



Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Background

Persona was established in 1995 as a not-for-profit organisation with the purpose of providing education, personal and professional development opportunities in the area of inter-personal relationships and counselling founded on the principles of the Person-Centred approach.

In 1996 Persona established a Diploma Programme in Counselling and the first cohort of students completed their studies in May 1998. The course gained accreditation with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in 1998. In 2007 the course gained academic validation with the University of Stirling as a Post-Graduate Diploma and in 2010 was further accredited as an MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy. In 2016, we approached the University of Aberdeen to discuss academic validation of the Post Graduate Diploma and MSc. Our programmes gained validation and Persona has been successfully running the PG Dip and MSc programmes with the University of Aberdeen since then.

The Post-Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy is a two-year part-time programme awarded to students who exit the MSc programme at the end of the second year. The programme is validated and awarded by the University of Aberdeen and professionally accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

The Post Graduate Diploma is specifically designed to accommodate people who have work commitments during the week which make weekly attendance difficult and for that reason the course takes place mainly at weekends or week-long units over three years. The programme benefits enormously from being largely residential providing regular periods of intense and focused work as well as creating the opportunity for students to spend some informal time with others on the course; both are important and part of the immersive design and structure of the programme. The programme provides an advanced training in the Person-Centred approach and allows students the opportunity to engage in professional and personal development which meets the standard that BACP requires for professionally accredited counsellors.

The Person-Centred Approach

The Person-Centred approach is founded on a well-integrated theory of growth and development which stresses the inner resources of each individual. As a therapeutic approach it sets out to provide individuals with a connection with another person which minimises adverse conditions and maximises those conditions which support development. The Person-Centred approach is based on the work of Carl Rogers which has continued to develop and expand its theoretical foundations and therapeutic application from his original writings.

Aims of the course:

- To provide the opportunity, environment, resources and support for students to undertake accredited training in professional counselling.
- To offer a programme which supports and respects the learning process of students by incorporating a variety of training methods relevant to counselling.
- To provide a learning and assessment process which is Person Centred and encourages students to take major responsibility for their learning.
- The programme will provide a primary focus on the central concepts and theories of the Person-Centred approach in counselling and will extend to include other theories of human growth and development and their related therapeutic approaches, models of psychopathology and related mental health issues
- The course will provide a structure within which students will be invited to consider their own internal processes, reactions, thoughts and feelings in support of their development as reflective practitioners.
- The course will support the development of student's clinical competence during their clinical practice by focusing on the development and integration of:
 - a) their counselling skills
 - b) their underpinning knowledge of therapeutic processes and their ability to apply this to their work with clients
 - c) their understanding of their ethical and professional responsibilities
 - d) their personal reflectiveness and understanding of intra-psychic and interpersonal processes.

Our approach to learning and development:

The Persona approach to development and learning can be summed up as creative facilitation. We see ourselves not so much as teachers or lecturers but rather as facilitators of learning: we encourage the learner to explore and understand themselves as "seekers of truth" rather than "receivers of knowledge". Our aim is to create a learning environment in which students are affirmed as learners, and find their own learning path.

It is essentially an experiential approach which means that we create and use a wide variety of activities with the specific aim of prompting self-directed learning, personal reflection and insight. Whether the focus is on theoretical concepts, improving skill or deepening self-awareness it is the same philosophy. Persona is as committed to a learning process which supports learners as it is to learning outcomes.

The programme is designed to be interactive and the facilitation process includes a variety of different learning activities which a learning dynamic within which everyone, participators and facilitators alike engage in a creative learning process. It is also important not to lose sight of learning outcomes; theories are there to be understood, clinical skills and ethical awareness and a deepening self-awareness is essential to the process of developing as an effective, ethical practitioner. As a professionally and academically accredited programme it is important that the programme learning outcomes are understood and progress is measured against them. Written assignments, client recordings, individual supervision and client work are all part of the learning portfolio which is used to assess the student's ongoing learning and development.

Programme Structure

The programme comprises residential and non-residential study units, although the majority of the training is residential. The venue provides twin occupancy rooms as standard but for those that are more comfortable in their own space, single occupancy rooms are available if requested, but students will need to pay an additional supplement. The venue provides a safe and welcoming environment which is conducive to the learning and reflective processes of the programme. All residential training days are held at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge

and **residential attendance on the programme is a requirement of the course**. Non-residential Study Days are held at the TCS Centre in Coatbridge where the Persona office and course administration are based.

The programme utilises different learning activities to deliver and support student's learning and development. Some aspects of the course are presented in lecture form and there are presentations by external specialists covering different topics relevant to counselling. Interactive workshops are the principal learning environment for exploring specific themes and issues. Other learning forums which are used include: the Course Community Meeting, Process Reflection Groups, Skills Practice Groups, Encounter Groups, Study Groups, Discussion groups, 1:1 reviews. Supervision Groups also form a key part of the course programme. These groups provide a forum for exploration and discussion of counselling issues and an excellent opportunity for students to integrate theory with practice, supporting reflection on theory from the point of view of the actual therapeutic relationships. As students will be practicing in a diverse range of settings, it gives the members of the group a chance to broaden their experience of issues that they might not normally work with in their own counselling setting

Developing Counselling Competence

During the course, students develop their competence as counsellors through a range of different activities including practice sessions working as a "client" and "counsellor". Out with the course, there is a requirement for students to engage in a clinical placement. The course provides information about counselling agencies who have been approved by the course. It is the student's responsibility to contact agencies and arrange their own counselling placement. The course administration and course staff will assist course members, but ultimately it is the responsibility of students to ensure that they are able to meet the minimum course requirement of 150 hours of appropriately supervised counselling practice. Students should be aiming for an average of 3 hours of client work per week throughout the duration of the course. This should preferably include a mix of long-term work with clients as well as shorter contracts.

It is also a requirement of the course that students engage with an individual supervisor who has been approved by the course. Students are required to attend supervision regularly throughout the course, at a minimum frequency of one hour per fortnight and to complete a minimum of 40 hours throughout the programme. The frequency of supervision might need to be increased if the student's level of work or personal difficulties require it. The fees for individual supervision are additional to the course fees.

Assessment

The programme has a blend of formative and summative assessment processes which are structured to provide ongoing support and encouragement, with feedback from members of staff and other students. Formal feedback is provided specifically in relation to each of the three core areas of the course:

- **Theoretical understanding:** is monitored and assessed through written assignments and presentations
- **Clinical competence:** is monitored and assessed through live practice sessions, recorded sessions, group supervision and the presentation of case studies
- **Self-reflectiveness and the ability to understand process;** is monitored through participation in Course Community Meetings, Process Reflection Groups, Process Orientated/Experiential Workshops and Encounter Groups

Required Submissions

Students are required to undertake written work during the course as a focus for their personal research and reading and to allow them to demonstrate their learning. Each module has a formal assessment process; modules 1, 2, 3, and 4 include a written assignment which is tutor assessed, modules 5 and 6 have a blended assessment process which includes oral presentation and analysis of client work, and the students process supported by written assignments which are tutor, peer and self-assessed. All written assignment are required to be submitted via the University of Aberdeen student portal, and the course uses the Aberdeen Common Grading Scale to assess students written work. The assignments are designed to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their theoretical understanding and to integrate this with clinical work and self-development. The assignments are structured in such a way as to give the students the maximum opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

With regard to the assessment of clinical work, students are expected to record a minimum of four audio-recordings of their counselling work with clients, with the client's informed consent. These recordings offer the best possible insight into the student's competence, providing a key opportunity for personal/professional development. Individual supervision is not assessed and individual supervisors are not required to submit a report on the student's performance during individual supervision sessions.

Selection

Since this course is essentially an advanced training programme, applicants must have completed a foundation training in either Counselling or Counselling Skills as a minimum entry requirement. Where applicants are able to make a case for themselves on the basis of equivalent experience that will also be considered. In such a case "equivalent experience" would mean that the applicant has experience of working (paid or as a volunteer) in a role which necessarily involves using counselling skills and creating a supportive relationship with those using that service. It would also mean that the applicant has been working in this role for a significant length of time so that they could discuss their development over time in using these skills. All candidates are invited to submit a completed application form supported by two professional references. Enclosed with the application form is the set of questions which we ask each referee to answer on behalf of the applicant. Referees are invited to send the completed reference directly to the course administration office.

The Application Form has been devised to elicit only the most essential information about the individual and this is done deliberately as part of our equal opportunities approach to selection.

All applications receive a written acknowledgement which informs them if they are being offered an interview and the interview date. Following an interview, successful applicants will be offered a place on the course. Once a place has been accepted and a deposit has been paid, the applicant's place on the course is secure. Anyone who is not successful will be informed of the reason that they were not considered suitable to be offered a place on the course at this time.

The interview process involves two separate meetings; the first part (two individual interviews) lasts between 30-45 minutes per interview and the second part (a group interview) lasts three hours. The individual meetings are with two of the core staff team including one Director and the group interview process which involves other applicants is facilitated by the same staff. Individual and group Interviews are held in Coatbridge.

Staff Team

The programme is designed, facilitated and delivered by a team who are all experienced person-centred practitioners, trainers and group facilitators.

- Ishtar Swaffield: Programme Director
- Ross Cairns: Core Trainer
- Clair Higgon: Core Trainer
- Sheila Morrison: Core Trainer
- Alison Reid: Core Trainer
- Sue Black: Core Trainer
- Janet Keogh: Core Trainer
- Sarah Austin: Core Trainer
- Paula Williams: Trainer

Programme Modules

Module 1: The Theory and Practice of Therapeutic Change	Yr 1
Module 2: Personality Theory, Psychopathology and Psychological Wellbeing	Yr 1
Module 3: Clinical Issues, Different Psychological Approaches and Different Client Groups	Yr 2
Module 4: Research Issues and Research Methods	Yr 2
Module 5: Clinical Placement, Clinical Supervision, the in-depth analysis of the counselling process	Yrs1 & 2
Module 6: Personal Development, Developing Insight and Reflective Practice	Yrs1 & 2

Programme Dates

The study day sessions run from 9.00 am to 6.15pm and residential days from 9.00am to 9.00pm (apart from Fridays).

Module 1:

Week - September Monday 28th to Friday October 2nd 2020

Study Day - October Saturday 17th 2020

Weekend - October Saturday 31st to Sunday November 1st 2020

Study Day - November Saturday 21st 2020

Weekend - December Saturday 12th to Sunday December 13th 2020

Module 2:

Week - January Monday 25th to Friday January 29th 2021

Weekend - February Saturday 27th to Sunday February 28th 2021

Weekend - April Saturday 24th to Sunday April 25th 2021

Weekend - June Saturday 26th to Sunday June 27th 2021

Module 3:

Week - September Monday 13th to Friday September 17th 2021

Weekend - October Saturday 2nd to Sunday October 3rd 2021

Weekend - November Saturday 6th to Sunday 7th 2021

Weekend - December Saturday 4th to Sunday 5th 2021

Module 4:

Weekend - January Saturday 15th to Sunday 16th 2022

Weekend - March Saturday 19th to Sunday 20th 2022

Week - May Monday 9th to Friday 13th 2022

Weekend - June Saturday 18th to Sunday 19th 2022

Programme Fees

The overall cost of the programme is £8,300. An initial course of £500 is required to secure a place on the programme. Thereafter, the course fees for each year are £3900.00. Fees are required to be paid in advance at the beginning of the academic year. Payment Plans are available.

The programme fees include the cost of University Registration and full board and accommodation (twin occupancy rooms) at the Conforti Institute. Single occupancy rooms are available on request but an additional supplement of £240 will be charged.

Please Note: The programme is not covered by SAAS funding. Overall costs are correct at time of publication, but could be liable to slight variation

Additional Fees

Individual Supervision

The cost of individual supervision (minimum course requirement of 40 hours) is met by the student and is not included in the course fees.

Personal Therapy

It is not a mandatory requirement of the programme that every student engages with personal therapy; however, in our experience of providing the course we have found that at some point on the programme every student does enter into personal therapy. The cost of personal therapy is also met by the student.

Applications:

Please complete the attached application form and return it by email to admin@personacounselling.com