

Programme specification

1. Overview / factual information

Programme/award title(s)	BA (Hons) Counselling Studies (Top Up)
Teaching Institution	Nescot College
Awarding Institution	The Open University (OU)
Date of first OU validation	July 2020
Date of latest OU (re)validation	March 2025
Next revalidation	2030-31
Credit points achieved for the award	120
UCAS Code (if applicable)	4602
HECoS Code (if applicable)	
LDCS Code (FE Colleges England only)	PS.1
Programme start date and cycle of starts if appropriate.	September 2025
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	Counselling and Psychotherapy
Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes (including QAA Characteristics Statements). For apprenticeships, the standard or framework against which it will be delivered.	QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (Counselling and Psychotherapy)
Professional/statutory/ accreditation recognition	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
For apprenticeships fully or non-integrated Assessment. If fully integrated, EPAO being used.	
Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face) Apprenticeship	Full Time, Face to Face
Duration of the programme for each mode of study	1 Year
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	

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

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

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

Date of production/revision of this specification	January 2025
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2. Programme overview

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

The BA (Hons) in Counselling Studies programme aims to:

- Draw on a wide range of academic resources and theoretical perspectives to illuminate understanding of counselling and its context in society
- Provide students with a broad and balanced knowledge and understanding of the principles features of counselling in a wide range of contexts
- Encourage students to engage with and challenge fundamental questions concerning the aims and values of counselling and its relationship to society
- Provide opportunities for students to appreciate the problematic nature of counselling theory, policy and practice and devise solutions in context
- Develop in students the ability to construct and sustain a reasonable argument about counselling issues in a clear lucid and coherent manner
- Promote a range of qualities in students including intellectual independence and critical engagement with evidence.

At the end of the course learners will be able to:

- Explain and critique complex theories underpinning counselling models including psychodynamic, phenomenology philosophy and psychosocial frameworks
- Critically analyse and evaluate a range of current theories and practices, including recent developments and advances
- Recognise theoretical and contextual issues that underpin strategies required to achieve good therapeutic outcomes and apply these in context
- Apply theory of ethics for counselling (for example the BACP Ethics for Counselling and Psychotherapy guidance)
- Evaluate key counselling modalities
- Effectively work within and respond to a wide range of professional contexts including efficiency, self-management, good communication skills and autonomous learning skills
- Formulate and achieve professional and personal aims and objectives to illustrate practice as a reflective practitioner

2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards

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

This course, a BA (Hons) Top Up in Counselling Studies, has been developed in response to employer and students' feedback requesting a level 6 Top-Up degree as a natural progression route for Nescot's current students on the Foundation Degree in Psychodynamic Counselling. It would also be of interest to Nescot alumni who paused their education at Level 5 and external candidates who have completed an appropriate Foundation Degree at other institutions. At present, Nescot offers a suite of counselling qualifications from level 2 through to level 6 to allow applicants with varying entry qualifications to study the subject and progress through from no experience to degree level within the same institution.

It is anticipated that the course will attract a wide and dynamic range of students from differing academic and professional backgrounds who either work, or intend to work, in a range of roles within Counselling. For example: child protection and associated social services, school support specialist and medical and healthcare practitioners. Course progression routes have also been shared with NESCOT's inhouse Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance department

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

n/a

2.4 List of all exit awards

BA Ordinary Degree (60 credits at level 6) This may comprise of any combination of modules from PYSC 1200/1201/1202. An ordinary degree cannot compromise of PSYC 1203 Research Methods and Project.

3. Programme structure and learning outcomes

(The structure for any part-time delivery should be presented separately in this section.)

Please adjust 'levels' to reflect SCQF if applicable

Compulsory modules	Credit points	Optional Modules	Is module compensatable?	Terms runs in
PSYC 1200 – Advanced Clinical Practice	30	No	No	2&3
PSYC 1201 – Time-Limited Therapy	30	No	No	1
PSYC 1202 – Relational Thinking	30	No	No	2&3
PSYC 1203 – Research Methods and Project	30	No	No	1,2&3

Programme Structure – Single Registerable Modules				
Compulsory modules	Credit points	Pre-Requisite as SRM	Is module compensatable?	Semester runs in

Intended learning outcomes at Level 6 are listed below:

<u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u>	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>A1: Examine the inner world of unconscious meaning, internal relationships and dynamics.</p> <p>A2: Examine difference, diversity, culture, intersectionality, power, oppression, social inequality;</p> <p>A3: Demonstrate understanding of the ‘self’, individual and/tutor group identities and their connection with contemporary and historical social and political formations.</p> <p>A4: Design a well organised, clear and logical research project which shows broad reading with well-argued conclusions relating to significant counselling issues</p> <p>A5: Integrate into practice legal, professional and organisational requirements pertaining to equal opportunities, diversity and anti-discrimination whilst maintaining ethical principles that underpin counselling and psychotherapy</p> <p>A6: Assess potential limitations of preferred theoretical models or models in work with specific clients</p> <p>A7: Critically analyse the theoretical basis of time-limited therapy and evaluate the specific skills required to undertake this effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Students are provided with at least 2 pieces of preparatory reading each week and expected to research widely for essays & presentations. o Modules are delivered through a series of illustrated lectures and/or practical assignments. o Group debate or individual student Workshops, seminars, critical thinking groups, peer sharing. o Seminars will be used to supplement the understanding of lecture material using more interactive methods of learning, such as small-group discussions and presentations to peers. o These sessions will also provide opportunities to reflect on learning. o The key skills of working with and relating to others, verbal communication and non-verbal communication will also be developed in these sessions. <p>Other methods made use of include:</p> <p>Undertaking small (counsellor/client/observer) and large group Skills practice (counsellor/client tutor and cohort) on a regular basis to promote establishment of communication skills and reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Agency and college-based supervision sessions accessing students’ client work. (FD only) o Identification of learning points o Group experiential sessions

<u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u>	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Video & assessment of counselling skills using clips in the VLE of neutral situations to interpret and critique initially o Additional skills training
3B. Cognitive skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
B1: Demonstrate a critical awareness of and application of research and evaluation of individual case studies B2: Compare other counselling principles in relation to psychodynamic framework of counselling B3: Critically evaluate a range of different approaches to conducting research in Counselling and psychotherapy context B4: Interrogate the assumptions underpinning theory and practice and question concepts and theories of counselling B5: Analyse the importance of cultural and contextual influences on the therapeutic relationship B6: Critically appraise a range of theoretical approaches to practice	Intellectual skills are mainly developed in lectures, seminars/ group discussion and through guided independent study, self-managed learning with the use of case studies and debate.
3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
C1: Justify the importance of listening out for unconscious communication, process and content; transference and repetition; anxiety, resistance and defences; unconscious conflict, repressed and split off material; working with breaks and endings	Students will support the work undertaken during each lecture by engaging in independent and collaborative learning including reading and critically appraising literature for peer debates. They will also be directed to the preparatory reading and questions to consider. There will

3C. Practical and professional skills	
<p>C2: Apply counselling skills developed to establish, conduct and conclude a supportive, helping conversation with due regard for boundaries, ethics and diversity and equality</p> <p>C3: Critically appraise recent published research on counselling and psychotherapy and integrate relevant research findings into practice</p> <p>C4: Critically appraise the range of psychological services and interventions available to clients.</p>	<p>be follow up exercises to consolidate learning, and where appropriate contextualising this to a range of new experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Additional visiting speakers will attend to contribute to the diversity, for an understanding of issues around equal opportunities. For example, a tutor from an ethnic minority to teach race and ethnic issues. o Students will be engaged in critical discussion and challenged to make informed and evidential decisions. o They will be challenged to apply their setting based or newly acquired skills in analysing situations and reflect on different case studies or scenario. o Developing an analytical approach to all aspects of Counselling theory, client material and personal growth and development in seminar and journal sessions, as well as through essays and supervision. * presentations, role plays, suitability of behaviour & contributions in all course activities o Regular supervision sessions will promote self-reflection o Formal written Self assessments to and formal written assessments from tutors o Regular supervision sessions will promote self-reflection o Formal written Self assessments to and formal written assessments from tutors

3C. Practical and professional skills	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o By use of the reflective journal, students will be able to consider theory, experience, and reactions and impact i.e. experiential which is reviewed within tutorials and allows goals to be set by students as a result. The personal therapy which all students are required to be engaged in will form an invaluable means of considering application and impact of techniques, seeing them in action firsthand, reflection in practice. (this would only be on the FD)
3D. Key/transerable skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>D1: Use reflection to deepen self-awareness; enhance interpersonal, group-work and helping skills; foster engagement with course activities and improve learning skills</p> <p>D2: Effectively use of a range of digital tools to communicate findings</p> <p>D3: Work within appropriate legal and ethical framework in which research takes place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Transferable skills are developed in an embedded and contextual manner through all modules, class activities and coursework assignments. o Lectures and seminars will be conducted using several teaching techniques and devices. These will include the use of assessment case studies, role play and group discussions, which will highlight and deepen the students' understanding of the impact of counselling theories. o Guidance in presenting and analysing a theoretical subject in journal clubs and group tutorials o By clinical and administrative management of counselling agencies or similar client and staff environments. Developing an analytical approach to all aspects of Counselling theory, client material and personal growth and development in sessions, through essays and supervision.

Exit Award: BA (Ordinary) in Counselling Studies (Top-Up) Degree

4. Distinctive features of the programme structure

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

The course is designed to promote and engage learning to students of all age groups. The college's feeder courses (from Level 2 to 3 and thence to the Foundation Degree) feature students across a broad range of ages and experience. The curriculum is flexible in that it builds on existing knowledge and fosters a deeper understanding of the wider applications of counselling and psychotherapy.

The key feature of the programme is the provision of a more local progression route, including students from non-clinical arenas, which is tailored to meet wider employer and student needs.

As a result of being responsive to identified and emerging needs the programme will assist in developing and strengthening the community by supporting its infrastructure in particular with regards to meeting the increasing needs for support of mental health and well-being within the community and workplace.

In short, it is the development of local provision by a local college being responsive to local need, enhancing the community as a result. This programme is also contributing to the national needs and demands within this profession.

5. Support for students and their learning

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

In a formal sense students are supported as outlined below:

- Clear and accurate information about programmes, qualifications and entry requirements
- Advice on Finance available before and during the course
- Referral to additional advice and guidance services whenever appropriate
- Opportunity to see the College(s) and the facilities available for the student prior to committing to a programme of study i.e. library, computer suites.
- Feedback is given for both summative and formative assessment

Opportunity to have one to one appointment with the academic staff and obtain more details about their subject specialism

- Disability and learning difficulties support tailored to students' needs
- Mental Health 1st Aider

- Wellbeing team support
- Personal tutor allocated to support with pastoral care
- Programme Handbooks that will provide detailed information about the programme and the college regulations
- A multi-faith prayer room

Advice and Guidance

- For information, advice and guidance about courses and progression routes including careers or apprenticeships
- The College has a designated specialist HE Academic Support Mentor who is able to support applications for DSA as well as provide study assistance including regular structured study skills sessions and one to one support.
- The College has E-learning facilitators in the LRC who can help with your Digital Skills.

Teaching accommodation

Throughout the college, there is purpose-built and comfortable teaching accommodation available with full internet access and interactive whiteboards. A wide range of software is also accessible to all.

Library facilities, book stock and opening times

The Learning and Resource Centre (LRC) provides a comprehensive collection of textbooks, e-books and other study aids including journals, newspapers and audio-visual materials. Many of these resources can be accessed remotely from the Nescot website and the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). There are a range of on-line databases suitable for educational research and all students are able to acquire an Athens password for access.

As part of Nescot's commitment to these programmes, an extensive range of e-books, books and online subscriptions to education studies journals have been purchased. The curriculum team compile module-reading lists drawn from reviewed books and journals as well as those recommended by the academic and subject librarian. This ensures students have access to a wide range of appropriate and current materials. As part of the induction process, the subject librarian works with curriculum team to provide students with a tailored introduction to the LRC and its resources and services. The LRC, itself, is a bright and comfortable learning environment with facility for group and silent study; an HE study zone; access to PCs, photocopying, DVDs, learner support; and guidance from LRC staff. It opens Monday to Friday throughout the year (excluding the Christmas break).with late night opening Monday to Thursday.

IT facilities and accessibility

Laptop access in the classroom supports teaching, learning and assignment completion. The LRC provides ready access to PCs/laptop on-line resources as well as assistive technology and IT support staff. The e-learning facilitators offer advice and guidance to develop students' IT skills in such areas as word-processing, internet searching, use of systems, etc. All teaching sessions are roomed with access to a 'Smartboard' (interactive whiteboard) to allow for maximum modelling of good practice in the use of ILT for teaching and learning.

Nescot's VLE provides an environment for teaching and learning which can be accessed remotely, on or off campus and at any time. The programme team make effective use of the VLE to store student-generated material; compile glossaries; post presentations, video clips, web links, handbooks, and course literature; and provides on-line asynchronous discussion opportunities via forums. Students particularly value the ever-growing library of e-books also stored on the VLE.

Pre-Induction (transitional support) and Induction

The two most critical elements of these processes are ensuring students feel settled and initial and/or appropriate diagnostic assessments are carried out in order to put support in place as quickly as possible where needed.

All students progressing to the Top up level 6 will be assessed by the team and materials and resources to support their entry to the course provided at pre-course preparation. Where there are late starters, enrolment is carried out as quickly as possible to ensure they are given access to college facilities as early as possible and tutorials are scheduled to compensate for any missed induction activities.

Induction

Induction is a process carried out over the first few weeks of study.

Induction aims to welcome and orientate students to both the college (e.g. key policies such as assessment, student engagement and safeguarding) and the programme itself. It introduces them to the team who will be teaching and tutoring them; the college environment and resources (such as the Learning Resource Centre, HE study zone, HE common room, the programme and placement handbooks and the VLE.); and the relevant policies, procedures and protocols of the college. Programme expectations are set and a series of information literacy skills' sessions are started. Various significant documents are examined in order to prepare students for the programme – these include templates for the PDP.

Personal tutoring and staff/employer availability

The College operates a tutorial programme to provide the opportunities for students to develop their potential academically, socially and personally whilst they go through their journey at Nescot. The support offered is personalised for each student, and effective tutoring encourages students to become more responsible for their own learning. The tutoring programme complements and underpins the students' learning experience and their PDP (Personal Development Planning).

Tutorials are designed to fulfil a range of purposes. They will provide opportunities to support delivery of module content, to provide support in the workplace for students and for one-to one academic or pastoral support. These programmes incorporate a combination of one to one and both course and personal tutors will undertake group tutorials, subsequently tutorials.

As each student commences their programme, they will be allocated a personal tutor from the teaching team. The tutor will be responsible for:

Identifying student needs and initiating support where necessary.

- Assessing and monitoring progress and achievement of academic and work-based learning and providing feedback.

- Conducting tutorials to advise and guide students academically, socially and personally.
- Discussing issues and concerns arising.
- Keeping records of tutorials and other meetings.
- Observing and assessing
- Referring students to internal and/or external bodies, as appropriate.
- Maintaining confidentiality and disclosing information where necessary.
- Attending team meetings to share current issues and developments.

One-to-one personal tutorials will be held at mutually convenient times and on a regular basis of at least one tutorial per semester. Students also receive dedicated time to discuss feedback following all work within 20 days. In addition, the team operates an open-door policy and are readily accessible by phone, email and appointment.

Tutorials are formally set for discussions around work and surrounding plans, (short and long term) supporting the balance of study and outside commitments and specific project tutorials to ensure students are aware of their progress and what they need to do to continue to improve.

6. Criteria for admission

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

Applicants should normally have English Language GCSE grade C or an equivalent award and a Level 5 relevant qualification (i.e. Diploma of Higher Education/Foundation Degree in Counselling) or an equivalent Level 5 qualification (e.g. Foundation Degree in Psychology and related subjects). Applicants should also have membership of BACP or equivalent professional association with a code of ethics.

It is expected that students are practising counsellors or have relevant recent experience such as working in related professions (i.e. child protection and associated social services, school support specialists and medical and healthcare practitioners). Other students may be considered for admission and will be individually assessed by the Programme Leader upon submission of a statement of their relevant experience and evidence of their qualifications.

Overall IELTS score of 5.5 with a minimum of 5.5 in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking (or recognised equivalent).

Applicants must have or complete an Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check, plus an occupational health check, during the application process.

7. Language of study

British English

8. Information about non-OU standard assessment regulations (including Professional Statutory Recognised Body requirements)

n/a

9. For apprenticeships in England, summary of how the End Point Assessment (EPA) links to the academic award

n/a

10. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning including the student experience

The College has a variety of means to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA).

These include:

- Making full use of the student's voice (Staff Student Consultative Committees, Student Council, internal and external surveys, module evaluations)
- Formal and informal assessments of TLA using the College observation process and supplementing this with regular learner walks.
- Internal audits and reporting, including the collation of programme specific action plans
- Close relationships with academic reviewers to improve course design and development
- External Examiner and HEI/Awarding body feedback

Outcomes from the observation processes feed into staff development and appraisal; informing the themes and targets. The outcome of this is professional discussion and dialogue leading to developing practice and reflection through the structure CPD sessions.

Academic staff continue to develop their knowledge in their subject areas by frequently attending conferences, seminars, networking events and research dissemination events. This allows staff to build relationships with other academics and local employers, which can assist when shaping curriculum and assessment. Staff provide

detailed reports to their peer for each conference or networking event attended and during weekly meetings discuss how these can be adopted into developing their pedagogy further. These reports feed into the cross-college Teaching and Learning Group which meets half termly to share and develop practice at practitioner level. Final commentary/report from External Examiners feed into the development of assessment practice and provides useful feedback both positive areas and to develop.

The HE Faculty employs a full-time Head of Academic Standards to oversee Quality assurance matters and drive quality improvement across all HE provisions at Nescot, as well as a Senior Quality Administrator who deals exclusively with HE. These posts ensure that all necessary feedback is collated from a variety of internal and external sources to draw conclusions regarding outcomes and consider any themes or patterns or significant quality issues. This information is then used to inform individual course action plans and any necessary staff CPD or training.

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

The core structure and general content of the qualification remains unchanged.

- Learning aims at both programme and module level have been streamlined
- Assessment format amended for 1202 to podcast and critical reflection (was essay x 2)
- Weighting and submission weeks have been modified for some modules
- Change of delivery order for PSYC1201 & 1202

Annexe 1: Curriculum map

Annexe 2: Curriculum mapping against the apprenticeship standard or framework (delete if not required.)

Annexe 3: Notes on completing the OU programme specification template

Annexe 1 - Curriculum map

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

Please amend this mapping to suit frameworks used within the different nations if appropriate.

Level	Study module/unit	Programme outcomes															Available as single registerable module?																		
		A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7		B8	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7		
6	PSYC 1200 – Advanced Clinical Practice					✓	✓			✓					✓						✓							✓							No
	PSYC 1201 – Time-Limited Therapy							✓		✓									✓							✓	✓								No
	PSYC 1202 – Relational Thinking	✓	✓	✓										✓				✓	✓									✓							No
	PSYC 1203 – Research Methods and Project				✓							✓	✓							✓									✓						No