Programme specification

1. Overview/ factual information

Programme/award title(s)	BA (Hons) in Counselling Studies (Top-Up)
Teaching Institution	Nescot
Awarding Institution	The Open University (OU)
Date of first OU validation	2020
Date of latest OU (re)validation	N/A
Next revalidation	N/A
Credit points for the award	120 Credits
UCAS Code	TBC
HECoS Code	TBC
LDCS Code (FE Colleges)	TBC
Programme start date and cycle of starts if appropriate.	September 2020
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	Subject Benchmark statements Counselling and Psychotherapy 2013
Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes. For apprenticeships, the standard or framework against which it will be delivered.	QAA Academic Infrastructure, including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the Code of Practice UK Quality Code for Higher Education Open University Awards Framework
Professional/statutory recognition	N/A
For apprenticeships fully or partially integrated Assessment.	N/A
Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face) Apprenticeship	Full Time
Duration of the programme for each mode of study	1 year
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	N/A
Date of production/revision of this specification	22/06/2020

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

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

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

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

The BA (Hons) in Counselling Studies programme aims to:
- Draw on a wide range of intellectual resources, theoretical perspectives and academic disciplines to illuminate understanding of education and the context within which it takes place
- 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 fundamental questions concerning the aims and values of counselling n and its relationship to society
- Provide opportunities for students to appreciate the problematic nature of counselling theory, policy and practice
- Encourage the interrogation of educational process in a wide variety of contexts
- 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:
- Show a detailed understanding of the complex theories underpinning counselling models including psychodynamic, phenomenology philosophy and psychosocial frameworks
- Show an in depth understanding of recent and current theoretical developments and advances
- Demonstrate a high level of analysis and evaluation of theories and practices
- Show a critical awareness of the theoretical and contextual issues underpinning strategies required to achieve good therapeutic outcomes
- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the theory and application of ethics for counselling (for example he BACP Ethics for Counselling and Psychotherapy guidance)
- Demonstrate a detailed understanding of key counselling modalities
- Show the ability to effectively work within and respond to a wide range of professional contexts including efficiency, self-management, good communication skills and autonomous learning skills
- Evidence the ability to formulate and achieve professional and personal aims and objectives, including progression to Masters level study

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)

Level 5 graduates will have a very good grounding in all aspects of counselling theory and practice and are in demand to fill specialised counselling posts in centres that focus on mental health in Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT), Drug and Alcohol Addiction; Bereavement services, School Counselling as well as GP practice counselling. All these routes are available to Nescot graduates once they undertake up to 10 weeks additional training provided by the centre (i.e. professional roles in linked professions).

The course aims to build the body of current knowledge and critical questioning thinking alongside research skills and longer term project planning to allow graduates to be making full use of the skills and theoretical concepts acquired by applying these effectively to a range of working situations.

It is expected that applicants 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. This individual assessment as part of the application process allows skills and knowledge gaps to be identified and the requisite materials put in place to enable all incoming students to be prepared to undertake the required academic level of work within this field. The clarity around what needs to be understood and the body of knowledge requisite to enable students to fully step into the programme at the start will be clearly articulated as part of a pre course preparation.

Transitional support for all students will be provided in the form of preparatory reading and exercises including access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) called Weblearn. The pre-induction activities and module introductions and expectations. At the end of these activities' students will understand what material will be covered and useful reading and discussion points prior to starting the course. This on-line pre-course tutorial will be supplemented with a summer school whereby activities are completed prior to the start of the programme. Part of the early activities will be the provision of guidance around study, organisational, research and reflective skills and of course the initial considerations of ethics. This will form the early phase of the personal professional development planning element which will be addressed by students throughout the course, both independently and within the tutorial slots supporting them.

To summarise this pre course preparation will set the scene for the Top-Up degree programme content and depth and allows all incoming students to be clear about what they need to have a prior understanding of and or the skills and techniques to be familiar with.

The Top-Up aims to build upon concepts covered within the Diploma or related qualifications, in particular, extending on developmental psychology, and topics such as the development of self and psychopathology and its causes. These will be considered in light of a broader range of modalities in the second semester with the first semester modules of Relational Thinking making links to the philosophy of meaning and its

implications for students and their clients with especial regard for the differences between people. This module makes emphasis on extending professional ability to interpret meaning through material presented without personal bias.

In a broader sense the course aims to build on skills such as strategic thinking, problem solving, managing tasks, and applying design and creativity acquired through a previous Level 5 programme in a related discipline such as community or youth work, social work or nursing. This will create other opportunities where students can critically evaluate theory and practice, analyse and synthesise information, identify implicit values, detect false logic or reasoning and ensure that conclusions are supported by evidence. On completion of this course students would have relevant skills to commence a master's degree program or be better placed regarding professional attributes and their application in a professional context.

In short, many of the transferrable skills such as the application of analytic ability to all life experiences. Students will realistically evaluate own ability; achievements and understanding and identify areas needing development. They will be aware of personal limitations and their impact on self & others; work independently and with others; understand group processes; demonstrate understanding and empathy about all aspects of equal opportunities and difference; use digital technology to communicate efficiently and enable personal research and to maintain ethical principles. These are all key to creating successful employees and good citizens in the community.

The crux in developing these skills to the full is in developing the reflective practitioner. Reflection is integral throughout all aspects of the programme and within the tutorial and development planning sessions. The questioning techniques used (whether remotely or face to face) promote self-evaluation in academic, personal and professional capacities. One of the aspects supporting this development outside the programme is the requirement for students to be undertaking supervision.

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

Programme Structure - LEVEL 6					
Compulsory modules	**Credit points**	**Optional modules**	**Credit points**	**Is module compensatable?**	**Semester runs in**
PSYC 1200 – Advanced Clinical Practice	30	No	30	No	1 & 2
PSYC 1201 – Time-Limited Therapy	30	No	30	No	1
PSYC 1202 – Relational Thinking	30	No	30	No	2
PSYC 1203 – Research Methods & Projects	30	No	30	No	1& 2

Intended learning outcomes at Level 4 are listed below:

Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
A1: Discuss the inner world of unconscious meaning, internal relationships and dynamics. A2: Examine difference, diversity, culture, intersectionality, power, oppression, social inequality;	Lectures will be used to present key concepts and theoretical arguments and will offer students the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of these concepts and ideas associated. Lectures, seminars workshops, case study debate, additional visiting speakers will attend to contribute to the diversity, for an understanding of issues around equal opportunities.

Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6

3A. Knowledge and understanding	
A3: Demonstrate understanding of the 'self', individual and/tutor group identities and their connection with contemporary and historical social and political formations. A4: Show understanding of the different stages in the research process and ability to perform them A5: Demonstrate understanding of the importance of research by producing coherent and logical findings which show broad reading A6: Provision of well-argued conclusions relating to significant counselling issues A7: Integrate into practice legal, professional and organisational requirements pertaining to equal opportunities, diversity and anti-discrimination A8: Maintain ethical principles that underpin counselling and psychotherapy A9 Recognise potential limitations of preferred theoretical models or models in work with specific clients	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. Other methods made use of include: o Undertaking small (counsellor/client/observer) and large group role-plays (counsellor/client tutor and cohort) on a regular basis to promote establishment of communication skills and reflection in practice i.e. whilst undertaking a meeting.

Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6

3A. Knowledge and understanding

	- Agency & college-based supervision sessions accessing students' client work. - Identification of learning points - Group experiential sessions - Video & assessment of counselling skills using clips in the VLE of neutral situations to interpret and critique initially - 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: Refine generic and core principles in counselling B3: Examine other counselling principles in relation to psychodynamic framework of counselling B4: Critically evaluate a range of different approaches to conducting research in Counselling and psychotherapy context B5: Think critically and independently B6: To interrogate the assumptions underpinning theory and 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.

3B. Cognitive skills	
B7: To question concepts and theories encountered in their studies of counselling B8: Analyse ethical dilemmas and work with others as necessary, to formulate appropriate responses B9: Critically appraise a range of theoretical approaches to practice	

3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
C1: Gain further understanding 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 C2: Use counselling skills developed to establish, conduct and conclude a supportive, helping conversation with due regard for boundaries, ethics and diversity and equality C3 Listen out for unconscious communication in the process and content of material, which may relate to transference and repetition; anxiety, resistance and defences; attachment and loss. C4: Critically appraise recent published research on counselling and psychotherapy and integrate relevant research findings into practice C5: Demonstrate familiarity with the legal and ethical framework in which research takes place	o 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 be follow up exercises to consolidate learning, and where appropriate contextualising this to a range of new experiences. 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 ethic 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.

3C. Practical and professional skills	
C6: Improve their own learning and performance including the development of study and research skills C7: Critically appraise a range of theoretical approaches to practice C8: Work with managers and clients in the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services C9: Appraise the range of psychological services and interventions available to clients	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 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.

3D. Key/transferable skills	
Learning outcomes:	**Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods**
D1: Use study and communication skills appropriate to course learning activities (including keeping a learning journal, presenting in class, reflective and academic writing, and using IT and educational technology	o Transferable skills are developed in an embedded and contextual manner through all modules, class activities and coursework assignments.
D2: Recognise responsibilities to the client, employers, and the counselling and psychotherapy professions and to society.	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.
D3: Use reflection to deepen self-awareness; enhance interpersonal, group-work and helping skills; foster engagement with course activities and improve learning skills	
D4: Take account of diversity issues and the rights and responsibilities of all clients regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, national and ethnic origin cultural, class, ability sexual orientation, religion and belief	o Guidance in presenting and analysing a theoretical subject in journal clubs and group tutorials
D5: Respond appropriately to the effect of their own values, beliefs, attitude and behaviours when working as a counsellor/psychotherapist.	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.
D6: Demonstrate familiarity with the legal and ethical framework in which research takes place	
D7: Use ICT and a variety of library and IT resources	
D8: Construct and sustain a reasoned argument	
D9: Work to deadlines	
D10: Communicate effectively	

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 featurs 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 Diploma) 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 around 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 work place)

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
- Counselling and safeguarding 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

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. This is in addition to pre programme activity which may take the form of use of the Weblearn (VLE) or face to face. Where there are late starters, their 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 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.

It is perhaps this local level of support from the course team which is of most benefit in terms of a responsive open door policy which includes active feedback on drafts, use of the VLE for formative feedback and development of skills including in class (facilitated by the smaller group sizes) so students are aware of progress as they progress and also what they need to do to continue to improve. Tutorials are formally set for discussions around work and surrounding plans, (short and long term) supporting the balance of study and outside commitments, specific project tutorials to guide this aspect.

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 PSRB requirements)
N/A

9. For apprenticeships in England End Point Assessment (EPA). *(Summary of the approved assessment plan and how the academic award fits within this and the EPA)*
N/A

10. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.
The College has a variety of means to assess the quality of teaching learning and assessment. These include: • making full use of the student's voice (Student Consultative Committees, Student Council, internal and external surveys) • formal and informal assessments of TLA using the College observation process and supplementing this with regular learner walks. Outcomes from the observation processes feed into staff development and appraisal. Running alongside this is a scheme being piloted this year, which involves Peer Observation framework the outcome of this is professional discussion and dialogue leading to developing practice and reflection. 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 a relationship with other academics and the local employers, which can assist when planning field trips for students. Staff do provide detailed reports to the peers each conference or networking event attend and during weekly meeting discuss how these can be adopted into developing their pedagogy further.

Final commentary/report from External Examiners feeds into the development of assessment practice and provides useful feedback both positive and areas to develop.

10. Changes made to the programme since last (re)validation
N/A

Annexe 1: Curriculum map

Annexe 1 - Curriculum map

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

Level	Study module	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10
6	PSYC 1200: Adavanced Clinical Practice in Counselling					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				
	PSYC 1201: Time-limited Therapy	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
	PSYC 1202: Relational Thinking in Therapy	✓	✓		✓		✓				✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	PSYC 1203: Research Methods and Project			✓	✓	✓								✓	✓				✓				✓	✓	✓									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Annexe 2: Notes on completing programme specification templates

1 **-** This programme specification should be mapped against the learning outcomes detailed in module specifications.

2 – The expectations regarding student achievement and attributes described by the learning outcome in <u>section 3</u> must be appropriate to the level of the award within the **QAA frameworks for HE qualifications**: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx

3 – Learning outcomes must also reflect the detailed statements of graduate attributes set out in **QAA subject benchmark statements** that are relevant to the programme/award: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx

4 – In section 3, the learning and teaching methods deployed should enable the achievement of the full range of intended learning outcomes. Similarly, the choice of assessment methods in section 3 should enable students to demonstrate the achievement of related learning outcomes. Overall, assessment should cover the full range of learning outcomes.

5 - Where the programme contains validated **exit awards** (e.g. CertHE, DipHE, PGDip), learning outcomes must be clearly specified for each award.

6 - For programmes with distinctive study **routes or pathways** the specific rationale and learning outcomes for each route must be provided.

7 – Validated programmes delivered in **languages other then English** must have programme specifications both in English and the language of delivery.