

Programme Specification

BA (Hons) Counselling and Mental Health

<i>School:</i>	Education, Language and Psychology
<i>Subject area:</i>	Counselling
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2025-26
<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>	
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Counselling and Mental Health Diploma of Higher Education Counselling and Mental Health BA (Ord) Counselling and Mental Health
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Undergraduate periods of study ¹ for full-time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	Yes
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The BA (Hons) Counselling and Mental Health (or BA CMH for short) is an innovative degree programme for students who want to work with other people in a helping setting. You might have a very clear idea of the area you want to work in, or you might just be generally interested in the idea of helping people to overcome obstacles and fulfil their potential. In either case, the BA CMH is designed to give you the knowledge, skills, practical experience and personal awareness that you'll need to pursue your career aims after university. It also provides a firm foundation for postgraduate training in a range of professional disciplines.

The BA CMH includes a number of features that will help you to get the most from your time at York St John and will also enhance your career prospects. These include:

- Support with making the transition to university study.
- Tutor-observed skills practice every week.
- Placement activity in each year of the programme.
- One-to-one meetings with your academic tutor.

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated

- Opportunities to gain additional professional qualifications (dependent upon academic achievement and the modules you study), including:
 - Equivalent to the York St John University Certificate in Counselling Award.

Details of these features are given in the sections that follow.

Our approach to the field of counselling and mental health

Whilst the BA CMH introduces you to a number of schools of thought, the theoretical foundation of the programme is Humanistic Psychology. Humanistic helpers don't adopt a medical-style approach to working with others; we assume that people are the experts on their own lives, and that our job is to promote their autonomy and growth. We do this by listening very carefully, putting ourselves in the other person's shoes, helping them to identify and develop their personal resources, and supporting them in the choices they make.

There is a large amount of research evidence to suggest that it is the quality of the helping relationship, rather than the theories and techniques used by the helper, that makes the biggest difference to the lives of the people we work with. It is important to understand theory and develop a broad repertoire of helping skills, but in order to be able to form ethical and productive helping relationships with a diverse range of people, we also need to know ourselves. We need to become aware of our preferences and prejudices, to reflect on our reactions to people and situations, and to learn how other people experience our presence.

For this reason, in addition to the academic aspects of the programme, the BA CMH places an emphasis on your personal development. This requires you to be willing to learn about your characteristic ways of thinking, feeling and acting, to be open to feedback from your peers and tutors about how they experience you, and to be willing to reflect on your learning in a way that enables personal growth.

Our approach to learning, teaching and assessment

The Humanistic ideas outlined above also shape our overall approach to education. We see students as people who are striving to make sense of the world, each in their own unique way. For this reason, when we introduce you to new ideas, we invite you to explore them in relation to your experience of the world. This doesn't mean that anything goes and all interpretations have equal value. However, it does mean that we see knowledge as something that's created by people in particular situations for particular purposes, rather than being a set of clear-cut facts. We make no claim to be scientists, and do not believe that the scientific method is the best way to study human experience.

Knowledge is also created in relationships, and a lot of your learning on the programme results from engaging with your peers and tutors in a learning community, in lectures, seminars, skills workshops and supervision groups. This means that you have to be physically (and psychologically) present. Whilst we expect you to do many hours of independent learning (for example reading, reflecting and writing assignments), the BA CMH is not the right choice of programme for students who prefer to learn only through solitary study, and/or who are unable or unwilling to commit to a high level of presence and participation.

Our approach to assessment is informed by the same relationship-based philosophy. The original meaning of the word 'assess' was 'sit alongside,' and we see assessment as one part of our ongoing conversation with you about your development as a learner. Assessment isn't confined to those times when you submit assignments, but is an integral part of your week-by-week experience, for example when tutors provide feedback on your skills practice with your peers, or offer comments on pieces of written work.

In keeping with this philosophy (which is sometimes referred to as assessment *for* learning, rather than assessment *of* learning), most of your assignments will be coursework-based, and will be designed to help you extend and deepen your knowledge and understanding of topics that are relevant to your overall development.

In keeping with the developmental approach to learning outlined above, we have introduced a first-year module that will enable you to make the transition to university-style education, which requires you to be proactive and self-directing. You will learn how to search, evaluate and cite academic sources; how to make sense of instructions for assignments; how to structure your work and write in an appropriately academic style; and how to develop good study habits. This will create a level playing field for all students, and enable you to take full advantage of your time with us. If you already have a good level of academic study skills, the module will enable you to hone them further, and to project a clearer and more confident academic voice in your assignments.

Your academic tutor

One other important relationship is the one you develop with your academic tutor, the member of the BA CMH teaching team who has responsibility for your overall well-being and progress. During your time with us, you will have scheduled meetings with your academic tutor, who will write references for you when you complete the programme and will also be your first point of contact in times of difficulty. We offer a good level of support throughout the programme, not only in relation to your academic study but also in helping you to access the wide range of additional support services - for example academic, financial, well-being or career-related - that the University provides.

Placements

Whilst there are modules in every semester that enable you to develop your helping skills by working in small groups with your peers, we think it's important that you have the chance to apply your skills and knowledge in a real-world setting. For this reason, you will also work on placement during each year of the programme, undertaking a minimum of 110 hours' placement activity during your time with us. BA CMH students have frequently cited their placements as being particularly valuable in developing their competence and confidence, giving them an attractive CV, and helping them to build professional networks. A number have gone straight from the course to paid employment in their former placement organisation.

The Humanistic philosophy discussed above also applies to the role we play in helping you to secure a placement. Our aim is to promote your autonomy and personal development whenever we can. For this reason, we don't allocate you to a particular placement, as we want you to develop the important skills of researching the type of placement that feels relevant to you, making an application to the placement provider, and being persistent if you're not successful first time round. However, we don't expect you to do this all alone, and we have a large database of placements which you can look through to develop your ideas. We also work with you to ensure that the placements you undertake whilst on the course are suitable to your level of development.

Additional professional awards

If you successfully complete the practical skills modules COU6001M *Critical Practice 1* and COU6004M *Critical Practice 2*, your final degree transcript will state that you have met the criteria for the equivalent of the York St John University Certificate in Counselling award. This is a recognised measure of professional competence, and also enables you to apply for postgraduate counsellor training at

York St John University or elsewhere.

Given that a key purpose of this programme is to prepare you for employment in helping settings, you have to pass the final two professional practice modules, COU6004M *Critical Practice 2* and COU6005M *Professional Identity*, in order to successfully complete the BA CMH. This provides a guarantee to prospective employers that you have demonstrated sufficient practical competence and professional awareness to be suitable for employment in helping roles.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [undergraduate](#) study.

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.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 [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The BA (Hons) Counselling and Mental Health aims to:

1. Provide you with an intellectually stimulating, professionally valuable and personally rewarding experience of university education.
2. Equip you with knowledge, skills and personal awareness that will enable you to operate as an effective, ethical helper and flourish in graduate-level occupations.
3. Enable you to develop a detailed understanding of the field of mental health, of the use of counselling and other helping strategies that enable people to address mental health problems, and of the varied social and organisational contexts in which these strategies are implemented.
4. Provide opportunities for you to apply and develop your professional skills and knowledge, through engagement in placement activities which are relevant to your vocational interests and employment aspirations.
5. Foster an ethos of community, collaboration and mutual learning, both amongst students and between students and staff.
6. Promote your academic development by creating a culture of intellectual curiosity, research-informed teaching and scholarly rigour.
7. Enhance your ability to think critically, ethically and reflectively.
8. Help you to develop a sense of confident, self-aware professional and personal identity.

Programme learning outcomes

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

Level 4

- 4.1 **Apply** theory to both hypothetical and actual situations and experiences.
- 4.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the **application** of humanistic principles and skills in a helping conversation.
- 4.3 **Search, discuss** and **evaluate** sources of knowledge and information.
- 4.4 **Evidence** and **discuss** their participation in all aspects of the course and their maintenance of professional standards of behaviour in academic and placement settings.
- 4.5 **Apply** the principles of reflective practice to their personal, professional and academic development.

Level 5

- 5.1 **Reflectively apply** theory to both hypothetical and actual situations and experiences.
- 5.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the **application** of humanistic principles and key skills in a helping conversation.
- 5.3 **Evaluate** and **compare** sources and forms of knowledge, and methods of knowledge-production.
- 5.4 **Evidence** and **evaluate** their participation in all aspects of the course and their maintenance of appropriate standards of professional behaviour in academic and placement settings.
- 5.5 **Reflectively evaluate** their professional, personal and academic development.

Level 6

- 6.1 **Critically and reflectively apply** theories, and methods of knowledge-production, to both hypothetical and actual situations and experiences.
- 6.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the intentional, theory-informed and client-responsive use of helping skills.
- 6.3 **Synthesise** and **critically evaluate** sources and forms of knowledge, and methods of knowledge-production.
- 6.4 **Evidence** and **reflectively critique** their participation in all aspects of the course and their maintenance of appropriate standards of professional behaviour in academic and placement settings.
- 6.5 **Reflectively critique** their professional, personal and academic development.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	non-compensatable or compensatable NC or X
COU4001M	4	1	Foundations of Helping Relationships	20	C	X
COU4002M	4	1	Introduction to Reading, Writing and Researching	20	C	X
COU4003M	4	1	Humanistic Theories	20	C	X
COU4004M	4	2	Developing Humanistic Theory and Practice	20	C	X
COU4005M	4	2	Introduction to Professional Practice	20	C	X
COU4006M	4	2	Difference and Diversity in Helping	20	C	X
COU5003M	5	1	Psychodynamic and Cognitive-behavioural Approaches	20	C	X
COU5004M	5	1	Mental Health and Contemporary Practice	20	C	X
COU5005M	5	1&2	Developing Professional Practice	20	C	X
COU5001M	5	2	Theory and Practice of Coaching	20	C	X
COU5002M	5	2	Research Methods	20	C	X
COU5006M	5	2	Key Presenting Issues	20	C	X
COU6001M	6	1	Critical Practice 1	20	C	X
COU6002M	6	1&2	Independent Research Project	40	C	NC
COU6003M	6	1	The Ethical and Reflective Professional	20	C	X
COU6004M	6	2	Critical Practice 2	20	C	NC
COU6005M	6	2	Professional Identity	20	C	NC

Progression and graduation requirements

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

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

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](#)

Programme originally approved: 30/05/2018