

International Training Circle

Recognition Process in the Network of Trainings

Guideline Recognition Process

Adopted version from 29 April 2023 (updated 23 April 2025)

This guideline is based on the principles formulated in the organizational papers of the Training Circle on "Basic Principles and Ways of Working".

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1 General aspects

This guide describes the process of recognition in the network of professional education and training centers of the Section for Inclusive Social Development. This process is a peer evaluation, which is organized and documented by the Training Council. The members of the Training Council appointed for this function are experienced peer reviewers. The Training Council can also ask other members of the Training Circle to take on the role of peer reviewers and will support them in this function, if needed.

Recognition of quality in professional education and training is based on the following seven fields of work in which a professional education and training center should demonstrate competency. These fields direct the evaluative gaze to various aspects of professional education and training, including specific professional orientations, national contexts, and development phases that are relevant across the board. They can also provide guidance for setting up a new professional education or training program.

1. Students: How does the training enable students to make steps in learning and personal and professional development? How concrete and specific is the evaluation of students' current status and how concrete and specific are the resulting objectives and implementation steps for learning and development?
2. Teaching staff/faculty: How capable is the faculty/teaching staff in terms of learning, processes and teamwork, and how does this show?
3. Content/concept: How does the training concept combine general professional and scholarly expertise with the anthroposophical study of the human being?
4. Methodology: How does the training work with the trinal method (linking study, art and practice)?
5. Organization: How are organizational processes designed and managed (including quality development)?
6. Network: What contacts does the professional education and training center maintain with other institutions, training centers and organizations (anthroposophical and others)?
7. Vision field: What challenges, perspectives and visions live in the training center?

First and foremost, the preparation of the peer evaluation and the visits of the peer reviewers serve the self-evaluation of the professional education or training center. At the end of their visit, the peer reviewers also write an evaluation report in which they describe their impressions and perceptions and formulate recommendations.

The evaluation reports are subject to data protection, and any use in the professional development of peer reviewers or disclosure to third parties may only take place with the consent of the respective professional educational or training center.

Given the geographic spread of professional education and training centers, communication should take place electronically as much as possible.

2 Process

2.1 Overview and coordination

A list of all processes that have already taken place and those that are still ongoing is maintained and continuously updated by a Coordinator. This Coordinator can be a member of the Training Council or be appointed by the Training Council from among the members of the Training Circle. The Coordinator is also the contact person for the initial contact if a professional education or training center wants to be certified.

Contact: recognition@inclusivesocial.org

2.2 Initial certification

2.2.1 Contact

The professional education or training center contacts the Coordinator. The Training Council is informed about the request. If the preliminary clarifications in the Training Council lead to a positive assessment, the professional education or training center is invited to submit the application and receives the link to the portfolio as well as to the guidelines for the recognition process from the Coordinator.

The Coordinator informs the applicant professional education or training center which peer reviewers are available and clarifies any wishes regarding the peer reviewer. These wishes are then discussed by the Coordinator and the Training Council; if necessary, this clarification takes place by email. A second reviewer for the evaluation report is also assigned.

After this consultation, the Coordinator asks the proposed peer reviewer, who has been accepted by both sides, whether they can and want to accept the request.

If the answer is yes, the applicant professional educational or training center is informed and can now make direct arrangements with the peer reviewer. The financial questions are clarified by the applicant center. The applicant organization is responsible for all costs of the peer review (especially travel expenses of the peer reviewer).

The documents must be submitted to the peer reviewer at least two weeks before the planned date of the visit. The peer reviewer informs the Coordinator about scheduled dates and contacts them in case of difficulties.

2.2.2 Application

An application for recognition can only be submitted if a training course has already been successfully completed in a first round. Exceptions require the approval of the Training Council.

By submitting the application, the professional education or training center confirms that it agrees with the paper Basic Principles and Ways of Working of the International Training Circle and the principles formulated in the Guideline Recognition Process.

The application contains

- The completed Portfolio Questionnaire with attachments
- Self-evaluation report

2.2.3 Explanation of the Portfolio Questionnaire

The professional education or training center indicates in the Portfolio Questionnaire, based on the conditions defined below, for which level training the recognition should be made.

There are three options: First Professional Training, Advanced or Continuing Professional Education, and Foundation/Introductory Courses. The criteria formulated below are general guidelines. The Training Council decides on exceptions. If possible, the regulatory framework of the national professional education system is taken into account.

- **First Professional Training:** This type of program qualifies the student/trainee to work independently in the profession without any specific requirement for a prior professional qualification. It takes at least two years full time and includes theory and guided professional practice with a total of at least 1200 hours.

- **Advanced and Continuing Professional Education:** These programs build on a prior professional qualification and deepen expertise in the professional field. They comprise at least 400 instructor-led course hours and 400 hours of supervised professional practice overseen by the professional education or training center.
- **Foundation/Introductory Courses:** These comprise at least 400 instructor-led course hours.

If a professional education or training center wishes to be recognized for more than one of the listed formats, the application must contain separate documentation for each format. Descriptions of the organization of the training center as the responsible entity of the different programs do not have to be duplicated if all programs are reviewed as part of the same peer review process. The recognition decision is made separately for each program submitted, and a separate certificate is issued for each.

2.2.4 Explanation of the Self-Evaluation

In the written Self-Evaluation, submitted in addition to the Portfolio Questionnaire, the professional education or training center addresses the following guiding questions:

- How are competencies acquired, implemented, evaluated, and further developed by the professional education or training center in the seven fields of work outlined in point 1 (e.g., by lecturers, team, practice supervisors)?
- What are the most significant questions that the organization is working with at this point (brief characterization)?

The Self-Evaluation forms the starting and reference point for the peer reviewer's conversations with the professional education or training center. This ensures that the recognition process serves the self-evaluation of the organization.

2.2.5 Conducting an initial certification

Any language interpretation needed during the peer reviewer's visit must be provided by the professional education or training center.

In addition to the visit of the physical site, the process of initial certification includes – at a minimum – conversations with the faculty, students and staff and observation in the classroom. At the end of the visit, a joint review conversation takes place.

2.2.6 Report and follow-up on the initial certification visit

The peer reviewer writes a report within two months of the visit. The report is prepared according to the model report that the Coordinator sends to the peer reviewer.

The report is based on the completeness and coherence of the documents submitted, the written Self-Evaluation, the impressions gained during the visit and the review conversations, and classroom observations carried out.

The following steps must be followed once the report is completed:

The peer reviewer's evaluation report is first forwarded to a second reader from the circle of peer reviewers. The second reader reports back to the peer reviewer (if necessary, after consultation with the other members of the Training Council responsible for the recognition process) within two weeks as to whether the format and scope of the report meet the general requirements. The report is then sent directly to the professional education or training center for factual correction, and the center submits any corrections within two weeks. If necessary, the peer reviewer clarifies open questions with the professional education or training center, and in the case of problematic or complicated questions, also with the Training Council.

Based on the feedback, the peer reviewer prepares the final evaluation report and sends it as a PDF document to the professional education or training center and the Coordinator, who in turn sends it to the members of the Training Council. In addition, the peer reviewer sends all documents submitted by the professional education or training center to the Coordinator for storage in the documentation system of the Section for Inclusive Social Development.

If the educational or training institution does not agree with the disposition of the report and the Training Council's decision, it may lodge a written objection with the Training Council, stating its reasons. The Training Council decides on the further course of action and, if necessary, forms an arbitration committee of members of the Training Council who were not directly involved in this recognition process. Should no agreement be reached in this way, the process will be forwarded to the members of the leadership team of the Section for Inclusive Social Development who are not involved in the Training Council for final arbitration.

The recognition certificate is issued by the office of the Section for Inclusive Social Development and signed by the responsible member of the Leadership Team and a responsible member of the Training Council.

The date of recognition is the date of the peer reviewer's report.

2.2.7 Significant changes after certification

Significant changes that occur at the professional education or training center or in the training program after certification must be reported to the Training Council via the Coordinator.

Significant changes, which may occur during the validity period of the certificate, and which must be reported to the Training Council, are understood to include, for example:

- Change of legal entity or leadership
- Changes to the training concept or the training objectives
- Serious incidents with legal consequences
- Permanent termination of active membership in the Training Circle

The Training Council, in consultation with the peer reviewer of the most recent certification, determines any possible need for follow-up action and decides on how to proceed.

2.3 Recertification every 5 years

The same provisions and steps apply as for initial certification, with the following modifications:

In the Fall of the year prior to recertification, the Coordinator notifies the professional education or training center. The center then submits an application for recertification by 31 December, if it wishes to continue certification.

The peer reviewer is newly assigned in consultation between the professional education or training center, the Coordinator and the Training Council. It is generally desirable that the same peer reviewer who carried out the initial certification carries out the recertification, unless there are reasons for a change of peer reviewer.

In addition to the completed Portfolio Questionnaire with attachments and the Self-Evaluation report, the application for recertification also contains a statement on how the recommendations of the first evaluation report were handled.

Recertification must also include a site visit at the professional education or training center. (This is different from the practice in place until 2022.)

Exceptions to this rule may be allowed by the members of the Training Council responsible for the recognition process, if there are serious reasons that make on-site recertification impossible.

The recertification process must be completed within one year of the expiry of the certificate's validity period. The Training Council decides on justified exceptions.

2.4 Recognition of one-time training courses

The procedure for recognition of a one-time training course is similar in process to that of recognition of a training center. The same conditions apply regarding recognition as First Professional Training, Advanced and Continuing Professional Education or Foundation/Introductory Course.

Differences:

It is not a professional education or training center that is recognized, but a training course that is carried out once.

An on-site visit by a peer reviewer is not mandatory.

There is no recertification.

The following conditions must be met in order for a one-time training course to be recognized:

- A person appointed by the initiators and approved by the Training Council accompanies the training course. This person is or was a member of the Training Circle and has many years of experience in the field of training.
- A core faculty group is responsible for the training program on site, and an organization serves as responsible legal entity. The finances are handled transparently.
- There must be a written curriculum; depending on the format (Foundation/Introductory Course, First Professional Training, Advanced and Continuing Professional Education), supervised professional practice, a practical project and written assessments of performance and/or competence must be included.
- The obligations connected with the training and the conditions for achieving the certificate are set out in writing and are known to the participants (rules on absences, assessment of practical project and performance evaluations).

The process is as follows:

- The initiators inform a member of the Training Council before the start of the training course. The information includes key facts of the planned training, a provisional curriculum as well as the name of the assigned accompanying person.
- The Training Council gives feedback on the proposed initiative and whether it is eligible in principle for the recognition process.
- Six months before graduation of the cohort, those responsible for the training program submit the necessary documents for the recognition process (Portfolio Questionnaire with attachments, Self-Evaluation report).
- This is followed by a conversation of a responsible person with one of the members of the Training Council responsible for the recognition process. This conversation usually takes place within the framework of the international conference of the Training Circle but can also be conducted in another format.
- The decision of the Training Council is forwarded to the office of the Section for Inclusive Social Development. The office issues the certificate for this training course.

3 Guiding questions for certification and recertification conversations

As described above, the evaluation of the quality of a training is based on the information provided in the Portfolio Questionnaire and on seven fields of work for which statements are made in the written Self-Evaluation.

The guiding questions for the conversations take up this structure. They can be helpful in reviewing the written documents and in preparing the (re)certification interviews. They can be used as reference points for the peer reviewer and the professional education or training center to be certified.

NOTE: The certification conversations include discussions with leadership, faculty and students. The questions formulated below on the seven fields of work – or a selection, as appropriate – can be discussed with all three groups.

3.1 Initial certification conversations

Portfolio questionnaire

- Are there any questions of clarification regarding the title or formalities of the certification?
- What is the local framework? Designation of the education, training or continuing education, type of degree, state recognition, certificates?

Students

- How does the education enable students to take developmental steps?
- What form and vessels are there for educational support and mentoring?
- What is the relationship between instructors and students?
- Where do students turn when they don't feel sufficiently seen, or feel discriminated or violated? Is there a confidential contact and grievance process?
- In what form is feedback from students obtained? How is it processed? Are there examples of such an evaluation, its review, conclusions and corresponding action steps?

Faculty

- How is cooperation within the faculty organized? How are responsibilities distributed? What forms of collaboration exist?
- What are the team dynamics, also regarding formal and informal leadership functions?
- How capable is the teaching staff in terms of learning processes, group processes and teamwork – and how does this show in concrete terms?

Content/Methodology

- Are there any questions of clarification about the curriculum of the training?
- How is the link between theory and practice implemented?
- What is the relationship between teaching general professional perspectives on the one hand and anthroposophical perspectives on the other? Quantitatively: What is the respective scope of teaching? How is this weighting justified? Qualitatively: Are links made between the two? If so, how and by whom specifically?
- How is the trinal method (integration of study, art and practice) implemented?
- Assessment: How are the evaluations and assessments structured? Are there formal and transparent guidelines? Is there a possibility to appeal outcomes?
- What form of instructional documentation is used?
- What form does the cooperation with the practice centers take? Are there written and binding agreements on the framework for supervised practice? How does the faculty ensure that these framework conditions are implemented?

Organization

- What is the organizational structure and processes of the professional education or training center?
- How can the training institution's own identity be described? Is there a mission statement?
- If the training center is integrated into a practice institution: What is the status of the training center in the context of the overall organization? What is the balance between independence as a training center and integration within the context of the practice institution? Are there defined workloads for the responsibilities carried by staff as training faculty?
- What form of quality assurance and development is implemented?
- How is the training center financed?

Network

- How does an exchange with other centers and organizations take place?
- How is the training center integrated into the network of regional and national training centers?
- How is the training center integrated into the national (if any) and international network of anthroposophically based training centers?

Visions

- Questions about alternatives and visions for the future
- In which professional fields is there a demand for the knowledge and competencies acquired in the training? Is there a need for development in this respect for the training center?
- Outlook: What future visions for the next 5 years can be formulated?

3.2 Recertification conversations

Each recertification conversation can also follow the guiding questions described in 3.1.

Additionally, it should refer to the previous evaluation report (5 years ago), together with the documents currently submitted (Portfolio Questionnaire, Self-Evaluation report and statement on the implementation of previous recommendations).

The form of the recertification conversation is particularly dependent on the following factors:

- Have the peer reviewers or those responsible for the training center changed – or can the process be continued from 5 years ago? In the case of a change, it is advisable – if possible – to obtain information from the previous peer reviewer.
- Have there been any significant changes at the training center? If this is the case, these must be addressed in the conversation.

The following questions are dealt with during each recertification conversation in order to take note of, and – if possible – support the development processes of the training center:

- What are the significant development steps of the last 5 years? Where does the training center stand now in comparison?
- How were the recommendations of the previous peer review implemented?

4 Evaluation of the process

The process described in this guide will be evaluated regularly by the Coordinator and the Training Council at intervals of no more than 5 years. Proposed changes will be submitted to the Training Circle for approval.

5 Publication of recognition status

Recognized professional education or training centers and one-time training courses may refer to their recognition in their public presentation (website, brochures, etc) and on their certificates with the logo of the Section for Inclusive Social Development and the following wording (German or English):

Anerkannt durch die Sektion für Heilpädagogik und inklusive soziale Entwicklung am Goetheanum – Freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft

Recognized by the Section for Inclusive Social Development at the Goetheanum – School of Spiritual Science

Professional education and training centers, as the bodies responsible for the educational program and student assessments, are themselves responsible for issuing their diplomas and certificates to students. It must be clear from the placement of the wording that the recognition refers to the educational institution and the training program. Nothing shall be done to suggest that diplomas and certificates for graduates are issued by the Section for Inclusive Social Development or the Goetheanum.

6 History of the guide

This guide was adopted and put into effect by the International Training Circle on May 13, 2011. It was re-adopted as amended in April 2015, reaffirmed on May 4, 2017, and re-adopted as revised on April 25, 2019.

In 2022, the International Training Council, through a lengthy process and in consultation with the Recognition Group that had been in place until then, decided to propose to the Training Circle two fundamental changes to the current recognition process.

1. Format of recertification conversations

Until 2022, the recertification to be performed after 5 years took place in Kassel (or frequently online in the years of the Corona pandemic) and not at the location of the training center. From 2023 onwards, this has been adapted to the effect that both the initial and all further recertifications should as a rule take place on site at the training center.

The experience of recent years shows that certification from a distance often cannot give a clear picture of the development, especially since those who had done the initial certification were often no longer available for the process.

2. Responsibility for the recognition process as a whole

Previously, the recognition process was the responsibility of a separate Recognition Group, of which a permanent member of the Training Council was a member.

From 2023 onwards, the process should be the responsibility of as many permanent members of the Training Council as possible – as well as, in individual cases, additional peer reviewers appointed specifically for this function. In this way, we hope to achieve a more comprehensive overall awareness in the Training Council and a bundling of resources.

These changes were proposed by the Training Council in January 2023 in a revised draft that was presented and approved by the Training Circle on 04/29/2023.

In April 2025, the documents were amended to reflect the transfer of the former tasks of the Anthroposophic Council for Inclusive Development to the newly founded Section for Inclusive Social Development.