

Diploma in Online Counselling

Brief Course Guide

The Diploma builds on the knowledge and skills developed through associated prior learning. It prepares students to run an online therapeutic practice with clients from around the world. It is held in two parts of 12-weeks each which run concurrently (see example timetable, *this can change*).

You will be working online with real clients and so will need to incorporate supervision sessions with an OLT supervisor into your time. You will also be expected to provide evidence of 10 hours of personal therapy with an OLT recommended counsellor.

Learning in an Online Group

- 1) A weekly email outlines the tasks for the week and reminds students of any deadlines for completed work.
- 2) Live group synchronous discussions are conducted online from a chat program such as Skype, Zoom or another. There are weekly audio and text meetings with a themed discussion led by a tutor. There are 90-minute weekly Teaching and Learning sessions which are arranged for a day and time to suit the majority of students.
- 3) There are also group discussions using emails or the message board on the campus (asynchronous discussions).
- 4) Practical Work. Throughout the Diploma, course members work online with clients (either their own or ones supplied by OLT) They receive online supervision from an OLT Supervisor.
- 5) Assessment is made of both learning and practice, some of which is handed into the tutors and assessed, during the diploma
- 6) The online Campus Library is regularly updated with useful articles that generate additional insight (added this)
- 7) Each course member emails a 500+ word weekly journal to their Tutor which describes their learning experiences that week. Their Tutor will offer feedback and further support as necessary.

The Part One timetable below is an example of what might be covered each week (the order of topics may change or vary according to the interests of a particular cohort and developments in technology). Part Two begins after a break and is a further 12-week term of discussions and regular meetings. Students lead one discussion meeting during Part Two includes taking responsibility for managing the group online and introducing and facilitating the discussion topic for that week.

Assessment for the Diploma

During the Diploma, students will research and examine aspects of working online. They will show their understanding of the requirements for being an online counsellor and will have presented that evidence in their final portfolio. In addition to their evidence, students will include a case study of their work with one client (2,500 words) and demonstrating how they work as counsellors online; a 15 mins transcript with process commentary taken from a live session with one client; written a brief reflection on their personal experience of online therapy and written an essay on the implications of setting up an online practice.

The diploma requires approximately 10 + hours each week. This is divided between individual and group discussion meetings, client contact, individual and group supervision, asynchronous discussion by email and forums and personal development (therapy) as well as background reading. Throughout the diploma, there are facilitated synchronous group discussions (90 minutes each); group supervision meetings (90 mins) and an individual supervision session; individual tutorial meetings (45mins); 10 hours of personal therapy; an average of 20 client hours (either live session or email). Also, there are ongoing email and noticeboard discussions, background reading, research and private study. There are study weeks in each term and a longer break between terms. Assessment will be by a portfolio of work submitted 4 weeks after the course ends and by online presence throughout the course.

The diploma comprises 200 Study hours, made up of 90 Guided Learning Hours and 110 Private Study Hours.

Course Outcomes for Diploma Students

Group Meeting	Dates	Discussion theme for the week Task for the week
Week 1	Introductory meeting –Who are We? What’s in a contract?	Research requirements for a legal and ethical online framework
Week 2	Work within a legal and ethical professional framework for an online counselling service	Prepare your client contract, pre-counselling information sheet and web profile ready to start work with clients
Week 3	Respond to and manage legal and ethical issues for own online counselling service and website	Research Codes of Practice and other websites or online counsellors, complaints procedures Share results on Notice Board
Week 4	Supervision Group meeting – first clients allocated	Individual tutorials - submission of evidence for portfolio criteria
Week 5	Manage the conflicts and demands of working within relational boundaries in an online practice.	Respond to the dilemma on Campus Share thoughts on Notice board research global insurance

Week 6	Work with implicit aspects of therapeutic relationship	Share experiences of client work so far and internal/external supervisor responses
Week 7	Work with challenges and difficulties that arise in the therapeutic relationship	Research ways of managing suicidal clients, use of supervision, Onward referral etc.
Week 8	Supervision Group Meeting	Individual tutorials -submission of evidence for the portfolio
Week 9	How can diversity issues affect online counselling work	Contribute to Notice board "Working with Difference" Create a list of websites suitable for Referring clients outside your competency
Week 10	Reflect on different cultural perceptions of mental health and well-being.	Dilemma on Campus. Research and contribute to Notice board thread on medical provision around the world
Week 11	What social, cultural and biological factors impact on individual clients and how diversity issues impact on the way clients accesses an online counselling service. Respond to the dilemma on Campus	Contribute to Notice board thread on own experience so far
Week 12	Supervision Group meeting Individual tutorials - submission of evidence for criteria	

By the end of the course, students will have considered the following:

- Developed a model for online counselling which suits their core theoretical approach and is evidenced in their Case Study.
- Demonstrated the counselling and process skills needed for initiating, maintaining and ending an ethical and therapeutic online counselling relationship.
- Used online supervision to encourage awareness and development of these skills.
- Explored the potential for new technologies in online counselling.
- Researched ways and circumstances in which onward referral may become necessary or appropriate.
- Discussed how client assessment (both initial and ongoing) may be conducted online and how regular monitoring and evaluation can inform their online counselling practice.
- Researched what information is useful and desirable for online counselling websites.
- Experienced taking the role of Group Leader in an online group discussion meeting, presenting a topic of interest and facilitating the discussion

- Considered the ethical and legal implications of working globally with clients.
- Researched how confidentiality and privacy may best be offered online.
- Presented evidence of their understanding of online counselling issues in a Portfolio Grid.
- Demonstrated their awareness of process in online counselling with a 15-mins live session transcript.
- Reflected on being an online client in personal therapy
- Worked as an online counsellor with online clients receiving regular online supervision from an OLT supervisor both in the group and individually.
- Considered ways in which they can maintain and update their online skills and knowledge once the Diploma ends and explored how they can obtain ongoing professional support.