

Programme Specification

Doctorate of Counselling Psychology

<i>School:</i>	Education, Language and Psychology
<i>Subject area:</i>	Psychology
<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>	British Psychological Society Graduates are also eligible to apply for registration as a Practitioner Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Diploma in Psychological Therapies and Interventions MA in Psychological Therapies and Interventions
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Psychology
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Professional Doctorate periods of study ¹ for full time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The *Doctorate of Counselling Psychology* (DCounsPsy) at York St John University provides a postgraduate training pathway essential for those wishing to pursue a career as a counselling psychologist. Counselling psychology focuses on the application of psychological and psychotherapeutic theory and research to clinical practice. Counselling psychologists adopt a humanistic position towards provision of a range of evidence-based therapeutic modalities aimed at reducing psychological distress and promoting the wellbeing of children, adolescents, adults, couples, families, and other groups. Counselling psychologists work across a diversity of health and social care providers e.g., NHS, outpatient and inpatient units, community organisations, educational institutions, forensic settings, and independent practice.

You will have the opportunity to learn a range of psychological theories and develop your skills under the supervision of experienced practitioner psychologists. This programme will provide you with professional training in relevant theory, research, therapeutic skills, and focus on your personal development. The focus of the course is on a diversity of approaches to reducing psychological distress and promoting the wellbeing of children, adolescents, adults, couples, families, and other groups. As a graduate of this course, you will be eligible to apply for registration as a Practitioner Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This course is approved by the HCPC and accredited by the British

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated

Psychological Society (BPS) and satisfies the educational standards for chartered membership and full membership of the Division of Counselling Psychology.

This programme primarily focuses on the modality of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Person-Centred Humanistic approaches as a secondary modality. Graduates will also be eligible to apply for registration as a Counselling Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Psychological assessment, practice and supervision

The library at YSJ is well-resourced with materials relating to the practice and research of counselling psychology (i.e., books, journals, audio-visual materials). In addition, you will have access to a *Psychology Test Library* containing a range of questionnaires and psychometric tests for assessment of personality, intelligence, cognitive, behavioural, and neuropsychological function, psychopathologies, career interest and others.

In the first year of the programme, you'll undertake coursework modules, each comprising a 4-hour weekly seminar including teaching and skills practice. Our modules develop the professional skills required of leaders and supervisors, and for working in diverse, multi-disciplinary teams. Alongside this, you will experience a total of 450 hours of client-facing practice of supervised clinical practice and 4 hours per week of clinical supervision. In the third year, you'll complete further coursework modules in parallel with up to two clinical placements in community settings. Placements in third year enables you to complete your hours of clinical practice and you will have 2 hours per week of supervision. Supervision is provided by appropriately qualified psychologists using a combination of 1:1, face-to-face, and small group sessions.

In the first year of the programme, you will undertake a Foundation Placement, which begins in Semester 2. The sourcing of the Foundation Placement, supervisor, and payment arrangements is your responsibility as the trainee, under the approval of the year 1 placement co-ordinator. York St John will provide 1 hour of supervision a week to ensure consistency and to maintain quality standards.

Research opportunities

During the second and third years of the programme you'll undertake an individual research project designed to advance your knowledge of counselling psychology. Under the supervision of an academic member of staff, you'll demonstrate your ability to undertake a coherent line of experimental research and be required to write a 35,000-45,000-word thesis.

You will have access to, and be actively encouraged to use, YSJ's psychological laboratories supported by technical staff and technical resources. We have a range of research resources, which include but are not limited to designated spaces for research with children, physiological monitoring equipment, virtual reality headsets, and specialist software for creating, recording, and analysing data. We are situated in a multidisciplinary school which affords us access to purpose built mock clinical environments. This is in addition to an invitation to make use at Foss Park Hospital. In line with YSJ's collaborative relationship with the NHS and mental health teams in the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Trust, as well as other NHS Trusts and services, it is expected that you'll also work on a range of new and existing clinical projects of benefit to the local community.

As part of the course, you will be expected to produce impactful research outputs, contributing to the changing landscape of innovative practice-based evidence and evidence-based practice. Your learning and training will be facilitated by Practitioner and Academic teams with extensive healthcare experience who embody and relay the values of being reflective scientist-practitioners:

- Working creatively, compassionately and collaboratively
- Working ethically and effectively
- Commitment to social justice.

Personal development

Personal development is a professional requirement as a counselling psychologist and is integral to this programme. The programme requires you to become a self-reflective evaluator of your own clinical skills; be able to develop strategies to build resilience to handle the impact of clinical practice; and to undertake personal therapy. Through personal therapy you'll be able to understand the therapy experience, facilitate strong therapeutic relationships, and monitor and evaluate your own therapeutic practice.

In line with the new (2023) HCPC revised standards of proficiency, 3.2: which state that is key for registrants to understand the importance of their own mental and physical health and wellbeing strategies in maintaining fitness to practise; as well as standard 3.4: which states the importance of developing and adopting clear strategies for physical and mental self-care and self-awareness, to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness and a safe working environment we maintain that you find your own registered therapist who you feel comfortable with and who can commit to provision of a minimum of 40 hours of personal therapy. These must be completed across the training as a counselling psychology trainee. The cost for the personal therapy will need to be met by yourself, though you will also be eligible to receive counselling from the University's Wellbeing Team which can provide emotional and psychological support for emergencies and/or emergent wellbeing needs.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- A good honours degree from a BPS accredited undergraduate psychology programme (normally a 2.1 or above, although applicants with a lower degree classification and other postgraduate qualifications and/or experience will also be considered).
- The Graduate Basis for Chartership with the BPS.
- Satisfactory DBS enhanced disclosure.
- A commitment to undertake personal therapy and clinical supervision.
- Evidence of working in a one to one helping role (e.g. experience in the health and social care field in the public, private or voluntary areas) supported by a clinical reference.
- A requirement for clinical experience and or relevant training [this for example could include a 100 Hour Certificate in Counselling Skills and Theory].
- The capacity to undertake Doctoral level research - supported by an academic reference
- An Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on the Child & Adult Workforce and Child and Adult Barring Lists and subscription to the DBS Update Service. (Overseas equivalent required for non-UK applicants)
- Maturity and robustness to undertake work that is emotionally and academically challenging, a willingness to engage with feedback on your development and a commitment to self and professional growth.

The programme is a challenging programme and on intake we are now asking for the following:

- Two references and a personal statement (1,200 words maximum) which includes a small statement of intent that takes into consideration work life balance.
- Research proposal (500- words maximum). This should include a research question applicable to an area of Counselling Psychology, with clearly defined methodology and a plan for analysis.
- Your current most up to date CV that makes clear both your clinical work experiences and qualifications.

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 aims of the Doctorate of Counselling Psychology are to produce graduates who will:

1. Be competent, reflective, ethically sound, resourceful, and informed practitioners of counselling psychology able to work in therapeutic and nontherapeutic contexts
2. Value the imaginative, interpretative, personal, and collaborative aspects of the practice of counselling psychology
3. Commit themselves to ongoing personal and professional development and inquiry

4. Understand, develop and apply models of psychological inquiry for the creation of new knowledge which is appropriate to the multi-dimensional nature of relationships between people
5. Appreciate the significance of wider social, cultural, spiritual, political, and economic domains within which counselling psychology operates
6. Adopt a questioning and evaluative approach to the philosophy, practice, research and theory which constitutes counselling psychology
7. Develop and demonstrate communication, influencing, teaching and leadership skills by applying psychological knowledge and skills in a range of professional, clinical, organisational, and research contexts

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 8

- 8.1 Understand and critically evaluate the philosophical paradigms which underpin the psychological theories relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.2 Demonstrate knowledge of human, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social and physiological functioning, and apply this understanding to the use of psychometric tests and diagnostic frameworks relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.3 Initiate, develop and maintain purposeful therapeutic relationships as conceptualised by different models of psychological therapy, and conduct evidenced-based psychological assessments, case formulations and case presentations
- 8.4 Conduct psychological interventions across a range of clients, including children, adolescents, adults, couples, families and groups (under the supervision of a suitably qualified practitioner psychologist) using a range of cognitive behavioural and humanistic therapeutic approaches
- 8.5 Evaluate practice and outcomes of psychological therapy at an individual level and understand broader evaluation processes at organisational and systemic levels
- 8.6 Demonstrate and apply knowledge of research inquiry, research integrity and research design by conducting and reporting on a substantial original research investigation relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.7 Understand best practices for working with diversity and cultural competence and demonstrate social inclusion and equal opportunities in clinical practice
- 8.8 Understand and demonstrate ethical values, personal integrity and the professionalism required by a counselling psychologist
- 8.9 Understand and demonstrate effective communication, influencing, teaching and leaderships skills

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	non compressible or compensable NC or X
Year 1						
PSY8107M	8	1	Counselling Psychology: Theory and Practice	30	C	NC
PSY8108M	8	1	Psychological Assessment Theories and Practice	30	C	NC
PSY8109M	8	1	Professional Practice in Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8110M	8	2	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: Theory and Practice	30	C	NC
PSY8111M	8	2	Research Methods in Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8112M	8	2	Psychological Interventions Over the Lifespan: (Theory, Practice and Placement)	30	C	NC
Year 2						
PSY8207M	8	1	Group Psychotherapy	30	C	NC
PSY8208M	8	1&2	Doctoral Thesis 1	60	C	NC
PSY8209P	8	1	Placement 1	30	C	NC
PSY8210M	8	2	Counselling Psychology in Context and Systems	30	C	NC
PSY8211P	8	2	Placement 2	30	C	NC
Year 3						
PSY8307M	8	1	Psychopathology and Relational Psychotherapy Practice	30	C	NC
PSY8308M	8	1&2	Doctoral Thesis 2	30	C	NC
PSY8309P	8	1	Placement 3	30	C	NC
PSY8310M	8	2	Professional Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8311M	8	3	Doctoral Thesis 3	30	C	NC
PSY8312P	8	2	Placement 4	30	C	NC

Learning, teaching and assessment

The programme aims to be inclusive and accessible and recognises that training to be a counselling psychologist is an active, constructive and contextual process. The programme is structured such that your knowledge and skills continually develop across the levels of the programme, assuming prior knowledge of undergraduate psychology, but not counselling. All students will be supported across the three years by a course leader, module leaders, lecturers, research supervisors, and placement supervisors, in addition to an individual programme tutor.

All modules are delivered at doctoral level (level 8). There are six modules related to the acquisition of counselling and psychotherapy skills (PSY8107M, PSY8110M, PSY8112M, PSY8207M, PSY8210M, PSY8307M), with three modules completed in Year 1, two included in Year 2, and one in Year 3. Each of the therapy modules builds on the last, and those taken concurrently (i.e., PSY8110M and PSY8112M) are taught in parallel such that you cover the common cognitive behavioural and humanistic approaches across the lifespan. Students will be taught person centred and cognitive behavioural modalities. In accordance with HCPC Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists (2022), 12.18 'understand the philosophy, theory and practice of more than one evidence-based model of formal psychological therapy,' students will acquire a minimum of 150 hours of secondary model (cognitive behavioural) training. Model training is supported by the following modules: PSY8107M, PSY8108M, PSY8110M, PSY8112M, PSY8209P, PSY8211P, PSY8309P and PSY8312P. Person centred and cognitive behavioural modalities are core taught modalities on this programme. In addition to these, as evidenced by the range of modules, trainees are also taught psychodynamic and systemic models (e.g. PSY8109M, PSY8210M and PSY8307M). A variety of clinical placements strengthen the competencies that trainees acquire throughout this three-year programme. The therapy modules are complemented by a module covering the theory and practice of psychological assessment (in Year 1) and two modules including the ethical and professional aspects of the profession of counselling psychology (in both Years 1 & 3). Research competencies are covered in four modules; commencing with instruction in research methodology and design (in Year 1) and followed by three research thesis modules (across Years 2 & 3). The thesis modules require you to conduct a programmatic research project in an area related to counselling psychology under the supervision of an academic member of staff and culminate with the production of a 35,000-40,000-word thesis.

Instruction comprises didactic teaching, seminars, scaffolded skills practice sessions, virtual learning environments (i.e., Moodle), and placement activities (a minimum of 450 hours working as a trainee counselling psychologist). You will be supported to complete therapeutic practice in cognitive behaviour and humanistic therapies with appropriate face-to-face clinical supervision, in all placements (Placements 1, 2, 3 & 4).

There is a mix of written (e.g., theoretical papers, case reports, examinations), oral (e.g., case presentations), and videoed assessment. Clinical experiences and therapy competencies conducted on placement, are monitored using a Clinical Folio.

Examples of formative assessments can be now observed within multiple doctoral thesis milestones (PSY8208M; PSY8308M and PSY8311M assessment milestones), including formative feedback from research supervisors on an ethics application and first draft writing of Study 1 introduction, method and data collection. As further examples of formative assessments, students present case studies within small group supervision spaces for PSY8209P, PSY8211P, PSY8309P and PSY8312P. This mirrors multidisciplinary healthcare practice demands that students face within clinical placements and on their successful graduation as a Practitioner Psychologist.

Attendance and programme expectations

The Doctorate of Counselling Psychology is subject to an 80% module attendance rate in order to pass and progress.

Please be aware that 100% attendance is the expectation across all aspects of the programme. All attendance is in-person, unless explicitly stated by the module lead. This must be sustained throughout the three years of the programme to support your recommendation for registered practitioner psychologist status. However, if illnesses and personal circumstances impact on your studies at any point over the duration of the course, there are mechanisms within the University for you to follow for you to receive appropriate support.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general [regulations](#) for professional doctorate 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.

In addition, the following programme-specific regulations apply in respect of progression and graduation:

- All assessment items must be passed to satisfy progression, that is, only those successfully completing all components will be allowed to progress to the next year of study.
- The Doctorate in Counselling Psychology will be awarded on completion of all modules and a dissertation, alongside documentary evidence of supervised practice and personal therapy (this aspect is assessed in various modules).
- There is a fourth programme year to allow trainees to complete outstanding components of the placement and thesis modules (PSY8311M and PSY8312P). This would be only for those trainees who have failed to complete all assessments within the stipulated three year full time period. This has fee implications. In addition to programme fees, trainees engaging in this year will be required to source and fund their own clinical placement supervision. This is congruent with national Doctorate of Counselling Psychologist programmes.
- The Postgraduate Diploma in Psychological Therapies and Interventions will be awarded to students who exit with at least 120 credits from taught modules. This is a non-practicing award and does not qualify the student as a practicing clinician.
- The MA in Psychological Therapies and Interventions will be awarded to students who exit with at least 180 credits which include successful completion of PSY8209P Placement 1, PSY8211P Placement 2 and PSY8208M Doctoral Thesis 1. This is a non-practicing award and does not qualify the student as a practicing clinician.

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.

PSY8211P Placement 2

PSY8312P Placement 4

PSY8310M Professional Counselling Psychology

PSY8311M Doctoral Thesis 3

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#)
- [Strategic Plan 2026](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statement](#)
- [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- [BPS Standards for the accreditation of Doctoral programmes in Counselling Psychology \(2019\)](#)
- [Health & Care Professions Council Standards of education and training \(2014; 2022\)](#)

Date written / revised: 04/12/2022

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