

Programme Specification for BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling Top-up

This document applies to Academic Year 2025/26 onwards

Table 1 programme specification for BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling Top-up

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	Iron Mill College
3.	Programme accredited by	The National Counselling Society Advanced Specialist Training Status
4.	Final award	BA (Hons) Top Up (Level 6 only)
5.	Programme title	Integrative Counselling
6.	Pathways available	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Iron Mill College, Exeter One teaching day per week, self-directed study and work based learning
8.	Mode of attendance and duration	Full time, one year
9.	UCAS Code	52B8
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	June 2013. August 2014 and October 2014 (Regulations). February 2017 (transfer to new PS template and minor amendments) June 2017 for new partner approval August 2017 AQU amendments April 2018- NCS status added for IMC students (effective from 9 th February 2018) August 2018 AQU amendments and updates February 2019 AQU amendments to template (section 13 amended, sections 19 and 21 removed, renumbering) for 2019/20 August 2019 AQU amendments to Section 19 August 2020 AQU amendments to Section 19 Nov 2020 AQU dissertation-equivalent noted on award map . April 2021 Additional information added to Admissions section/Entry requirements, effective from September 2021 August 2021 – AQU amendments August 2022 – AQU amendments, HLNSC references removed July 2023 – annual updates May 2024 – update to wording of MBACP status statement to Admissions/Entry requirements from Sept 25

12. Educational aims of the programme

BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling (Level 6)

The BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling course aims to attract interest from applicants who are already qualified as a counsellor. It is a one-year, full time top-up programme, which encourages individual choice in an area of special interest, and a vocationally relevant and up-to-date focus. It provides opportunities for the student to develop a specialism, to conduct a literature review on a chosen area, and a negotiated work based learning project of choice. It also encourages a wider view of counselling in the 21st century, with the exciting developments in the present and future of our profession.

- **Philosophy**

The BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling embraces relational values as described by Mearns and Cooper's work on relational depth (2005). This focuses our attention on the importance and the quality of relationship as the central component of therapeutic work. The programme adopts a pluralistic postmodern philosophy, according to which there is no 'one true reality': the programme respects differing theoretical stances as 'lenses' through which to view the therapeutic relationship. The programme will therefore be suitable for practitioners from a wide variety of theoretical backgrounds. The BA (Hons) combines a practical applied focus - thorough placement, professional skills and work-based learning - with a deep interest in the richness of the human condition and the nature of relationship. These elements are integrated throughout the programme.

- **Ethical Framework**

The [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\) Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) (2018) is at the heart of each module taught on the programme. The BACP is the largest (by membership) professional organisation for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the UK. It is considered important that all counsellors, whether qualified or in training, adhere to an Ethical Framework and are accountable for their professional work. Membership of the BACP for all students will promote a shared understanding of good practice standards. The BACP offer a wide variety of support for students who are members, including CPD, conferences, online resources, practice information sheets and placement information.

- **Work based Learning**

The BA combines a practical applied focus, thorough placement, professional skills and work based learning, with a deep interest in the richness of the human condition and experience. These elements are integrated throughout the programme. Additionally, the Specialist Work Based Learning module allows students to develop a specialism of their choice and to participate in a negotiated learning contract with a counselling provider.

The BA (Hons) aims to:

- advance understanding of integrative approaches to counselling, which place the relationship at the heart of the work
- provide a rich and creative learning environment from which each counsellor can further evaluate and develop a unique personal integrative approach
- enhance employability with a focus on development of specialisms, professional applications and work based learning
- focus on up-to-date theory, research and critical thinking
- provide skills enabling participation in research
- enhance counsellor self-awareness and reflective practice
- encourage and provide opportunities for the development of creative thinking and practice
- focus on advanced ethical practice and the use of the BACP Ethical Framework (2010) in managing complex work
- expand awareness of difference and diversity and manage the complexities which can develop in practice
- meet the criteria listed in the QAA Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013) for undergraduate training, and the BACP Gold Standard Document for Accredited Training (2009)
- reflect on the role and function of counselling in society with regard to economic, cultural, professional and political influences
- engage with the possibility of making a personal contribution to the future of

this profession.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Learning Outcomes: BA (Hons) Top Up Degree

By successfully completing level 6 of the programme, as set out on the award map, students will have attained the intended learning outcomes of the BA (Hons) Top Up as set out below.

Table 2 knowledge and understanding outcomes for modules/codes

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	critically evaluate the philosophical assumptions underpinning the theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy	IMIC3005
2.	analyse and assess ways in which the relationship is conceptualised in a range of different theoretical models, and evidence the ability to form and maintain a meaningful therapeutic relationship	IMIC3000
3.	professionally manage ethical complexities using the ethical principles that underpin counselling and psychotherapy	IMIC3000
4.	critically evaluate professional knowledge of mental health and psychopharmacology	IMIC3000
5.	critically analyse the purpose, theory and practice of supervision	IMIC3000 IMIC3003
6.	critically analyse the present role and function of counselling in society with regard to economic, cultural, professional and political influences	IMIC3000 IMIC3005
7.	demonstrate, evaluate and enhance the personal qualities and ethical awareness which underpin successful relational therapeutic work	IMIC3000

Table 3 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills		
8.	analyse, compare and contrast a range of well-established therapeutic approaches and demonstrate the ability to use these in a manner which is appropriate to the needs of the client	IMIC3000
9.	critically analyse a personal philosophy of counselling, and provide evidence of a well-developed integrative approach in practice	IMIC3000 IMIC3005
10.	develop knowledge about research and apply a comprehensive, in-depth and research-informed body of knowledge in practice, developing skills in the retrieval, evaluation and communication of information	IMIC3004
11.	explicitly define areas for professional development and demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate your own practice	IMIC3000 IMIC3005

Table 4 skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability

12.	evaluate legal, professional and organisational requirements pertaining to equal opportunities, diversity and anti-discrimination	IMIC3000
13.	evaluate and analyse ethical, contractual, professional, legal, social and organisational aspects of work-based learning	IMIC3003
14.	critically evaluate their own professional strengths and limitations, demonstrate awareness of the impact of limitations upon practice, and develop appropriate self-support and self-care strategies	IMIC3000
15.	competently assess potential risk to the client or others, and make professionally appropriate decisions in response to ethical dilemmas and legal responsibilities	IMIC3000
16.	negotiate and manage a work-based learning project appropriate to an area of professional interest	IMIC3003

Table 5 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/key skills

17.	self-assess, analyse and demonstrate advanced competence in the use of therapeutic skills	IMIC3000
18.	demonstrate and analyse understanding of the self in relationship, making use of a well-established self-reflective practice	IMIC3000
19.	professional presentation of work in a clear, well-structured and well-informed manner, with the ability to critically evaluate material	IMIC3000
20.	specialise in a chosen professional area and develop advanced contemporary professional knowledge	IMIC3004
22.	evaluate and apply advanced professional learning to the practice of counselling	IMIC3000

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Staff and specialists:**

The BA makes use of both experienced core teaching staff and invited specialist staff in the teaching and learning on this programme.

- Students:**

Students will become part of a professional learning community which values the experience and knowledge each student brings to and acquires during the programme, and there will be ample opportunity for the shared learning opportunities this presents.

- Teaching focus:**

The learning and teaching on this programme focuses on being up-to-date and relevant to professional practice today

- Placement/Work Based Learning provision:**

Work Based Learning (WBL): the Specialist Work Based Learning module allows students to start to develop a specialism of their choice, by participating in a negotiated learning contract and project with a counselling provider, or with a provider within the related helping and support professions. Students are required to locate their own placement and WBL opportunities, with the support provided by the training provider; for example, the use of placement databases or placement fayres.

Placement Practice: Students continue to work in practice as a qualified counsellor, achieving 50 hours of supervised counselling work meeting professional requirements, during this programme.

Process: For both of the above (WBL and Placement) students will be required to use the WBL and Placement Handbooks to complete their proposal for practice. Detailed guidance and processes are contained within each handbook.

- **Technology:**

The University of Worcester Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Library Services ('The Hive') provide an array of online information and support for BA students studying at partner colleges. The reading lists for the modules are enhanced by the use of TALIS, which allows students direct access to available books and journals. Students will make use of the VLE (Blackboard) and e-portfolio (Pebblepad) for submission of assignments, and Blackboard specifically for receiving communications and announcements, and accessing course documents and learning materials.

- **Learning and Teaching Methods:**

Students gain knowledge and understanding through a balanced use of methods including lectures, seminars, handouts, discussion, debate, modelling, audio-visual input, professional skills triad work, case studies, experiential work, group work, reflective practice opportunities, and guided independent learning.

- **Summative Assessment Methods:**

Essays; oral exams and interviews; written assignments; professional portfolio (work based learning and placement); case presentation and discussion; poster/exhibition; work based learning conference presentation; counselling skills work and recordings; journal-based reflective writing.

- **Formative Assessment Methods:**

Journal writing; peer and tutor feedback on skills work; group process work; reflective practice opportunities; experiential work; observations

- **Requirements for Study**

This course involves a high degree of self-directed learning. The following represents a guide to the time needed to devote to study per module in order to successfully complete the course:

- attendance at all timetabled teaching days
- 1-2 days per week attending placement, work based activities and supervision
- 2 days per week guided independent study and assessment preparation
- personal therapy is recommended at 1 hour per week

14. Assessment Strategy

The assessment strategy is designed to help students develop the knowledge, skills and competence to practise as competent and professional counsellors on completion of the programme. Assessments provide opportunities to critically analyse and evaluate evidence and current practice in counselling and apply this knowledge within their own developing practice.

The team are committed to developing and enhancing students' professional competence by providing opportunities to demonstrate skills of self-reflection, evaluation of existing evidence and critical application of that learning to new practice situations. Students will be assessed in both theoretical and practical components of the course.

Each assessment has specific marking criteria contained in the relevant module guide, which is given to students at the beginning of the module.

A grid showing **assessment methods and weightings** mapped to modules at each level is included in the assessment section of the Course Handbook.

Regulation of assessment

The assessment strategy is aligned with the University's [Assessment Policy](#).

The course operates under the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#) which sets out the full regulations for passing modules, grading of modules, retrieving failed modules, progression from one academic level to the next, requirements for awards, and how the degree is classified.

The course is fully compliant with UW regulations for assessment, mitigation, appeals and complaints. For further details on any of these areas please follow this link to the [Registry Services](#) website or see the UW [Student Handbook](#).

15. Programme structures and requirements

The BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling (Top up) is a modular programme, comprising 4 modules of 30 credits at Level 6. Students should refer to the website and course handbook for details of additional expenses associated with the programme.

Award Map

Table 6 heading for course title

Level 6: BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling (Top-up)
Students must successfully complete all 4 modules at Level 6 to achieve this award.

Table 7 level 4 award map for BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling

Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)	Status (Mandatory (M) or Optional (O))
IMIC3000*	Advanced Professional Practice	30	M
IMIC3003	Specialist Work Based Learning	30	M
IMIC3004	Research for Counselling Practitioners (Dissertation equivalent module)	30	M
IMIC3005**	Counselling in the 21 st Century	30	M

*30 credit module delivered in semester 1

**30 credit module delivered in semester 2

Students will study 60 credits per semester

16. QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality

The BA is designed with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), which provides details of the academic level expected within

each year of the programme. This award is located at Level 6 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#)

The programme is designed in compliance with the University of Worcester Taught Courses Regulatory Framework. In addition, the [QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) was instrumental in shaping the Learning Outcomes for this programme.

The BACP Gold Standard Course Accreditation criteria (2009) have been integrated throughout.

17. Support for students

Partner College (place of course delivery): The course is delivered at two partner colleges, both of which provide an on-site college library available for students to use for independent study and provide internet and pc access. Students will be allocated a Personal Academic Tutor who will offer support throughout their studies, and the designated Placement Coordinator will support students in their professional placement practice.

Individual website information provides further detailed information about resources available at each partner college.

University of Worcester: Students enrolled on the BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling have the opportunity to access the services offered by UW Student Services. Student Services is the central department that provides non-academic support of students. The department includes Careers, Counselling and Mental Health Support, Disability and Dyslexia Service, Student Wellbeing Centre, and Welfare and Financial Advice. Further details are listed in the Course Handbook. Students cannot meet personal therapy course requirements though the University's counselling service.

18. Admissions

Admissions Policy

The BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling Top Up course aims to attract interest from applicants who are already qualified as a counsellor. This will include those who are experienced in the counselling and psychotherapy profession who wish to gain a professional degree and/or establish a specialist area of expertise; those who have recently qualified who wish to enhance their employability and increase their learning to a more advanced level; and people who wish to engage further with the future of the counselling profession through research and wider understanding of the issues involved.

Entry requirements to the BA (Hons) Top-Up Programme

The current entry requirements for entry to this course are published on the University's website: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/courses/integrative-counselling-ba-hons>:

- FdA Counselling award at Levels 4 and 5, meeting BACP supervised practice requirements of 100 hours minimum, or equivalent
- Applicants not meeting this requirement will be individually assessed by the programme leader to determine their ability to study at level 6, and must provide evidence of a counselling qualification which:
 - included at least 400 tutor contact hours
 - had a training duration of at least 2 years
 - had a supervised placement of at least 100 counselling hours
 - covered theory, skills, professional issues and personal development
- Students pursuing this route will be set an academic challenge to submit a case study and reflective statement of learning, which will be assessed against FdA level 5 learning outcomes and FHEQ level 5 descriptors. This will be assessed by

- the BA Course Leader, and applicants will also be asked to attend an interview.
- MBACP status (qualified counsellor and Registered member of the BACP or equivalent e.g., NCPS Accredited Registrant or UKCP Registered Member)
- In practice as a counsellor: students entering the programme must be qualified counsellors and must enter the programme with current counselling practice in place. The practice will be assessed by the college placement coordinator once the course has started, for suitability as an approved placement.

Admission to the programme via RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning)

Details of acceptable Level 4 and 5 qualifications, policy in relation to mature students or applicants with few or no formal qualifications can be found in the prospectus or on the University web pages. Information on eligibility for recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry with advanced standing is also available from the University webpages or from the Registry Admissions Office (01905 855111).

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

For students who wish to enter the BA (Hons) programme via RPL: these are thorough processes of assessment, requiring clear evidence of prior achievement of the Learning Outcomes for each module at the required level of study. For information on eligibility for recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry with advanced standing at Level 6, please contact the Programme Leader to arrange assessment via the School of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Worcester.

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

Admissions procedures

1. Applicants to this full-time course apply through UCAS. The application must include a personal statement and references, one of which is required on the UCAS form and one of which must be supplied to the college.
2. Applicants invited for interview must bring the following documentation to their interview:
 - Proof of academic achievement (original certificates) plus 2 photocopies of each certificate
 - Proof of identification (Birth certificate, Driving licence card, Passport) plus 2 photocopies of each
3. Students attend for interview (see details below)
4. The University will send a letter to successful applicants confirming the offer and requesting that the student completes the on-line registration.
5. Students will be required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate via the University following acceptance of a place on the course, for which a fee is payable. This requirement will also apply to students who already hold a DBS.

Admissions/selection criteria

An offer of a place on the course will depend upon the entry criteria described above and a successful interview.

Interview

The interview is an important part of the selection process, and applicants will need to demonstrate the criteria listed below in order to be offered a place. Interviews consist of participation in a group interview and also at an individual interview. The interviews are held by Registered Lecturers associated with the course of study.

Applicants successful at interview will have the professional and personal qualities for counselling training, as well as a good understanding of the expectations and

commitments of the training. Strong relational and communication skills are essential, along with maturity, self-awareness and self-reflective ability, and the ability to engage with the academic requirements of the programme. Applicants will need to show the confidence and enthusiasm required to successfully negotiate a work based learning opportunity, and a clear idea of the area of specialism they wish to develop. Applicants also need to be at the right time in their own lives to be able to engage fully with this highly demanding training.

19. Regulation of assessment

This course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to re-sit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessment.

Requirements for Progression

- A student who, by the time of the reassessment Board of Examiners, has failed 90 credits or more (after exhausting all reassessment opportunities) during the academic year, will have their registration with the University terminated.
- If a student has not passed at least 90 credits by the reassessment Board of Examiners, the student is not permitted to progress to the next level and will be required to either complete outstanding reassessment or retake the failed modules the following academic year. Students will be able to carry forward any passed modules.

This course is subject to the [University's fitness to practise procedures](#).

Requirements for Awards

Table 9 requirements for awards

Award	Requirement
-------	-------------

Top up Degree: non-Honours	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at Level 6 as specified on the award map from any two of the modules: IMIC 3000, IMIC 3003, IMIC3004, IMIC3005.
Top up Degree: with Honours	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at Level 6 as specified on the award map.

Classification

The Honours classification is determined on the profile of the 120 credits attained at Level 6 only.

Classification will be based on the weighted average grade together with a requirement for at least half of the Level 6 grades to be in the higher grade.

For further information on honours degree classification, see the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#)

Please Note: The above method of classification applies to students entering the Top-up degree from September 2022 onwards.

20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

Graduate destinations

The BA QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013) states: "As those entering the counselling and/or psychotherapy fields require understanding of a complex body of knowledge, clinical skills, self-awareness, analytical techniques and problem-solving skills, and the ability to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions to reach sound independent judgements, it is likely that they will need to be qualified to at least the level of a bachelor's degree with honours" (Section 1.4). This BA is designed to address these abilities, and to enhance skills and knowledge with particular reference to employment and the development of specialist areas of interest. It provides the opportunity for advancement in a variety of counselling-related careers. Our graduates are people with the advanced theoretical and applied knowledge to make an impact on service provision.

Possible career opportunities include:

- NHS initiatives e.g. Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
- Educational institutions: schools, colleges and Universities
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPS)
- Local Authority employee services programmes
- Charitable agencies
- Private Practice

The Programme provides links with employers through the placement and work-based learning component.

Student Employability

This course of study is unique because it provides students with the opportunity to discover, follow and develop their own professional specialism to an advanced level, and experience its application to the workplace. Students will build upon a professional portfolio, which will enhance their employability and through research they will contribute to the body of knowledge in their chosen field. Advice and discussions on future career opportunities in counselling will be provided by the course team during their programme, and further enhanced by the networking involved within work-based learning.

Links with employers

Through placement and specialist work-based learning on this programme, and the dissemination and sharing of their learning throughout the programme, students are able to build a growing knowledge of the professional domain in their geographical area as well as nationally.

An external employment advisor was involved in the development of this programme, as were approved supervisors and placement providers.

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 associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications.