

Programme Specification

Postgraduate Diploma Humanistic Counselling

MA Humanistic Counselling

<i>School:</i>	Education, Language and Psychology
<i>Subject area:</i>	Counselling
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2026-27
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<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>	Postgraduate Diploma accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate in Humanistic Counselling Studies Postgraduate Diploma in Humanistic Counselling
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	N/A
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	N/A
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013), Master's degree characteristics statement (2020)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Non-standard period of study as follows: • Postgraduate Diploma part-time for two years • MA part-time for three years
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with Foundation Year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The Postgraduate Diploma provides professional training for those wishing to enter the counselling profession. It is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). It is delivered on a two-year part-time basis to those demonstrating appropriate personal and professional readiness. On successful completion of the Postgraduate Diploma, you will secure the counselling practitioner award.

While the programme is at postgraduate level, applicants without a degree but with relevant professional experience are welcomed, and are supported into the transition to PG study with a 21-hour Access to Postgraduate Study module at an additional cost.

You can choose whether to apply for the Postgraduate Diploma or the MA. Both offer flexibility – if you successfully complete the Postgraduate Diploma you can choose to progress to the MA, and if you apply for the MA you can choose to exit with a Postgraduate Diploma. The Postgraduate Diploma is two years part time and the MA is three years part time, i.e. one additional year. Alternatively, you may apply to join

us just for the MA year if you have completed your core counsellor training elsewhere and have the required credits and practitioner training.

The main theoretical orientation of the 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, paying particular attention to the client's here-and-now experience, the counselling relationship, and the broader context of the client's life.

A Postgraduate Diploma gives you the opportunity to explore and reflect on contemporary and innovative counselling practice that is informed by research carried out at York St John University and elsewhere. The academic staff have research expertise on mental health, counselling supervision, the therapeutic relationship, working online, anger management, bereavement, and coaching. They are also active practitioners, working in a variety of counselling settings, and involved in a range of professional networks such as the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), Psychotherapists & Counsellors for Social Responsibility (PCSR), and Psychotherapy and Counselling Union (PCSU). Their professional interests include anti-racist approaches, non-pathologising ways of working with mental health, critiques of a medical model for psychological distress, political aspects of counselling, and links with community services.

The Postgraduate Diploma combines theory, skills practice, work-based practice, supervision and personal development opportunities. A highlight is two residential weekends, which give you the opportunity to deepen your understanding of personal development, take part in experiential activities and reflect on self in relationship. The cost of the residential weekend is in addition to the course fees. In addition, you will need to fund supervision independently – see Learning, Teaching and Assessment section below.

If you choose to study towards the MA, then you will take the additional module Research Investigation 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.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.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 [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The Postgraduate Diploma aims 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.

The MA enables you to critically evaluate research and undertake a novel research project that addresses an important academic and/or professional practice issue.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Postgraduate Diploma you will be able to:

- 7.1 Understand the fundamental nature of ethics to all counselling practice, demonstrating your ability to make appropriate ethical decisions in line with the BACP ethical framework.

- 7.2 Analyse, synthesise and evaluate humanistic theories, in relation to the broader field of therapeutic theory and practice.
- 7.3 Be aware of diverse sociocultural contexts and social justice, and the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity in therapeutic relationships
- 7.4 Demonstrate and critically appraise the humanistic counselling skills and competences which underpin your approach to counselling practice
- 7.5 Evidence ongoing self-awareness and how it impacts on the counselling relationship
- 7.6 Maintain and articulate reflective and reflexive practice which draws on personal development, use of supervision, ethics and humanistic counselling theory
- 7.7 Critically appraise research relating to counselling and demonstrate a research-informed approach to your counselling practice.

Upon successful completion of the MA students will also be able to:

- 7.8 Plan, conduct, report, and evaluate a sustained piece of novel research that addresses an important academic and/or professional practice issue.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Year	Term	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
Year 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Humanistic Counselling							
COU7015M	7	1	1-3	Humanistic counselling theory 1	15	C	NC
COU7016M	7	1	1-3	Counselling skills and reflective practice 1	30	C	NC
COU7017M	7	1	1-3	Personal and professional development 1	15	C	NC
Year 2 Postgraduate Diploma in Humanistic Counselling							
COU7018M	7	2	1-3	Humanistic counselling theory 2	15	C	NC
COU7019M	7	2	1-3	Counselling skills and reflective practice 2	30	C	NC
COU7020M	7	2	1-3	Personal and professional development 2	15	C	NC
Year 3 MA in Humanistic Counselling							
COU7021M	7	3	1-3	Research Investigation	60	C	NC

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensable. A non-compensable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 50) in order to progress.

Learning, teaching and assessment

The Postgraduate Diploma is delivered part-time over two years. It is designed to create a balance between structure and flexibility. Each year is divided into three terms (usually September to December, January to March, and April to June). Each module is delivered year long, with 30 weeks of teaching across the three terms. All taught sessions for each week are delivered on one day; on other days you will study independently. You will also benefit from one residential weekend per year, usually in late January or early February. In total you will receive 400 teaching hours. In addition, you will be required to undertake a minimum of 150 hours of supervised counselling practice in a placement setting. Supervision will be with an

external University approved supervisor. You will need to locate opportunities for counselling practice and begin this process on securing a place on the course.

Taught sessions on the Postgraduate Diploma consist of lectures, seminars, and small group work, including skills practice and group supervision. Lectures involve a combination of didactic teaching and more experiential forms of learning. The residential weekends focus on experiential learning at both a group and individual level. Independent study consists of peer review, guided reading, journal writing and involvement in discussions on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). To support you in your learning, you are offered up to 30 minutes of tutorial time per module per semester to provide you with one-to-one feedback and advice.

Academic staff take responsibility for the development of a learning context which is personally and professionally challenging and meaningful, seeking 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. You are 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.

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 includes an essay, case study, presentation and evaluation of a counselling session, a reflective research investigation into a topic that is of interest to you and your practice, and a personal development profile. Formative feedback and assessment is provided by academic staff 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.

While on the programme you will have access to multiple sources of support. You will have an induction at the start of the programme. As well as the tutorial time described above, support is offered by Central Services on study skills such as finding resources, referencing, critical thinking, critical writing, time management, planning assignments, proofreading and presentation skills. Central services also offer support in wellbeing, careers and digital training.

If you wish to study towards the MA then you will take the Research Investigation module. This module is delivered over an academic year on a part-time basis. You will study how to conduct research and then undertake a research project of your own. In term 1, you will receive training in how to do research. The teaching is delivered on the same day every other week. You will then 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 terms 2 and 3. You will attend one additional taught day at the start of term 2 and then you will have 10 hours of contact time with your supervisor, which you can organise to suit you.

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 as non-compensable.

Late result modules

This programme contains the following modules, where the result of the first attempt is not known in time for the June School Assessment Panels (or equivalent level progression point for non-standard entry points). This may delay progression to the next level of study.

- COU7019M Counselling skills and reflective practice 2

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- Professional body regulations (BACP)
- The Competence Framework for the Humanistic Psychological Therapies (Roth & Pilling)

Date written / revised:

Programme originally approved: