

## Programme specification

### MA in Counselling Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling

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YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

<i>School:</i>	Psychological and Social Sciences		
<i>Entry from:</i>	September	<i>in:</i>	2019
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University		
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University		
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University		
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	choose an item:		
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling Studies		
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable		
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable		
<i>QAA benchmark group(s):</i>	Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013)		
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	PGDip part time for two years MA part-time for three years		
<i>Language of study:</i>	English		

### Introduction and Special Features

The MA/Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling provides BACP accredited core professional training for those wishing to enter the counselling profession. On successful completion of the postgraduate diploma you will secure the counselling practitioner award. However, for those wishing to progress to a full master's award you will have an opportunity to study in-depth a professional issue of interest through undertaking a supervised research project.

The main theoretical orientation of the Postgraduate Diploma counselling programme is humanistic. You will be introduced to a range of humanistic approaches in the context of other contemporary counselling practices and theories. Humanistic is an umbrella term for a range of approaches to counselling which, whilst different, share a philosophical stance which regards every person as unique, and capable of taking appropriate responsibility for managing their lives to their satisfaction. Humanistic counselling emphasises the client's active role in the counselling process, and pays particular attention to the client's here-and-now experience, the counselling relationship, and the broader context of the client's life. We use the term 'integrative' to describe the process of blending elements from a consistent group of particular therapies. The aim of the course is to develop self-aware, reflective, ethical counsellors who are grounded in evidence-based practice.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling conforms to the requirements of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) for accredited courses. This includes the provision of 360 direct contact teaching hours and two 20 hour residential weekends over the two years of the programme. The cost of the residential weekend is in addition to the course fees. The residential weekends form a key part of your learning and personal development. Here you will have the opportunity to deepen your understanding of personal development, take part in experiential activities and reflect on self in relationship.

The practitioner element of the course is delivered on a two-year part-time basis to those demonstrating appropriate personal and professional readiness. The course combines theory, skills practice, work-

based practice, supervision and personal development opportunities. Over the two years of the course you will be expected to undertake 150 hours of supervised face-to-face counselling. Supervision will be with an external University approved supervisor which you will need to fund independently and is in addition to course fees.

If you choose to study towards the MA in Counselling award then you will undertake an additional module: Research Investigation (MCS007). This is taught part-time over an additional year. This involves taught sessions focused on different research methods and completion of a research project in an area of professional interest, supervised by an academic member of staff. You can apply to be admitted on to the MA in Counselling programme at the outset, or you can opt to move to this aspect of the programme after successful completion of the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling (years 1 and 2).

### **Admissions Criteria**

In addition to the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study, in order to be admitted to the programmes you must have:

1. Either:
  - a) A first degree from York St John University or any other approved university or institution of higher education; OR
  - b) Possess a professional qualification and/or experience which is recognized by the University as equivalent of a first degree through its procedures for recognition of prior certificated or experiential learning;
2. Experience of the use of counselling skills at work, in education or the helping professions or in voluntary agencies;
3. Satisfactorily completed a foundation course in counselling, normally at Certificate level;
4. Demonstrable capacity to be self-aware and reflexive.

Students can initially register either for:

1. The MA in Counselling, or
2. The Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling

If students on the Postgraduate Diploma route subsequently wish to progress to the full MA award they will need to notify Registry and the Subject Administrator of their intention to do so by semester 2 of year 2 at the latest.

Note: Confirmation of admission to the MA in Counselling is contingent on passing all modules of the Postgraduate Diploma.

If your first language is not English, you will need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning (APL/APEL). Further information can be found here [Accredited Prior \(Experiential\) Learning \(APL/APEL\)](#).

### **Programme Aims**

For progression to the award of Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling the programme aims:

1. To facilitate the development of effective, ethically-minded, theoretically-informed, self-aware, reflexive humanistic counselling practitioners, who are capable of taking an active role as members of a professional community.
2. To offer an opportunity to broaden and deepen the knowledge gained on foundation level courses and to enable students to develop higher-level critical awareness of the theory and practice of counselling.

3. To comply with the accreditation criteria for counselling courses, prescribed by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) for Accreditation of counsellor training courses.
4. To comply with the training elements of the individual accreditation criteria for counsellors, as stipulated by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP.)

For progression to the award of MA in Counselling the programme aims:

5. To provide research education/training that will allow students to critically evaluate research and undertake a novel research project that addresses an important academic and/or professional practice issue.

### **Programme Learning Outcomes**

#### **Level M / FHEQ L7**

Students who gain the award Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling will be able to:

1. Define and critically appraise the theory and practice of humanistic counselling, in relation to the broader field of therapeutic theory and practice.
2. Situate, and critically reflect upon, their counselling practice in relation to contemporary humanistic theories and practices in the context of the wider field of counselling theory.
3. Locate and critically discuss the theory and practice of counselling in its organisational, social and cultural context.
4. Demonstrate and critically appraise the use of humanistic counselling skills and competences.
5. Demonstrate effective and ethical counselling practice.
6. Demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate specific counselling strategies, appropriate to a range of client problems and settings.
7. Reflect upon their use of and learning from counselling supervision, and upon the application of this learning to their counselling practice.
8. Recognise and address ethical issues and dilemmas in relation to professional and personal values.
9. Critically appraise research relating to counselling, and demonstrate a research-informed approach to their counselling practice.
10. Recognise the potential impact of difference and diversity on the counselling process, and demonstrate personal awareness in relation to issues of difference and diversity.
11. Critically reflect upon their professional and personal development as a counselling practitioner.
12. Evidence understanding of the importance of personal awareness to effective, ethical counselling practice, demonstrating a self-aware and non-defensive stance.
13. Synthesise academic, professional and personal learning.

Students who gain the award MA in Counselling will be also be able to:

14. Demonstrate systematic understanding of different research methods used in the area of counselling and psychotherapy.
15. Critically evaluate research methodologies in terms of their ability to address complex problems at the forefront of academic and/or professional practice.
16. Plan, conduct, report, and evaluate a sustained piece of novel research that addresses an important academic and/or professional practice issue.

## Programme Structure

The Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling is part-time and runs over two academic years, normally September to June. You will be required to undertake a minimum of 150 hours of supervised counselling practice in a placement setting. You will need to locate opportunities for counselling practice and begin this process on securing a place on the course.

There are six compulsory modules for the postgraduate diploma award; three modules each year, which are taught concurrently. Core Counselling Competences (1 & 2) involves work-based learning, supervision of client work in groups facilitated by course tutors, and a minimum of nine hours of supervision of client work from an external, University approved supervisor. Each year also includes a compulsory residential weekend. A pass must be achieved in all modules for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling.

If you wish to be awarded an MA in Counselling then you will need to undertake module MCS007 *Research Investigation*. The module is delivered over an academic year on a part-time basis. MCS007 *Research Investigation* focuses on how to conduct research and then supports you to undertake a research project of your own. Initially you receive training in how to do research in semester 1 across 5 days. The teaching is delivered on the same day every other week. You then have the opportunity to do a research project. The research project is your opportunity to investigate in-depth an area of personal and professional interest. You will have the support of a supervisor when you are conducting your research. The research is done throughout semester 2 and across the summer. You are required to attend one taught day at the start of Semester 2 and then you have 5 hours of contact time with your supervisor, which you can organise to suit you.

### Modules for the Programme

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Status of Module*
Year 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling					
MCS001	7	1 and 2	Counselling Theory 1	15	CA
MCS002	7	1 and 2	Core Counselling Competences 1	30	CA
MCS003	7	1 and 2	Self, Theory & Practice 1	15	CA
Year 2 Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling					
MCS004	7	3 and 4	Counselling Theory 2	15	CA
MCS005	7	3 and 4	Core Counselling Competences 2	30	CA
MCS006	7	3 and 4	Self, Theory & Practice 2	15	CA
Year 3 MA in Counselling					
MCS008	7	5 and 6	Research Investigation	60	CA

\***C**: Compulsory, **CP**: Compulsory for progression to the next level, **CA**: Compulsory for award, **O**: Option or **E**: Elective.

## Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling includes lectures, seminars, small group work (including skills practice and group supervision), individual tutorials and self-directed learning. Lecture sessions involve a combination of didactic teaching and more experiential forms of learning. Each year of the programme includes a residential weekend focused on experiential learning at both a group and individual level. Staff will take responsibility for the development of a learning context which is personally and professionally challenging and meaningful. The programme allows for a balance between structure and flexibility.

Course tutors seek to embody the humanistic principles on which the course is based. This translates in practice into the creation of a safe, mutually-respectful learning environment in which you will be able to engage productively with personally challenging learning materials and participate in experiential activities. In light of the nature of the course you are therefore required to engage

actively in learning activities and a high premium is placed on attendance, both in terms of learning and BACP requirements. Continuous reflection upon the learning experience is encouraged through Review Partner dialogues, individual tutorials, and use of a reflective journal.

It is recognised that as you will spend only 1 day a week on the University campus during the Postgraduate Diploma you will need appropriate supported learning facilities. The Supported Open Learning element of the programme comprises peer review partners, guided reading and study, journal writing and involvement in discussions on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) represents an additional tool for communication and interactive learning activities. An introduction to this will form part of your initial course induction.

Assessment consists of on-going formative feedback over the duration of the Postgraduate Diploma and summative assessment at the end of each module. Summative assessment will include an essay, case study, presentation and evaluation of a counselling session, and a personal development profile. Formative feedback and assessment is provided by tutors verbally and/or in written form during skills practice sessions, in group supervision and in individual tutorials. In skills practice sessions, group supervision and at peer review meetings there are also observation and feedback systems in place that will give you the opportunity to give and receive peer feedback, develop reflexivity and self-assessment skills. Additionally you will receive regular, on-going formative feedback on your counselling practice from a University approved external supervisor.

In addition, if you progress onto the MA award pathway general teaching sessions on MCS007 are a blend of face-to-face contact and virtual learning exercises. There is formative feedback and the VLE will continue to be a repository for teaching materials. You will also receive individual supervisory support whilst undertaking your research project. You will keep your academic tutor support and tutorials will be available with tutors teaching on the module.

### **Progression and Graduation Requirements**

The University's [general regulations for postgraduate awards](#) apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section.

The award of Master of Arts will be dependent on the successful accumulation of 180 credits.

### **Internal and External Reference Points**

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#) [see page two]
- [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#) [see page four]
- [QAA subject benchmark statement](#)
- [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- University External Examiner involvement
- Professional body regulations (BACP)
- The Competence Framework for the Humanistic Psychological Therapies (Roth & Pilling)

### **Further Information**

Further information on the programme of study may be obtained from:

- Admissions entry profile (Admissions)
- Programme validation document (Registry – Academic Quality Support)
- Regulations (Registry – Academic Quality Support)
- Student programme handbook (school)
- Module handbooks (school)