

## Course record information

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| <b>Name and level of final award</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postgraduate Diploma - Counselling</li> <li>• Master of Science - Counselling (Top Up)</li> </ul> <p>The award is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible</p> |
| <b>Name and level of intermediate awards</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postgraduate Certificate (Pg Cert) - Counselling</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Awarding body/institution</b>  | University of Westminster  |
| <b>Teaching institution</b>   | University of Westminster  |
| <b>Status of awarding body/institution</b>                              | Recognised Body  |
| <b>Location of delivery</b>   | Primary: Central London  |
| <b>Language of delivery and assessment</b>                              | English  |
| <b>QAA subject benchmarking group(s)</b>                                | QAA Counselling and Psychotherapy.   |
| <b>Professional statutory or regulatory body</b>                        | British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) can be applied for see Award and Accreditation section  |
| <b>Westminster course title, mode of attendance and standard length</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling PGDip, Part-time day, September start - 2 years standard length</li> <li>• Counselling MSc, Part-time day, September start - 1 year standard length</li> </ul>      |
| <b>Valid for cohorts</b>  | From 2023/4  |

## Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum entry requirements for all postgraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information. For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply>.

## Aims of the course

The Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) / Masters (Top Up) in Counselling is a part-time course designed to provide professional training for people who are considering a career in counselling, psychotherapy and related mental health fields. The PG Dip training, covering the first two years of training, prepares students to be reflective, knowledgeable practitioners, with self-awareness and competency to work ethically, safely and effectively with clients. To achieve this, the course curriculum incorporates skills practice, a counselling placement and theory, a focus on personal wellbeing and development, research, and professional development. The Masters component that students may choose to take after having completed the PG Dip, involves a year-long Research Methods and Project in Counselling module leading to the Masters (Top Up) in Counselling award.

The course focuses its coverage on two highly influential modalities: psychodynamic therapies and humanistic therapies. There is, in addition, coverage of cognitive behaviour therapy and other therapeutic ways of working in the weekend workshops, explained below. Thus, practitioners will emerge with in-depth knowledge and skills, including the ability to integrate different modalities. Additionally, the focus is on inclusive training that welcomes differing perspectives,

thereby promoting awareness of positionality and facilitating empathy for different cultures and ways of living. This, along with our decolonising the curriculum approach (i.e. undoing the injustices of colonisation by, for example, listening to seldom-heard voices and being curious about differences) is important if the field is to better meet the challenges of supporting diverse clients (see below for more information).

The aims of the programme are for students to:

- Gain understanding of the theoretical and experiential nature of counselling.
- Become personally and professionally equipped as reflective practitioners, employing an inclusive counselling approach.
- Reflect critically, in class, in groups and as individuals, on their counselling practice, including working with issues of difference and diversity and evaluating the impact of coloniality on the theories studied and on clients.
- Become familiar with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework and adhere to its principles and guidelines.
- Be equipped to work towards accreditation.

Students may enter the programme at the start of the second semester of their first year or at the start of the second year of the training, if they have completed appropriate accreditation of prior learning (APL) in counselling. See the APL policy.

All modules are core (compulsory) on this programme; there are no option modules. Students study three modules each year, to the value of 60 credits and the placement module. In both years of the PG Dip, students take one module in Semester 1, one module in Semester 2, and two skills based modules that runs across both semesters. For the MSc Top Up element, students take the year-long 60 credit Research Methods and Project in Counselling module.

### **Award and Accreditation**

The PG Dip in Counselling award is made once a student has fulfilled the following requirements: completed the 120 credits; successfully completed the BACP requirement of a minimum of 100 hours of counselling practice under supervision; and completed the minimum required number of hours of personal therapy. Students can exit at that point with the award of PG Dip in Counselling. The second part is the optional MSc in Counselling award that students are awarded upon successful completion of a further 60 credits of the Research Methods and Project in Counselling module.

After graduation, the student is able to register with the BACP as a qualified counsellor working towards accreditation. The process towards accreditation is summarised below and requires the student to have:

1. Successfully completed professional counselling training, including the completion of a minimum of 100 clinical hours in a counselling placement under supervision while on training (student are responsible for finding their counselling placement, and are helped in this process by the guidance of the placement coordinator). The counselling placement module runs in parallel with the theoretical and practical modules across both years.
2. Completed the minimum number of required personal therapy hours (50) by the time they submit their final clinical portfolio
3. Attended at least 80% of each module and to attended the weekend workshops
4. Completed 120 credits of modules while on training
5. Registered as qualified therapist with the BACP upon completion of the PG Dip.

Please note that:

1. For full accreditation as a counsellor, the BACP requires a further 350 hours of clinical practice, which need to be carried out after completion of the main PG Dip training
2. The university will support, but cannot guarantee, students to find their own personal therapy, clinical placement and clinical supervision.
3. The PG Cert, which is the Exit Award that a student receives, does not provide eligibility for registration as qualified counsellor/psychotherapist with the BACP.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The PG Dip / MSc (Top Up) in Counselling are guided by the ethos of the School of Social Sciences: *"Our commitment to diversity and decolonise the curriculum and teaching practices in the School of Social Sciences is aimed at challenging prejudices that exist in the societies, celebrating plurality of identities and perspectives, and empowering our students and colleagues to explore their full potential"*.

Throughout the training, students are encouraged to bring their whole selves, backgrounds and knowledges into the classroom and to engage in discussions about the material, through class discussions, group activities, individual/group supervision and critical reading and assessments. Assessments will build on class discussions and require students to consider the historical, social and cultural contexts of the theories being studied. For example, we endeavour to decolonise our teaching, so that we can consider what better care might look like for a range of diverse groups along the lines of racialised minority status, gender, sexuality, class, disability and so on. Decolonisation involves a restoration of regard and empathy for ideas, clients and/or conditions which were previously (and may still be in some quarters) less well regarded, i.e. for who do not fit a traditionally privileged white perspective. Thus, we will explore ideas like decolonisation, and how colonial ideas influence and constrain the field, as well as what the possibilities for better care are. Assessments are designed to be authentic and inclusive, drawing on different formats such as case studies, reflective writing, traditional essays, projects and authentic MCQs. The case studies and activities that facilitate learning throughout the course directly engage students with a variety of different identities such as sexuality, gender, ability, culture and ethnicity, so as to bring to life the lived experience of a diverse range of clients, as well as to help students to consider what the impact of different levels of disadvantage and privilege may have on their clients.

Ultimately, the course aims to create the conditions for all students to feel included, to feel confident in their own identities as practitioners, and confident in working with the identities of others. We aim to support students from all walks of life to develop their own subjectivity and voice in relation to the counselling field. As such, we hope our graduates will feel confident in challenging oppressive structures, including colonialism, as practitioners.

## **Postgraduate Diploma Counselling**

The aims of the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling are for students to:

- Gain understanding of the theoretical and experiential nature of counselling.
- Become personally and professionally equipped as reflective practitioners, employing an inclusive counselling approach.
- Reflect critically, in class, in groups and as individuals, on their counselling practice, including working with issues of difference and diversity and evaluating the impact of coloniality on the theories studied and on clients.
- Become familiar with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework and adhere to its principles and guidelines.
- Be equipped to work towards accreditation.

## **MSc Counselling (Top Up)**

The aims of the MSc in Counselling (Top Up) programme are for students to:

- Develop an understanding of research methods and data analysis skills relevant for investigating counselling problems.
- Communicate awareness of ethical issues and write an ethically appropriate research proposal.
- Conduct research and collect data in an ethical manner.
- Submit the research through a written dissertation.

## Employment and further study opportunities

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace, i.e. employability skills. The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- Career development skills are embedded in all courses
- Opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are widely available to students
- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision
- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements, which will inform the service delivered to students.

The University of Westminster and the counselling course team are committed to supporting you to enhance your employability, and to help you to develop professionalism in your field of choice.

One of the strengths of the PG Dip / MSc (Top Up) Counselling is the vocational nature of the training, leading to professionally trained and qualified therapists who are ready to enter the therapeutic professions or related job markets. Therefore, the course has, at its core, a strong employability ethos which maps on to the Westminster Graduate Attributes. Students successfully completing the training will also be eligible for accreditation as a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, which will provide a further stamp of their professional standing.

The employability elements include skills, knowledge and competencies including: the development of counselling skills throughout the course; the work-based clinical placement; teamwork; self-management; self-awareness and business-awareness; ethical awareness; communication skills; literacy and numeracy; presentation and networking skills; and being locally and globally engaged citizens. In addition, guest presentations by professionals working in the therapeutic fields will provide further knowledge and guidance on professional settings. Students are also given opportunities to connect to the vast employability resources available in the University.

Graduates from the course will be equipped to work in a wide variety of settings. These include working within the NHS, university counselling services, school-based counselling, charity organisations, private practice, academic departments, and research. The course will also have equipped students, through transferable skills, to work in a wide variety of other fields such as personal and executive coaching, business environments, among many other settings. Opportunities for life-long continuing professional and personal development are embedded in the counselling role.

The programme can also lead to additional study and advanced training, such as the professional doctorate in counselling and psychotherapy and training in specialist branches of therapy.

Therefore, the development of employability is evident through:

- experience on placement under supervision;
- personal growth and reflection with the assistance of tutors at each level of the programme;
- the engagement of theory and practice in taught modules;
- the development of skills throughout;
- careers advice and assistance from counselling tutors.

## What will you be expected to achieve?

### Course learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning.

These are threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

The overall knowledge and understanding you will gain from your course (KU)

Graduate attributes are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA)

Professional and personal practice learning outcomes are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP)

Key transferable skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course. (KTS)

Upon successful completion of the the programme, students will have acquired the requisite knowledge and understanding to:

- 001 Demonstrate critical knowledge of theoretical concepts and debates relating to counselling. ( KU )
- 002 Apply a range of practical counselling skills in therapeutic contexts. ( KTS SS )
- 003 Formulate, explain and critically assess the use of integrative models of counselling. ( KU PPP )
- 004 Critically evaluate and develop interpersonal and team working skills. ( KTS )
- 005 Develop and engage appropriately with a range of communication skills and using a variety of mediums. ( KTS )
- 006 State awareness of evidence-based practice and the ethical basis of work, and of the level and limitations of students' contribution as counsellors to wider psychological and mental health services. ( KU PPP KTS )
- 007 Engage positively in personal development through critical reflection, self-evaluation, self-care and supervised practice. ( PPP CS )
- 008 Engage inclusively, empathically and critically with a diversity of world views and the people who hold them, both within a counselling context and more broadly. ( PPP )
- 009 Participate as compassionate and responsible citizens of local and global communities. ( KTS )

Additionally, the students of the MSc Counselling (Top Up) pathway will be able to:

- 010 Develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to formulate, implement, investigate and complete research questions suitable for a counselling-related problem ( KU SS )

## How will you learn?

### Learning methods

A variety of learning and teaching methods are used to facilitate the development of learning, progression and achievement. There is an emphasis on enquiry-based learning and active engagement in problem-solving activities as consistent with the practice of professional counselling. The learning is focused on the applied nature of the issues within professional work, and how students can integrate their own personal style with the theories and practices taught.

In addition to the weekly modules in both years, students need to attend 8 non-residential weekend workshops (Friday-Sunday, 9.30 am - 5.30 pm) over the course of the PG Dip training. The themes of these workshops typically include cognitive behaviour therapy, sex therapy, working in the context of religion and spirituality, mirror work, creative ways of working, online therapy, and gender, sexual and relationship diversity. The provisional dates are:

20-22 October 2023

15-17 December 2023

09-11 February 2024

17-19 May 2024

20-22 September 2024

29 November-01 December 2024

21-23 February 2025

02-04 May 2025

**Learning takes place through lectures, seminar sessions, personal development groups, the clinical work placement, personal therapy, personal tutorials, and independent study.**

Lectures are interactive in nature and facilitate reflection on the theoretical/conceptual and practice-based material.

Seminar sessions involve active engagement and participation in exploring diverse client case studies, group discussions and debates, role plays, small group skills practice, and presentations.

The personal development group facilitates self-reflection, self-awareness and personal development, including an awareness of individual positionality in relation to levels of privilege.

The counselling placement involves developing counselling skills through supervised work of at least 100 hours with clients, and facilitates knowledge and understanding of the professional contexts in which therapy occurs. The learning on the counselling placement is further explored and skills are developed on an ongoing basis in the Counselling Skills & Practice and Advanced Skills & Practice and the theoretical modules.

Personal therapy (a recommended minimum of 25 hours per year) facilitates self-reflection, self-awareness and personal development, and also provides insights into being a client, and the therapeutic relationship. Personal therapy is arranged privately by the students after authorisation from the Placement Co-ordinator. Students meet the costs of personal therapy.

Personal tutorials provide one-to-one meetings between the student and their personal tutor, so that students can raise issues around their learning, understanding and progression.

In addition, students engage in continuous independent learning outside of the above contexts, through additional reading, the practice of skills in peer groups, peer supervision, and working on assignments.

## **Placement**

An important part of the learning happens in the counselling placement where students carry out counselling with clients in an appropriate organisation. Students need to complete a minimum of 100 hours of client work, under supervision by their placement supervisor, in order to successfully complete their professional training and receive the Postgraduate Diploma. The Counselling Course Team provide further support in helping students find appropriate placements and additional supervision as part of their learning.

## **Teaching methods**

The teaching aims to develop the students as counselling practitioners. The teaching focuses on integrating not only the theory with the practice, but also supporting students to integrate all the elements that make them competent practitioners and ethical human beings. Teaching includes onsite lectures and online resources using the Blackboard virtual learning environment. Where lectures are delivered online, they will be either synchronous (taking place in real time) or asynchronous (pre-recorded, which students can then access in their own time). Blackboard is used for a variety of functions, including a repository of learning resources, for small-group skills activities using the Blackboard Collaborate function, and for peer-initiated activities. In addition, there are eight campus-based weekend workshops across the two years, centred around specific themes.

## **Assessment methods**

A variety of assessment methods are used on the course. They vary across modules and reflect assessment of authentic activities that students are likely to come across in their role as counsellors. Examples include reflective reports, small group presentations of client issues, assessment and formulation of diverse case studies, demonstration of counselling skills, an extended case study, and performance in the clinical work experience setting. In addition, each module has a built-in formative assessment that enables students to demonstrate their preparation towards the summative assessment. Formative assessments include peer-assessment and self-assessment. Feedback from peers and tutors will enable students to improve and enhance their knowledge, understanding and skills on given tasks.

## **Feedback**

Feedback on student work is provided through a variety of means. For assessed work submitted online, feedback is also provided online. In addition, formative feedback is provided to students frequently, based on observations of their performance in class, in the skills practice sessions. The placement supervisor also provides feedback of student's client work through regular supervision.

| Graduate Attribute                            | Evident in Course Outcomes |
|---|----------------------------|
| Critical and creative thinker                 | 010                        |
| Literate and effective communicator           | 010                        |
| Entrepreneurial                               |                            |
| Global in outlook and engaged in communities  |                            |
| Socially, ethically and environmentally aware |                            |

## Course Structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Postgraduate students study 180 credits per year. Additional free text information on the choices may also be included, for example where students must choose one of two modules.. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

# Postgraduate Diploma Counselling

## Level 7

The Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Counselling is a 3-year programme that comprises 120 credits of the postgraduate diploma study and training (Years 1 + 2), and an optional third year of Masters dissertation (60 credits).

### Year 1

Therapeutic Approaches 1

Therapeutic Approaches 2

Counselling Skills and Practice

Counselling Placement

### Year 2

Therapeutic Approaches 3

Advanced Skills and Practice

Specialist Topics in Therapy

Counselling Placement

### Counselling Placement

Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of supervised client work in a counselling placement as well as the required personal therapy. Students start the placement during the first year and continue in a placement in their second year.

| Module Code | Module Title                     | Status | PT Year<br>(where applicable) | UK credit | ECTS |
|-------------|----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|-----------|------|
| 7PSYC033W   | Counselling Skills and Practice  | Core   | 1                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC030W   | Therapeutic Approaches 1         | Core   | 1                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC031W   | Therapeutic Approaches 2         | Core   | 1                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC035W   | Advanced Skills and Practice     | Core   | 2                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC034W   | Specialist Topics in Counselling | Core   | 2                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC032W   | Therapeutic Approaches 3         | Core   | 2                             | 20        | 10   |
| 7PSYC037W   | Counselling Placement            | Core   | Various                       | 0         | 0    |



# MSc Counselling (Top Up)

## Level 7

### Year 3 (optional MSc Top Up)

Research Methods and Project in Counselling

Students must have successfully completed the PG Dip prior to the Top Up.

| Module Code | Module Title                                | Status | PT Year (where applicable) | UK credit | ECTS |
|-------------|---|--------|----------------------------|-----------|------|
| 7PSYC036W   | Research Methods and Project in Counselling | Core   | Various                    | 60        | 30   |

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. In addition, timetabling and limited spaces may mean you cannot register for your first choice of option modules.

## Professional body accreditation or other external references

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) pending, students are eligible to apply for accreditation see above section on Award and Accreditation.

BACP Accreditation of Training Courses Core Curriculum (2021)

## Course management

The Course is hosted in the School of Social Sciences, one of the four Schools within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences on Cavendish Campus. The Course is directly managed by the Course Leaders within the School of Social Sciences. Each module on the course also has a designated Module Leader responsible for the administration and monitoring of its design and delivery. The Head of School has overall responsibility for all academic provision in the School.

The course teaching team consists of staff from the School of Social Sciences. Key members of the course team meet regularly to identify and address ways of improving the design and delivery of the course. Staff involved in the course undergo annual appraisal and peer development of their teaching practice, which is provided by the Academic Engagement and Learning Development Team within the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI). Staff also engage in their own research and/or scholarly activity. Staff teaching on the course also attend workshops organised by Academic Standards and the Teaching and Learning Groups for continuous development in teaching, learning and assessment approaches.

The Postgraduate Diploma / MSc course draws upon internal institutional resources provided by the University as well as external resources and guidance provided by the BACP and similar organisations.

## Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations](https://westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations).

Course specific regulations apply to some courses.

## Academic Support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Campus Registry. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students. Further information on Blackboard can be found

at <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/your-student-journey/when-you-arrive/blackboard>

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Further information on the Academic Learning Development Centre can be found at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development).

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their College. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

## **Support Services**

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/student-advice>.

The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/students-union>

## **How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?**

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel. University Panels normally include internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university, a representative from industry and a Student Advisor.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the evidence of student surveys, student progression and achievement and reports from external examiners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and make changes where necessary.

A Course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with revalidation panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

## **How do we act on student feedback?**

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Course representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the course representatives.
- There are also School Representatives appointed jointly by the University and the Students' Union who meet with senior School staff to discuss wider issues affecting student experience across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees;
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate, if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification is supplemented by the Course Handbook, Module proforma and Module Handbooks provided to students. Copyright in this document belongs to the University of Westminster. All rights are reserved. This document is for personal use only and may not be reproduced or used for any other purpose, either in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the University of Westminster. All copies of this document must incorporate this Copyright Notice – 2022©

## Additional Details