

Programme Specification for FdA in Integrative Counselling

This document applies to Academic Year 2025/26 onwards

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	Iron Mill College
3.	Programme accredited by	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
4.	Final award or awards	FdA
5.	Programme title	Integrative Counselling
6.	Pathways available and/or Linked Honours Degree progression route/s	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Through attendance at Iron Mill College and via synchronous online delivery.
8.	Mode of attendance and duration	2 Years Full Time. Blended Learning
9.	UCAS Code	B9K0
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Course Accreditation (Gold Book, 2021) FD Qualification Benchmark: Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (QAA 2020) The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022) BACP Online and Phone Therapy Competencies (2021)
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	Re-approved June 2023 July 2023, annual updates

12. Educational aims of the programme

The Foundation Degree (FdA) in Integrative Counselling programme

The Foundation Degree (FdA) is a two-year modular programme at Levels 4 & 5. It is designed to qualify competent, confident and creative professional counsellors, who are well resourced for entering a variety of workplace settings. The FdA is accredited by the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) (BACP) and upon completion students will become registered members achieving MBACP status. In addition, [BACP Online and Phone Therapy Competencies](#) are embedded throughout the training, to enable students to develop the necessary skills for remote working.

Philosophy

The FdA in Integrative Counselling embraces relational values as described by Mearns and Cooper's work on Relational Depth (2005) and as more recently developed in Knox, Murphy, Wiggins and Cooper (2012). These works focus our attention on the depth and the quality of relationship as the central component of therapeutic work.

The core integrative framework is Faris and van Ooijen's Relational Integrative Model (2012), which offers a framework for the integration of humanistic, psychodynamic, and cognitive-behavioural approaches, and places the relationship firmly at the heart of the integrative approach. This model falls within a pluralistic postmodern paradigm, according to which there is no 'one true reality': the above approaches are presented as different 'lenses' with which to view relational integrative therapeutic work. The focus of counselling practice largely takes place

within the areas of 'overlap' shared by the three approaches, and in direct response to each client's wishes and needs.

Each FdA module has a focus on a particular theme relevant to contemporary relational counselling practice; models relevant to that theme are taught, critically evaluated, compared, integrated, and applied. The theoretical models addressed within this programme are taught in an integrative manner consistent with the philosophy described above. Psychodynamic approaches may include Transactional Analysis, Freudian concepts, and attachment theory.

Humanistic approaches may include person-centred work, 'relational depth', and transpersonal models such as Psychosynthesis. Cognitive Behavioural approaches may include brief therapy, CBT/mindfulness, and solution-focussed work. Additionally, family systems, neuroscience and existential approaches have particular relevance to a relational approach. Students will be encouraged to develop their own integrative approach based upon their learning, and upon their ability to compare the presented models and approaches.

The FdA has a practical applied focus - through placement, professional skills and work-based learning – and combines this with a deep interest in the richness of the human condition and the nature of relationship. These elements are integrated throughout the programme.

Finally, our philosophy for counselling extends to our philosophy for teaching:

"How we like to be with clients – open, available, collaborative, invitational and creative – is how we like to be in relationship with students" (Faris and van Ooijen, 2012).

Ethical Framework

The [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) (2021) is at the heart of each module taught on the FdA Integrative Counselling Course. The BACP is the largest (by membership) professional organisation for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the UK. Iron Mill College considers it important that all counsellors, whether qualified or in training, adhere to an Ethical Framework and are accountable for their professional work. Membership of the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) 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 and Placement

The FdA combines a practical applied focus (through 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. **'Placement'** refers to the required 100 hours of one-to-one supervised counselling practice; **'work-based learning'** refers to the contextual organisational learning and experience associated with professional counselling related employment.

Work-based learning presents students with opportunities to explore and gain contextual awareness in a professional counselling setting. The experience is designed to enable students to apply their learning to the workplace and contributes towards the general learning outcomes of the course. There is no specific 'hours requirement'; as a guideline, students will undertake approximately 30- 50 hours per year. Students will be provided with a Work-Based Learning Handbook and will be supported by the Placements Co-ordinator.

Some examples of Work-based learning activities include:

- attending case management conferences
- interviewing staff
- identifying and collaborating with associated support agencies/organisations
- attending induction days/ introduction events
- data collection for audit or other research purposes
- attending staff training events which are a requirement of the workplace
- assessing policy documents

- undertaking administrative tasks/clerical duties
- attending team meetings
- reading/reviewing service literature, policies and procedures
- structured workplace training
- observation of group supervision within the workplace
- other observation, assisting and job shadowing activities
- support staff in running groups or other service user activities

The FdA 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 identify and develop a unique personal integrative approach
- enhance employability with a focus on professional applications and work-based learning
- focus on up-to-date theory, research, and critical thinking
- enhance counsellor self-awareness and reflective practice
- encourage and provide opportunities for the development of creative thinking and practice
- focus on ethical practice and the use of the BACP Ethical Framework (2018)
- expand awareness of difference and diversity and the implications for counsellors meet the criteria listed in the [QAA Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(2022\)](#) for undergraduate training, the [BACP Online and Phone Therapy Competencies \(2021\)](#) and [BACP Gold Book \(2021\) for Accredited Training](#).

13. Programme Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes are shaped by the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy's current Course Accreditation Requirements (Gold Book, 2021), the QAA Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark Statement (2020), and the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022).

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Identify and discuss the philosophical assumptions underpinning the theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy	IMIC2101
2.	Discuss 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	IMIC2101
3.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ethical principles that underpin counselling and psychotherapy	IMIC2103
4.	Demonstrate professional knowledge of mental health and psychopharmacology	IMIC2103
5.	Demonstrate in-depth understanding of the purpose, theory and practice of supervision	IMIC2105

Table 1 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
6.	Evaluate and make use of a range of well-established humanistic therapeutic approaches appropriate for the needs of the client	IMIC2101
7.	Describe and critically analyse a personal philosophy of counselling and integrative approach and provide evidence of this approach in practice	IMIC2104 IMIC2105
8.	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	IMIC2103
9.	Demonstrate the ability to reflect upon your own practice and explicitly define areas for professional development	IMIC2105

Table 2 skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
10.	Integrate into practice legal, professional, and organisational requirements pertaining to equal opportunities, diversity, and anti-discriminatory practice	IMIC2103
11.	Critically reflect on the ethical, contractual, professional, legal, social, and organisational implications of counselling work	IMIC2103
12.	Recognise their own professional strengths and limitations that may affect therapeutic practice, and develop appropriate self-support and self-care strategies	IMIC2104 IMIC2105
13.	Recognise and make appropriate decisions in response to ethical dilemmas and legal responsibilities when assessing potential risk to the client or others	IMIC2103
14.	Develop Online and Phone Therapies Competencies (OPT)	IMIC1202

Table 3 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/key skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
15.	Demonstrate confidence and competence in the use of therapeutic skills both in the room and working remotely	IMIC2106
16.	Demonstrate use of reflective practice in developing an understanding of the self in relationship	IMIC2104
17.	Professionally present work in a clear, well-structured, and well-informed manner with the ability to critically evaluate material	IMIC2104

Learning, teaching and assessment

Teaching: This is a Full Time Course

Teaching is via blended learning and will be delivered through attendance at Iron Mill College (70%) and via online synchronous teaching (30%). Therefore, students are required to attend both on campus and online synchronous teaching sessions.

Synchronous learning refers to all online activities that take place during live sessions, while asynchronous learning refers to guided activities that students can access at a time to suit student's own schedules within any designated timeframe.

Students are taught through a combination of formal lectures, creative activities, experiential exercises, group process, presentations, skills practice, large and small group activities, and reflective practice. OPT (Online and Phone Therapies) competencies will be taught via online synchronous learning. There is a strong emphasis on applying theory to practice within all modules. Students will also have the opportunity to develop skills as well as graduate attributes through the Work Based Learning modules and clinical placement. In addition, meetings with Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) are scheduled on at least four occasions in the first year and three occasions in each of the other years of a course.

The University places emphasis on enabling students to develop the independent learning capabilities that will equip them for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as academic achievement. A mixture of independent study, teaching and academic support from Student Services and Library Services, as well as the Personal Academic Tutoring system enables students to reflect on progress and build up a profile of skills, achievements and experiences that will help them to flourish and be successful. This includes preparing the students regarding employability for counselling in online and telephone contexts as well as face to face.

Contact time

In-person teaching will take place one day per week and students will typically have around 7 contact hours per week of either attended or online synchronous teaching. Students will receive a teaching schedule for the academic year during the induction days. This will indicate both the attended (70%) and online synchronous teaching days (30%). There will be a focus on students developing OPT competencies within the (30%) synchronous teaching days. In addition, there will be up to 3 hours of asynchronous learning each week.

Typically, class contact time will be structured around:

- Lectures, discussions
- Skills practice
- Large and small group activities
- Reflective practice and experiential work

Independent self-study

As a full-time taught programme of study, students are expected to undertake the equivalent of 37 hours per week in total, which includes contact time, self-study, and placement activities.

- Reading of textbooks and journals
- Journal writing
- Professional Portfolio activities
- Work Based Learning. Approx. 30-50 hours per year
- Placement – a minimum of 100 hours across the two years
- Supervision of counselling practice – a minimum of 1.5 hours per month
- Personal Therapy – a minimum of 40 hours across the two years
- Preparation for assignments

Teaching staff

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. The teaching is delivered by experienced practitioners who are registered /accredited with BACP and/or UKCP. In addition, tutors are also in ongoing supervised practice as therapists. The academic team aim to create a colourful and varied learning experience, combining up to date theory and research, experiential activities, practical work and reflective opportunities. Further information on the teaching team can be found by visiting the Staff Profiles <https://www.ironmill.co.uk/college-staff>

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade.

Assessment methods include essays, presentation, portfolios, interviews, creative exhibition, case studies, oral exams, and skills assessment. There are no written exams on this course.

Year 1

- IMIC1101: The Art of Relationship: written assessment (1500 words) + skills reflection
- IMIC1102: Professional Competence: Interview + Portfolio work
- IMIC1103: Neuroscience for Counsellors: Presentation + Supporting Paper
- IMIC1104: A Sense of Self: Essay (4000 words)
- IMIC1105: Professional Development 1: Portfolio work

Year 2

- IMIC2101: The 'Here and Now' Encounter: Written assessment (2500 words) + recorded skills
- IMIC2102: Creative Arts Therapies: Presentation + Supporting paper
- IMIC2103: Counselling in context. Presentation + Poster
- IMIC2104: The Process of Change: Case Study 3000 words
- IMIC2105: Professional Development 2: Oral Exam + Reflective Transcript
- IMIC2106: Professional Practice: Placement Counselling hours and Personal Counselling

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 develop 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. These are based on the generic assessment criteria contained within the [Generic Grade Descriptors Levels 4-7](#).

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

Submission dates are module-specific and located in the Module Guide provided at the beginning of each module.

15. Programme structures and requirements

The FdA in Integrative Counselling is a two-year full-time modular programme comprising:

- Year 1: 5 modules at level 4
- Year 2: 6 modules at level 5

Each module of 15 credits comprises 150 hours of study, including teaching days, work based learning and self-directed learning. Each module of 30 credits comprises 300 hours of study, including teaching days, work based learning and self-directed learning. In addition to this, students are required to undertake a further 100 hours of supervised counselling practice and 40 hours of personal therapy.

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

- attendance at all timetabled teaching days either at Iron Mill College or online
- attend placement (3-4 hours per week once competency achieved)
- supervision (1.5 hours minimum per month)
- work-based activities (approx. 30-50 hours per year)
- 2-3 days per week guided independent study and assessment preparation
- personal therapy at 1 hour per week (40 hours minimum over two years))

Award Map

Course Title: FdA Integrative Counselling
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LEVEL 4: Students must successfully complete 90 credits including IMIC1 102 to progress to Level 5.
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Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)	Status Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)
IMIC1101	The Art of Relationship	15	M
IMIC1102	Professional Competence	30	M
IMIC1103	The Neuroscience for Counsellors	15	M
IMIC1104	A Sense of Self	30	M
IMIC1105	Professional Development 1	30	M

LEVEL 5: FdA Integrative Counselling

Module Code	Module Title	Credits (Number)	Status Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)
IMIC2101	The 'Here and Now' encounter	30	M
IMIC2102	Creative Arts Therapies	15	M
IMIC2103	Counselling in Context	30	M
IMIC2104	The Process of Change	15	M
IMIC2105	Professional Development 2	30	M
IMIC2106	Professional Practice	0	M

16. QAA and professional academic standards and quality

The FdA is designed with reference to the [Office for Students](#) sector recognised standards. This award is located at Level 5 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#).

The programme is designed in compliance with the University of Worcester [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#) and the QAA Foundation Degree Characteristic Statement (2020). In addition, the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022) was instrumental in shaping the Learning Outcomes for this programme.

The BACP Gold Book (2021) standards have been integrated throughout.

17. Support for students

The Iron Mill College offers a pleasant and comfortable learning environment within Exeter city centre. Students have access to a small library with relevant texts as well as an online e-library. Access to the IMC placement database allows students to find approved placement providers, counsellors, and supervisors in the geographical area of their choice.

You will also have access to resources online, such as eBooks and eJournals, access to images, maps, newspapers, research collections, subject specific databases, teaching resources, dissertations & theses, reports, videos, and films. Specialist and subject-specific help & advice is available from the University's [Information and Learning Services](#)

In addition to Iron Mill resources, The University of Worcester offer a wide range of e-learning technologies such as the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment, and Pebblepad e-portfolio. Students enrolled on the FdA in 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 Programme Handbook and details obtained from [First Point](#).

Iron Mill College will provide students with a personal academic tutor who will be their point of contact for tutorials throughout the course of study. Details can be found here: [Personal academic tutoring](#). Meetings with personal academic tutors (PATs) are scheduled on at least four occasions in the first year and 3 occasions during year 2. Students are responsible for contacting their tutor to arrange tutorials which may happen face to face, or by video call / telephone as agreed.

18. Admissions

Admissions policy

The FdA in Integrative Counselling course aims to attract interest from a wide range of applicants including those who are experienced in the counselling and psychotherapy profession wishing to gain a professional degree; mature entrants; applicants wishing to change their career paths; students who are in related professions wishing to broaden their expertise, and students with substantial life experience wishing to study at undergraduate level.

[Entry Requirements](#)

To be eligible for this course students must:

- Have completed at least 30 hours of preliminary counselling training. Applicants not meeting this requirement will be recommended to take the Iron Mill College Certificate in counselling.
- Possess a Level 3 (or equivalent) qualification. Applicants not meeting this requirement will be assessed for academic writing ability.
- Applicants must provide a personal statement on application and provide two references.
- Provide proof of identification.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements

Students will be required to apply for their Enhanced DBS Certificate via the University. A fee will be payable at this point.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

To ensure that all students meet the criteria for BACP registration, RPL is not permitted. Students need to complete the course in its entirety to achieve their FdA award and BACP registration.

Admissions procedures

- Applicants will apply via UCAS to the University of Worcester. The application must include a personal statement and two references
- Students attend for a group and individual interview at the Iron Mill College (see details below)
- The University will send a letter to successful applicants confirming the offer and requesting that the student completes the on-line registration. The student completes the registration via Sole Pages. The University of Worcester will send a confirmation letter to the student and will enclose a handbook.

Admissions/selection criteria

Interview

Applicants who meet the entry criteria will be invited to Iron Mill College for an interview. The interview process includes both a group and individual element and is led by members of the FdA teaching team. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they possess the professional and personal qualities for counselling training and demonstrate that they have:

- A good understanding of the expectations and commitments of the training.
- Strong relational and communication skills
- Maturity, self-awareness and self-reflective ability, and the ability to engage with the academic requirements of the programme.
- The confidence and competence required to actively seek and obtain a placement, as well as having relevant professional experience which will assist with the gaining of a placement.
- Applicants also need to consider the full-time nature of the course and the personal commitment to be able to engage fully with this highly demanding training.

*In preparation for interview applicants are advised to look at the BACP website and the [BACP Ethical Framework](#), which lists the values and personal qualities expected of counsellors.

19. Regulation of assessment

The 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.

- A student is 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

- A student who submits 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.
- A student who submits 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

- A student is 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 reassessments.

Requirements for Progression

- A student will be permitted to progress from Level 4 to Level 5 if, by the time of the reassessment Board of Examiners, they have passed at least 90 credits at Level 4. Outstanding Level 4 credits must normally be studied in the following academic year.
- 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 practice procedures](#).

Requirements for Professional Practice

- Students must complete the required number of professional practice hours and all associated requirements of the Professional Practice module in order to be eligible for the FdA award.
- Subject to the confirmation of the Exam Board, a student may extend the period of study to complete the professional practice hours after all other modules have been successfully completed.
- Students are not eligible to progress to a 'top-up' award until all requirements are met.
- The Exam Board will monitor progress in relation to completion of the practice hours.

Requirements for Awards

Award	Requirement
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Cert HE	In order to be eligible for the exit award of Certificate in Higher Education in the named subject/area of study, a student must have passed at least 120 credits in total including the mandatory modules for Level 4 of the award as specified on the award map.
Foundation Degree FdA	120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5 as specified on the award map.

These awards are not classified.

20. Graduate destinations, employability, and links with employers

Graduate destinations

This FdA programme provides the opportunity for advancement in a variety of counselling-related careers. Applicants with degrees are increasingly being sought, and the Foundation Degree is established as a qualification which is also vocationally relevant. Our graduates are people with the advanced theoretical and applied knowledge to make an impact on service provision.

The Foundation Degrees in Counselling leads to career opportunities and the possibility of further study leading to BA (hons) and postgraduate qualifications. 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 and the voluntary sector
- Private Practice

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

Upon successful completion of the FdA students are eligible to progress to the BA (Hons) in Integrative Counselling.

BA (Hons) in Integrative Counselling (Level 6)

The BA (Hons) is a one-year, full time top-up programme which encourages individual choice in study, and a vocationally relevant and up-to-date focus. It provides opportunities for developing more specialist knowledge and experience, conducting a literature review on a chosen topic, and for negotiating a work-based learning project tailored to the individual's interest and choice. It also encourages a wider view of counselling in the 21st century, with contemporary developments in the present and future of our profession.

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.