

## **MEDIATE BC SOCIETY ASSESSMENT OF COURSES IN MEDIATION & CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

The Mediate BC Society's acceptance of applicants for admission to a Roster is based, in part, on an assessment of the mediation and conflict resolution courses taken by the applicants.

The Society's assessment of courses is based on a view of mediation that is pluralistic: interest-based, evaluative, transformative and other dispute resolution values and philosophies are all recognized by the Society. The assessment is criteria-based, and courses are examined for the degree to which they provide a balance and blend related to the theoretical knowledge, skills, attitudes and other attributes required for competent mediation practice. Central to the Society's belief is that the quality of instruction is integral to the quality of a course.

In assessing the courses, the Society will review all of the criteria in the attached document, "Assessment of Courses in Mediation & Conflict Resolution", to ensure that course delivery adheres to these standards for content, quality, educational/instructional standards, evaluation, documentation and verifiability of a knowledge/skills balance.

The criteria are used by the Society primarily as guidelines that portray an ideal. The Society's decision as to whether it will admit an applicant will be based, in part, on the overall strength of the courses taken. The criteria are used to weigh the courses on all their merits, with no particular criterion necessarily being essential in itself.

Courses are categorized in two ways: i) courses suitable for "core education in conflict resolution", and ii) courses "focused on mediation". The Society requires at least forty hours of the latter. Courses suitable for "core education in conflict resolution" may be generic conflict resolution education or other education that is supportive of or relevant to the practice of mediation, for example courses in negotiation. Courses "focused on mediation" must apply directly to processes of mediation.

A minimum of 10 hours of mediation skills practice is required for admission to a Roster. The skills practice must be coached<sup>1</sup> to be eligible for the Society's 10-hour requirement. Courses are assessed as to how many full hours of coached role play they include; they are not required to include a full 10 hours of coached mediation role play to be accepted. Applicants for admission who have taken courses that focus entirely on theory should be aware that such courses count toward the 80 hours of training, but do not count toward the 10 hours of required mediation skills practice.

The Society's assessment of individual courses will be premised on the assumption that they are consistent over time and the number of offerings. Changes in objectives, content, and other components may affect the Society's ongoing assessment of the courses.

## 1. Course Description / Overview

- i) The course description (*100-150 words*) provides information about:
  - course content
  - intended audience
  - overall purpose of the course
  - instructional methods (*e.g., face-to-face, distance, lecture, video, discussion, role-play exercises*)
- ii) The course overview clearly identifies and states:
  - the dispute resolution/philosophy
  - course objectives
  - instructional methods
  - instructors and qualifications
  - course materials provided to the students, including readings and assignments
  - course level (*e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced*) including the method by which it is ensured that students have the necessary entry level skills for the course (*e.g., student self-selection according to published criteria, pre-registration questionnaire, pre-registration interview*)
  - prerequisites for course admission (*if any*)
  - course duration (*i.e., number of instructional hours*)
  - methods of learner assessment (*e.g., self-assessment, written or oral examination, instructor or coach oral or written feedback*)
  - requirements for course completion (*e.g., attendance, successful completion of examination*)

## 2. Dispute Resolution Approach / Philosophy

- i) The course's values and philosophy are:
  - stated (*e.g., interest-based, evaluative, transformative*)
  - defined and adequately explained
  - contrasted with other main approaches to dispute resolution, which are also defined and explained
- ii) Value-oriented goals for dispute resolution are articulated (*e.g., social justice, settlement, social transformation, party self-determination*)

## 3. Course Objectives

- i) The course objectives are:
  - clear, focused, coherent and stated in objective terms
  - articulated in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or other attributes of conflict resolvers
  - related to the course philosophy
- ii) The means by which the objectives were identified and selected is stated (*e.g., conflict resolution literature review, client or other needs assessment, statutory requirement, new research in the field*)

- iii) Objectives for behavioral outcomes are informed by the knowledge, skills, attitudes or other attributes of persons required to perform the tasks of a conflict resolver or mediator

#### 4. Content: Theory and Skills Practice Component

Theory (Body of knowledge, concepts):

- i) Theoretical content relates to the course philosophy and learning objectives
- ii) Origins of the theories presented in the course are identified (*e.g., social conflict theory, problem-solving theory, communication theory, needs theory, systems theory*)
- iii) Course concepts are clear, integrated and summarized

Skills Practice Component (Simulated role play and/or practice):

- i) The skills component relates to the course philosophy, theoretical content, and objectives
- ii) The skills to be acquired, and the means by which they are taught are specified and appropriate (*e.g., demonstration, role play practice, exercises*)
- iii) The sequencing of skill-building is appropriate
- iv) Sufficient time is allowed for:
- self-reflection about the skills being taught
  - feedback
  - assessment of skill acquisition
- v) The number of hours of each of the following is clearly specified:
- mediation role plays<sup>2</sup>
  - role plays coached<sup>1</sup> at a ratio of no more than five students for each coach

#### 5. Course Materials

- i) Students are provided with written course materials that include information about:
- the author/editor of the materials
  - the author's background in conflict resolution
  - when the learners receive the materials (*e.g., in advance of the course, the first day, during the course*)
  - how learners are to use the materials
  - how readings and assignments relate to the course content
  - which readings are required and which are optional
  - additional information resources (*e.g., relevant reference books, websites*)
- ii) Materials are:
- clear, focused, coherent, complete and current
  - comprehensible as stand-alone materials (i.e., materials are understandable by a reader without the presence of an instructor)
  - adequate to meet course objectives
  - referenced to course content
  - logical in sequence

## 6. Course Agenda / Outline

- i) Learners are provided with a detailed written course outline which relates to the course objectives
- ii) Learners are provided with a daily course agenda
- iii) The agenda allows for sufficient time to cover the course objectives, including the theoretical content and skills practice components

## 7. Qualifications: Instructor and Coach

### Instructor Qualifications:

- i) Each instructor's qualifications are relevant, current<sup>3</sup> and documented
- ii) Instructors meet all of the criteria established for coaches (outlined below) and, in addition, meets the following minimum criteria:
  - the instructor has received extensive training in conflict resolution and possesses a solid knowledge base of current conflict resolution philosophy and skill relevant to the course content
  - in the case of courses "focused on mediation", the instructor has received extensive training in mediation and possesses a solid knowledge base of mediation philosophy and skill
  - the instructor has substantial experience in instructing adults
  - the instructor has demonstrated instructional skill in:
    - using the principles of adult education, and
    - delivering the content of the program in question (including theoretical, philosophical, experiential and practical components of the course)
  - the instructor has demonstrated an instructional style which is facilitative, interactive, non-defensive, assertive, empathic and otherwise supportive of a positive learning environment.
  - the instructor is able to demonstrate the skills relevant to the course
  - in the case of courses "focused on mediation", the instructor has significant recent practice experience<sup>4</sup> as a mediator and is able to demonstrate the skills of mediation
  - the instructor has demonstrated a commitment to ongoing professional development<sup>5</sup> and is familiar with current research and theory

### Coach Qualifications:

- i) Each coach's qualifications are relevant, current<sup>3</sup> and documented
- ii) Coaches meet the following minimum criteria:
  - each coach is an experienced dispute resolution practitioner, with knowledge, skills and current practical experience in conflict resolution.
  - each coach is familiar with the course, including the objectives, philosophy, overview and agenda.
  - each coach's activities conform to the definition of "coaching."<sup>1</sup>

## 8. Instructional Methods

- i) The instructional methods for various components of the course are identified (*e.g., lecture, demonstration, exercises, discussion, role play, video, pre-readings, assignments*)

- ii) The stated instructional methods are clear, focused, coherent and related to the course's philosophy and objectives
- iii) The instructional methods accommodate the variety of adult learning styles
- iv) The instructional methods allow for interaction and reflection.
- v) The pacing and sequencing of the various learning activities are suited to the audience of learners and the context within which they will be utilizing the theoretical content and skills
- vi) Sufficient time is allowed for reviewing, summarizing and integrating the theoretical content and skills

## **9. Evaluation Methods**

### Course Evaluation:

- i) The course is evaluated
- ii) The evaluation of the course is based on its objectives
- iii) The methods of evaluation are specified (e.g., instructor, student, coaches, external evaluator)
- iv) Course evaluation includes evaluation by students
- v) Evaluations are reviewed by the instructor and sponsoring organization and are used for ongoing course improvement or development

### Student Evaluation:

- i) Student learning is assessed
- ii) The methods of learning assessment are specified (e.g., by self, coach, peer, journal, tests)
- iii) Methods of feedback to students are specified (*e.g., by peer, coach, instructor, video, written*)
- iv) Methods of student self-assessment are specified (e.g., checklist, documentation of progress, written reflection)

### Instructor Evaluation:

- i) Methods of evaluating instructors are specified (e.g., by students, peers, external evaluator, self)
- ii) Evaluations are reviewed by the instructor and the course sponsor, and are used for maintaining and improving the content and quality of instruction

## 10. Course History

- i) The course has been offered at least three times.
- ii) Specific dates, locations and instructors are documented.
- iii) In the event of one-time course offerings, the dates, locations, instructors and course sponsors of similar courses (if any) are documented.
- iv) The course's acceptability has been demonstrated by student evaluations; in particular, the evaluations document that course objectives and content match the course agenda/outline. Not applicable to one-time only offerings.
- v) Each instructor's acceptability has been demonstrated by student evaluations. In the event of one-time offerings or new instructors, instructor acceptability is otherwise documented.

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<sup>1</sup> "Coaching", as defined by the Society, involves more than supervision. It is informed and structured feedback, with the feedback being related to the stated learning objectives. The feedback is learner-centered, and facilitative and educative, rather than directive and critically analytical. The coach engages in the role play and acts as mediator and observer. The coach is focused on behaviors: incidents are observed objectively, skills focused on, and learners asked "why".

<sup>2</sup> "Role play" means any mock mediation practice session which is part of a mediation course in which participants are coached or otherwise directly supervised.

<sup>3</sup> "Current" means received training or has been an active trainer in conflict resolution and mediation knowledge and skills in the past five years, attends annual professional development courses and, in the case of mediation training, has practiced mediation for at least 30 hours per year over the past five years.

<sup>4</sup> "Experienced" means has practiced mediation for at least 30 hours per year in the last five years.

<sup>5</sup> Has attended or taught professional development courses for at least 20 hours each year.