

Programme specification.

(Notes on how to complete this template are provided in Annexe 3)

1. Overview / factual information

Programme/award title(s)	BA (Hons) Counselling
Teaching Institution	New College Durham
Awarding Institution	The Open University (OU)
Date of first OU validation	November 2016
Date of latest OU (re)validation	2019
Next revalidation	2029
Credit points for the award	120 credits
UCAS Code	N/A
HECoS Code	N/A
LDCS Code (FE Colleges)	N/A
Programme start date and cycle of starts if appropriate.	September 2024
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards, Chapter A3: The programme level (QAA 2011) The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree- Awarding Bodies (QAA 2014) Qualifications and Curriculum Framework Subject Benchmark Statement Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022) BACP course accreditation (2023)
Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes. For apprenticeships, the standard or framework against which it will be delivered.	The programme is closely aligned to the QAA Benchmark statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022, Appendix 1). It is also referenced to the BACP Course Accreditation Scheme, including the core curriculum (2021, Appendix 2). There are no PSRB requirements for the programme.
Professional/statutory recognition	No
For apprenticeships fully or partially integrated Assessment.	N/A

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in student module guide(s) and the students handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face) Apprenticeship	FT & PT Face to face
Duration of the programme for each mode of study	32 weeks/ 64 weeks
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	N/A
Date of production/revision of this specification	

2. Programme overview

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

This programme has its curriculum content directly matched to the knowledge and skills which employers, current BA (Hons) Counselling students, the BACP, QAA (2022) Subject Benchmark Statement: Counselling and Psychotherapy, and recent government policy identified to be essential for counsellors. The programme ensures that the specialist nature of the studies is viewed by students within the broader context of the counselling profession and other health professionals.

The overall aim and objectives of the programme are to:

Empower aspiring counsellors with a transformative educational experience, fostering holistic development, ethical professionalism, and an enhanced view of complex counselling issues and practice. This programme aims to shape awareness, knowledge, empathetic, culturally sensitive, and skilled professionals ready to make a positive impact in the field of counselling and improve their employability skills.

We aim to achieve this through the following objectives:

- Students will possess a solid foundation, equipped to navigate the diverse challenges of the counselling profession.
- Students will be proficient in conducting and applying research, adding valuable insights to the evolving landscape of counselling.
- Students will adhere to the highest ethical standards, demonstrating professionalism and integrity in their counselling practice.
- Provide a solid foundation for graduates aspiring to pursue advanced studies in counselling at master's level.
- Enhance students' critical analytical skills to evaluate a range of complex counselling issues, facilitating adept navigation and insightful engagement with diverse theoretical frameworks and practical applications.

Theoretical Orientation

The BA (Hons) Counselling top-up programme is rooted in an integrative framework, which emphasises the synthesis of various counselling theories and approaches, recognising that no single model can fully capture the complexity of human experience. By integrating elements from different theoretical perspectives such as psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, humanistic, and s, students are equipped with a diverse toolkit to address the varied needs of clients.

Within this integrative framework, the programme places a strong emphasis on a person-centred core, reflecting the belief that everyone has the capacity for self-awareness, self-direction, and personal growth. The integrative nature of

the programme allows students to explore how various theories complement and enhance one another, rather than adhering rigidly to any single model. This encourages students to adopt a flexible and eclectic approach to counselling, drawing on different techniques and interventions based on the unique needs of each client. By embracing an integrative framework, the programme prepares students to navigate the complexities of real-world counselling scenarios, where clients often present with diverse backgrounds, issues, and preferences.

Organisational Feedback

We have received feedback from ARCH Teesside when approached to discuss the new modules that we are including this was the response “You are including some valuable modules. It is important to raise awareness of the significance of Trauma Informed Practice and what the term “actually” means as often it can get lost. I am also pleased that you are including young people and families, our young people unfortunately have had a difficult few years and we have seen an increase in under 25’s referring to our service. Referrals of children to emergency mental health services have tripled since 2019 ... CAMHS reached 466,250 referrals in May, the highest number on record ... which is shocking ... so without doubt good quality support is needed! Supporting families and understanding family systemics is always effective in therapeutic work too.”

Durham County Council also responded “...it appears to be a very interesting much needed course which highlights the importance of the changing landscape within the counselling profession. As a children and young people service, we are encouraged to see the inclusion of the children, young people and families module. We have seen an increased uptake in referrals and another important area highlighted is children who are within the social care system”.

Washington Mind stated that, “I have a good working relationship with the programme team and the new BA they have developed showcases the team's adeptness in integrating modern insights on professional conduct. It will provide students with a great depth of knowledge in the changing landscape of counselling”.

This feedback is invaluable informing the team of the importance of what employers are seeking from counsellors currently in terms of knowledge and experience.

2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards

(Where the award is part of a hierarchy of awards/programmes, this section describes the articulation between them, opportunities for progression upon completion of the programme, and arrangements for bridging modules or induction)

NCD provides students with a progression route which enables them to study counselling from level 2 to level 6. Progression to the BA (Hons) Counselling Studies is from students undertaking Foundation Degrees in Counselling and Level 5 Counselling Diploma students, from both New College Durham and other local colleges, as well as experienced practising counsellors. All students undertake induction to both the college and the programme in the first few weeks of term. Students are asked to complete and sign an induction checklist. Absences in knowledge are followed up by tutors.

Students who graduate from the BA (Hons) Counselling programme will possess and communicate those higher-level skills in critical appraisal, analysis and research, reflexivity, flexibility, and innovation that are transferable to a range of contexts and which will present the graduate with employment opportunities. On exiting the programme students will have the ability to select, organise and interpret complex information which could lead to graduate positions in public, private and third sector counselling organisations. The qualification can also allow graduates to progress to study at master's level.

Many students have secured employment following successful completion of the course; some have enhanced their current agencies' practice by conducting research for them and others have gone on to publish work explored in their research dissertation. Of the last cohort from the 21-22 academic year three students are in paid counselling employment with two volunteering in counselling organisations.

2.3 For Foundation Degrees, please list where the 60-credit work-related learning takes place. For apprenticeships an articulation of how the work based learning and academic content are organised with the award.

This section is not applicable.

2.4 List of all exit awards

On successful completion of all the modules on this programme (120 credits) students will obtain an award of BA (Hons) Counselling.
Where students successfully complete Trauma Informed Practice and Working as a Professional in Practice (a total of 60 credits) they will obtain a contained award of BA in Wellbeing Studies.

<u>Programme Structure - LEVEL 6</u>					
Compulsory modules	Credit points	Optional modules	Credit points	Is module compensatable?	Semester runs in
Working as a Professional in Practice	30	N/A	N/A	No	1
Trauma Informed Practice	30	N/A	N/A	No	2
Children and Young People	20	N/A	N/A	No	F/T 1 P/T 3
Research Dissertation	40	N/A	N/A	No	F/T 1 & 2 P/T 3 & 4

Intended learning outcomes at Level 6 are listed below:

<u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u>	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>A1: Evaluate and justify philosophical knowledge, theory and assumptions underpinning counselling and psychotherapy.</p> <p>A2: Analyse the ethical, legal, social and cultural factors which inform and influence the therapeutic relationship.</p> <p>A3: Evaluate a negotiated, self-managed research project relevant to counselling.</p> <p>A4: Relate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity to a counselling context.</p> <p>A5: Critically appraise the evidence base underpinning the practice of counselling.</p> <p>A6: Critically reflect upon the limits of knowledge in relation to a therapeutic relationship.</p>	<p>Beginning with philosophical foundations and theories, the approach involves interactive lectures, seminars, and projects, fostering active participation, collaborative case analysis, and the maintenance of reflective journals. Ethical, legal, social, and cultural factors influencing the therapeutic relationship are addressed through sessions on ethics, legal considerations, cultural competence, and role plays, supplemented by guest speakers. Research project evaluation involves comprehensive teaching on research methodologies, project guidance, with students developing proposals, engaging in peer review, and presenting findings for shared learning. Equality, diversity, and evidence-based practice are integrated through discussions, experiential learning activities, and dedicated sessions, with students participating in cultural competency workshops, conducting case studies on individual differences, and engaging in literature reviews and journal clubs. Reflection on the limits of knowledge is woven throughout the curriculum, incorporating reflective practice sessions, case studies, and discussions on managing uncertainties in counseling. This multifaceted strategy aims to cultivate well-rounded counseling practitioners by combining theoretical knowledge, practical application, and reflective practice across the course.</p>

<u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u>	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
	<p>Formative assessment is in the form of group supervision, written work, poster presentation and case study. These are intended to help prepare the students for their summative assessments.</p> <p>Summative assessments are in the form of a poster presentation, written case study, research proposal, research dissertation and powerpoint presentation.</p>
3B. Cognitive skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>B1: Synthesise and evaluate evidence from appropriate sources to make independent judgements.</p> <p>B2: Appraise complex problems and justify the application of appropriate knowledge relevant to counselling practice.</p> <p>B3: Develop intellectual flexibility and openness to new ideas.</p>	<p>Firstly, for synthesising and evaluating evidence, students engage in sessions that develop their skills in critically assessing information from diverse sources, including research studies and contemporary literature. Interactive discussions, case studies, and assignments require students to make independent judgements and justify their perspectives.</p> <p>Secondly, in addressing complex problems and the application of knowledge, the strategy incorporates real-world scenarios, case studies, and problem-solving exercises. These activities challenge students to appraise intricate issues within the context of counseling practice, encouraging them to justify the application of appropriate knowledge and therapeutic interventions.</p>

3B. Cognitive skills	
	<p>Lastly, to encourage intellectual flexibility and openness to new ideas, the teaching strategy emphasises considerations of diverse perspectives. Reflective exercises, such as journaling and group discussions, further encourage students to explore and embrace new ideas, promoting a mindset of continuous learning and adaptability within the field of counselling. This comprehensive strategy aims to empower students with the skills and mindset necessary for independent judgement, problem-solving, and intellectual flexibility in their future counselling practice.</p> <p>Formative assessment is in the form of a case study, poster presentation and classroom discussion.</p> <p>Summative assessment is in the form of a research proposal, dissertation, powerpoint presentation, poster presentation and written case study.</p>
3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>C1: Operate ethically in complex contexts requiring selection and application of appropriate methodology and research techniques.</p> <p>C2: Operate autonomously with limited supervision, to contribute effectively to generating sustainable argument and reaching reasoned conclusions within agreed guidelines.</p>	<p>With regards to ethical operation in complex contexts, students engage in specialised sessions focusing on ethical considerations in counselling research. This involves the selection and application of appropriate methodologies and research techniques, providing students with the tools to navigate intricate ethical issues inherent in research.</p>

3C. Practical and professional skills	
<p>C3: Independently navigate client interactions adhering to agreed ethical and professional guidelines.</p>	<p>Secondly, in cultivating autonomy and effective contribution, the strategy involves activities promoting independent thinking and decision-making in the realm of research. Students participate in projects, discussions, and assignments that necessitate autonomous operation, substantive contribution, and reasoned conclusions within established ethical guidelines of New College Durham and the BACP.</p> <p>Lastly, in acting autonomously within ethical and professional parameters when working with research subjects, the strategy includes practical components emphasising supervised research projects. Students engage in critical research groups reviewing existing research papers. This approach aims to instill confidence and competence in students for independent research work while upholding ethical standards within the counseling research domain. The overall strategy strives to equip students with ethical decision-making skills and research autonomy necessary for successful and ethically sound research practice in counselling.</p> <p>Formative assessment is in the form of a case study, poster presentation and classroom discussion.</p> <p>Summative assessment is in the form of a research proposal, dissertation, powerpoint presentation, poster presentation and written case study.</p>

3D. Key/transferable skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>D1: Engage effectively in academic discussion and debate.</p> <p>D2: Plan, manage and evaluate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.</p> <p>D3: Critically appraise and choose software tools suitable for various functions within the field of counselling.</p> <p>D4: Recognise and evaluate the ability to work with others.</p>	<p>Firstly, for engaging effectively in academic discussion and debate, students participate in regular seminars, debates, and collaborative projects, fostering the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills. Secondly, in communication skills, workshops focus on clear and effective written and verbal communication, tailoring styles to different contexts within the counselling field. For planning, managing, and evaluating the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, the strategy includes self-directed learning and reflective practices, empowering students to take ownership of their educational journey. Regarding software applications, students learn to select and evaluate software tools for diverse counselling tasks, enhancing technological proficiency in the field. Lastly, for recognising and evaluating the ability to work with others, collaborative projects, group discussions, and peer assessments are integrated into the curriculum, cultivating interpersonal skills essential for collaborative and professional practice.</p> <p>Formative assessment is in the form of a case study, poster presentation and classroom discussion.</p> <p>Summative assessment is in the form of a research proposal, dissertation, powerpoint presentation, poster presentation and written case study.</p>

4. Distinctive features of the programme structure

- **Where applicable, this section provides details on distinctive features such as:**
 - where in the structure above a professional/placement year fits in and how it may affect progression
 - any restrictions regarding the availability of elective modules
 - where in the programme structure students must make a choice of pathway/route
- **Additional considerations for apprenticeships:**
 - how the delivery of the academic award fits in with the wider apprenticeship
 - the integration of the 'on the job' and 'off the job' training
 - how the academic award fits within the assessment of the apprenticeship

Distinctive Features

At New College Durham, we take pride in offering a level 6 qualification in counselling that stands out for its unique emphasis on Children, Young People, and Families, coupled with a dedicated focus on Trauma-Informed Practice. This distinctive feature positions our program as a trailblazer in the field, as no other institute currently provides such an in-depth exploration of these crucial aspects at this level of study. In today's evolving landscape of counselling, recognising, and addressing the specific needs of children, young individuals, and families is paramount. Our curriculum is designed to equip students with the specialised skills and insights required to navigate these sensitive areas effectively. Moreover, we understand the importance of Trauma-Informed Practice in fostering a compassionate and supportive counselling environment.

To enhance practical learning, we incorporate cutting-edge technology, such as a 360-degree igloo using virtual reality, enabling students to immerse themselves in realistic scenarios within a safe and controlled setting. This innovative approach prepares our graduates to apply their knowledge with confidence in the dynamic and diverse field of counselling.

Programme Structure

Overview of structure of the modules across the Academic Year.

To qualify for the award students must complete all the core modules.

Full time

The full-time programme will be delivered two days per week over 32 weeks.

Semester 1	Semester 2
Working as a Professional in Practice (30 credits)	

Children, Young People and Families (20 credits)	Trauma Informed Practice (30 credits)
Research Dissertation (40 credits)	

Part time

The part time programme will be delivered one day per week over 64 weeks.

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
Working as a Professional in Practice (30 credits)	Trauma Informed Practice (30 credits)	Children, Young People and Families (20 credits)	
		Research Dissertation (40 credits)	

Colour co-ordination shows where the part time programme would infill to the full-time programme.

All modules will have a taught component delivered through lectures and seminars. The Research Dissertation module will be the exception where learning will be largely addressed by dissertation supervision sessions and structured peer group support. Dates for supervision will be negotiated between the student and the supervisor. Other modules on the programme will require students to maintain and develop research and critical appraisal skills.

5. Support for students and their learning

(For apprenticeships this should include details of how student learning is supported in the workplace)

Support for Students and Their Learning

As this programme represents the final level of an undergraduate degree students will develop as independent learners. Students will be required to accept responsibility for meeting objectives that have been set with module tutors and to work ethically and responsibly with research participants, including counselling agencies. Support for students with these areas is available from course tutors. Some students also find valuable support from their counselling supervisor.

Marketing, interview, selection, and admission procedures are consistent, fair, and transparent, aligning with QAA requirements and adhering to the standards set by the Office for Students (OfS) in the UK. The web pages are updated to reflect the changes to the programme. The course information details precise academic prerequisites and vocational experience. Support for students commences at this inquiry stage, where there is an opportunity to attend, HE events endorsed by the OfS that focus upon progression, enabling students to explore their options and discuss in detail with course tutors the programme aims and objectives.

Throughout the student's journey individual student support can be provided through tutorials, research supervision and through other learning support mechanisms such as the College's VLE. More general additional academic support is supplied by the Academic Support Tutor as well as the HE Advanced Personal Learning Coach; this may include, where necessary, advice on writing at degree level, time management, carrying out literature searches, examination/ assignment/ essay writing skills etc.

Student Induction

During the summer a keeping warm day is delivered to new students to allow them to meet their fellow students and allow them to become familiar with the campus, staff and support services that are available. This allows students to feel connected and informed prior to starting their study. During the first weeks of teaching speakers from various departments including the Library, Learner Support (this includes dedicated Higher Education Personal Learning Coaches), the HE Academic Support Tutor and ASC (Advice, Support, and Careers).

ASC is an extremely important supportive resource for students and provides a range of services including advice on student funding and welfare (including benefits, loans, and grants), personal support which includes information around personal issues, sexual health and contraception, relationships, mental health, bullying, drug and alcohol awareness, safe-guarding and PREVENT, personal counselling in a confidential setting, contacts, and referral to external services if appropriate. Students frequently access this support and staff are quick to signpost or refer students to these services if they deem it appropriate.

The students are given a presentation of the OU Academic Regulations, Fitness to Practice Policy and Mitigation Process. This presentation is also uploaded to the VLE to ensure students can access this throughout the year. Students are given a tour of the Learning Resource Centre and shown the extensive resources within the NCD University Centre. They are also given programme handbook and module guides and other documentation in addition to online access to the VLE and Office 365. Students are signposted to the online college handbook and Student Intranet where they can find additional information about the support services available.

Learner Support Team

The Higher Education Learner Support team provides support to a variety of students with a wide range of learning needs and are committed to providing inclusive education in a safe and positive environment. Examples of areas and disabilities they support with include:

- Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia.
- Autism Spectrum Conditions.
- Hearing and Visual (Sensory) Loss.
- Medical and/or Mobility Needs.
- Mental Wellbeing.

The Higher Education Learner Support Team provision:

A Higher Education Access Adviser will contact the student directly to make an appointment and the adviser will remain the main point of contact for the service. They will arrange an initial assessment of the student's individual needs and requirements and provide guidance and advice including:

- Discussing and developing strategies to support the student through their course.
- Arranging examinations concessions, library extensions, equipment.
- Supporting students to share information with tutors so that they can get as much support as possible.
- Assisting students in claiming Disabled Students Allowance.
- Recommendations for referral for other (external) specialist assessment. (E.g., Visual processing or motor skills assessment).

Digital Learning Hub (DLH)

The Digital Learning Hub is a large computing suite located on the first floor in the main college building. The Hub has over 250 computers all with Microsoft Office 365 software, internet access and some specialist software. Higher education students not only have access to Digital Learning Hub IT facilities in the Main Building, but also have their own dedicated drop-in computer room on the first floor of the University Centre with access to computer and printing facilities.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

New College Durham utilise a virtual learning environment as a valuable learning resource for students. In addition to using the system for obtaining valuable learning resources, it is also actively used for:

- Communication with staff and students via email.
- General or module specific discussion boards (student voice).
- Formative assessment through quizzes, multiple choice questions, etc.
- Timetabling and general course information.

Pastoral Support

The programme team will implement early intervention strategies through student attendance and performance data to identify students that are struggling and provide targeted support. This will be using the New College Durhams's monitoring information system and will allow progress tracking and intervention plans to be developed to address specific challenges that students may face.

New College Durham is committed to providing a high quality, confidential and impartial information, and advice and guidance service. This is provided by the comprehensive Advice, Support Careers (ASC) Service. All students receive induction on the ASC service at the start of their course. The ASC service is designed to provide effective and timely information, advice and guidance on funding and welfare, career planning and provides access to confidential personal counselling support. The ASC service offers appointments and a 'drop-in' service. ASC information is also available to download from the College website, NCD on-line or to pick up from the dedicated ASC area within the Learning Resources Centre (LRC). The Learner Development Co-ordinator, based in the Students' Union, also helps with social and health related issues. The PLC service does not have any specific criteria for referral, and any student who may benefit from such support can access the service. Students can be referred by their tutor, lecturer, and external advisor, such as ASC. This personalised referral system helps in identifying new students as well as continuing communication with progressing students. There is a dedicated page on the College internet and intranet. The service is also advertised via the College television system, allowing students in communal areas of college to become aware of the provision.

Academic Support

Students are supported in their preparation for assessments by their module tutor and where relevant other academic staff within the course team. Students have access to additional academic support particular to assessment tasks from an independent Higher Education Academic Support Tutor. The course team offers specific study skills advice and guidance through timely and meaningful feedback to students on their performance in assessments. Standardisation of assessments and feedback are validated by second markers and the external examiner. Students are also provided with individualised appointments and group workshops on areas such as Academic Writing, Assignment/Essay Planning and Structuring, The Harvard System (for references & bibliographies), Open Athens & Online Information Retrieval, Literature Searching, Presentation Skills, Reading Efficiently, Report Writing, Revision and Examination Skills. Electronic advice and guidance booklets are available on the student intranet to download. [College Policies & Procedures - Learning Support Policy.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

In order to protect students against unfair competition, the college may need to ensure that the students are not submitting assessments which have been copied or plagiarised or which are not substantially the student's own work. The

College uses software to enable staff and students to check work for similarity and originality.

Module specific material is provided on Microsoft Teams; this information is reviewed and updated to coincide with the nature and specific requirements of assignments being delivered each year. Documents include the course handbook, module guides, PowerPoint presentations, and assessment briefs.

Self-directed study is an important aspect within the course that enables students the opportunity to develop their assignments when resources are not available outside of the college campus.

6. Criteria for admission

(For apprenticeships this should include details of how the criteria will be used with employers who will be recruiting apprentices.)

Students seeking entry to the degree will hold a Foundation Degree in Counselling, or alternatively a Counselling Diploma qualification achieving 240 credits, 120 at level 4 and 120 at level 5. Applicants should also be engaged in weekly counselling practice as well as be a member of a recognised membership body for example BACP, NCPS or UKCP.

In addition, it is expected that applicants will demonstrate some of the standards prescribed in the BACP Ethical Framework. Students who otherwise satisfy the entry criteria may be unable to be admitted to the degree if there is sufficient reason to suggest that they do not adhere to these standards.

To be eligible for an interview applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Hold a Diploma or Foundation degree in Counselling.
- Hold membership with the BACP, UKCP or NCPS.
- Have gained 100 supervised counselling hours.
- Hold GCSE grade C or above in English language and Mathematics or a minimum of Level 2 Key Skills in Communication and Application of Number.
- Provide a personal statement which identifies the individual's rationale for wishing to undertake the course of 250 words.
- Provide two references, these can be a selection from employment/tutor/character reference.

Members of the programme team:

- Ensure that applicant's original qualification certificates are reviewed during the admissions process.
- Entrants have demonstrated an appropriate level of verbal communication skills during one-to-one interview.
- Entrants have demonstrated an appropriate level of reading comprehension and academic writing during the written component of the interview process and within their personal statement of application.

If an application is shortlisted, then the candidate will be invited to attend an interview, where they are required to produce original qualification certificates and complete a written task of 1000 words. Applicants are provided with an instruction sheet clearly explaining the task and what criteria they are being addressed against.

The selection of successful applicants is determined by evaluating their performance during the interview, written assessment, and references. The panel considers various aspects of each applicant's abilities and skills to ensure a comprehensive and well-informed decision regarding their suitability is made. Upon reaching a decision, successful applicants are notified through email and receive a "conditional course offer." This offer is subject to two satisfactory references and a clear DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check, which are standard procedures to ensure the applicants meet the necessary requirements. Unsuccessful applicants are provided with feedback and guidance to assist them in exploring alternative study pathways that can enhance their current learning portfolio such as the FdA Integrative Counselling course.

Attendance Monitoring:

Establish Clear Attendance Policies: Define clear and comprehensive attendance policies from NCD, outlining expectations, consequences for non-compliance, and any exceptions or accommodations.

Communication and Awareness: Communicate attendance policies to students at the beginning of each academic term. Use multiple channels such as email, VLE and in person.

Early Intervention Strategies: Develop an early intervention system to identify and address attendance issues promptly. This may involve sending prompts, conducting meetings with students, or connecting them with support services to address any underlying challenges.

Student Engagement Initiatives: Foster a positive learning environment to enhance student engagement. Implement interactive teaching methods, collaborative projects, and real-world applications to make classes more appealing and relevant, thereby encouraging regular attendance.

Support Systems: Develop support systems for students facing challenges in maintaining regular attendance. This may involve academic advising, counselling services, or connecting them with resources that address specific issues affecting attendance.

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7. Language of study

English

8. Information about non-OU standard assessment regulations (including PSRB requirements)
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This section is not applicable.

9. For apprenticeships in England End Point Assessment (EPA)

<i>(Summary of the approved assessment plan and how the academic award fits within this and the EPA)</i>
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This section is not applicable.

10. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning
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Student Voice

<p>The College values your input and has several ways to ensure your voice is heard. These include opportunities like module evaluations, online Induction and On Programme Surveys, student representative and student forum participation, and the National Student Survey. At the end of each module, you'll have a chance to share your thoughts through a module review form, highlighting what worked well and areas for improvement. The programme team take your feedback seriously and compile reports to continuously enhance your learning experience. We also place significance on the National Student Survey results. Your course representatives help clarify responses to surveys during team meetings and provide feedback to course tutors. Regular course team meetings, where students are represented, are held throughout the academic year to review the program. These meetings serve as platforms for reporting progress on student-raised issues and listening to your perspectives. We utilise Microsoft Teams to keep you updated on progress related to your suggestions. All student views and team responses are documented in the course annual report. Any actions resulting from your feedback are noted and reviewed regularly to ensure ongoing improvement, contributing to our commitment to providing an excellent learning experience.</p>

External Examiner

Your assignments are important, and to ensure their quality, we involve an External Examiner in our assessment process. Before you receive your assignment briefs, they are sent to the External Examiner at the beginning of each academic year. This step is crucial for external quality assurance, as it allows an independent expert to review the assignments and ensure they meet the required standards.

They play a vital role in maintaining the quality of your assignments by providing feedback on the assessment briefs, examining samples of student work, and assessing overall standards and processes. Their insights are compiled into an annual report, which the team carefully considers and responds to.

This process is designed to guarantee that your assignments are not only challenging but also fair and aligned with academic standards. The External Examiner's involvement contributes to the continuous improvement of our assessment practices, ensuring that you receive a robust and valuable learning experience throughout your academic journey. Your assignments matter, and the External Examiner helps us maintain the highest standards to support your academic success.

Continuous Professional Development

The team remain vocationally relevant by engaging in weekly counselling practice. During the duration of the programme to date, lecturers have counselled in areas such as mental health, gender and diversity, bereavement, anxiety, and depression. Both members of the team are qualified Clinical Supervisors currently in practice with external supervisees. One member of the team is accredited with the BACP, and the other is a registered member in the process of applying for accreditation with the BACP. In the last academic year both members of staff undertook a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and were also successful in obtaining Fellowship of the HEA. As counsellors, the team members engage in 30 hours of counselling related CPD per annum. The team also engage in four staff development days at New College Durham where teaching and learning topics are addressed. These developments help to keep the content delivered to students current and accurate.

11. Changes made to the programme since last (re)validation

There have been no changes since the last validation. Proposed changes at re-validation are:

- The existing modules of Developing Professional Practice will now be known as Working as a Professional in Practice, this is to highlight the importance of multi-disciplinary working within many organisations. It prepares students for the attendance of multi-agency meetings, report writing and developing communication skills.
- There has been the addition of a brand-new module Children, Young People and Families, this is a follow-on module from the FdA Integrative Counselling. This module is designed to meet several of the BACP Competences for working with young people (2022). The module will also consider early childhood experiences. This will help build skills and knowledge enabling students to develop a clinical specialism with children and young people, with a specific focus on working creatively. There is no requirement for students to be in practice with children and young people for the duration of this module.
- The CBT and Mental Health module has been updated to Trauma Informed Practice. This includes specific content on mental health and the current climate regarding this. The new content addresses some of the bullet points under section 6.7 of the QAA subject benchmark document (2022) which was not addressed in the previous programme; The module likely incorporates how trauma-informed principles can be integrated into the practice of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Overall, the transformation of the CBT and Mental Health module to Trauma Informed Practice reflects a forward-looking approach, ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of mental health in contemporary society.
- Designing the Primary Research Project has been merged with the Research Dissertation module as the programme team feels it will be more streamlined to create a long and thin module during the academic year. This will also help alleviate any confusion from students as to how both of those modules linked very strongly.

Annexe 1: Curriculum map

Annexe 2: Notes on completing the OU programme specification template

Annexe 1 - Curriculum map

This table indicates which study units assume responsibility for delivering (shaded) and assessing (✓) particular programme learning outcomes.

Level	Study module/unit	Programme outcomes															
		A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	D4
6	Working as a Professional in Practice																
		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
	Trauma Informed Practice																
		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Research Dissertation																
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Trauma and Families																
		✓		✓				✓	✓			✓		✓			

Annexe 2: Notes on completing programme specification templates.

- 1 - This programme specification should be mapped against the learning outcomes detailed in module specifications.
- 2 – The expectations regarding student achievement and attributes described by the learning outcome in section 3 must be appropriate to the level of the award within the **QAA frameworks for HE qualifications**:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx>
- 3 – Learning outcomes must also reflect the detailed statements of graduate attributes set out in **QAA subject benchmark statements** that are relevant to the programme/award: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx>
- 4 – In section 3, the learning and teaching methods deployed should enable the achievement of the full range of intended learning outcomes. Similarly, the choice of assessment methods in section 3 should enable students to demonstrate the achievement of related learning outcomes. Overall, assessment should cover the full range of learning outcomes.
- 5 - Where the programme contains validated **exit awards** (e.g. CertHE, DipHE, PGDip), learning outcomes must be clearly specified for each award.
- 6 - For programmes with distinctive study **routes or pathways** the specific rationale and learning outcomes for each route must be provided.
- 7 – Validated programmes delivered in **languages other than English** must have programme specifications both in English and the language of delivery.