

# **London Metropolitan University Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology**

## **Information for prospective applicants**

Author: Malin Sellden  
Version: 2  
Date: 21 August 2015  
+44 (0)20 7133 2650  
m.sellden@londonmet.ac.uk

## What are the programme's application criteria and procedures?

In keeping with the collaborative approach of the programme, trainee selection is very much seen as a two-way process: on the one hand, we hope to provide applicants with sufficient information to enable them to evaluate and make an informed decision about whether the programme is suitable for them; and on the other, we are looking to gain as much of a rounded picture as possible of an applicant, their knowledge skills and experience, on which to base our selection decisions.

There are two stages to the selection process for the Counselling Psychology programme at London Met: 1) a **written application**, which is used by the programme team to short list candidates, and 2) an **interview** process, which is used to select the strongest candidates from the short list. The programme receives a high volume of applications each year for just 15-20 places on the programme. This inevitably means that selection is competitive and applicants who can demonstrate the strongest applications are most likely to be short listed for interview and offered a place. The team makes its decisions on the basis of evidence gathered through the application process. Year 1 of the programme then constitutes a preparatory stage in which students are supported in developing their skills and capacities to a level that will be necessary to progress to the next stage of the training.

### Stage 1: The written application

All applicants must meet the programme's *eligibility criteria* before applying, as listed below. Those who meet these criteria should submit a written application using the University's standard application form for postgraduate courses, as described below. The written application should clearly demonstrate that applicants meet the criteria.

### Eligibility criteria

1. A minimum of an upper second-class Honours degree in Psychology (2:1)
2. Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) of the BPS
3. Practical experience of using counselling skills in an emotionally demanding helping role gained over at least one year prior to application, and ideally some training in counselling skills
4. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken English of a standard necessary to support academic study and professional practice at advanced postgraduate level. Applicants for whom English is not a first language must possess an English language qualification demonstrating proficiency of an IELTS minimum of 7 with no element below 6.5 or TOEFL IBT min 110 with a minimum of 26 in reading and a minimum of 28 in writing speaking and reading.

## **The personal statement**

The application form also requires applicants to complete a personal statement. On the notes accompanying the application form applicants are advised to answer a number of questions when completing their personal statements. The course team will use the applicant's personal statement to assess the overall strength of the application and guide a decision about whether to short list for interview. It is therefore important that applicants regard their personal statements as central to their written application. When assessing applicants' personal statements the course team will look for evidence of the following:

- A standard of written English adequate to support advanced postgraduate study
- A capacity to reflect upon skills and learning that have been gained from relevant personal and professional experiences to date
- Professional and theoretical understanding adequate to support clinical practice with vulnerable clients from the beginning of the programme
- A constructive appraisal of one's own stage of development and further learning needs
- Opportunities for securing an appropriate placement
- A good understanding of the nature of counselling psychology, as similar and distinct from other fields of psychological therapy, and a clear rationale for wanting to become a counselling psychologist
- Personal maturity, self awareness and reflective capacity
- Academic ability to support advanced postgraduate study
- Areas of research interest in the field of counselling psychology that could be developed into a doctoral research proposal
- A realistic appreciation of the nature of doctoral level study and readiness to undertake this

Applicants should therefore aim to demonstrate the above when completing their personal statements. Personal statements should be appropriately detailed and informative but not exceed 2,000 words in length. Applicants who meet the basic eligibility criteria and provide personal statements that adequately demonstrate the above are likely to be short listed for an interview. Applicants who are not short listed for interview will receive formal notification from the University Admissions Office.

## **Guidance for students with disabilities**

London Metropolitan University is committed to equality of opportunity and treatment, and has a dedicated Disabilities and Dyslexia Service which supports students with disabilities and advises the university on reasonable adjustments that can be made to support their learning and achievement

(<https://intranet.londonmet.ac.uk/student-services/dyslexia-disabilities>). The HCPC also provides a guidance leaflet 'A disabled person's guide to becoming a health professional', available via their website ([www.HCPC-uk.org](http://www.HCPC-uk.org)), which provides useful information for those considering undertaking an HCPC approved training programme. Although applicants are under no obligation to disclose a disability, the University's application form provides an opportunity to do so. The HCPC also

encourages applicants for an approved training course to disclose. This is because it enables the training provider to assess the potential impact of a disability on a student's studies; their ability to meet the necessary standards of proficiency required by the HCPC; and what reasonable adjustments can be made for a student with disability while they are enrolled on the programme.

## **Stage 2: Interview**

Candidates who have been short listed for interview will receive a formal interview notification from the Admissions Office, providing information about the date, time and location of the interview. The interview enables applicants to have an opportunity to visit the department, and to discuss their applications in more detail. It provides an essential means by which the course team can go beyond what is 'on paper' to get a more direct sense of the candidates professional development, and their readiness and suitability to undertake the programme.

The interview process starts with a short presentation about the programme by a member of the course team to a group of invited candidates. At the end there is an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the training, as well as meet other members of the course team. Following the presentation, each candidate has two interviews: one focusing on their *clinical* experience and personal development, and another focussing on their *research* interests and academic competence. Each interview is conducted individually with the applicant, with a different member of the course team, and lasts between 20 and 40 minutes.

In the **clinical interview** candidates will be expected to explain their reasons for wanting to become a counselling psychologist, to discuss examples of their work experience to date and reflect on their personal motivations and relevant life experiences. Specifically, the course team look for evidence of the following:

- A capacity to reflect upon skills and learning that have been gained from relevant personal and professional experiences to date
- Professional and theoretical understanding adequate to support clinical practice with vulnerable clients from the beginning of the programme
- Opportunities for securing an appropriate placement
- A realistic and constructive appraisal of one's own stage of development and further learning needs
- A good understanding of the nature of counselling psychology (as similar and distinct from other fields of psychological therapy) and a clear rationale for wanting to become a counselling psychologist
- A fit between the applicant's and the programme's philosophy and theoretical approach
- Personal maturity, self awareness and reflective capacity
- A professional standard of spoken English adequate to support effective clinical practice in the UK

In the **research interview**, the course team look for evidence of the following:

- An ability to describe and critically discuss a previously undertaken or current psychology research project(s)
- A level of understanding of psychological research, methods, epistemology and critical ability adequate to support advanced postgraduate study
- Ideas regarding potential areas of research interest in the field of counselling psychology, and an ability to think critically about how these could be developed and taken forward on the programme.
- An accurate appreciation of and readiness for the nature of doctoral level study

Interviewees are not expected to have developed a specific proposal for a doctoral research project, but there is an expectation that they will have had some ideas regarding a potential topic area and avenues for further research. Applicants are welcome to attach a short written *research proposal* (e.g. 2 sides of A4) to their written application for consideration and discussion in the research interview, if they wish. Should a candidate subsequently take up a place on the course, they are not committed to a study or idea that was presented or discussed at interview.

After completing the two interviews, each candidate participates in a short **counselling role play** exercise, in which they play a counsellor in an initial session with a client, played by a member of the course team. The exercise that lasts 5 to 10 minutes and gives the course team an opportunity to get a sense of a candidate's basic therapeutic skills and interpersonal style and potential as a counselling psychologist. The emphasis is on assessing a candidate's readiness to work safely with clients in placement, rather than a demonstration of advanced clinical technique. As such, the course team consider core areas such as:

- Establishing and developing rapport
- Verbal and active listening skills
- Emotional responsiveness and empathy
- Ability to link and share themes and observations helpfully

On completion of the role play exercises, candidates are free to go, and the team members meet to discuss their assessments of the applicants and reach decisions about whether or not to offer a place. The team's decisions take into consideration a candidate's overall performance in the three components of the interview process (i.e. the clinical interview, research interview and role play), whether an adequate level of competence has been demonstrated in each, and how well they have performed in relation to other candidates. Candidates should receive formal notification of the outcome of their interview from the University's admissions office within one to two weeks. If a place has been offered a candidate is normally required to accept or decline the offer within four weeks of the date of the letter. It is not possible for a candidate to defer a place that has been offered or to have an application carried over to a subsequent year. In such instances, a candidate would be advised to submit a new application to the programme in the following year.

## **What is GBC and why is it important?**

The Counselling Psychology programme at London Met is a BPS accredited course, which means that all applicants *must* have already completed stage 1 and possess GBC in order to be eligible able to apply. Applicants who do not have GBC or do not submit the appropriate evidence of GBC with their application will therefore not be considered. A letter from the BPS confirming GBC status constitutes appropriate evidence. Please note that a copy of a degree certificate or a letter from your university indicating that the degree is BPS accredited will *not* be considered sufficient. If an applicant is unsure whether they are eligible for GBC they are advised to contact the BPS: [enquiries@bps.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bps.org.uk); Tel +44 (0)116 254 9568.

## **How does someone obtain GBC?**

The most straightforward way to obtain GBC is to take a BPS-accredited Honours degree in Psychology. If an applicant's course is not accredited or their degree is not in Psychology and they wish to gain GBC, the School of Psychology at London Met offers a 1-year full-time Conversion Diploma, which will convert an existing degree into the equivalent of an Honours degree, with Psychology as a main subject. Further information about the London Met Conversion Diploma is available via the University's website: [www.londonmet.ac.uk](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk) or by contacting the Conversion Diploma Course Leader Dr Ming Wei Ernest Lee ([ming-wei.lee@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ming-wei.lee@londonmet.ac.uk)). The BPS also provides the Society's Qualifying Examination, which offers an alternative pathway for obtaining GBC and can assess the qualifications of individuals who completed non-UK degrees to determine eligibility for GBC.

## **If my application is unsuccessful can I apply again in the future?**

Applicants who are unsuccessful are welcome to re-apply to the programme in a subsequent year, though they may not re-apply within the same academic year in which an application has already been submitted. If an applicant decides to re-apply they should state in their personal statement that they have applied to the course previously and how they think they have improved their application following their previous attempt.

## **Can I transfer to your programme from another counselling psychology course?**

Trainees who have completed part of another accredited counselling psychology programme are welcome to apply to the programme and should do so in the same way as other applicants. However applicants in this situation must also include the following in their application:

1. a reference from a member of staff on the counselling psychology programme that the applicant has attended
2. a transcript of the trainees' performance on the modules taken on that programme
3. an explanation in the applicant's personal statement of the reasons for leaving/not completing the programme of training

Depending on the amount and content of prior training in counselling psychology completed and the quality of a candidate's application, it may be possible to offer direct entry into Year 2 of the programme, subject to assessment of eligibility for accreditation of prior learning, as explained below, and availability of places. Consideration for Year 2 entry would include assessment of a comprehensive and viable research proposal, including ethical considerations, by the candidate, and evidence of a capacity to undertake research and training at doctoral level, assessed via interview.

## **Can I apply for accreditation of my previous learning or qualifications?**

London Met offers the possibility of accreditation of prior learning (APL) for most of its courses, including the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology. This may be relevant for applicants who have already completed a significant amount of prior training or qualifications in the same or a related field. APL offers the possibility of providing exemptions from some of the modules on a programme of study.

APL can enable a) *direct Year 2 (Level 8) entry* for applicants who have already completed Year 1 or its equivalent and b) entry to the *top up doctorate (Level 8)* pathway (see section 14) for qualified Counselling Psychologists (HCPC registered and chartered with full membership of the BPS division of counselling psychology), who can use their existing qualification to gain APL for the Year 1 *and* the Advanced Psychological Theory and Practice modules of the programme.

In order to meet the requirements for APL, applicants need to be able to demonstrate that they have achieved, via previous study, the learning outcomes associated with a Year 1 module or modules covered by the London Met programme. The learning outcomes for each of the modules taught on the programme are listed within the module specifications available via the programme's main webpage (under 'Contents' – 'Read more about the modules'). If this can be demonstrated *and* the applicant is successful in their basic application for the programme, they will be awarded APL for any module where they have already accrued the required learning. Applications and eligibility for APL should be discussed with a member of the course team if invited for interview, where further guidance on the APL application process can be provided. This essentially involves the applicant submitting additional documentary evidence (e.g. prior course or module specifications and certification) and a covering letter clearly outlining how the applicant has met the learning outcomes of one or more of the London Met programme Year 1 modules. Further general information regarding APL at the University can also be found at <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/how-to-apply/admissions/apel.cfm>

Please note: It is a BPS requirement for accredited counselling psychology programmes that exemptions can only be granted for learning or competence that has been attained following the candidate's achievement of eligibility for graduate basis for chartered membership (GBC) with the BPS.

## How do I submit an application?

Applications for the programme can be submitted electronically and application packs can be downloaded via the London Met web site counselling psychology page:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/2016/counselling-psychology---prof-doc/>

Alternatively applicants can request a hard copy by contacting the course enquiries office on: [enquiries.city@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries.city@londonmet.ac.uk) (City campus) or 020 7320 1616. The office can also provide information and advice regarding accommodation whilst studying if relevant.

There is no set submission deadline for the receipt of applications for the Counselling Psychology programme. Applications are considered and processed as they are received. The programme has one intake per year, in October. Interviews for places usually begin in the December or January of the preceding academic year and continue until places have been filled. It is advisable, however, to apply as early in the academic year preceding the intended year of entry as possible, as places may be filled or limited by May or June.

## What do I need to include with my application form?

The following items must be submitted with application forms. Forms received without the following may not be processed or may be subject to delays.

1. **Evidence of GBC.** This should be a letter of confirmation from the BPS of your GBC status. Degree certificates or University letters are not adequate evidence.
2. **Two references.** One of these should be an academic reference, ideally from someone who has direct experience of and can comment on your psychological research ability, such as a dissertation supervisor. The other reference should be from someone who has experience of and can comment on your practical work experience, such as a clinical supervisor or line manager.
3. **Copies of transcripts and certificates.** Copies of transcripts and certificates (not originals) detailing the results of any psychology degrees or conversion diplomas the applicant has completed should be included.
4. **Abstracts.** Abstracts of any research projects that the applicant has completed (e.g. an undergraduate or Masters dissertation) should be included.
5. Applicants may also **optionally** submit a brief research proposal (2 x A4 sides maximum) relating to a topic of potential interest for doctoral study.

Applicants who have completed part of a counselling psychology training programme elsewhere must also include additional information as outlined previously.



## What if I have a criminal conviction?

Applicants are required to disclose any criminal conviction(s) on their application form. Further details of the conviction(s) may then be sought from the applicant before reviewing their application in order to assess the candidate's suitability for the course. The University's Secretary may also be consulted in order to agree whether or not programme admission would be possible.

Trainees on the programme are required to undertake clinical placements, as explained further below. Before beginning a placement trainees must undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) <https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>. This may be organised through a placement provider or the BPS and usually costs about £40. As DBS checks can take six to eight weeks to complete, once trainees have started on the programme they are encouraged to apply for a DBS check as soon as possible to prevent delays in starting placements. If an applicant has an up-to-date or recent DBS check this may be sufficient but it is also possible that some placement providers may require the trainee to undergo another check. Placements may also require trainees to undergo an occupational health check before taking up a placement.

Successful completion of the programme confers eligibility for apply for registration with the HCPC. However the HCPC have their own policy on assessing the applications from those who have criminal convictions who wish to join the register. Any applicant who has a criminal conviction is advised to consult the HCPC booklet *Guidance on Health and Character* in the first instance, before applying to the programme. This explains how the HCPC assess applications from individuals with criminal convictions and the kinds of convictions which may prevent individuals from joining the register (<http://www.HCPC-uk.org/publications/brochures/>). For further guidance or queries, applicants should contact the HCPC directly. Applicants should also be aware that individual practice placement providers on the programme make their own assessment of a trainee's suitability to undertake a placement with them, including the potential relevance of any criminal convictions. The programme seeks to take into account the HCPC guidance on criminal convictions and registration, and the requirements of practice placement providers, in its assessment of applications from individuals who have a criminal conviction. However, the offer of a place on the programme does not itself assure the securing of a placement or achievement of HCPC registration upon successful completion of the programme.

## What sort of experience do I need to have before I apply?

Applicants should have gained professional experience, in a paid or voluntary capacity, of making use of counselling skills within the context of an emotionally demanding helping relationship. The best way to gain this experience is to have worked over a continuous period for at least a year in a role where you have provided face to face therapeutic help, for example, as a counsellor, support worker, assistant psychologist or psychological practitioner. Telephone counselling or support work is relevant, though not necessarily as useful as face to face work. Observing psychotherapeutic work, undertaking short work placements, for example, during an undergraduate degree, or having personal experience of caring for an

individual or family member with mental health problem, though relevant, would not on their own constitute sufficient experience. It is also useful if applicants' relevant work experience has included using English as the spoken language. Where this is not the case, applicants will need to demonstrate that they have fluency in spoken English adequate to support psychological practice in the UK.

Examples of types of work experience that would be considered relevant include:

- assistant psychologist
- graduate mental health or low/high intensity IAPT worker
- counsellor (professional or voluntary)
- trained health care professional (e.g. nurse, social worker, support worker)
- trained telephone counsellor

Work experience in the following roles is relevant but may not be considered adequate on its own, so gaining experience in any of the above areas would be beneficial:

- teaching/training
- befriending
- HR, management, coaching

Prior courses or training undertaken in counselling or counselling skills are considered advantageous, though on their own do not satisfy the requirement for practical experience. The less formal direct counselling or psychological experience an applicant has the more beneficial some form of introductory counselling course is likely to be. In-house trainings completed as part of a relevant occupational role may also be relevant to discuss. Generally speaking, the longer and more theoretically-based the course undertaken the more valuable it is likely to be as a preparation for the counselling psychology programme. Applicants may, for example, have completed a diploma or certificate in counselling skills. The British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy ([www.bacp.org.uk](http://www.bacp.org.uk)) can be contacted to find out more about organisations that offer introductory level counselling courses. Some charities also provide specific training courses for their workers (e.g. the Samaritans). The World Wide Web, or local business directories, such as the *Yellow Pages*, can be useful additional resources for finding out about counselling organisations that may be willing to offer relevant work experience and/or training. Information on training to become a psychological practitioner within an NHS *Improving access to psychological therapies* service (IAPT) can also be found at <http://www.iapt.nhs.uk/>

Relevant work experience is a crucial prerequisite for the programme, as trainees begin to work with vulnerable clients from the start of the programme. Possessing basic skills, experience and theoretical understanding will enable trainees to do this with an adequate degree of confidence and safety, and can also be essential to securing placements. It is also important that applicants have spent an adequate period of time developing the personal qualities and capacities necessary to undertake this kind of work. Applicants who have proceeded straight from A level or undergraduate study to postgraduate study, without an intervening period of work experience and professional development, are unlikely to be successful.

It is also important to appreciate that the course team are interested in what a candidate has learned from their experience and their ability to reflect on this. Sometimes applicants who have less experience show a better capacity to demonstrate this than applicants who have more experience. Consequently, applicants should not necessarily be put off if they feel they have gained valuable learning from their work experience. All applicants are advised to make a clear case for the relevance of their experience as a preparation for counselling psychology training.

## **How will I gain practical experience during training?**

A supervised counselling psychology practice placement that offers a minimum of 80 hours of client contact time during the first year of training is undertaken by all trainees, alongside the taught components of the course. A suitable Year 1 placement would include opportunities to work individually with adult clients who have mild-to-moderate difficulties. In each of Years 2 and 3, trainees are required to carry out a minimum of 185 hours of client contact time, totalling a minimum of 450 hours over the three years of the programme. As trainees progress, they are expected to gain experience of working in different placements settings and with more complex presentations. Trainees will need to have opportunities to practice cognitive-behavioural therapy in their placements in order to demonstrate the relevant competencies in course assessments. They are encouraged to develop a portfolio of experience that reflects their areas of clinical interest and possible future specialism. Trainees are expected to gain experience of practising psychological therapy in at least two placements while on the programme, including work in both generic and specialist settings. The majority of work undertaken will be with adults in an individual context, though there is a requirement to gain some experience in an alternative modality (e.g. working with couples, families or groups). Trainees are normally expected to stay in placements for a minimum duration of 6 months.

Trainee placements may take place in settings such as NHS services (e.g. primary care, community mental health teams, child and adolescent, family, drug and alcohol, eating disorders, personality, severe and enduring mental illness services), voluntary organisations, social services, student counselling and prison services. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of placement opportunities they may already have, or can develop, within these or other areas. Trainees are not necessarily confined to working in placements within the London and the South East, should they have contacts in other parts of the country. For applicants currently residing outside of the UK, obtaining a suitable supervised placement will require particularly careful planning, preparation and liaison with the Placements Co-ordinator. Please note that it is not possible for students to undertake placements outside of the UK. Clinical supervision of placements is usually provided by the trainee's placement setting. All practice placements and supervisors must be formally approved by the Placement Co-ordinator. In the first year of training, supervision must be provided at a minimum ratio of 1 hour of supervision to every five hours of client contact. This reduces to 1:8 in the second and third years. The majority of supervision (40 hours) received over the period of training must be with a HCPC registered counselling psychologist or chartered psychologist with full membership of the BPS division of counselling psychology. Where supervision is not provided within the placement, or where what is provided is not adequate, the

individual trainee can pay for their own additional supervision. This would normally be between £30-50 per session. Placements organisations are sometimes willing to cover or subsidise such additional costs.

## **How do I secure a practice placement?**

The London Met programme maintains a database of over two hundred organisations that provide practice placements to trainees. The placement co-ordinator provides support to candidates to help them secure placement arrangements. Practice placements should be organised ideally by the time the course commences or shortly after, to enable trainees to start accruing the necessary clinical hours. Candidates who have accepted a place on the programme are given access to the database prior to the beginning of the training, so that they can research and secure placements. At the start of the programme trainees attend a full placement induction with the placement co-ordinator which explains the key practice placement related policies and procedures. Trainees need not rely on the programme's database and are encouraged to make use of any existing contacts or opportunities they may have, for example within an organisation they already work for. The responsibility for securing placements rests with the trainee, with the programme providing a range of placement resources and support. Practice placement providers may require trainees to undergo their own occupational health assessments before taking up a placement.

## **Do I have to undertake my own therapy?**

Yes. The value-base of Counselling Psychology is grounded in the primacy of the therapeutic relationship and emphasises the importance of the therapist's personal awareness and use of self in ensuring effective, ethical and reflective practice. It is important for applicants to understand that undertaking training in counselling psychology is an emotionally, as well as academically, challenging experience. The process emphasises the practitioner's personal as well as professional development. Indeed, counselling psychology regards the 'self' of the practitioner, and their personal growth, as inextricable from their professional skills and competence. As part of a commitment to their ongoing personal and professional development, trainees are required to undergo a minimum of 60 hours of their own therapy during the training with a HCPC registered counselling psychologist and chartered psychologist with full membership of the BPS division of counselling psychology. They must also be approved by the course. This requirement is one of the ways in which training in Counselling Psychology differs from Clinical Psychology. Choice of personal therapists is left to the individual trainee and there is not normally any direct discussion between the course and the trainee's therapist. The programme maintains a database of qualified personal therapists which trainees may wish to access in finding a suitable therapist. A useful chapter on getting the most of personal therapy is also provided in the recommended Bor & Watts text listed at the end of this document. Trainees are expected to meet the costs of their personal therapy themselves and will need to budget for this in planning their studies. The cost of personal therapy can vary considerably and some therapists offer reduced rates for trainees. However, you should expect to pay somewhere between £30 - £50 per session. Any personal therapy completed by an applicant prior to the training does not count towards the 60 hour course requirement, though this may be

potentially advantageous and relevant to discuss in the application.

## **Trainee consent**

It is important that trainees on counselling psychology programmes appreciate the demanding nature of the training so they can consent to participate effectively in it. The emphasis on the trainee's own personal development and use of self within the professional practice of counselling psychology mean that the training process is likely to be an emotionally and personally, as well as academically, challenging one. Trainees will inevitably be challenged to think about themselves in new ways and become aware of aspects of their personal functioning that have relevance to the development of their professional competence. This can sometimes be experienced as destabilising or deskilling as trainees work through the various emotional and technical demands of the process. The time required and changes in self perception brought about by the training process can also have a significant impact on a trainee's life and relationships outside of the programme.

As well as engaging in personal therapy and supervision, and seeing clients in practice placement settings, trainees will be invited to participate in various forms of experiential and practical activities within teaching on the programme to support the learning process. These involve things like reflective practice groups, in which trainees discuss complex and demanding cases with other trainees and team facilitators. Experiential exercises, in pairs and groups, that ask trainees to reflect on aspects of their personal characteristics, beliefs and style of relating to others that may have relevance to their professional practice and development. Therapy role play/simulation exercises that involve trainees taking on the role of a client or therapist as part of clinical skills practice. Written coursework in which trainees will be required to demonstrate self awareness and reflective capacity and to some extent make disclosures of a personal and reflective nature in the context of discussing and evaluating their clinical practice (e.g. 'I was feeling anxious because...').

Trainees can vary in how comfortable and confident they feel about these aspects of the training process, which can in turn be a function of personal life experiences as well as individual differences such as cultural background and beliefs (e.g. about the appropriateness of emotional expression or self-disclosure). Trainees should be aware that their autonomy in determining a level of participation in the experiential and practical aspects of the programme that feels safe and appropriate to them will be encouraged and respected. Moreover, trainees and staff are expected to treat any personally sensitive material that arises in the course of the teaching and assessment on the programme in a confidential manner. However it is important that trainees appreciate that they are entering a training and profession which emphasises the practitioner's personal development, and will require an ability to demonstrate reflective practice.

## **What is the attendance requirement and time commitment?**

The Counselling Psychology programme runs as a 3-year full-time course, with an option to complete the first year of the programme in a part-time mode over 2 years (years 1a and 1b), totalling 4 years of training. For full time trainees, attendance during Year 1 is currently on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and for part-time trainees on Thursdays during Year 1a and Wednesdays in Year 1b. Attendance in Year 2 is

currently on a Thursday and in Year 3 on a Wednesday. Attendance on all days usually runs between 9.30 /10 am – 5pm. Each year of the course is taught over 2 semesters, which run from October to February (Semester 1) and February to June (Semester 2).

## Can I work while I complete the training?

In addition to attending the university for one or two days of the week, trainees should be aware that they will need to spend the remaining time each week engaged in other course requirements, such as client work, clinical and research supervision, personal therapy, coursework, individual study, research and library work. It is therefore generally unrealistic for trainees to expect to be able to undertake significant additional paid employment whilst on the programme, where this does not constitute their placement work. Training in the part-time mode 1 offers more scope for incorporating work or family commitments alongside the training, but it is important that part time students appreciate the significant time demands of the programme and set aside a realistic amount of time for their studies and professional development. It is important that applicants have an accurate appreciation of the nature and demands of the programme and have appraised their readiness to undertake the training. The programme cannot accept responsibility for any difficulties trainees may later encounter that result from not having sufficient time to adequately meet the demands of the programme. Applicants sometimes ask about how much additional paid work is possible while undertaking the training. In our experience the circumstances and capacities of individual trainees to undertake additional paid work can differ significantly, so it is not possible or advisable to attempt to provide a definitive answer to this question. However, the following general guidelines regarding the approximate amount of time required for the various components of the training may be helpful for applicants in considering their own circumstances.

Full time Year 1	
Days per week	Activity
2	University attendance
1-2	Working in placements and supervision
1	Study time, coursework, personal therapy
4-5	Total days per week needed for the course
Part time Year 1	
Days per week	Activity
1	University attendance
1	Working in placements and supervision
1	Study time, coursework, personal therapy
3	Total days per week needed for the course
Years 2 and 3	
Days per week	Activity
1	University attendance

1-2	Working in placements and supervision
1	Study time, coursework, personal therapy
1	Doctoral research
4-5	Total days per week needed for the course

## How much does the course cost?

Up-to-date information regarding course and module fees is provided via the programme's main web page:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/pgprospectus/courses/counselling-psychology-doctorate.cfm>

As suggested previously, where appropriate, trainees should also factor in the cost of a DBS check and personal therapy in planning their studies, as well as travel costs, to and from University and placements. The costs of clinical supervision are usually covered by the placement provider, though there may be instances where supervision, or an adequate level of type of supervision, is not provided by a placement, in which case a trainee would need to cover the costs of additional supervision.

## How do people fund their training?

The financial cost of training as a Counselling Psychologist is usually borne by the trainees themselves. This is different from training in Clinical Psychology, which is funded by the NHS and where trainees are in effect 'employees' of the NHS. Consequently, successful training as a Counselling Psychologist usually rests on a strong vocational commitment, as well as careful financial planning and consideration. Counselling Psychologists fund their training in a variety of ways, combining career development loans, personal savings and support from family members. Some trainees are lucky enough to have an employer who is willing to offer financial support for their training, as part of an investment in their ongoing professional development; for example, if they are already working within a relevant NHS service.

## Will I get paid for my placement work?

Unless applicants are already employed in a psychological capacity as described above or have experience as a professional counsellor, it is unlikely that they will be able to command a salary in their placement during their first year. In most cases, trainees are expected to offer their services for free. However, as they progress through the programme, trainees' chances of getting paid for their work increase. By the third year of the programme, some trainees will be in a salaried post. Please note that private paid work as a counsellor that is not linked to a placement organisation cannot be counted towards course requirements.

## **Where do graduates from the programme end up working and what career guidance will I receive?**

Graduates from the programme take up posts in a variety of settings that is fairly typical of the range of work undertaken by contemporary counselling psychologists and that reflects the kinds of areas in which trainees undertake placements. This includes within the NHS, such as primary care, IAPT services, community mental health teams, drug and alcohol, rehabilitation, eating and personality disorders services, as well as in the prison service, voluntary sector, private practice and consultancy. Some of our graduates have gone on to provide placements and supervision to our trainees, while others have gone into teaching and academia, including as contributors to the programme. While on the programme trainees receive individualised career guidance through team members involved in the process of reviewing appraising and planning their practice placement work and professional development. They also have access to careers information and resources through the British Psychological Society and trainee membership of the Society's Division of Counselling Psychology. Career development and preparation for independent practice are issues that are also addressed during teaching in the final year of the programme.

## **Can I visit the department?**

Yes. The University holds postgraduate open evenings for prospective course applicants during the academic year. These are opportunities for prospective applicants to visit the department, meet staff from their course of interest, ask questions and be given a presentation about the programme. Information regarding these events is usually posted on the University's website homepage:

[www.londonmet.ac.uk](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk)

## **Further sources of information**

Applicants for the programme are expected to have a good understanding of the field of Counselling Psychology, a clear rationale for choosing this profession and a realistic appreciation of the demands of doctoral level study.

Prospective applicants who would like to find out more about Counselling Psychology can visit the Division of Counselling Psychology's pages on the BPS website <http://dcop.bps.org.uk>

We also recommend that prospective applicants familiarise themselves with the following key documents which outline the competencies and standards expected of counselling psychology trainees by the HCPC and BPS:

- Health and Care Professions Council, *Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists*: [www.HCPC-uk.org](http://www.HCPC-uk.org)
- British Psychological Society, *Accreditation through partnership handbook: guidance for counselling psychology programmes*: [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads)



The following texts also provide useful background reading:

- Bor, R. & Watts, M.H. (Eds.) (2010). *The trainee handbook: a guide for counselling & psychotherapy trainees*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage
- Lee, N. J. (2008). *Achieving your professional doctorate*. London: Open University Press.
- Milton, M. (2010). (Ed) *Therapy and Beyond: Counselling psychology contributions to therapeutic and social issues*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Orlans, V. & Van Scoyoc, S. (2008). *A short introduction to counselling psychology*. London: Sage.
- Woolfe, R., Strawbridge, S., Douglas, B. & Dryden, W. (Eds.) (2009). *Handbook of counselling psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage.

In addition to the above text by Lee (2008), a useful picture of the characteristics and expectations of study at masters and doctoral level are described by the Quality Assurance Agency Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. An extract of the key descriptors outlined for doctoral degrees is provided below. Alongside the HCPC and BPS standards and competencies, this framework underpins the design of teaching and assessment on the counselling psychology programme. Further information can be found at [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

### **QAA descriptors for a higher education qualification at level 8: Doctoral degree**

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to
- specialist and non-specialist audiences

- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research. Holders of doctoral degrees will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees will have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

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### **QAA descriptors for a higher education qualification at level 7: Master's degree**

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
- to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
- to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level

- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.



The Health and Care Professions Council  
Park House  
184 Kennington Park Road  
London  
SE11 4BU, UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7820 9684

The British  
Psychological Society  
St Andrews House  
48 Princess Road East  
Leicester  
LE1 7DR, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)116 254  
9568

London Metropolitan University  
166-220 Holloway Road  
London N7 8DB, UK  
+44 (0) 20 7423 0000

