



NATIONAL
COUNSELLING &
PSYCHOTHERAPY
SOCIETY

Standards of Training and Education Required for NCPS Accredited Plus Course Recognition



Introduction

Accredited Plus training courses provide core practitioner training in counselling and/or psychotherapy, equipping its graduates to work with adult clients who present with a range of commonly encountered issues. This training maps to the competencies for SCoPEd Column A enabling graduates to apply for Accredited Registrant (MNCPS Acc.) membership. This training also provides content that maps to SCoPEd Column B competencies which, in addition to all other criteria required, will support graduates to apply for Accredited Professional Registrant (PNCPS Acc.) membership.

Accredited Plus training must contain a substantial component of face-to-face/in-the-room training with allowance for some synchronous online teaching should a training provider wish to offer this. A minimum of 70% of the training course is to be delivered face-to-face/in the room, with up to 30% being permissible via online synchronous delivery. Asynchronous online tuition and/or distance learning is not permissible for Accredited Plus training recognition.

Our procedures look at quality as well as quantity and recognise that a variety 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
- Skills For Health Competencies for Psychological Therapies PT01-PT49
- Competence Frameworks for the Delivery and Supervision of Psychological Therapies
- SCoPEd Framework

Such 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.

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

Course Content

Training must include a balance of theory and practice.

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 5 on the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), or equivalent as demonstrated to the Society's satisfaction, and must evidence that it meets the following competencies:

Theme 1 Professional Framework Course Quality

1.1.A Knowledge of and ability to operate within professional, legal and ethical frameworks.

1.2.A Ability to understand and apply the Equality Act and other relevant legislation to practise safely and ethically within the law.

1.3.A Ability to negotiate, maintain and review an appropriate contract with the client or patient, taking account of timing, practice setting and duration of therapy, ensuring that the client's or patient's consent is explicitly informed and freely given.

- 1.4.A** Ability to create regular opportunities for the client or patient to review and feedback their experience of the therapy.
- 1.5.A** Ability to protect the confidentiality and privacy of clients or patients from unauthorised access or disclosure by informing them in advance about any reasonably foreseeable limitations of confidentiality and privacy.
- 1.6.A** Ability to provide and maintain a secure framework for both therapist and clients or patients, in terms of meeting arrangements and the therapy setting.
- 1.7.A** Ability to evaluate own work within an ethical framework and apply the framework to resolve conflicts and ethical dilemmas.
- 1.8.A** Ability to address and respond to ethical dilemmas and recognise when to consult with supervisor and (or) other appropriate professionals.
- 1.9.A** Ability to work with ethical difficulties and dilemmas, including addressing and resolving contradictions between different codes of practice and conduct, or between ethical requirements and work requirements.
- 1.10.A** Ability to incorporate equality awareness and consideration of diversity of client's or patient's identity, culture, language, values and worldview into ethical decision-making.
- 1.11.A** Ability to establish and maintain appropriate professional and personal boundaries in online relationships with clients or patients by ensuring that:
- a) reasonable care is taken to separate and maintain a distinction between personal and professional presence on social media where this could result in harmful dual relationships with clients or patients
 - b) any public, online communication is carried out in a manner consistent with the NCPS Code of Ethical Practice
- 1.12.A** Ability to manage and respond appropriately to the practical and ethical demands of all forms of technologically mediated therapy and communication.
- 1.13.A** Ability to use team-working skills to work with others.
- 1.13.Bi** Ability to take an active role as a member of a professional community and participate effectively in inter-professional and multiagency approaches to mental health where appropriate.
- 1.13.Bii** Ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams with other professionals to enhance therapeutic outcomes.

Theme 2 Assessment

- 2.1.A** Ability to make an initial and ongoing assessment of the client's or patient's problems and suitability for therapy being offered.
- 2.1.B** Ability to use an initial and ongoing clinical assessment strategy that is informed by a consistent, coherent and in-depth theoretical approach.
- 2.2.A** Ability to establish agreement on the therapeutic work which attends to the needs of the client or patient, the skills of the therapist and the time available.

2.3.A Ability to recognise own professional limitations, and in collaboration with clients or patients and other professionals as appropriate, manage the process of referral during assessment and throughout therapy.

2.4.A Ability to assess the client's or patient's suitability for technologically mediated therapy.

2.5.A Ability to draw upon knowledge of common mental health problems and symptoms of psychological distress (with due understanding of cultural norms) during assessment and throughout therapy.

2.5.B Ability to conceptualise, evaluate and take account of a range of mental health problems, symptoms of psychological distress, functioning and coping styles (with due understanding of cultural norms), during assessment and throughout therapy.

2.6.A Ability to understand core issues relating to the role of psychiatric drugs, dependence and withdrawal and the implications these have for clients or patients in therapy.

2.7.A Ability to work within own scope of practice and professional limitations and manage the process of referrals where appropriate.

2.8.A Ability to make initial and ongoing risk assessments regarding clients' or patients' and (or) others' safety, and comply with safeguarding guidance, appropriate to the therapy setting taking into account own limits of competence.

2.8.B Ability to devise and use a comprehensive risk assessment strategy.

2.9.A Ability to collaborate with clients or patients and (or) others as appropriate to assess risks, needs and strengths when working with imminent and ongoing:

- suicidal ideas and (or) behaviour
- self-harming ideas and (or) behaviour

(An awareness of 'NICE stipulations relating to Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence' as per NICE guideline [NG225] Published: 07 September 2022': <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng225>)

- risk of harm to clients or patients from third parties e.g.
- situations of domestic abuse

2.10.A Ability to contain clients or patients when in crisis by providing information about self-care strategies and making clear arrangements for future meetings or contact.

2.11.A Ability to make an initial and ongoing assessment of the risks for both parties specific to the environment of technologically mediated therapy.

2.11.B Ability to identify and respond to the impact of the technologically mediated environment on issues of identity and presence, including fantasies and assumptions about the therapist and client or patient.

Theme 3 Therapeutic relationship

3.1.A Ability to understand the central importance of the role and purpose of the therapeutic relationship within the therapeutic approach.

3.2.A An ability to demonstrate personal qualities associated with supporting a strong therapeutic relationship including:

- showing appropriate levels of empathy, warmth, concern, confidence, and genuineness, matched to the client's or patient's need
- experiencing and communicating a fundamentally accepting attitude
- being respectful, non-judgmental, and approachable with an ability to establish rapport
- being flexible and allowing the client or patient to discuss issues which are important to them

3.3.A Ability to explore with the client or patient and reflect upon the impact that diversity of their identity, culture, language, values and worldview (including protected characteristics) has upon the relationship and the therapeutic process and use this shared understanding in ongoing work.

3.4.A Ability to reflect on and understand the impact of working with a third-party present in the therapy sessions (e.g. as translator, interpreter, signer, carer)

3.5.A Ability to communicate empathy, sensitivity, acceptance, openness and curiosity towards all aspects of diversity and respond in a way that shows an understanding of the client's or patient's perspective.

3.6.A Ability to work therapeutically with issues of diversity and intersectionality, taking account of the different dimensions of diversity within a person.

3.7.A Ability to value and understand the person within their unique context including, but not limited to, their family, social, community and cultural setting alongside their personal history and sense of identity.

3.8.A Ability to establish and hold appropriate boundaries, creating and maintaining a collaborative relationship rooted in courtesy and respect.

3.9.A Ability to be responsive to the client's or patient's agenda, focus, therapeutic needs and pace.

3.10.A Ability to recognise, understand and work with issues of power and how these may affect the therapeutic relationship.

3.10.B Ability to work with issues of power and authority experienced in the 'unconscious' or 'out of awareness' processes of the client or patient as part of the therapeutic process.

3.11.A Ability to explore the client's or patient's expectations and understanding of therapy and the relationship with the therapist.

- 3.12.A** Ability to agree a shared understanding of the purpose, nature and process of therapy and the therapeutic relationship with the client or patient.
- 3.13.A** Ability to establish, sustain and develop the therapeutic relationship and to engender trust and authentic connection.
- 3.13.Bi** Ability to critically reflect on the client's or patient's process to enhance the client's or patient's self-awareness and understanding of themselves in relationship
- 3.13.Bii** Ability to be aware of, and respond to, emotional shifts occurring in each session, with the aim of maintaining a level of emotional engagement appropriate for each circumstance.
- 3.14.A** Ability to form an empathic connection which communicates understanding of the client's or patient's experience.
- 3.15.A** Ability to enable the appropriate discussion of and (or) expression of the client's or patient's emotions and understand and respond therapeutically to the emotional content of sessions.
- 3.16.A** Ability to be aware of and manage own emotional or physical responses to the client or patient.
- 3.16.B** Ability to actively use own responses to the client or patient in a way that is therapeutic and consistent with the theoretical model or approach.
- 3.17.A** Ability to recognise how breaks and holidays may affect the therapeutic relationship and process and make appropriate arrangements for clients or patients to seek support in case of emergency.
- 3.18.A** Ability to be open and aware that the client or patient may have an unspoken agenda.
- 3.19.A** Ability to reflect on and tolerate uncertainty, responding therapeutically while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- 3.20.A** Ability to attend to, reflect on and respond to the client's or patient's verbal and nonverbal communication as part of the therapeutic process.
- 3.21.A** Ability to recognise and respond to difficulties or ruptures in the therapeutic relationship.
- 3.21.B** Ability to make use of ruptures or impasses in the therapy as opportunities for expanding the understanding of the client's or patient's subjective experience of their difficulties.
- 3.22.A** Ability to make professional arrangements in the event of a sudden or unplanned break or ending and communicate the arrangements to the client or patient.
- 3.23.A** Ability to foster and maintain a good therapeutic relationship including:

- capacity to recognise and address threats to the therapeutic relationship
- ability to recognise and respond when strains in the relationship threaten the progress of therapy
- ability to use appropriate interventions in response to disagreements about tasks and goals
- being aware of possible responses and meanings for the client or patient if the therapist takes external action (e.g. when needing to implement risk management procedures)
- ability to address difficulties related to equality, diversity, and inclusion in order to repair any damage to the therapeutic relationship

3.23.B Ability to analyse and address difficulties in the immediacy of the therapeutic encounter to find ways to overcome such difficulties.

3.24.A Ability to clearly communicate about endings with the clients or patients, and work to ensure these are managed safely and appropriately.

3.24.B Ability to consider and manage complex issues arising when ending therapy in the light of the client's or patient's previous experience of endings.

3.25.A Ability to end a session appropriately.

Theme 4 Knowledge and Skills

4.1.A Ability to articulate the rationale and philosophy underpinning own therapeutic practice.

4.2.A An understanding of and the ability to apply the theory and practice of therapy from assessment to ending including knowledge of:

- a model of person and mind
- a model of gendered and culturally influenced human development
- a model of human change and ways in which change can be facilitated
- a model of therapeutic relationship
- a set of clinical concepts to relate theory to practice

4.2.B Ability to critically appraise a range of theories underpinning the practice of counselling and psychotherapy.

4.3.A Ability to apply understanding of suicidal behaviours, and (or) self-harming behaviours, to work collaboratively with clients or patients.

4.3.B Ability to work with suicidal risk and the often complex nature of suicidal ideation and (or) other self-harming behaviours and associated 'unconscious', or 'out of awareness' processes and perceptions.

4.4.A Ability to help the client or patient to become aware of recurring patterns in their relationships in order to facilitate therapeutic change.

4.4.B Ability to use the therapeutic relationship to work with the client's or patient's 'unconscious' or 'out of awareness' perceptions, experiences and distortions of the therapist and the therapeutic relationship to enhance therapeutic change.

4.5.A Ability to recognise symptoms of trauma and acknowledge own limitations and level of competence in work with clients or patients showing such symptoms.

4.6.A Ability to understand and track the process of change within a core, coherent theoretical framework and adopt a stance as therapist in accordance with it.

4.7.A Ability to select and use appropriate therapeutic interventions and (or) responses.

4.7.B Ability to demonstrate the capacity, knowledge and understanding of how to select and adapt interventions and (or) approaches to respond to the needs of the client or patient.

4.8.A Ability to recognise, respect and work to support and enhance the autonomy of the client or patient.

4.9.A Ability to use skills and interventions for the benefit of the clients or patients, that are consistent with underlying theoretical knowledge.

4.9.B Ability to reflect upon the complex and sometimes contradictory information gained from clients or patients and to coherently describe their present difficulties and the potential origins using a clear theoretical model or approach.

4.10.A Ability to invite the client's or patient's use of imagination to facilitate work towards therapeutic goals.

4.11.A Ability to reflect upon own identity, culture, values and worldview, and have the capacity to work and communicate authentically in a non-discriminatory and anti-oppressive manner.

4.11.B Ability to recognise and explore with the client or patient the assumptions that underpin understanding of identity, culture, values and worldview.

4.12.A Ability to acknowledge diversity and explore the impact of discrimination, prejudice and oppression on mental health.

4.13.A Ability to a) recognise when technologically mediated therapy effects a lowering of inhibition in either the client or patient and (or) the therapist and b) regulate and understand the impact this has on the therapeutic relationship.

4.14.A Ability to understand the inter-relatedness of psychological and physical illness.

4.15.A Ability to understand the use of audit and evaluation tools to review own counselling work.

4.15.B Ability to utilise audit and evaluation tools to monitor and maintain standards within practice settings.

4.16.A Ability to understand, assess and apply research evidence to own practice.

4.16.B Ability to draw upon and evaluate published research on counselling and psychotherapy, and integrate relevant research findings to enhance practice.

4.17.A Ability to communicate clearly, appropriately and using understandable language with clients or patients, colleagues and other professionals providing and receiving information which may be complex, sensitive and (or) contentious.

Theme 5 Self-Awareness and Reflection

5.1.A Ability to make use of personal development, self-awareness and supervision to reflect on, learn from and enhance therapeutic practice.

5.1.Bi Ability to be emotionally prepared for intense and complex work, which requires sustained reflexivity.

5.1.Bii Ability to work with 'unconscious' and 'out of awareness' processes.

5.2.A Ability to use awareness of self during therapy to enhance the therapeutic process.

5.3.A Ability to reflect on aspects of own identity, culture, values and worldview that have most influenced 'self' and work on own preconceptions and bias.

5.4.A Ability to understand the significance and impact of own identity, culture, language, values and worldview in work with clients or patients.

5.4.B Ability to critically challenge own identity, culture, values and worldview.

5.5.A Ability to monitor and evaluate fitness to practise and maintain own self-care and wellbeing.

5.6.A Understand the importance of supervision, with the ability to contract for supervision and use it to address professional and developmental needs.

5.6.B Ability to review and evaluate supervision arrangements and take responsibility for adapting supervision to the evolving and changing requirements of ongoing practice.

5.7.A Ability to evaluate learning from supervision and apply to ongoing practice.

Coherence and Cohesion

The duration of the programme must be at least equal to the Total Qualification Time (TQT) set by the Awarding Body for a qualification at the relevant Level and offer no less than 450 Guided Learning/Tutor Contact hours (GLH).

Appropriate Learning Outcomes must be published and made available.

Teaching, Learning and Contact Hours

The number, qualifications and availability of teaching staff must be sufficient to ensure that students are enabled to develop their skills and learning in line the competencies required for SCoPEd Columns A and B.

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

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' who are required to demonstrate SCoPEd A and B Competencies. 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.

It is a condition of registration that a counsellor has the competency to practice "in the room". So, should a blended approach to learning be adopted, it is required that at least 51% of the minimum number of supervised placement hours are carried out face-to-face/in-the-room. If a training provider approves a student to be competent to carry out some of their supervised client hours online this will need to be synchronous, supported by relevant OPT training, and with relevant support from the placement provider and supervised by a supervisor who is qualified and experienced to support client work required to develop SCoPEd A and B competencies.

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.

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, Inclusion and Diversity (EDI) policy

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

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.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please email standards@ncps.com



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