

Programme Specification

Doctorate of Counselling Psychology

<i>School:</i>	Education, Language and Psychology
<i>Subject area:</i>	Psychology
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2021-22 in
<i>the month(s) of:</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	British Psychological Society
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Diploma in Psychological Therapies and Interventions* MA in Psychological Therapies and Interventions*
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Psychology
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Professional Doctorate periods of study for full time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The *Doctorate of Counselling Psychology* (DCounsPsy) at York St John University provides a postgraduate training pathway essential for those wishing to pursue a career as a counselling psychologist. Counselling psychology focuses on the application of psychological and psychotherapeutic theory and research to clinical practice. Counselling psychologists adopt a humanistic position towards provision of a range of evidence-based therapeutic modalities aimed at reducing psychological distress and promoting the wellbeing of children, adolescents, adults, couples, families and other groups. Counselling psychologists work across a diversity of health and social care providers e.g., NHS, outpatient and inpatient units, community organisations, educational institutions, forensic settings, and independent practice.

This programme will provide you with professional training in relevant theory, research, therapeutic skills, and also focus on your personal development. This programme primarily focuses on the modality of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Person-Centred Humanistic approaches as a secondary modality. The programme will be accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and will satisfy the educational standards for chartered membership and full membership of the Division of Counselling Psychology. Graduates will also be eligible to apply for registration as a Counselling Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

* exit awards retrospectively applied in 2023-24 for current students

Psychological assessment, practice and supervision

The library at YSJ is well-resourced with materials relating to the practice and research of counselling psychology (i.e., books, journals, audio-visual materials). In addition, you will have access to a *Psychology Test Library* containing a range of questionnaires and psychometric tests for assessment of personality, intelligence, cognitive, behavioural and neuropsychological function, psychopathologies, career interest and others.

In the first year of the programme, you'll undertake coursework modules, each comprising a 4-hour weekly seminar including teaching and skills practice. In the second year, you'll complete additional modules of coursework, alongside two clinic placements. Placements in second year consist of 144 hours of supervised clinical practice and 4 hours per week of clinical supervision. In the third year, you'll complete further coursework modules in parallel with two clinical placements in community settings. Placements in third year consist of 100 hours of clinical practice and 2 hours per week of supervision. Supervision is provided by appropriately qualified psychologists using a combination of 1:1, face-to-face, and small group sessions.

Research opportunities During the second and third years of the programme you'll undertake an individual research project designed to advance your knowledge of counselling psychology. Under the supervision of an academic member of staff, you'll demonstrate your ability to undertake a coherent line of experimental research and be required to write a thesis of 35,000 – 45,000 words.

You will have access to, and be actively encouraged to use, YSJ's experimental laboratories supported by technical staff and technical resources, such as, eye-tracking equipment, HD surveillance cameras and ceiling mounted microphones, virtual reality headsets and motion sensors, Biopac physiological recording equipment, and specialist software for creating, recording and analysing experimental stimuli. In line with YSJ's collaborative relationship with the NHS and the mental health team in the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Trust, it is expected that you'll also work on a range of new and existing clinical projects of benefit to the local community.

Personal development

Personal development is a professional requirement as a counselling psychologist and is integral to this programme. The programme requires you to become a self-reflective evaluator of your own clinical skills; be able to develop strategies to build resilience to handle the impact of clinical practice; and to undertake personal therapy. Through personal therapy you'll be able to understand the therapy experience, facilitate strong therapeutic relationships, and monitor and evaluate your own therapeutic practice.

We would recommend that you find your own registered therapist who you feel comfortable with and who can commit to provision of a minimum of 20 hours of personal therapy across your 3-year journey as a counselling psychology trainee. The cost for the personal therapy will need to be met by yourself, though you will also be eligible to receive counselling from the University's Wellbeing Team which can provide emotional and psychological support for emergencies and/or emergent wellbeing needs.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- A good honours degree from a BPS accredited undergraduate psychology programme (normally a 2.1 or above, although applicants with a lower degree classification and other postgraduate qualifications and/or experience will also be considered).
- The Graduate Basis for Chartership with the BPS.
- Satisfactory DBS enhanced disclosure.
- A commitment to undertake personal therapy and clinical supervision.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Accredited Prior \(Experiential\) Learning \(APL/APEL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The aims of the Doctorate of Counselling Psychology are in accord with the *Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral programmes in Counselling Psychology* (BPS, 2017) and are to produce graduates who will:

1. Be competent, reflective, ethically sound, resourceful and informed practitioners of counselling psychology able to work in therapeutic and nontherapeutic contexts
2. Value the imaginative, interpretative, personal and collaborative aspects of the practice of counselling psychology
3. Commit themselves to ongoing personal and professional development and inquiry
4. Understand, develop and apply models of psychological inquiry for the creation of new knowledge which is appropriate to the multi-dimensional nature of relationships between people
5. Appreciate the significance of wider social, cultural, spiritual, political, and economic domains within which counselling psychology operates
6. Adopt a questioning and evaluative approach to the philosophy, practice, research and theory which constitutes counselling psychology
7. Develop and demonstrate communication, influencing, teaching and leadership skills by applying psychological knowledge and skills in a range of professional, clinical, organisational, and research contexts

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to (aligned with the BPS standards for accreditation; see Appendix A):

Level 8

- 8.1 Understand and critically evaluate the philosophical paradigms which underpin the psychological theories relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.2 Demonstrate knowledge of human, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social and physiological functioning, and apply this understanding to the use of psychometric tests and diagnostic frameworks relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.3 Initiate, develop and maintain purposeful therapeutic relationships as conceptualised by different models of psychological therapy, and conduct evidenced-based psychological assessments, case formulations and case presentations
- 8.4 Conduct psychological interventions across a range of clients, including children, adolescents, adults, couples, families and groups (under the supervision of a suitably qualified practitioner psychologist) using a range of cognitive behavioural and humanistic therapeutic approaches
- 8.5 Evaluate practice and outcomes of psychological therapy at an individual level and understand broader evaluation processes at organisational and systemic levels
- 8.6 Demonstrate and apply knowledge of research inquiry, research integrity and research design by conducting and reporting on a substantial original research investigation relevant to counselling psychology
- 8.7 Understand best practices for working with diversity and cultural competence and demonstrate social inclusion and equal opportunities in clinical practice
- 8.8 Understand and demonstrate ethical values, personal integrity and the professionalism required by a counselling psychologist
- 8.9 Understand and demonstrate effective communication, influencing, teaching and leaderships skills

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	noncompensatable or compensatable NC or X
Year 1						
PSY8102M	8	1	Counselling and Psychotherapy Skills	30	C	NC
PSY8103M	8	1	Psychological Assessment Theories and Practice	30	C	NC
PSY8101M	8	1	Professional Practice in Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8105M	8	2	Individual Psychotherapy	30	C	NC
PSY8104M	8	2	Research Methods in Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8106M	8	2	Psychological Interventions Over the Lifespan	30	C	NC
Year 2						
PSY8203M	8	1	Group Psychotherapy	30	C	NC
PSY8202M	8	1&2	Doctoral Thesis 1	60	C	NC
PSY8201P	8	1	Placement 1	30	C	NC
PSY8206M	8	2	Psychological Interventions for Couples and Families	30	C	NC
PSY8204P	8	2	Placement 2	30	C	NC
Year 3						
PSY8303M	8	1	Psychopathology and Advanced Psychotherapy Process	30	C	NC
PSY8302M	8	1&2	Doctoral Thesis 2	30	C	NC
PSY8301P	8	1	Placement 3	30	C	NC
PSY8306M	8	2	Professional Counselling Psychology	30	C	NC
PSY8305M	8	3	Doctoral Thesis 3	30	C	NC
PSY8304P	8	2	Placement 4	30	C	NC

Learning, teaching and assessment

The programme aims to be inclusive and accessible and recognises that training to be a counselling psychologist is an active, constructive and contextual process. The programme is structured such that your knowledge and skills continually develop across the levels of the programme, assuming prior knowledge of undergraduate psychology, but not counselling. All students will be supported across the three years by a course leader, module leaders, lecturers, research supervisors, and placement supervisors, in addition to an individual programme tutor.

All modules are delivered at doctoral level (level 8). There are six modules related to the acquisition of counselling and psychotherapy skills (PSY8102M, PSY8105M, PSY8106M, PSY8203M, PSY8206M, PSY8303M), with three modules completed in Year 1, two included in Year 2, and one in Year 3. Each of

the therapy modules builds on the last, and those taken concurrently (i.e., PSY8105M and PSY8106M) are taught in parallel such that you cover the common cognitive behavioural and humanistic approaches across the lifespan. The therapy modules are complemented by a module covering the theory and practice of psychological assessment (in Year 1) and two modules including the ethical and professional aspects of the profession of counselling psychology (in both Years 1 & 3). Research competencies are covered in four modules; commencing with instruction in research methodology and design (in Year 1) and followed by three research thesis modules (across Years 2 & 3). The thesis modules require you to conduct a programmatic research project in an area related to counselling psychology under the supervision of an academic member of staff, and culminate with the production of a (max) 50,000 word thesis.

Instruction comprises didactic teaching, seminars, scaffolded skills practice sessions, virtual learning environments (i.e., Moodle), and placement activities (a minimum of 450 hours working as a trainee counselling psychologist). You will be supported to complete therapeutic practice in cognitive behaviour and humanistic therapies with appropriate face-to-face clinical supervision, in all placements (Placements 1, 2, 3 & 4).

There is a mix of written (e.g., theoretical papers, case reports, examinations), oral (e.g., case presentations), and videoed assessment. Clinical experiences and therapy competencies conducted on placement, are monitored using a Clinical Folio.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general [regulations](#) for postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

In addition, the following programme-specific regulations apply in respect of progression and graduation:

- All assessment items must be passed to satisfy progression, that is, only those successfully completing all components will be allowed to progress to the next year of study.
- The Doctorate in Counselling Psychology will be awarded on completion of all modules and a dissertation, alongside documentary evidence of supervised practice and personal therapy (this aspect if assessed in various modules).
- The Postgraduate Diploma in Psychological Therapies and Interventions will be awarded to students who exit with at least 120 credits from taught modules. This is a non-practicing award and does not qualify the student as a practicing clinician.
- The MA in Psychological Therapies and Interventions will be awarded to students who exit with at least 180 credits which include successful completion of PSY8201P Placement 1, PSY8204P Placement 2 and PSY8202M Doctoral Thesis 1. This is a non-practicing award and does not qualify the student as a practicing clinician

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#)
- [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statement](#)
- [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- BPS Standards for the accreditation of Doctoral programmes in Counselling Psychology (2017)
- Health & Care Professions Council Standards of education and training (2014)

Date written / revised: 05/01/18 / 24/09/21

Programme originally approved: 05/01/18

Appendix A

Learning Outcomes from Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral programmes in Counselling Psychology (BPS, 2017)

1. **Philosophy:** *By the end of the programme trainees will:*
 - a. Understand the diverse philosophical bases which underpin the psychological theories that are relevant to counselling psychology.
 - b. Be able to critically evaluate the primary philosophical paradigms that inform psychological theory and the understanding of the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of human experience.
 - c. Understand the spiritual and cultural traditions relevant to counselling psychology.
 - d. Embrace humanistic and relational value systems that engage with meaning, co-construction, and interpretation and aim at the exploration, clarification, and holistic understanding of clients' predicaments.
 - e. Embody the identity of the Reflective Practitioner and demonstrate the ability to engage in a collaborative dialogue with clients aiming at understanding their subjective experience and constructions of meaning and reality.
 - f. Be in a position to use their own personal insight, life experiences, personal therapy and clinical supervision to facilitate the formation of a strong therapeutic relationship that is founded upon the practitioner's personal qualities and the core conditions of empathy, acceptance, and authenticity.
2. **Psychological Knowledge and Application:** *By the end of their programme trainees will be able to:*
 - a. Demonstrate knowledge of theories of human, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social and physiological functioning relevant to counselling psychology.
 - b. Critically evaluate theories of mind and personality.
 - c. Demonstrate knowledge of different theories of life-span development.
 - d. Understand the importance of historical, social and cultural contexts and their impact on practice.
 - e. Demonstrate knowledge of psychological, social, and relational distress and knowledge of a range of explanatory frameworks used to understand these presentations (e.g., distress as meaningful, distress as psychopathology etc.). Trainees will also demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate these in the light of research and practice.
 - f. Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of psychometric theory.
 - g. Evaluate, use and interpret psychometric tests; this includes the selection, administering, scoring and interpretation of performance based psychometric tests, e.g. Neuropsychological tests, tests of cognition and development, self-other report, and other standardised assessment procedures. Use of such tests would be in close collaboration with clients and identified as one, amongst other, possible means for understanding and interpreting clients' psychological distress.
 - h. Have the ability to critically evaluate the reliability and validity of such procedures.
 - i. Have knowledge of diagnostic frameworks such as the DSM and ICD, including a critical understanding of the concept of diagnosis.
 - j. Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of psychopharmacology and have the ability to evaluate its effects in the light of research and relational practice.
3. **Psychological Assessment and Formulation:** *By the end of their programme trainees will be able to:*
 - a. Initiate, develop, maintain and end a purposeful therapeutic alliance and be able to work therapeutically at relational depth.

- b. Understand and work with the therapeutic relationship and alliance as conceptualised by different models of psychological therapy.
 - c. Conduct psychological assessments (depending on the therapeutic modality used) aiming at increasing clients' self-awareness and shared understanding of their predicament, nature of distress, needs, expectations, and desired outcomes.
 - d. Conduct appropriate risk assessment and use this to guide practice.
 - e. Construct collaborative formulations utilising theoretical frameworks and the clients' subjective experience aiming at an empathic understanding of their predicament.
 - f. Ensure that formulations are expressed in accessible language, culturally sensitive, and nondiscriminatory in terms of, for example, age, gender, disability, and sexuality.
 - g. Reflect on and revise formulations in the light of on-going feedback and intervention and use them as a basis for decision making with regards to an appropriate therapeutic plan.
 - h. Lead on the implementation of on-going formulation in work settings, utilised in order to enhance teamwork, multi-professional communication and psychological mindedness in those settings.
4. **Counselling Psychology Practice and Psychological Intervention:** *By the end of their programme, trainees will be able to relate their philosophical understanding of counselling psychology and its evidence base to their practice, and will:*
- a. Demonstrate in depth critical knowledge and supervised clinical experience of the particular theory and practice of at least one specific model of psychological therapy.
 - b. Have a working knowledge and supervised clinical experience of at least one further model of psychological therapy.
 - c. Be able to compare, contrast and critically evaluate the ontological and epistemological foundations underlying a range of models of therapy.
 - d. Be able to provide psychological therapy interventions:
 - (i) To individual adults and depending on placement experience other client groups including children and young people, older adults, couples, groups, families, and organisations.
 - (ii) In range of contexts, which may include NHS (primary, secondary and tertiary care) and other statutory, voluntary or independent settings.
 - (iii) Working within different timeframes of therapeutic practice (time limited, short and longterm, as well as open-ended therapy).

Trainees must complete a minimum of 450 hours of supervised clinical experience, and programmes must have a system in place for monitoring the breadth of experience that each trainee develops.
 - e. Understand the therapeutic process as it occurs when working with a range of different individuals experiencing psychological difficulties, whether that be in relation to adjustment, to circumstances, or in more significant and problematic experiences as often indicated in diagnostic categories.
 - f. Demonstrate a personal, coherent, and ethical way of working with clients that takes account of a critical knowledge of evidence based practice, practice based evidence and reflective practice.
 - g. Be able to reflect critically on their practice and responsiveness to the complex demands of clients, and consider alternative ways of working where appropriate.
 - h. Understand explicit and implicit (verbal and non-verbal) communications in a therapeutic relationship.

- i. Have knowledge of, and ability to conduct interventions related to, secondary prevention and the promotion of health and wellbeing.
 - j. Conduct interventions in a way, which promotes wellbeing, personal and social functioning, and is informed by client values and goals.
 - k. Understand social approaches to intervention; for example, those informed by community, critical, and social constructionist perspectives.
 - l. Be able to effectively communicate clinical and non-clinical information from a psychological perspective in a style appropriate to a variety of different audiences (for example, to professional colleagues, and to clients and/or their carers).
 - m. Understand the main principles of and approaches to supervision and have knowledge of how to apply these at an appropriate level within their own sphere of competence.
5. **Evaluation of Practice:** *By the end of their programme, trainees will be able to:*
- a. Critically understand and use processes of evaluation in the context of counselling psychology.
 - b. Evaluate practice through the monitoring of processes and outcomes, across multiple dimensions of functioning, in relation to wellbeing, values and goals, and as informed by client experiences as indicators chosen in collaboration with the client including measures (i.e., objective and self-report) where appropriate.
 - c. Have awareness of the value of maintaining external consultation in the form of clinical supervision with experienced members of this and related professions, as well as continuing professional development, and personal psychological therapy so as to maintain and enhance ethical and clinical sensitivity.
 - d. Understand the process of evaluation and outcomes at the organisational and systemic levels as well as the individual level, including appreciating outcomes frameworks in wider use within national healthcare systems, the evidence base and theories of outcomes monitoring (e.g. as related to dimensions of accessibility, acceptability, clinical effectiveness, and efficacy).
6. **Research and Inquiry:** *By the end of their programme, trainees will be able to:*
- a. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the research evidence on process and outcomes of psychological therapy relevant to counselling psychology.
 - b. Demonstrate knowledge of the models of science that underpin research and inquiry and of the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches to these.
 - c. Demonstrate competence to use appropriate software and research tools.
 - d. Critically analyse and evaluate published research relevant to counselling psychology and other research relevant to their practice.
 - e. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of research designs.
 - f. Devise and evaluate research questions and select an appropriate methodology.
 - g. Design, conduct, critically evaluate and report on a research project.
 - h. Understand research ethics and demonstrate the ability to apply them.
 - i. Reflect on their experience of being a researcher.
 - j. Understand the purpose and principles of service audit and service evaluation.
7. **Working with Diversity and Cultural Competence:** *By the end of their programme, trainees will be able to:*
- a. Develop knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity and diversities and how to work affirmatively to promote social inclusion in their clinical practice.

- b. Value social inclusion and demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities.
 - c. Understand issues of power, discrimination and oppression, the psychological impact of these, and how to work with these issues psychologically.
 - d. Develop an understanding of the importance of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and an awareness of difference including visible, less visible, and mixed backgrounds, and be able to work from a knowledge base of different cultural frameworks.
 - e. Have an understanding of the major religious beliefs and practices, spirituality, and how to work with these in clinical practice.
 - f. Understand the diversity of forms of relationships and families in gender and sexual minority clients; be knowledgeable of the diversity of sexual and gender minority identities and practices; work affirmatively with gender and sexual minority clients, understanding contemporary models of gender and sexuality, internalised oppression, and the impact of stigmatising beliefs; and recognise that attitudes towards sexuality and gender are located in a changing socio-political context, and reflect on their own understanding of these concepts.
 - g. Be mindful of the impact of socioeconomic status and disadvantage and limited access to resources and services.
 - h. Be aware of attitudes towards disabled people and the social construction of disability, and appropriate models for practice.
 - i. Understand the principles and requirements of safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
 - j. Understand human development across the lifespan and the issues of discrimination and disadvantage that can arise.
8. **Personal and Professional Skills and Values:** *Trainees will continuously evaluate their practice in the light of the following principles and, by the end of their programme, will:*
- a. Understand ethical issues and relevant legal frameworks and guidance and be able to apply these in complex healthcare and therapeutic contexts, ensuring that informed consent underpins all contact with clients and research participants.
 - b. Strive to do no harm by recognising their personal limitations, appropriate boundaries and understanding of the dynamics present in therapeutic and other relationships, including dynamics of power.
 - c. Understand the experience of therapy through active and systematic engagement in personal therapy, which will enable them to:
 - (i) Demonstrate an understanding and experience of therapy from the perspective of the client, which will be utilised to guide their own practice.
 - (ii) Demonstrate an understanding through therapy of their own life experience, and understand the impact of that experience upon practice.
 - (iii) Demonstrate an ability for critical self-reflection on the use of self in therapeutic process.
 - d. Demonstrate creativity and artistry in the use of language and metaphor in the therapeutic process.
 - e. Be able to monitor and evaluate their therapeutic practice through clinical supervision, qualitative feedback, quantitative outcome measures, feedback provided by service users, and their own personal therapy.
 - f. Develop strategies to build resilience to handle the emotional and physical impact of practice and seek appropriate support when necessary.
 - g. Have the capacity to recognize when their own fitness to practice is compromised and take steps to manage this risk as appropriate.

- h. Hold themselves accountable to the public and the profession for their personal integrity.
 - i. Demonstrate commitment to undertake professional development to ensure they can continue to work effectively in the best interests of their clients.
 - j. Demonstrate commitment to pursuing ethical reasoning, and deeper personal and professional knowledge, relevant to practice.
 - k. Develop a knowledge of and practical experience in ethical reasoning and decision making.
 - l. Demonstrate a commitment to continuing to abide by the Society's ethical framework and professional codes of conduct and practice guidelines and those of the Health and Care Professions Council.
9. **Communication, Influencing, Teaching, and Leadership Skills:** *By the end of their programme, trainees will have developed knowledge and actively engage in experiences that demonstrate skills at a level commensurate with their level or training and role within the service to:*
- a. Communicate effectively clinical and non-clinical information from a psychological perspective in a style appropriate to a variety of different audiences (for example, to professional colleagues, and to client and carers).
 - b. Demonstrate competency in appropriate record keeping and report writing to enhance communication with other practitioners from the same and related fields.
 - c. Understanding the process of communicating effectively through interpreters and having an awareness of the limitations thereof.
 - d. Impart psychological knowledge in a professional capacity with a view towards influencing the psychological mindedness of teams and organizations.
 - e. Demonstrate qualities such as being aware of and working with interpersonal processes, an ability to manage professional relationships, proactivity, and contributing to and fostering collaborative working practices within teams.
 - f. Understand the organisational policies and contextual and legal frameworks within which they practice.
 - g. Contribute to the management and auditing processes of the organisation at a stage-appropriate level.
 - h. Work with a knowledge and awareness of the dynamics, use and misuse of process and power and being able to recognise malpractice or unethical practice and the appropriate organisational policies and procedures to respond.
 - i. Understand ways to contribute to the development and leadership of the counselling psychology profession.