

National Counselling Society

Standards of Training and Education for Accredited Courses

2020

Introduction

The NCS accredits courses that meet its Training Standards and provides core practitioner training in counselling and/or psychotherapy, equipping graduates to work with adult clients who present with a range of commonly encountered issues. Accredited training must contain a substantial component of in-the-room or synchronous online teaching, as opposed to purely asynchronous online tuition/distance learning.

Successful completion of an NCS Accredited course is one of the routes to becoming an Accredited Member and to being accepted on to the Society's Accredited Register. Accredited courses must meet the standards set out in this document.

In setting its minimum standards, the Society seeks to adopt a flexible and holistic approach that considers the wide range of experience, style, and training of practitioners in this field.

Our procedures look at quality as well as quantity and recognize that a blend of learning experiences is involved in becoming a reflective practitioner of counselling.

In devising these Standards, The Society has consulted:

- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy 2013
- ISBN 978 1 84979 777 1 www.qaa.ac.uk
- Skills For Health Competencies for Psychological Therapies PT01-PT49
<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/about-us/competences%10national-occupational-standards/>
- Competence Frameworks for the Delivery and Supervision of Psychological Therapies
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/clinical-psychology/CORE/competence_frameworks.htm

Accredited courses must also show that they meet the particular requirements appropriate to their own model and scope of training. They should provide appropriate learning outcomes to demonstrate this.

The Standards

1. Course Quality

Training must incorporate and be informed by:

- Respect for the client's autonomy, cultural differences and rights.
- Practitioner awareness of the limits of their level of competence and the vulnerability of the client.
- Awareness of the importance of personal development, supervision and CPD
- The protection of students' and tutors' rights to free speech

Trainees should be enabled to become safe, competent and ethical practitioners who can:

- maintain professional boundaries
- use professional supervision
- develop skills in ethical decision making

2. Course content

Training must include a balance of theory and practice.

Theoretical study must include awareness of:

- Human growth and development
- Psychological theories concerning:
 - How psychological problems develop
 - The process of therapeutic change
 - The importance of the therapeutic relationship
- Ethics and the law including, but not limited to:
 - Legal limits to confidentiality
 - Safeguarding
 - Use of Code of Ethical Practice
 - Contracting
 - Working within levels of competence and managing referrals
 - Use of Supervision

- Psychopathology
 - Limitations and advantages of the medical model
 - Overview of various mental illnesses - mild, moderate to serious and chronic, including both psychotic and non-psychotic diagnoses
 - Basic elements of psychopharmacology - drugs commonly used in treatment.
- The value of research
- Equality and Diversity including but not limited to: Gender/ Gender identity, Age, Ethnicity, Nationality, Ethnic origin, Culture, Class, Ability, Sexual orientation, Religion, Beliefs, Spirituality

Skills training must address:

Generic practical skills including those of:

- Relationship building
- Communication
- Assessment
- Formulation
- Psychotherapeutic strategies and interventions
- Reflective practice
- Monitoring, evaluation and research.
- Recognising the importance of equality, diversity and difference and understanding and managing their impact on the therapeutic relationship
- Specialist skills appropriate to the core theoretical model of the course.

(Ref: QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy 2013 pp.4-5)

3. Coherence and cohesion

The training course must take the form of a coherent programme which allows for the integration over time of students' theoretical knowledge, personal development and practical experience.

The programme must be at minimum Level 4 on the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) or equivalent as demonstrated to the Society's satisfaction.

The duration of the programme must be at least equal to the Total Qualification Time set by the Awarding Body for a qualification at the relevant Level.

Appropriate Learning Outcomes must be published and made available.

4. Teaching, Learning and Contact hours

The number, qualifications and availability of teaching staff must be sufficient to ensure that students are enabled to become competent, ethically sound practitioners of counselling.

5. Assessment

Trainees must be regularly assessed, by both formative and summative assessments, in terms of their:

- Developing theoretical and practical knowledge
- Competence to practice counselling in an ethically sound manner
- Ability to manage the therapeutic process and its effects on both client and counsellor

Appropriate Assessment Criteria must be published and made available.

A suitable qualified External Examiner must be involved in monitoring assessment.

Procedures must be in place to suspend and support trainees found to be incompetent, incapable or ethically unsound.

6. Supervised Practice/Placement

Trainees should experience at least 100 hours of clinical experience with clients in a formally supervised placement. Clients must first be assessed as suitable for work with students. Training providers must also satisfy themselves that students are ready for work with real clients in placement and that there is an appropriate written agreement with the agency in place. It must be made explicit where the clinical responsibility for the client work is held. Private practice or an arrangement whereby students find their own clients is not acceptable. The placement must be integral to the course, and examples of client work must be taken to the course for assessment.

7. Personal growth and development

The programme must contain opportunities for experiential learning about self and others. This should support trainees in managing and making use of their own experience within the therapeutic relationship.

8. Ethics and policies

Training providers must have in place and publish:

- A satisfactory Complaints Procedure.

A suitable Independent Complaints Reviewer (ICR) must be in place to support any requests made to review a complaint. An ICR would be defined as someone who was not otherwise directly associated with the trainer (not a tutor, lecturer, employee or business owner) but whom the trainer could compensate for their duties.

- A satisfactory Equality/Diversity policy

Training Providers agree to be subject to the Society's own [Code of Ethics](#) and [Complaints Procedures](#).

9. Philosophy of training

The training organisation should provide a statement of its particular approach to and ethos of the vocation of counselling and the training of practitioners.