

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1. Key Information

Programme Title:	MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy
Awarding Institution:	Buckinghamshire New University
Teaching Institution(s):	Buckinghamshire New University
Subject Cluster:	Psychology
Award Title (including separate Pathway Award Titles where offered):	Master of Science in Counselling and Psychotherapy
Pathways (if applicable)	
FHEQ level of final award:	Level 7
Other award titles available (exit qualifications):	Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy
Accreditation details:	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
Length of programme:	2 years (full-time)
Mode(s) of Study:	Full-time
Mode of Delivery:	In person (on-site) delivery
Language of study:	English
QAA Subject Benchmark(s):	Master's Degree Characteristics (2020)
Other external reference points (e.g. Apprenticeship Standard):	
Course Code(s):	MSCPSYFT
UCAS Code(s):	n/a
Approval date:	December 2024
Date of last update:	March 2025

2. Programme Summary

The MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy at BNU is designed as a comprehensive Level 7 professional training program that prepares graduates for careers as qualified counsellors and psychotherapists. The program combines rigorous theoretical instruction with practical, supervised clinical placements. Graduates of this program meet British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) membership standards, ensuring they are equipped for immediate entry into professional practice. With a focus on reflective learning, cultural sensitivity, and adherence to ethical frameworks, this program enables students to develop critical thinking skills and advanced therapeutic techniques.

The MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy programme is structured to provide a rigorous educational experience through a two-year full-time with enhanced clinical placement which allows the award of BACP accreditation. The programme is designed to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for professional roles in mental health settings. The MSc addresses an acknowledged need by establishing a clear progression route for graduates from undergraduate s within and outside Buckinghamshire New University, especially those from psychology, nursing, and social work backgrounds. Given the limited availability of postgraduate qualifications in counselling and psychotherapy that integrate clinical placements with a strong focus on BACP competencies, this programme serves as a vital bridge to higher qualifications and enhanced professional practice. Acknowledging the high demand for its student mental health services, Buckinghamshire New University has initiated plans to establish an on-campus mental health clinic and an extended partnership with local NHS GP's to provide mental health support (Psychotherapy) services. This facility will not only provide students with timely access to counselling services but will also serve as an invaluable practical training site for MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy students.

3. Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

Programme Aims

This programme aims to:

- Equip students with a comprehensive understanding of counselling psychology theories and models.
- Develop advanced skills in therapeutic communication, psychological assessment, and intervention strategies.
- Foster ethical, reflective, and culturally sensitive counselling practices.
- Prepare students for professional accreditation and successful careers in diverse settings.
- Secure a qualifying award accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), enabling graduates to be a BACP registered member and valid pathway of postgraduate employability.
- Establish a robust foundation for professional, ethical practice and a centre of excellence for extended research opportunities within the field of counselling and psychotherapy.
- Actively engage students as members of a professional community, contributing to ongoing professional development and meeting the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements of the BACP.
- Extend and deepen academic and professional competencies at the master's level.
- Extending and creating mental health wellbeing opportunities for the BNU students and staff community and local community partners.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding (K)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
K1	Articulate a systematic understanding of the various psychotherapy theories and their implications for practice, including, where appropriate, the use of technology in therapeutic settings.
K2	Demonstrate critical awareness of complex and unpredictable emotional and psychological states and their management within a therapeutic context.
K3	Evidence of in-depth understanding of the foundational knowledge that underpins effective counselling and psychotherapy practice as identified in relevant professional standards.
K4	Evidence of a critical understanding of various methods for managing client relationships and therapeutic boundaries effectively.
K5	Articulate a comprehensive and critical understanding of assessment strategies and therapeutic interventions for diverse client populations.

Analysis and Criticality (C)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
C1	Critically reflect on your therapeutic approach in comparison with other modalities within the wider mental health sector.
C2	Contextualise your practice to the requirements of professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies, such as the BACP, and align with internal and external policies affecting the field.
C3	Demonstrate how your practice exemplifies the knowledge, skills, and values relevant to counselling and psychotherapy, with particular attention to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusivity.
C4	Critically evaluate client data to inform personalized therapeutic practices and improve clinical outcomes.
C5	Critically reflect on personal and professional challenges and the potential for change in promoting mental well-being and sustainable therapist-client relationships.

Application and Practice (P)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
P1	Critically apply your advanced knowledge of psychotherapy to the development of your professional practice in diverse settings.
P2	Respond innovatively to contemporary challenges that affect mental health care and therapeutic practices.

P3	Evidence of the critical application of knowledge, skills, and ethical standards as defined by sectoral, disciplinary, and professional standards relevant to your practice.
P4	Implement a range of strategies for enhancing client self-awareness, emotional regulation, and overall mental health within your therapeutic practice.
P5	Critically apply effective and ethical assessment strategies as part of therapeutic interventions.

Transferable skills and other attributes (T)

On successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

ID	Learning Outcome
T1	Communicate effectively with clients and colleagues, adapting language and approach to meet diverse needs.
T2	Demonstrate emotional resilience and self-awareness, managing personal well-being in a professional context.
T3	Apply ethical principles and culturally sensitive practices in varied therapeutic environments.
T4	Collaborate effectively within interdisciplinary teams, respecting differing perspectives and expertise.
T5	Utilise critical reflection and continuous learning to enhance personal and professional development.

Graduate Attributes

The BNU Graduate Attributes of: Knowledge and its application; Creativity; Social and ethical awareness and responsibility; and Leadership and self-development focus on the development of innovative leaders in professional and creative capacities, who are equipped to operate in the 21st Century labour market and make a positive impact as global citizens.

Upon successful completion of the MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy programme, graduates have multiple opportunities for further academic advancement within Buckinghamshire New University:

PhD in Psychology or Counselling: Graduates interested in further academic research and scholarly contributions can progress to a PhD programme. This allows them to delve deeper into specific areas of interest within psychotherapy, counselling psychology, or related fields, contributing to new insights and advancements in mental health practices.

Specialist Postgraduate Certificates: For those looking to specialise further, BNU offers postgraduate certificates in related areas such as Addiction Counselling, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, and Family Therapy. These certificates provide focused training that can enhance the graduates' expertise and qualifications in niche areas of psychotherapy.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Courses: BNU also offers a range of CPD courses that allow graduates to update their skills, meet professional licensing requirements, and stay abreast of the latest developments in their field. These courses are particularly beneficial for maintaining and enhancing professional competencies in the fast-evolving field of mental health.

Career Opportunities:

The MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy programme equips graduates with the skills and credentials necessary to pursue a variety of career paths in the mental health sector:

Counsellor or Psychotherapist: With BACP registration, graduates are qualified to practice as counsellors or psychotherapists in various settings, including private practices, hospitals, and mental health clinics.

Specialist Roles in Mental Health: Graduates can specialize in areas such as addiction, family counselling, or youth counselling, working within specialized clinics, community health centres, or educational institutions.

Mental Health Advocacy and Policy: There are opportunities for graduates to engage in policymaking, advocacy, and community programme development aimed at improving mental health services at the local, national, or international level.

Academic Careers and Research: Those with an inclination towards academia can pursue careers in teaching and research at universities and colleges, contributing to the academic community and influencing future practices in psychotherapy and counselling.

Corporate Wellbeing and Consultancy: Graduates can also apply their skills in the corporate sector, working as wellbeing consultants or employee assistance programme (EAP) coordinators to help improve workplace mental health.

NGOs and Humanitarian Work: There are also opportunities to work with non-governmental organizations and international agencies focused on mental health, providing support and counselling in humanitarian settings or under-resourced areas.

4. Entry Requirements

The University's [general entry requirements](#) will apply to admission to this programme with the following additions / exceptions:

- Applicants must typically hold a bachelor's degree with Honours in a related field like Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, or Education, with at least a lower second-class (2:2) Honours.
- Non-native English speakers or those who did not have English as the language of instruction at the undergraduate level must demonstrate proficiency. This is typically evidenced by an IELTS score of 6.5, with no less than 6.0 in any category, although equivalent tests like TOEFL or Pearson PTE are also accepted.
- Experienced practitioners lacking formal qualifications may apply via alternative pathways including portfolio submissions that showcase relevant professional experience and an interview process to assess their suitability.
- Applicants with relevant experience may apply for Advanced Standing under the university's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme, potentially bypassing certain introductory modules.
- Those who do not meet standard entry requirements but have relevant professional experience might still qualify through the APL process, which can provide exemptions from specific modules.

If you do not meet the entry requirements you may, if you have relevant professional experience, still be invited for interview, where you will be required to demonstrate the necessary knowledge and understanding for entry onto the course.

Previous study, professional and / or vocational experiences may be recognised as the equivalent learning experience and permit exemption from studying certain modules in accordance with our [accreditation of prior learning](#) (APL) process.

5. Programme Structure

Level	Modules (Code, Title and Credits)	Exit Awards
Level 7	Core Modules PSY7042 Fundamentals of Psychotherapeutic Theory and Practice (20 credits) PSY7043 Advanced Communicative Techniques in Therapy (20 credits) PSY7044 Clinical Assessment Strategies and Treatment Modalities (20 credits) PSY7045 Integration of Psychotherapeutic Approaches (20 credits) PSY7046 Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations (20 credits) PSY7047 Professional Practice Development and Supervisory Methods (20 credits) PSY7048 Clinical Placement (100 hours of supervised practice, 0 credits) PSY7049 Extended Research Project (60 credits)	Postgraduate Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy (60 credits) Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy (120 credits) Master of Science in Counselling and Psychotherapy (180 credits)

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. Other option modules may also be introduced at a later stage enabling the programme to respond to changes in the subject area

6. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and teaching

The MSc Counselling and Psychotherapy programme employs diverse teaching methods to support theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and professional reflection. Core learning methods include lectures, interactive seminars, and workshops that engage students in comprehensive discussions and role-play exercises, enhancing critical thinking and communication skills essential for therapeutic practice. Practical components include skills labs and supervised clinical placements, allowing students to experience real-world scenarios and receive feedback from BACP-accredited supervisors.

Lectures and Seminars: Core theoretical knowledge will be delivered through a combination of lectures and smaller, interactive seminars. This approach allows for comprehensive coverage of material while also facilitating in-depth discussions and personal engagement with the subject matter.

Workshops and Skill Labs: Practical skills workshops and psychotherapy labs will be key components of the curriculum, providing hands-on experiences in counselling and psychotherapeutic techniques. These sessions will utilize role-playing and simulation exercises to mirror real-world scenarios.

Tutorials: Both individual and in small groups help to focus students on evaluating their own work and in identifying directions for study. Lecturers will question and advise students, presenting alternatives and challenging decisions, in order to help students to realise their full potential and to develop critical and evaluative skills.

Specialist and Professional Insights: To enhance learning and provide students with exposure to current practices and trends in the field, the programme will include specialist from practising counsellors, psychotherapists, and other mental health professionals.

Assessment

The [Assessment and Examination webpages](#) provide further information on how assignments are marked and moderated, including a description of assessment activities. These also include further information about how feedback on assessed work is provided to students, including our commitment to ensure this is provided to students within 15 working days (the 'three-week turnaround').

The programme's assessment strategy combines continuous assessment with practical evaluations, including reflective journals, case studies, and practical demonstrations. Key assessments are designed to gauge students' understanding and application of psychotherapeutic theories and techniques. Students complete an extended research project, synthesising their knowledge in a specialised area, and engage in reflective practice assignments that connect their learning with practical experiences.

Contact Hours

Learners can expect to receive approximately 12 hours of scheduled learning activities per week of a given term. This may include lectures, seminars, workshops, practicals, or placement hours. A full breakdown of contact hours can be found in individual module descriptors.

7. Programme Regulations

This programme will be subject to the following assessment regulations:

- This programme adheres to BNU's Regulations for Taught Degree Programmes (2023) with the following PSRB-required exceptions:
- Increased supervision hours, as mandated by BACP, require adjustments in faculty workload and supervision allocation.
- Extended training hours, meeting BACP's 300-400 hours training requirement and 100-hour supervised placement.
- These regulations ensure alignment with BACP standards and fulfil accreditation requirements critical for students' professional readiness.

8. Support for learners

The following systems are in place to support you to be successful with your studies:

- The appointment of a personal tutor to support you through your programme
- A programme handbook and induction at the beginning of your studies
- Library resources, include access to books, journals and databases - many of which are available in electronic format – and support from trained library staff
- Access to Blackboard, our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is accessible via PC, laptop, tablet or mobile device
- Access to the MyBNU portal where you can access all University systems, information and news, record your attendance at sessions, and access your personalised timetable
- Academic Registry staff providing general guidance on University regulations, exams, and other aspects of students and course administration
- Central student services, including teams supporting academic skills development, career success, student finance, accommodation, chaplaincy, disability and counselling
- Support from the Bucks Students' Union, including the Students' Union Advice Centre which offers free and confidential advice on University processes.

9. Programme monitoring and review

BNU has several ways for monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning and teaching on your programme. You will be able to comment on the content of their programme via the following feedback mechanisms:

- Formal feedback questionnaires and anonymous module 'check-ins'
- Participation in external surveys
- Programme Committees, via appointed student representatives
- Informal feedback to your programme leader

Quality and standards on each programme are assured via the following mechanisms:

- An initial event to approve the programme for delivery
- An annual report submitted by the External Examiner following a process of external moderation of work submitted for assessment
- The Annual Monitoring process, which is overseen by the University's Education Committee
- Review by the relevant PSRB(s)
- Periodic Subject Review events held every five years
- Other sector compliance and review mechanisms

10. Internal and external reference points

Design and development of this programme has been informed by the following internal and external reference points:

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- The BNU Qualifications and Credit Framework
- The BNU Grading Descriptors
- The University Strategy, Impact 2022
- The QAA Master's Degree Characteristics Statement
- The University Strategy
- BACP Standards of Proficiency (SOP)

Mapping of Subject Benchmark Statement and any relevant Apprenticeship Standard to Programme Learning Outcomes

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Benchmark / Standard requirement																				
Theme 1: Therapeutic Techniques and Interventions																				
Core therapeutic models and approaches	X																			
Application of therapeutic interventions	X					X					X									
Assessment and treatment planning						X										X				
Managing client progress and outcomes												X								
Theme 2: Communication and Interpersonal Skills																				
Active listening and empathy				X							X									

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Verbal and non-verbal communication				X							X		X							
Building therapeutic alliances							X										X			
Cultural competence in communication													X							
Theme 3: Clinical Assessment and Evaluation																				
Client assessment and diagnostic skills					X									X						
Formulating and evaluating treatment plans									X					X						
Outcome measurement and client progress														X					X	
Integrating feedback into therapeutic goals												X								

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Theme 4: Integration of Psychotherapeutic Approaches																				
Theoretical foundations of psychotherapy integration	X																			
Applying integrative approaches in practice	X					X														
Evaluating the effectiveness of therapeutic models											X									
Ethical implications of integrative methods												X						X		
Theme 5: Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations																				
Cultural competence in therapeutic practice		X						X												
Ethical principles and standards																		X		

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Understanding diversity and inclusivity in therapy		X						X										X		
Addressing personal biases and cultural awareness		X										X								
Theme 6: Professional Practice Development and Supervisory Methods																				
Role of supervision in professional development			X																	
Reflective practice and self-assessment																				X
Ethical decision-making and professional boundaries							X					X								
Receiving and providing constructive feedback			X																	X
Theme 7: Clinical Placement																				
Direct client work under supervision			X										X							

Subject Benchmark Statement / Apprenticeship Standard:	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Applying therapeutic techniques in practice			X							X										
Ethical and professional standards in clinical settings													X							
Reflective practice and adapting to client feedback																	X			X
Theme 8: Extended Research Project																				
Designing and conducting independent research					X															
Critical analysis of literature and research evidence									X											
Application of research findings to practice																X				
Ethical considerations in research					X							X		X						

Mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes to Modules

Programme Learning Outcome	Knowledge and understanding (K)					Analysis and Criticality (C)					Application and Practice (P)					Transferable skills and other attributes (T)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Fundamentals of Psychotherapeutic Theory and Practice (20 credits)	X					X					X	X				X				
Advanced Communicative Techniques in Therapy (20 credits)				X			X				X		X				X			
Clinical Assessment Strategies and Treatment Modalities (20 credits)					X				X			X		X					X	
Integration of Psychotherapeutic Approaches (20 credits)	X					X					X	X						X		
Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations (20 credits)		X						X				X	X					X		
Professional Practice Development and Supervisory Methods (20 credits)			X				X					X							X	X
Clinical Placement (100 hours of supervised practice)			X							X			X		X		X			
Extended Research Project (60 credits)					X				X					X		X				X

