

Course record information

Name and level of final award	• Postgraduate Diploma - Counselling and Psychotherapy • Master of Science - Counselling and Psychotherapy (Top up) The award is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible
Name and level of intermediate awards	• Postgraduate Diploma (Pg Dip) - Counselling Studies • Postgraduate Certificate (Pg Cert) - Counselling Studies
Awarding body/institution	University of Westminster
Teaching institution	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution	Recognised Body
Location of delivery	Primary: Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
QAA subject benchmarking group(s)	QAA Counselling and Psychotherapy.
Professional statutory or regulatory body	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) can be applied for see Award and Accreditation section
Westminster course title, mode of attendance and standard length	• Counselling and Psychotherapy PGDip, Part-time day, September start - 2 years standard length • Counselling and Psychotherapy MSc, Part-time day, September start - 1 year standard length
Valid for cohorts	From 2026/7

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 and Psychotherapy 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 and Psychotherapy 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).

Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy

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

- Gain understanding of the theoretical and experiential nature of counselling and psychotherapy.
- Become personally and professionally equipped as reflective practitioners, employing an inclusive counselling and psychotherapy approach.
- Reflect critically, in class, in groups and as individuals, on their counselling and psychotherapy 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 and psychotherapy. 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.

MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy (Top Up)

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

- Develop an understanding of research methods and data analysis skills relevant for investigating counselling and psychotherapy 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.

Award and Accreditation

The PG Dip in Counselling and Psychotherapy award is made once a student has fulfilled the following requirements:

- Passed the 120 credits core modules
- successfully completed the BACP requirement of a minimum of 100 hours of counselling practice under supervision. This will be demonstrated by passing the Counselling Placement module.
- Successfully completed at least 50 hours of personal therapy
- Successfully demonstrate the BACP requirement of attending a minimum of 450 hours of direct teaching/instruction.

Students can exit at that point with the award of PG Dip in Counselling and Psychotherapy. The second part is the optional MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy award, which students receive upon successful completion of a further 60 credits in the Research Methods and Project in Counselling module.

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

1. Successfully completed professional counselling and psychotherapy training, including the completion of a minimum of 100 clinical hours in a counselling and psychotherapy placement under supervision while on training (students are responsible for finding their counselling and psychotherapy 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).
3. Attended a minimum of 450 hours across the course, including the weekend workshops
4. Completed 120 credits of modules while on training.

Please note that:

1. For full accreditation as a counsellor/psychotherapist, 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 in finding 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 a qualified counsellor/psychotherapist with the BACP.

Students who are unable to meet the requirements for placement or teaching hours may leave the course. As long as they have passed the 120 theoretical modules (all core modules, excluding the placement module), they will obtain a PG Diploma in Counselling Studies without accreditation status. The course outcomes for this course are:

- Critically evaluate and integrate psychodynamic, humanistic and other relevant therapeutic theories to inform ethical, evidence-based counselling and psychotherapy practice.
- Demonstrate the self-awareness, reflective capacity and clinical competence required to establish and maintain safe, effective therapeutic relationships within supervised practice.
- Critically understand research-informed theories relevant to counselling and psychotherapy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The PG Dip / MSc (Top Up) in Counselling and Psychotherapy are guided by the ethos of the School of Social Sciences: *'Our commitment to diversity and decolonising the curriculum and teaching practices in the School of Social Sciences is aimed at challenging prejudices that exist in society, 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 knowledge 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/psychotherapist field. As such, we hope our graduates will feel confident in challenging oppressive structures, including colonialism, as practitioners.

Employment and further study opportunities

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace, i.e. career/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 and psychotherapy 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 and Psychotherapy 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 and psychotherapy 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 of what successful students have achieved as a 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)

Cognitive Skills, are learning outcomes that help build conceptual understanding that is necessary to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems and comment on research.

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 and Psychotherapy (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 and psychotherapy . 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 workshops (usually Fridays-Saturdays, 10.00-16.00) 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, creative ways of working, online therapy, and gender, sexuality and relationship diversity.

The precise dates are made available at the start of each academic year, with two workshops taking place in each semester (around the mid-way point in the semester and towards the end of the semester).

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 and psychotherapy 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 and psychotherapy 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 and psychotherapy 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 and Psychotherapy 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/psychotherapy 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 and Microsoft Teams is used for a variety of functions, including a repository of learning resources, for small-group skills activities using the Microsoft Teams function, and for peer-initiated activities.

Students must attend teaching to demonstrate the BACP requirement of attending a minimum of 450 hours of direct teaching/instruction.

In addition, there are eight campus-based weekend workshops across the two years, centred around specific themes, which are also linked to accreditation hours.

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 and psychotherapists. 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. Students will also be assessed on the BACP requirements, which include placement, personal therapy hours and clinical hours.

Formative assessments include peer-assessment and self-assessment. Feedback from peers and tutors will enable students to improve their knowledge, understanding, and skills in 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	001, 003, 004, 007, 010
Literate and effective communicator	002, 003, 005, 010
Entrepreneurial	005
Global in outlook and engaged in communities	004, 008, 009
Socially, ethically and environmentally aware	006, 008, 009

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 and Psychotherapy

Level 7

The Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy 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 and Psychotherapy Placement

Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of supervised client work in a counselling and psychotherapy 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 (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 and Psychotherapy (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 who pass the PG Dip Counselling and Psychotherapy are eligible to apply for accreditation; see the above section on Award and Accreditation. BACP Accreditation of Training Courses Core Curriculum (2021)

Students who graduate from the Top Up and PG Dip or Cert Counselling Studies are not eligible to apply for accreditation.

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://www.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 and additional support available. You will be provided with a Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or equivalent. 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 utilises 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->

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. In addition to online resources in Blackboard, students can also attend Study Skills workshops and schedule 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 our libraries, each of which holds 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.

Support Services

The University of Westminster's Student and Academic Services department provides a range of advice and 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 annually by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that any issues that might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence from various sources, including student surveys, student progression and achievement, and reports from external examiners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and make necessary changes.

Periodic reviews are also conducted to ensure that the curriculum remains up-to-date and that the skills acquired on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Representative students meet with a panel to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess the course's performance.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University, and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is collected in various ways.

- Through student engagement activities at the course and 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 for each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be improved.
- Final-year undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey, which helps inform the national university league tables. Postgraduate students will be asked to complete the Postgraduate Taught Survey (PTES).

This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student may reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities 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 – 2025©

Additional Details