summary, the learning trajectory (though never linear) can be represented in the following way:

**Self** / How am I in the world. What do I sense, feel and think?

**Self & Other** / Who am I with you and who are you with me?

**Self in Context** / How do the contexts from which I have emerged shape who I am?

**Self & Other in Context** / Who am I as an emerging gestalt therapist?

## BEING A STUDENT AT GTA

### STUDENT POSITION DESCRIPTION

A GTA student is willing to participate in an inquiry-based learning process that is holistic and developmental. Effective learning at GTA involves responding to the experiences

offered in the education and training program with leadership, agency, openness and commitment.

A central feature of being a student at GTA involves participating in an experiential learning group, and the wider GTA learning community, and being responsive to unfolding events – especially as they manifest in the learning process in the training group. This interrelating involves making and sustaining relationships with fellow students and faculty through sharing personal experiences and repairing ruptures in relationships should they occur. Engaging ever more fully in this relational activity requires developing deeper personal awareness and insight through self-reflection and inquiry. In the experiential learning process, students are encouraged to be curious and to investigate how they affect others and the environment through the way they relate and the choices they make. Students are challenged to take opportunities to move beyond established patterns and into new territory and novel experiences of themselves and others.

Students must demonstrate self-awareness. Over the four-year training program students will inquire into (and develop) the seven personal abilities that we see as crucial to practice of psychotherapy. These are: **Self-Recognising, Embodying, Responding, Interrelating, Experimenting, Contextualising and Presence.**

These personal abilities become an important tool for self awareness and conversation across all aspects of the program. Students will engage with faculty in dialogue about their personal abilities using the Personal Abilities Framework (PAF) throughout their studies.

You can find more information about the full PAF on the website.

## APPLYING TO BE A STUDENT AT GTA

### KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

- An undergraduate degree in a relevant field such as counselling, psychology, social work, nursing, psychiatric nursing, occupational therapy, medicine, teaching, welfare and community development, or pastoral care<sup>1</sup>
- Two years of work experience in their field with professional supervision or mentoring (i.e. work experience after completion of a relevant undergraduate degree)
- Attendance at both the group and individual interviews and confirmation of suitability from personal and professional referees
- Demonstrated ability to understand and practice ethical behaviour with a willingness to have an ethical stance integral to participating in this education program. GTA training program teaches to the PACFA Code of Ethics ([www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au)) but also references the APS and AASW Code of Ethics.
- The successful applicant will be required to sign the Course Contract.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

The process of admission to the GTA education and training program involves:

1. Completing and returning the Application Form (see attached)
2. Submitting an introductory letter that addresses the following:
  - a. Key Selection Criteria (see above)
  - b. A brief statement about why you have chosen this course and
  - c. How it fits your personal and professional development needs.
3. Submitting a detailed professional CV with contact details of two referees (one each personal and professional). In your CV please include any relevant details of personal therapy including date, duration and therapist
4. Payment of \$180 non-refundable processing fee
5. Attending a group interview
6. Attending an individual interview with member of Gestalt Therapy Australia faculty
7. Your referees will be contacted at this point in the process.

Applications are processed upon receipt. First round applications close on the 6th November 2020. A second round of applicants will be considered beyond the closing date depending on numbers. Places are subject to availability.

Applications can be sent to Student Intake Officer, PO Box 205, Fairfield, Victoria 3078 or emailed to [admin@gestaltcentre.com.au](mailto:admin@gestaltcentre.com.au)

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<sup>1</sup> In some circumstances, provision may be made to accept an application on the basis of an individual demonstrating relevant life or work experience, a history of personal therapy and an identifiable capacity to become a counsellor.

## **INTERVIEW PROCESS**

GTA considers admission to the education and training program a mutual selection process with both GTA and prospective students actively engaged in deciding about an applicant's suitability.

To assist this, GTA makes every effort to be clear with applicants about what is being offered in the education and training program. The applicant will be required to attend a group interview and an individual interview. Within this process both the applicant and Gestalt Therapy Australia will have a chance to discuss readiness and suitability.

The process of student selection is non-discriminatory on the grounds of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, religion or any disability or belief that does not directly interfere with the capacity of students to competently fulfil the education and training program.

Upon receipt of an application form and payment, applicants will be contacted for the group interview.

### **STEP 1. GROUP INTERVIEW**

The group interview will be held at GTA on Tuesday November 17, 2020 (6.30-8.00pm). All applicants are required to attend.

The group interview will involve an experiential exercise including an opportunity to share your experience and engage in some dialogue with other participants in the group. It may also give you an opportunity to experience what it is like to be in a group setting. At the group interview, you will be able to book in your individual interview so please bring your diaries.

### **STEP 2. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW**

The 30-minute individual interview will be an opportunity for applicants to expand further on their experience and their interest in joining the training program. In this interview there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the course. Individual interviews will be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (9am-8pm).

## **RECEIVING AN OFFER**

Acceptance into the course is communicated personally by telephone and followed-up with an enrolment package. Applicants confirm their place by signing the course contract and paying a \$1500 non-refundable deposit.

## **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STUDYING AT GTA**

### **PERSONAL INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS POLICY**

Applicants are asked to sign a statement agreeing to comply with all the conditions of the Personal Integrity & Professional Standards Policy attached to this document and available

on the website, including making relevant disclosures as appropriate. It is important that you read this document before submitting your application.

Please note all those entering the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the program will need to complete a Working with Children and Police Check and submit this to the Office Manager (see website for Personal Integrity and Professional Standards Policy).

## **PERSONAL THERAPY & SUPERVISION SESSIONS**

While preferring students to be in individual therapy for the duration of the four-year education and training program, a total of 50 hours of individual therapy is required to be completed by the commencement of year 3. This involves attending therapy either weekly over one year or fortnightly over two years. It is not necessary that the therapy be with a gestalt therapist however it is highly recommended.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> year students are required to undertake 100 hours of supervised client contact. To achieve the required 100 hours, students can apply for an internship through ConnectGround Clinic. There is more information about internships on the ConnectGround website. [www.connectground.com.au](http://www.connectground.com.au)

## **COURSE FEES**

In 2021 fees will be TBA per year (this includes all training fees and full accommodation for both residential weekends). There is an additional fee of \$250 for the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the course that covers assessment costs.

ConnectGround Student Internship (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Year) fees are \$550 per term/ \$2200 per year. On average students spend 12-18 months completing their client hours.

Please Note: A payment plan can be organised with the Office Manager.

## **ACCREDITATION**

Applicants come to GTA from many professional backgrounds; many are already working in the field with relevant qualifications and memberships of professional organisations. Others will not yet be fully eligible for professional memberships. We recommend that you research your options and make enquires to the relevant accreditation bodies that suit your circumstances. The GTA faculty are available to talk to you about this, please contact the office.

For those who have not already gained professional membership with AHPRA or with the AASW you may consider completing another course concurrent with your studies at GTA. You might also consider completing the graduate entry Masters in Gestalt at Gestalt Training Brisbane (GTB). Graduates of the Masters in Gestalt are eligible for PACFA registration. If you do not have other professional membership, then you may be interested



in joining the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) or the Australian Counselling Association (ACA).

## **GESTALT THERAPY AUSTRALIA TRAINING CENTRE**

Our training centre is located at 622-624 Lygon Street, Carlton North.

Each class takes place over 24 week nights and 12 days (5 weekends). Classes are conducted on Monday or Tuesday nights from 5.30 to 8.45pm. We follow the school term and our classes run from February to October. Of the five weekends 2 are residential and are held at the Yarra Valley Estate. Please note we do not operate on public holidays.

If you require further information, contact Katrina (Office Manager) at Gestalt Therapy Australia on P: 9489-6300 or E: [admin@gestaltcentre.com.au](mailto:admin@gestaltcentre.com.au)

*Please Note: The information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publishing (February 2020), but despite our efforts to provide certainty, things can (and do) change across time. We will update this document as necessary.*



## Application to Study at Gestalt Therapy Australia

### PERSONAL DETAILS:

Name.....

Address.....

..... Postcode.....

Phone.....Email.....

### PLEASE INDICATE WHICH COURSE YOU ARE APPLYING FOR:

Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling

Y1	Y2
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Advanced Clinical Training in Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy

Y3	Y4
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### APPLICANTS MUST PROVIDE:

1. An introductory letter that addresses the key selection criteria as outlined in the Student Information Pack. Please note that your application must include a brief statement about why you have chosen this course and how it fits into your personal and professional needs at this stage in your life.
2. A detailed professional CV with contact details of two referees (personal and professional) that identifies details of any personal therapy including date, duration and therapist.

Please attach this information to this application with a \$180 non-refundable application fee and post or email to Gestalt Therapy Australia.

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I have read and agree to comply with the **Personal Integrity & Professional Standards Policy** (available on the website) and agree to make any necessary disclosure as a part of this application process.

Signed: .....Date.....

First round applications close 6th November 2020; applications will still be accepted after this date according to availability. Early application is advised.

## PERSONAL INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS POLICY

A therapist is afforded great trust by their clients through virtue of their professional standing and by the nature of the work itself. A GTA student is afforded a similar position of trust within the learning environment with their peers, and especially when they come to practice as a student intern. Therefore, a student must always be accountable to the position of power that comes with a presumption of integrity. Further, at GTA we believe that integrity is not simply a private matter but that it is tested relationally. Good intentions are not enough; we must also consider the experience and perception of others.

If there is any matter that might impede a student's capacity to enter fully into the training program, or subsequently take up a professional role, we expect this to be declared as part of the application process or as circumstances arise. This could include, but is not exclusive of, anything related to criminal charges, mental health conditions and addictions. If you are in any doubt, please speak with the Director of Training.

At GTA we view any such disclosure as an act of integrity. We would work to understand the ways (if any) the matter hinders your participation, or work to mitigate any concerns. In most cases the issue disclosed would not warrant exclusion from the program, and sensitivity and discretion would be guaranteed from GTA faculty and staff.

In the case of a disclosure of this kind, GTA would be interested in:

- How the student makes sense of (and integrates) this?
- What support have they sought in the past and how do they currently manage this?
- Whether the student demonstrates an understanding of any potential risk to them, their clients or GTA?
- Whether the student has an understanding on how this might impact on them being a student, an intern and a future therapist?

All students will be asked to declare relevant information as part of the enrolment process. As third and fourth year students begin seeing clients, we require all students of these year levels submit a current Working with Children Check (WWC) and a Police Check. This brings us into line with other organisations in the sector. Please note that this is not only relevant to students working with children but is also relevant in acknowledging the potential vulnerability (including historic abuse or trauma) of any client. The support of therapy and supervision are crucial in the management of this dimension of your professional development across the 4 years of your training and beyond. All practitioners and students have a responsibility to monitor and maintain a fitness to practice, and if their effectiveness becomes impaired for any reason (even temporarily), advice should be sought from a supervisor or a faculty member as soon as possible. As described in our PAF process, the personal abilities of the therapist are as important as theoretical and practice competencies. Therefore, as an expression of our duty of care and responsibility to progress or graduate practitioners, GTA faculty reserves the right to raise issues related to a student's capacity to practice safely.