

Masters in Counselling: PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

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	Part time
9. UCAS Code	NA
10. Subject Benchmark Statement	NA
11. Date of Programme Specification	December 2010
<p>12. Educational aims of the programme</p> <p>The Masters in Counselling has been designed to provide continuing professional development for counsellors, people who use counselling skills as part of their professional role, and for those who wish to orientate their future work to counselling as a profession. With the latter in mind the course incorporates the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Counselling.</p> <p>More specifically the programme aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 profession of counselling 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 	
<p>13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods:</p> <p>Advanced subject specific knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theoretical premise and development of an integrative model of counselling • The development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship • The underpinning ethical bases employed in a variety of therapeutic contexts and with a range of service users • Assessment and identification of mental health issues • The political and social context of counselling • The reflexive and accountable practitioner 	

- The NOS for Counselling
- Epistemologies and methodologies relevant to counselling research and the employment of these in dissertations

Examples of learning, teaching and assessment methods used:

- The construction of a coherent and mandatory programme with a number of interdisciplinary modules shared with the MSc in Psychological Therapies, and the Mental Health pathways
- A programme of structured lectures, seminars, group work, presentations, group and individual tutorials with e.learning support
- The researching and writing of a variety of assignments and the subsequent written and oral feedback
- Self-directed research and project work with tutorial guidance and discussion
- Consistent approach to theory as related to practice
- Case study analysis and role play
- Supervised counselling practice
- Contributions to teaching by service users and practitioners
- A dissertation providing the opportunity for critical analysis of a conceptual or theoretical aspect or an empirical study of a counselling issue

Cognitive and intellectual skills of:

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

Examples of learning, teaching and assessment methods used:

- The presentation, discussion and analysis of competing philosophical, political, theoretical and ideological concepts and their analysis
- The engagement of learners in discussion and analysis of key issues and concepts
- The consistent application of UW LO policy to encourage the growth of critical analytic skills such as the ability to evaluate evidence and arguments and to recognise underpinning assumptions and judgements
- Module assessments providing the opportunity to reflect on individual and observed practice
- Formative and summative case study work
- Role play and its analysis
- The promotion of reflexivity in research and in therapeutic practice

Practical skills relevant to employment:

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

Examples of learning, teaching and assessment methods used:

- Skills for practice taught within modules
- The application of theory to practice, critical reflection and self evaluation in the assessments
- The use of discussion and presentations both formatively and summatively
- Critical analysis and reflection on own practice
- The sharing of information in small groups and in the class through presentations and role play
- The use of case study material and research based assessments
- Mandatory practice component

- The incorporation of the NOS for counselling within the modules

Transferable skills of:

- Advanced oral and written communication using appropriate academic conventions
- Negotiation and interpersonal skills
- Problem solving
- Independence in learning, planning and time management
- Empathy, ethical principles and practice
- Effective use of information technology
- Data analysis and numeracy
- Personal reflection, self assessment and action planning

Examples of learning, teaching and assessment methods used:

- The embedding of advanced study skills within the programme
- The embedding of research based skills within the programme
- Written assessment in a variety of formats including analytic and reflective essays, practice logs, and research based skills
- Self management skills are developed through the meeting of assignment deadlines, contributing to group work, working with others, work experience, individualised assessments where students choose the focus and application, and the dissertation
- Oral skills are developed by peer and whole group discussion, group and individual presentations
- Interpersonal and empathic skills, ethical principles and practice, negotiation and problem solving are embedded within the programme both as individual modules and within module assessment content
- Information technology is used to support the programme and student learning, In addition, all assignments
- Reflective and reflexive practitioner approaches

14. Learning, Teaching and 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, and Assessment Policies and takes account of the L&T Assessment Strategy.

Programme specific academic support for students:

Each student will be allocated a personal tutor for the duration of their studies who maintains regular contact with their tutee. The role of the personal 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.

All students will normally be in a supervised counselling practice environment at the commencement of their studies. Individual's private practice will not be accepted as a suitable context for the practice component of the course unless this is of long standing and the counsellor is registered either with BACP or BPS. Each student will be provided with a University based placement mentor who may be their personal tutor. Students will be expected to have appropriate insurance indemnity either on a personal basis or provided by their counselling context. All students will need supervision with a supervisor working within either a humanistic or psychodynamic orientation and in accordance with BACP guidelines. This will be in addition to any group supervision offered by the agency they are working in. Students will be responsible for the cost of their own supervision where necessary. A list of suitably qualified supervisors will be provided. However, should a student wish to identify their own supervisor or continue with a standing agreement for supervision then the course team will consider the request with confirmation from the supervisor of their willingness to continue plus confirmation of their ability to meet the course requirements for supervision.

Continuing Professional Development groups and the reflective learning log

Each student will be allocated to a facilitated professional development group and this group will meet regularly to provide a particular supportive learning environment where for instance course content and practice issues, challenges and demands, interpersonal, professional and personal issues can be discussed and worked through. The formative reflective learning log, a record of personal and professional development is a reference point to the work here in addition to its essential role in providing reflective account of theory and practice.

200 hours of supervised counselling is supported through the programme and through individual student supervision.

(See Work Based Learning handbook (wbl) for details)

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 email 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 International Office and the University Language Unit.

15. AWARD MAP FOR MSc Award

Title: MSc in Counselling

To gain the award of MSc in Counselling students must successfully complete the seven mandatory modules including the 60 level 60 credit dissertation. Interim awards are available as indicated below.

Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)
MCOU 4001	Theory for Practice: Towards and Integrative Approach	20
MPSY 4010	The Psychology of Mental Health	20
MCOU 4004	The Professional, Political and Social Context of Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Practice	20
	On completion of the 3 above compulsory modules (total of 60 credits) exit/interim award is Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling Studies	
MCOU 4002	Advanced Theory for Practice: An Integrative Approach	20
MCOU 4003	Managing the Therapeutic Relationship and Change	20
MPSY 4002	Advanced Research Analysis	20
	On completion of the above compulsory modules (total of 60 credits) plus 200 hours of supervised counselling exit/interim award is Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling	
MCOU 2005	Dissertation	60
	On completion of all 6 mandatory modules, 200 hours of supervised counselling plus the 60 credit dissertation (total of 180 credits) final award is MSc in Counselling	

16. QAA Academic Infrastructure:

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

The programme is aligned to of 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:

- The QAA Code of Practice on Placement Learning
- National Occupational Standards for Counselling (2008)

17. Support for students:

Course based activities and documents:

- Full-day induction programme
- Course handbook
- Work based learning (wbl) handbook
- Module outlines for each module including module code, title, level, learning outcomes, teaching activities, timetable, attendance requirements, assessments criteria and reading lists
- Supervised counselling practice
- A student wbl mentor
- A personal tutor responsible for pastoral and academic support and guidance
- CPD group and peer support
- 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 Committee

Central support from university services:

A full range of support for students is available within the University, see

www.2.worc.ac.uk/studentservices

18. Admissions policy, criteria and procedures

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:

- A recognised Diploma in counselling or psychotherapy following either a humanistic or psychodynamic orientation, or equivalent professional practice
- A counselling placement or present work within a counselling context
- 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

Any student who wishes to use their counselling practice with children or vulnerable adults, for their practice placement will have to have a current enhanced Criminal Records Check (CRB). Many placements will require students to have a current enhanced CRB irrespective of their client group. In either case students are responsible for funding their CRB check.

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.

Given that counsellor training is emotionally as well as intellectually demanding, and that the research evidence identifies that a sustained therapeutic relationship is crucial to positive client outcomes, it is professionally and ethically important that due consideration is awarded to the readiness of the applicant to undertake these demands. With this in mind all prospective students are interviewed by two tutors and will participate in a number of reflective activities as part of this interviewing process. In addition, candidates will be required to obtain satisfactory health clearance.

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 Department and Course requirements.

Accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L):

Students may seek APL in accordance with the University and IHS APL procedures and within the parameters set out within the University Postgraduate Regulatory Framework

See the APEL section of the University website: www.worc.ac.uk/courses/4216.html

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 tutor and module feedback
 - Student Forums
- Feedback from other sources:
 - External Examiner reports
 - Annual Course Monitoring Reports
 - Periodic review and external scrutiny
 - Peer observation
 - Staff annual appraisal
 - Moderation and second marking

QAA and UW validation documentation

- IHS committees responsible for monitoring and evaluating quality standards:

Course Committee
Ethics Committee
Academic Quality Standards
Learning and Teaching Committee
Research Committee

- UW committees:

Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee
Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee

20 Regulation of assessment

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 50% 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 (delete if this does not apply).
- 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 50% 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.
- Students who fail to submit an item of assessment lose their right to reassessment in that module, and will be required to retake the module, which will incur payment of the module fee.
- For full details of submission regulations see Postgraduate 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 or non-submission.
- Reassessment takes place during the following semester or during the summer reassessment period at the end of the academic year.
- If following reassessment the module has been passed, the module grade will be capped at 50%.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they will have one further and final reassessment opportunity.
- A student who fails 40 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert (Counseling Studies)	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7
PG Dip (Counseling)	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7, plus 200 hours of supervised counseling practice
Masters (MA/MSc/MBA/MTL)	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7 including a minimum of 40 credits from the Dissertation and 200 hours of supervised counseling practice

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

Departmental Examination Boards review and confirm results for modules, and the Scheme Examination Board considers candidates' marks to make decisions about progression, awards and degree classifications as appropriate.

The University requires Departments and /or course teams to have a formally stated policy for internal and external verification and moderation of marking which meets the requirements of the University Assessment Policy.

20. Indicators of quality and standards

- In November 2005, the institution was audited by the Quality Assurance Agency. The audit confirmed confidence in the University's management of the quality of its academic programmes and the standards of its awards. The QAA particularly commended the University's supportive ethos and range of departmental and central services provided to students and staff in support of its mission to deliver an excellent inclusive higher education
- The staff team are all involved in research or scholarly activity, or professional development of some kind. All have professional practice in counselling in their background

21. Career Opportunities & 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 NOS in Counselling and practice elements within the programme will provide students with the opportunity to work towards and to apply for professional registration
- Regular meetings are held with employers, placement providers and supervisors to provide a co-ordinated approach to student learning.

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 guide and course handbook. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Key sources of information about the Course can be found in:

The MSc In Counselling Student Handbook
The Student and Placement Handbook for WBL
University website www.worc.ac.uk
The Postgraduate regulatory Framework
The Postgraduate Scheme Regulations