

Programme Specification MSc Counselling

This document applies to students who commence the programme in 2016/17
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1.	Awarding Institution/Body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching Institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	Not applicable
4.	Final award	MSc
5.	Programme Titles	Counselling
6.	Pathways available	NA
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Taught modules/ University of Worcester
8.	Mode of attendance	Full-time and Part-time
9.	UCAS Code	NA
10.	Subject Benchmark Statement	NA
11.	Date of Programme Specification	December 2010, updated January 2014, August and 2014 (Regulations), August 2016 (Regulations amended - Section 20) November 2016 Minor updating

12. Educational aims of the programme

Aims and outcomes for the programme were specified with regard to the aims of the TCRF (Taught Courses Regulatory Framework) and the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

This course is designed to cater for counsellors seeking continuing professional development, perhaps with a particular aim to continue towards professional training at Doctoral level. The course is also of interest to those in health and social care practice who may wish to extend their knowledge base in respect of psychological approaches to care and psychological function.

The course includes the option of studying early interventions for people with dementia, their carers and families.

Programme Aims:

1. Provide an opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to succeed in achieving postgraduate qualifications through the development of advanced subject specific and transferable knowledge and skills relevant to the professions of counselling, health and social care
2. Develop a critical understanding of the theory and practice associated with an integrative model of counselling
3. Develop a critical understanding of the interrelationship and contested nature of knowledge, theory, and practice within counselling and psychotherapy

4. Advance practical counselling skills through critical reflection on personal practice and through engagement with research and evidenced based practice
5. Promote critical understanding and reflection upon societal, professional, agency and personal value and belief systems
6. Provide the opportunity to design and conduct a substantive study utilising an appropriate research methodology and associated research methods.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

The programme subject specific learning outcomes have also been developed in accordance with the UW Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to

Knowledge and Understanding

1. The theoretical premise and development of an integrative model of counselling
2. The development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship
3. The underpinning ethical bases employed in a variety of therapeutic contexts and with a range of service users
4. Assessment and identification of mental health issues
5. The political and social context of counselling
6. The reflexive and accountable practitioner
7. The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Counselling
8. Epistemologies and methodologies relevant to counselling research and the employment of these in the dissertation.

Cognitive and intellectual skills

9. Critical thinking, analysis and synthesis in the use of established and emergent theory, and concepts, to critically analyse the theory and practice of counselling
10. Synthesis to construct an integrative model
11. Creative, imaginative and flexible approaches to problem solving in relation to social and individual needs
12. The construction of coherent and reasoned arguments and conclusions
13. Reflexive and evidence based approaches to data collection and information concerning counselling outcomes and interventions and their impact on service users.
14. Sensitivity to the values and interests of others.

Practical Skills and Transferable Skills

15. A positive attitude to personal development through critical reflection, self-evaluation, self-care, and supervised practice
16. Communicate effectively through a variety of mediums and in a range of contexts
17. Interpersonal and team working skills employed to effectively collaborate with others in a range of counselling contexts

The table below indicates on successful completion of each award, which learning outcomes students will achieve:

Learning Outcome	PGCert	PGDip	MSc
1	✓	✓	✓
2		✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓
5		✓	✓
6		✓	✓
7		✓	✓
8			✓
9	✓	✓	✓
10	✓	✓	✓
11		✓	✓
12	✓	✓	✓
13	✓	✓	✓
14		✓	✓
15		✓	✓
16	✓	✓	✓
17	✓	✓	✓

On successful completion of **all 6 taught modules plus the 60 credit Dissertation module**, students will be awarded the MSc in Counselling.

On successful completion of **all 6 taught modules**, students will be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling.

On successful completion of **3 taught modules: MPSY4005, MCOU4001 and MPSY4010**, students will be awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling Studies.

14. Assessment Strategy

A variety of learning and teaching methods are used in order to maximise the achievements, progression and employment opportunities of students with a diverse entry profile, prior practical experience and knowledge. The course provides an appropriate structure of mandatory modules and assessments within which students may:

- Develop a progressive, critical analytical understanding of the theories, policies, politics, key concepts and values underpinning counselling practice
- Apply and synthesise counselling theory and practice
- Develop an integrative model for practice
- Acquire progressive academic, practical and transferable skills appropriate to the subject, social entrepreneurship and employment prospects
- Experience different forms of formative and summative assessment activity and approaches to learning and teaching including individualised assessments
- Develop skills of reflection and reflexivity to their own practice
- Develop advanced research skills and a comparative and critical attitude to analysis
- Debate and critically explore ethical and practical perspectives related to work with different service user groups

Assessment strategies and student support:

There are six specific components to the counselling assessment strategy:

1. A consistent approach to the development of the ability to critically apply theory to practice
2. A programme of assessments that ensures students are appropriately prepared for work within the sector with the knowledge and skills necessary for safe and effective practice
3. An individualised approach to assessments where appropriate
4. A range of assessment strategies supporting the development of subject specific and transferable skills
5. The incorporation of formative assessment strategies within the module teaching
6. The development of an evidenced based approach to learning and the ability to utilise this appropriately at an advanced level

Each module conforms to the University's requirements, articulated in the [Curriculum Design Policy](#) and [Assessment Policy](#) and takes account of the [Learning, and Teaching Strategy](#)

The programme does not employ e-learning as a dedicated assessment strategy. However, it is used to support student progress and enrich the learning environment. VLE and e-mail are consistently used by staff to support student activities and to provide materials, on-line discussion, feedback and contact. Students with additional needs find these modes of contact particularly useful. International Students may access support from the [University Language Centre](#). and [Student Services](#).

Students are assessed by a combination of course work and examinations. Each module must be passed individually at a D- minimum.

15. Programme structures and requirements

AWARD MAP FOR MSc Award

To gain the award of MSc in Counselling students must successfully complete six mandatory and one optional module, including the 60-credit dissertation. Interim awards are available as indicated below.

Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)
MCOU4001	Theory for Practice: Towards an Integrative Approach	20
MPSY4010	The Psychology of Mental Health	20
MPSY4005	Advanced Research Analysis 2	20
	On completion of the 3 above compulsory modules (total of 60 credits) exit/interim award is Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling Studies	
MATI4006	Development in Therapeutic Interventions	20
MCOU4003	Managing the Therapeutic Relationship and Change	20
MCOU4004	The Professional, Political and Social Context of Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Practice (Option)	20
MCOU4005	Interventions in Dementia (Option)	20
	On completion of the above compulsory and optional modules (total of 120 credits), exit/interim award is Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling	
MPTH4003	Dissertation	60
	On completion of all 6 mandatory and optional modules, plus the 60 credit dissertation (total of 180 credits) final award is MSc in Counselling	

16. QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality

The MSc Counselling is modular and part of the University of Worcester's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

This award is located at level 7 of the FHEQ. The programme is aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) at Masters level.

Accordingly students receiving the Masters award will have demonstrated:

- A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - a) To evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
 - b) To evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgments in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

And will have:

- The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;

- a) Decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
- b) The independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

In addition the programme embraces the principles of good practice within the National Occupational Standards for Counselling (2008)

17. Support for Students

Each student will be allocated a personal academic tutor for the duration of their studies who maintains regular contact with their tutee. The role of the personal academic tutor is to provide academic and pastoral support. In addition, on commencement of the dissertation, students will be provided with a tutor who normally has a research interest or is a specialist in their topic.

Course based activities and documents:

- Full-day induction programme
- Course handbook

- Module outlines for each module including module code, title, level, learning outcomes, teaching activities, timetable, attendance requirements, assessments criteria and reading lists
- A personal academic tutor responsible for pastoral and academic support and guidance
- A module tutor as a first reference point for academic queries
- An 'open door' policy for access to programme manager
- Student representation on the Course Management Committee

Central support from university services:

A full range of support for students is available within the University, see <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/index.htm>
<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/disability-and-dyslexia.htm>

18. Admissions policy, criteria and procedures

Admissions Policy

The University is committed to widening participation to candidates from diverse backgrounds, abilities and ages. The programme is open to those already in counselling practice and to those with the appropriate background who wish to pursue a career in counselling

Entry Requirements:

- An honours degree (normally a minimum of lower second class) preferably in an associated subject or equivalent professional qualifications

Plus:

- International students must hold a qualification equivalent to a UK first or second class honours degree
- All international students for whom English is not their first language are required to achieve IELTS 6.5 or equivalency

The programme is open to those already in counselling or psychotherapeutic practice and to those with the appropriate background who wish to pursue a career in counselling. The course is also of interest to those in health and social care practice who may wish to extend their knowledge base in respect of psychological approaches to care and psychological function.

Students with additional needs will be provided with relevant and appropriate support and where necessary, extra support will be assessed and provided with assistance from the University's Disability and Dyslexia Service.

Once accepted and prior to the commencement of the course students are invited to an induction day that will familiarise them with the University, the Institute and Course requirements.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning. Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance on 01905 855111.

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

19. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Student feedback:

- Mid and end of module evaluations
- Practice learning evaluation
- External Examiner Reports
- Student representation on course committee
- Personal academic tutor and module feedback
- Student Forums

Feedback from other sources:

- External Examiner reports
- Annual Course Evaluation Reports
- Periodic review and external scrutiny
- Peer observation
- Staff annual appraisal
- Moderation and second marking

Institute of Health and Society (IHS) committees responsible for monitoring and evaluating quality standards:

- Course Management Committees
- Ethics Committee
- Institute Quality Committee
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Research Committee

20. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#)

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Some modules have attendance requirements.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 5 days of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 5 days but within 14 days of the due date will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade, unless the failure was due to non-attendance.
- Reassessment items that are passed are graded at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert (Counselling Studies)	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map
PG Dip (Counselling)	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map
Masters (MSc)	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7 including a minimum of 60 credits from the Dissertation, as specified on the award map

PG Cert and PG Dip awards are unclassified. The awards of Masters may be made with Pass, Merit or Distinction.

21. Indicators of quality and standards

The Course External Examiner has judged the course as meeting the academic standards of a psychology postgraduate degree course. Module evaluations consistently indicate that students are highly satisfied with the quality of the course in terms of teaching, learning and assessment.

22. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

The course prepares individuals to work in a range of counselling occupations and contexts across the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

The incorporation of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Counselling and practice elements within the programme will provide students with the opportunity to work towards and to apply for professional registration.

Graduate destinations

Graduates of the MSc have gone on to further postgraduate study at Doctoral level and teaching within higher education, as well as employment within counselling organisations and private practice. It may also be used as a step on the path towards membership of professional bodies.

Student employability

The course includes presentations by University [Careers & Employability Service](#) staff on enhancing employability in counselling and psychology as well as giving guidance on specific pathways into the profession of counselling. It also includes careers advice from experienced professionals in the field.

Links with employers

Students have taken advantage of our connections with placement providers to advance both experience of, and careers within, counselling.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module study guides and course handbook.