

## Programme Specification

### Award and title: BA (Hons) Counselling and Mental Health

<i>School:</i>	Education, Language & Psychology
<i>Subject area:</i>	Counselling
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2025/26
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	N/A
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Counselling and Mental Health Diploma of Higher Education Counselling and Mental Health BA (Ord) Counselling and Mental Health

*UCAS code / GTTR / other:*

*Joint Honours combinations:*

*QAA subject benchmark statement(s):* QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2022)

*Mode/s of study:* Undergraduate periods of study<sup>1</sup> for full time

*Language of study:* English

*Paired with Foundation Year:* Yes

*Study abroad opportunities:* No

*Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:* No

*Excluding a year-long placement/professional experience, are there placement/field trip/work experience(s) totalling 20 days or more?* No

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## Introduction and special features

Counselling has a long and rich history at York St John with the first course, a Certificate in Counselling & Guidance, starting in 1985. Over our 40-year history our courses have grown to include the BA (Hons) Counselling & Mental Health. Our courses all share the same humanistic base which prizes the unique, lived experience of each person and so privileges the relationship in helping others. If you study the BA Counselling & Mental Health, you will be part of this ethos, our community, and the long and successful history of humanistic counselling at York St John University.

This course seeks to equip you with the knowledge, skills and confidence you need to be an ethical, self-aware, reflexive and effective helper. The humanistic and relational foundation of the course places authenticity and transparency at the heart of everything we do, privileging a relational ethos. As a course team we will foster a community ethos where collaboration and mutual learning is valued. You will gain an

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<sup>1</sup> The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated; please refer to the Regulations for Undergraduate/Taught Postgraduate/Professional Doctorate Awards <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/> for information on standard periods of study

in-depth understanding of the ways in which social justice and systemic factors intersect in mental health settings. This includes the anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice central to ensuring our students are politically aware. You will be encouraged to examine and reflect on how your worldview and beliefs impact on the helping relationship. As a team we are committed to supporting you to understand and articulate the social values which are important to you and will draw on our specialised interests and research to underpin this.

The course is designed around 5 strands which are interwoven and mutually beneficial. The first four: Theory, Skills, Placement, and Research are reflected in particular modules across all three years. The final strand, Personal Development, runs throughout everything we do, all modules and opportunities provided to the students to engage in reflection and activities in the wider university and local community.

Through weekly skills practice and placement modules you will be given authentic and real-world opportunities to develop and practice your skills and knowledge. Both will support you in translating the theory you are learning about counselling and mental health into practice through active learning. Placements are an integral part of your learning on this course and will enable you to develop the helping skills such as active listening and reflective practice that you are practicing in weekly skills sessions. Students on this course are expected to take a participatory approach to studying which involves engaging in activities and interpersonal discussions during taught sessions to link the ideas to the real world.

You will be given regular opportunities to discuss and test your knowledge and skills in lectures, seminars, skills sessions and, during level 6, in supervision groups. Feedback from students suggests that this approach is welcomed because of the variety of learning the programme offers. Skills practice and supervision groups encourage reflective and hands-on learning, while seminars and peer-support groups promote active engagement and foster a strong learning community. You will work in small, varied groups across all modules which will allow you to develop close working relationships with a range of your peers. The small group sizes for seminars and skills will help you gain and then further develop your confidence.

Placement hours are an integral part of the programme, and you will be engaged in placement activity across all three years. One focus of this programme is to support you to develop your theoretically informed, active listening skills within a helping relationship. This will take place in an organisational setting, and you will be supported to find a placement of your choosing. Examples of previous placements include working with young people, disabled people, adult services in a range of environments, school settings, community centres and advice hubs.

In level 4 you will be encouraged to find a placement that will help you explore areas of interest to you personally and professionally. Some of our students use this as an opportunity to take the first steps in a career pathway that is continued over the 3 years. Others use their three placements as explorations of different areas of work to enable them to understand where they feel most comfortable. By the time you complete your degree you will have a comprehensive record of your placement experiences which will support your application for work or further study.

The teaching team are all professionals and are registered by their professional bodies. As a result, we have established connections to a range of community based and professional organisations, some of which offer work related experiences for our students. We are proud to have the York St John Community Centre as part of our subject area and students have undertaken placements there supporting the work of the Centre.

In keeping with our relational ethos, we see student support as central to your time at university and have a range of support in place. You will be introduced to your academic tutor during the first week of teaching and have regular meetings with them. This is an important relationship, and we encourage you to make regular contact with them. Support will also come in the form of module tutorials and each year has a lead tutor responsible for the overall running of that year. As a team we recognise that not everyone learns in the same way. Therefore, no matter what our role in your university experience, we will always seek to work with you to understand and remove any barriers to your engagement and learning on the programme. We take a community-based approach to support therefore we actively encourage peer support alongside academic and module tutor support. In addition, the university has centralised services such as Wellbeing, Disability, Welfare, Writing Support and Learner Adjustment Plans which you will be able to access.

## Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of Recognition of Prior Learning. We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

## Programme aim(s)

1. Equip you with knowledge, skills and self-awareness that you will need as an effective, ethical and reflexive helper.
2. Provide opportunities for you to apply and develop your professional skills and knowledge, through engagement in placement activities which are relevant to your vocational interests and employment aspirations.
3. Foster an ethos of community, collaboration and mutual learning, both amongst students and between students and staff alongside an understanding of social justice.
4. Enable you to develop a systemic understanding of the varied social and organisational contexts where helpers interact with others.

## Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

### Level 4

- 4.1 **Apply** theory to both hypothetical and actual situations and experience.
- 4.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the **application** of humanistic principles and skills in a helping conversation.
- 4.3 **Search, discuss** and **evaluate** sources of knowledge and information
- 4.4 **Evidence** and **discuss** participation in all aspects of the course and maintenance of professional standards and behaviour in academic and placement settings.
- 4.5 **Apply** the principles of reflective practice to personal, professional, ethical and academic development.
- 4.6 **Demonstrate** awareness of anti-discriminatory practice that aligns with the principles of social justice.

### Level 5

- 5.1 **Reflectively apply** theory to both hypothetical and actual situations and experiences.
- 5.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the **application** of humanistic principles and key coaching skills in a structured coaching conversation.
- 5.3 **Evaluate** and **compare** sources and forms of knowledge, and methods of knowledge-production.
- 5.4 **Evidence** and **evaluate** participation in all aspects of the course and maintenance of appropriate standards of professional behaviour in academic and placement settings.
- 5.5 **Reflectively evaluate** ethical, professional and academic development.
- 5.6 **Reflect** on personal awareness of anti-discriminatory practice that aligns with the principles of social justice.

### Level 6

- 6.1 **Critically and reflectively apply** theories, and methods of knowledge-production, to both hypothetical and actual situations and experiences.
- 6.2 **Demonstrate** competence in the intentional, theory-informed and client-responsive use of helping skills.
- 6.3 **Synthesise** and **critically evaluate** sources and forms of knowledge, and methods of knowledge-production.
- 6.4 **Evidence** and **reflectively critique** participation in all aspects of the course and maintenance of appropriate standards of professional behaviour in academic and placement settings.

- 6.5 **Reflectively critique** ethical, professional, personal and academic development.
- 6.6 **Reflectively critique** awareness of anti-discriminatory practice that aligns with the principles of social justice.

## Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
COU4007M	4	1	Introduction to Counselling Skills	20	C	X
COU4008M	4	1	Academic and Research Skills	20	C	X
COU4009M	4	1	Humanistic Philosophy and Theories	20	C	X
COU4010M	4	2	Relational Skills in Counselling	20	C	X
COU4011M	4	2	Working in the Helping Professions	20	C	X
COU4012M	4	2	Working within Diversity	20	C	X
COU5010M	5	1	Relational Skills in the Community	20	C	X
COU5011M	5	1	Perspectives on Mental Health	20	C	X
COU5012M	5	1&2	Developing Professional Experiences	20	C	X
COU5008M	5	2	Change Oriented Approaches	20	C	X
COU5009M	5	2	Research Methods	20	C	X
COU5013M	5	2	Contextualising Mental Health	20	C	X
COU6007M	6	1 & 2	Independent Research Project	40	C	NC
COU6008M	6	1	Deepening Humanistic Practice	20	C	X
COU6009M	6	1 & 2	Ethical & Reflective Professional	20	C	X
COU6010M	6	2	Advanced Therapeutic Relationships	20	C	NC
COU6011M	6	2	Psychodynamic and Insight Oriented Theories	20	C	X

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 40 in order to progress).

## Learning, teaching and assessment

Four interlinked strands run across the whole programme, these are: skills; theory; placement; and research. Each year builds on the preceding year developing your understanding of key humanistic, counselling and mental health theory which is then applied in skills groups and further developed on your placement and is underpinned by research. Links between research, theory and practice are embedded throughout the degree. Learning and teaching is participatory with multiple opportunities to discuss, debate and reflect on and embed what you are learning in lectures in smaller groups.

In level 4, you will be introduced to key theories in the humanistic approach, basic listening skills such as active listening, and a module designed to support you with academic reading, writing, critical thinking and research. The level 4 placement module is designed to offer the opportunity to put both the theory you are learning and the listening skills into practice. In level 5, you will build on the skills you have learnt in level 4, embedding those further and allowing you to reflectively apply and evaluate your understanding of

knowledge, skills and theory. By the time you are in level 6, you will be able to confidently, reflectively critique, synthesise and evidence that knowledge.

Your skills modules and placements provide you with hands-on, real-world opportunities to embed theoretical learning into practice. You will complete a placement each year of your degree. You will be supported to seek out, apply to and secure your own placement which enables you to align these opportunities with your interests and career goals. Our criteria for these placements are that they should be meaningful, provide opportunities for development and growth, and enable you to make connections and build understanding of any helping profession or particular community.

We use a mix of assessment types to accommodate a range of learning styles, including written work such as essays, portfolios, presentations, posters and reports. There are no exams on this programme as they do not fit with our working practices or relational style. In level 4, you will be introduced to research skills; in level 5, these will be further developed, culminating in your dissertation in level 6. Assessments are linked across all three years. For instance, in the skills strand of level 4, you will start to address the question of what are helping skills and, by level 6, you will be able to critically and reflectively justify your intentional use of helping skills.

There are a number of group tasks set for you throughout the course. Active engagement with these, along with your participation in skills and supervision groups, means that you will learn to work within a collaborative environment and ethos throughout your degree. We have built team building activities into the skills sessions to foster close relationships and reduce social isolation across our student groups.

## **Progression and graduation requirements**

The University's [regulations](#) for undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

## **Internal and external reference points**

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission, Culture and Values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

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*Date written / revised: May 2025*

*Programme originally approved: 7 July 2025*