

Programme Specification for MSc Counselling

This document applies to Academic Year 2024/25 onwards

Table 1 Programme Specification for MSc Counselling

1.	Awarding Institution/Body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching Institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	N/A
4.	Final award	Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling (PG Cert), Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling (PG Dip), Master of Science in Counselling (MSc)
5.	Programme Titles	MSc Counselling
6.	Pathways available	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Block teaching and lectures across semesters (University of Worcester campus)
8.	Mode of attendance	Full and Part-time (normal period of study: 1 year full-time; part-time flexible but typically 2-4 years). Block Delivery (weekends) and lectures across each 12 week semester (1 and 2).
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark Statement	This programme of study meets the QAA descriptor at Master's level (QAA Master's Degree Characteristics), the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7 (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)).
11.	Date of Programme Specification	May 2020 Re-approval to 15/30 credit modules Approved June 2020. August 2020 – AQU amendments July 2021 – to reflect changes to AQU template August 2021 – AQU amendments August 2022 – AQU amendments July 2023 – annual amendments September 2024 – annual amendments

12. Educational aims of the programme

This course is designed to cater for students seeking entry to a career in counselling or 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. While providing a theoretical understanding of counselling, this course does not confer professional accreditation with any counselling organisations.

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).

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 counselling.
2. Provide students with a comprehensive 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.
4. Advance practical counselling skills through critical reflection on personal practice.
5. Advance practical skills through engagement with research and evidenced based practice.
6. Promote critical understanding and reflection upon societal, professional, agency and personal value and belief systems.
7. 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 University's [Learning, and Teaching Strategy](#)

Table 2 knowledge and understanding outcomes and which module/code they relate to

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s	Award
1	Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of multiple areas of Counselling by applying the use of cutting-edge theory and research in the field.	All taught modules	PGCert PGDip MSc
2	Demonstrate a comprehensive critical understanding of research methods and research techniques and their application to advanced research and scholarship in Counselling.	MPSY4184 MPSY4000	PGCert PGDip MSc
3	Synthesize conceptual understanding that enables the application of appropriate theories and tools to both academic and applied settings.	MCOU4114 MCOU4111 MCOU4113	PGCert PGDip MSc
4	Apply a comprehensive critical understanding of current professional and ethical debates in the field of Counselling	MCOU4112	PGCert PGDip Msc

Table 3 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills

5	Critically analyse and evaluate information from a range of academic sources, drawing on these evaluations to make theory to practice links, using professional writing guidelines (eg APA)	MCOU4115 MCOU4111 MCOU4114	PGCert PGDip MSc
---	---	----------------------------------	------------------------

6	Critically evaluate current research methodologies and advanced scholarship in Counselling.	MPSY4184	PGCert PGDip MSc
7	Plan, deliver and evaluate a significant research project through the creative application of advanced methodologies to develop new insights or understandings within the discipline and communicate this to professional standards.	MPSY4000	MSc

Table 4 learning skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability

8.	Engage in personally meaningful critical reflection, supported by theory and research, in order to facilitate both personal and academic development	MPSY4167 MCOU4115	PGCert PGDip MSc
9.	Demonstrate emerging and developing clinical skills by engaging in relevant practice based tasks	MPSY4167 MCOU4115	PGCert PGDip MSc

Table 5 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/key skills

10.	Communicate complex ideas effectively and coherently, in a variety of formats, to different audiences in line with professional writing guidelines (for example APA)	MCOU4115 MCOU4111	PGCert PGDip MSc
11.	Collaborate effectively with others to share ideas, problem solve and convey information with clarity	MCOU4113	PGCert PGDip MSc
12.	Effectively utilise accomplished digital information literacy being able to identify, retrieve, review and summarise relevant sources	All taught modules	PGCert PGDip MSc
13.	Demonstrate autonomous learning and project planning skills	All taught modules	PGCert PGDip MSc

Learning, teaching and assessment

The programmes adopt a student-centred approach to teaching and learning that utilises theoretical knowledge and practical skills, building on the student's strengths, interests and experiences. The programme is delivered via in-person lectures, practical sessions and online learning content. The programme is assessed by a variety of transferable assignments including presentations, conference style posters, case studies and essays.

Teaching

The programmes utilise in-person delivery with modules being supported with the use of online reading materials. There is an emphasis on self-directed autonomous learning with students applying learning outcomes and content to their own areas of interest or practice which is evidenced through a variety of module assessments.

Teaching within the course aims to be engaging for students with formal approaches such as lectures being interspersed with discussion, debates, analysis of cases, and

examples from practice settings. Learning approaches may include the use of Blackboard Collaborate, online discussion forums and flipped classrooms which expect students to complete independent work in preparation for teaching sessions to reinforce learning.

Sessions take a variety of formats and are intended to enable the application of learning through discussion and small group activities. Seminars enable the discussion and development of understanding of topics covered in lectures and are focused on developing subject specific skills and applied individual and group project work. Tutorials are a key aspect of the learning strategy with students being encouraged to share their assessment plans with tutors and peers, allowing structured questions and feedback. Tutorials can be in-person or utilise digital/videoconferencing technologies such as Skype/MS Teams/Zoom etc.

In addition, postgraduate students will have a minimum of two meetings with their Personal Academic Tutors, timed to coincide with key points such as induction or assessment.

When undertaking the dissertation module, a supervisor will be allocated towards the start of the module. Timetabled group support sessions as well as individual tutorials will be used for supervision of the independent research dissertation.

Contact time

The programme is taught across two-day blocks on a Friday and Saturday, each 15-credit module being four days in total, and the 30-credit module being eight days in total. Full time students complete all eight taught modules across two semesters, four modules per semester, plus the dissertation within a third semester in one academic year. Part time students select which modules and how many they want to complete in each year, with their dissertation in the final year.

In the final semester when students will normally be undertaking the dissertation, they will have less classroom contact time in order to do more independent study. Individual supervision will be provided on a one to one basis of a total of 8 hours.

In a typical week, students will have around 37 hours engaged in study which will, in a normal week, include a combination of taught sessions and independent study.

Independent self-study

In addition to the contact time, full time students are expected to undertake around 24 hours of personal self-study per week. Part time students are expected to undertake around 6 hours of personal self-study per module per week. Typically, this will involve completing online activities, reading journal articles and books, working on individual and group projects, undertaking research in the library and online, preparing coursework assignments and presentations, and preparing for examinations.

Independent learning is supported by a range of excellent learning facilities, including the Hive and library resources, the virtual learning environment, and extensive electronic learning resources.

Teaching staff

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. The team includes staff from a variety of Psychology backgrounds including counselling psychology, health psychology, psychotherapy and EMDR.

Teaching is informed by research and consultancy. The School encourages engagement in higher education teaching qualifications and the course leader is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade.

Assessment methods include a range of coursework assessments such as essays, reports, role play of counselling skills, project plan, presentations and a dissertation. Submission of assignments and feedback is managed electronically through Blackboard.

The precise assessment requirements for an individual student in an academic year will vary according to the mandatory and optional modules taken, but a typical formal summative assessment pattern, for a full-time student, for each year of the course is:

Semester 1

- 1 Conference paper with Audio Presentation
- 1 Qualitative analysis report
- 1 Essay
- 1 Research Proposal

Semester 2

- 1 Case study
- 1 Role Play with Process Report
- 1 Reflective Workbook
- 1 Essay

Semester 3

- Dissertation

The precise assessment requirements for part time students will vary according to the modules selected.

All assignments will be internally marked and moderated as well as being externally examined as per the [UW assessment policy](#). All assignments are submitted electronically, with feedback focusing on areas of strength and development needs, with advice for feeding forward to future assignments. Feedback takes a range of formats, including written comments, peer feedback, discussions with staff and audio recorded comments.

14. Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategies adopted in the MSc Counselling reflect the aims of the course and the [Master's Degree Characteristics - QAA Guidance on Writing Masters Courses](#) and make a significant contribution to learning. The assessment strategies are designed to develop skills and knowledge in psychology and provide evidence of the students' progress and achievement throughout the course and prepare the students for careers in counselling, psychotherapy and counselling psychology. Both formal (summative) and informal, developmental, (formative) approaches will be used.

In order to develop the skills of advanced study identified within the course aims, students will experience a variety of assessment strategies. The opportunity for students to demonstrate independence in a sustained piece of work is provided in the completion of the Dissertation. E-learning through the use of Blackboard will be utilised to support student learning between taught sessions, including the use of tests and knowledge checks.

15. Programme structures and requirements

AWARD MAP FOR MSc Counselling

To gain the award of MSc in Counselling students must successfully complete six mandatory modules plus MPSY4000 Dissertation (60-credits). Interim awards are available as indicated below. The Award Map for these programmes are shown below.

MSc Counselling:

Table 6 award map for each level of the course

Module Code	Module Title	Status			
		Credits (Number)	PG Cert	PG Dip	MSc
MPSY4184	Advanced Research Analysis 2	15	M	M	M
MCOU4111	Theory for Practice: Towards an Integrative Approach	15	M	M	M
MCOU4112	The Professional, Political and Social Context of Counselling	15	O	M	M
MCOU4113	Psychology of Mental Health	15	O	M	M
MCOU4114	Developments in Evidence-Based Counselling Practice	15	O	M	M
MCOU4115	Therapeutic Practice and Skills Integration	15	O	M	M
MPSY4167	Professional Skills Development	30		M	M
MPSY4000	Dissertation	60			M
Total Credits		180			
PG Certificate					
To be awarded the PG Cert Counselling students must successfully complete 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map including MCOU4111, MCOU4113 and PSYC4184.					
PG Diploma					
To be awarded the PG Dip Counselling students must successfully complete the PG Certificate plus MPSY4167 Professional Skills and a further 30 credits of taught modules from the award map above.					
Masters MSc					
To be awarded the Masters, students must complete a total of 180 credits at level 7 including 60 credits from the Dissertation.					

16. QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality

QAA and professional academic standards and quality

The MSc Counselling is modular and part of the University of the Worcester (UW) [TCRF \(Taught Courses Regulatory Framework\)](#). These programmes have been developed in line with the [QAA Master's Degree Characteristics \(September 2015\)](#).

This award is located at Level 7 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#).

17. Support for students

Induction:

Prior to commencing the course, students are invited to attend an induction that will familiarise them with the University, the School and the course. They can meet representatives from Student Services, Registry Services, Library Services and ICT and hear more about their services as well as meeting the programme team.

During the application process all students are advised that they are welcome to visit the programme leader where possible to discuss the course or contact them via email or skype if not able to attend the university.

There is extensive programme information on Webpages and within the programme handbook.

Personal Academic Tutors:

[Personal Academic Tutors](#) provide an exceptional level of individual academic support and encouragement to students. All students are allocated a personal academic tutor for the duration of the course and are encouraged to meet with them at least four times in the first year to discuss; feedback on assignments, module choice and dissertation plans. This support is personal and flexible and proactive; it is tailored to the particular needs of students who are known to the team over a long period of time. Tutorials can be in person or utilise digital/videoconferencing technologies such as Skype/MS Teams etc.

Additional support:

There is a programme community website via Blackboard for all students which will provide ongoing support, information and a way of enabling students to interact with each other.

Each module has a module outline and related blackboard page containing additional module information and guidance.

Most modules have a visit from the ILS link librarian on the first day of the programme.

All dissertation students have a supervisor allocated from first contact and throughout the proposal writing and dissertation process.

All module leaders provide individual academic support through module assessment specific tutorials in addition to personal academic tutor support.

University based support is available from Student Services and the Disability and Dyslexia Service:

<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/firstpoint/>

<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/home.aspx>
<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>

18. Admissions

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
[\(<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/study/international-students/information-for-international-applicants/language-requirements-and-support.aspx>\)](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/study/international-students/information-for-international-applicants/language-requirements-and-support.aspx)

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>

Admissions procedures

- All applications will be via the Admissions office.
- All application forms are viewed by Programme Leader and/or admissions tutor.
- If applicants meet the initial entry requirements, then applicants are invited for interview. This will be either in person or via digital/video conferencing

technologies (such as MS Teams/skype etc.). The interview is a two way process to ensure that the applicant understands and meets the requirements for post graduate study and also for the applicant to ensure the course is the right one for their needs. The interview will also include a discussion of their support needs and, if appropriate, signpost them to School of Psychology bridging materials online.

- Potential applicants are welcome to attend the University to meet the Programme Leader for informal discussion.

19. Regulation of assessment

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

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.
- 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 7 days (one week) 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 7 days (one week) but 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.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped 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.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for Awards

MSc Counselling

Table 7 requirements for awards

Award	Requirement
-------	-------------

PG Cert Counselling	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map (MPSY4184 plus 3 additional 15 credit modules from those listed above).
PG Dip Counselling	To be awarded the PG Dip Counselling students must successfully complete the PG Cert plus MPSY4167 Professional Skills and a further 30 credits of taught modules from the award map above.
MSc Counselling	To be awarded the MSc Counselling, students must complete a total of 180 credits at level 7 including 60 credits from the Dissertation.

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

Classification of Masters

The classification will be determined by whichever of the following two methods results in the higher classification.

Method 1

- a) Candidates will be awarded a Distinction where they have attained an average of A- (PD) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.
- b) Candidates will be awarded a Merit where they have attained an average of C+ (PM) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.

Method 2

- a) Candidates will be awarded a Distinction, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade A- (PD) or higher
- b) Candidates will be awarded a Merit, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade C+ (PM) or higher

Candidates will be awarded a Pass where they have not fulfilled the rules for Method 1 or Method 2, but are eligible for the award of a Masters.

For further information on honours degree classification, see the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#).

20. 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.

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 further training and 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.

Students will be required to undertake assessments which are reflective of, and transferable to both clinical and academic settings. These include conference style presentations, role plays in which to demonstrate counselling skill and essays which may be suitable for publishing.

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.