

GENERAL CERTIFICATE IN ONLINE COUNSELLING SKILLS

BRIEF GUIDE

How to you learn Online with people you never meet?

- A weekly email from the Course Tutor outlines the tasks for the week and reminds you of any deadlines for work that is due.
- Whole group discussions (synchronous communications) are conducted online, using different video platforms. Three times during the course everyone is required to attend a group meeting at the same time for a 90 minute themed discussion led by a tutor. They are held on Sundays in weeks 2, 6 and 10, usually in the early evening.
- There are also tutor-facilitated online group discussions using emails or the Campus Noticeboard (asynchronous communications).
- Each course member will be assigned a Personal Tutor who is responsible for a small group of students (up to 6). Small group discussions and online meetings are held using webcam.
- Tutor Observed Practice – course members take part as both counsellor and client in 2 online TOPs. They experience how counselling by different approaches can feel from both counsellor and client perspectives. They summarise their learning from these TOPs and present it in their Online Portfolio of Learning at the end of the course.
- Each course member emails a weekly Journal to their Tutor which describes their learning experiences that week. Their Tutor will offer brief feedback and further support as necessary. A summary of the learning Journal is included in their online Portfolio at the end of the Course.
- Each course member researches and presents a topic of interest to them, which is suitable for online readers. The webpage and notes about its construction are included in their online Portfolio.
- In addition, the campus website is an online learning resource, with many different areas including a Library (regularly updated with useful articles) and Practice Laboratory where “virtual” clients seek online help and course members can contribute an answer and read

Example of General Certificate Course Timetable

Week	Tutor Email	Registration Task	Practice Lab	Email Thread	Groups
1	Welcome, and read Online Guidelines for your own and other membership bodies.	Hopes and fears			
2	What does a client need to know about what is on offer?	What helps or prevents you feeling safe to share feelings and thoughts online?	Empathic response to a client enquiry		User centred approach
3	Send client email to role-play counsellor	My favourite online defences	Replying to an email which causes boundaries to be kept in place	Reflect on assertiveness, conflict resolution, and negotiation online	
4	During this	Reading week, write	Week and send	One your contract	to your client
5	Exchange topics for presentations	How am I different/similar to others in this group?	Respond to client presenting with mental health issues	Whom might I choose not to work with online?	
6	Consider how you would assess mental health online and share ideas with the group.	What I love and hate most about working online.	Respond to email which presents an ethical dilemma		Working with difference and diversity

7	Prepare and share, a dialogue between 'me online' and 'f2f me'.	Share an image or metaphor for yourself as an online counsellor	Respond to client email that raises issues of diversity		
8	Create a	Reading resource list of	Week online	Two referral and	support
9	End role-plays. Send feedback to counsellor	Something I haven't yet told anyone in this group about me.	Reply to an email to show clearly your counselling model or approach		
10	Reminders about submitting work	What I'm going to do when the course ends.		Ideas for client evaluation of the process	Beginning middle and end online – and in this group
Last day of course		End	Of	Course	



Course Aims

- To encourage course members to experience and use the relevant Internet Computer Technology (ICT) needed for online counselling;
- To reflect on this experience and present evidence of their learning in an online Portfolio of Learning which may be read by other members of their course group.

Course members will:

1. Make and experience different types of online relationship with people whom they do not meet face to face:

- Tutors on the course
- Other students on the course
- An online client (in Tutor Observed Practice)
- An online counsellor (in Tutor Observed Practice)

2. Research and record how to present a topic suitable for an online reader.

3. Record, reflect and assimilate all online learning experiences in a Journal of Personal Learning

4. Take part in two online roleplays (Tutor Observed Practice), one as a counsellor, the other as a client.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this Course students will have:

- Evaluated the suitability for counselling of different synchronous and asynchronous internet communication platforms and evidenced this in their online Portfolio of Personal Learning.
- Utilised and appraised their experience of online relationships as client, counsellor and course member and evidenced this in their online Portfolio.
- Researched how to present a topic suitable for an online reader.
- Assembled, assimilated and presented evidence of their online learning experiences in their Portfolio.

The Role of the Online Course Tutor

All Course Tutors are experienced online both as counsellors and tutors and have tutored and trained on previous Online Training for Counsellors Ltd courses. Their role is to;

- keep online communications running smoothly and drive the Course forwards with weekly emails
- facilitate online group discussions both asynchronously and synchronously
- provide support and encouragement for individual learning
- offer support and feedback if required during the Tutor Observed Practice.

Course Contract

Online Training for Counsellors Ltd undertakes to offer course members such individual encouragement and support as is needed for them to fulfil the requirements of the Course. In return, Online Training for Counsellors Ltd expects its course members to take responsibility for the following:

- Keep information about each other confidential; agree to disguise their roleplay clients' true identity and not include identifiable information about them in their Professional Portfolios.
- Act as professional therapists throughout the Course, offering interventions which they consider to be suitable to that role and within the code of ethics and practice to which they are professionally bound.