

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MSc Psychodynamic Counselling and Psychotherapy (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
HomeSchool/other teaching departments	Birkbeck Centre for Counselling
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Part-time (3 years) October/January
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), www.bacp.co.uk British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC), BPC.org.uk
<u>QAA subject benchmark group(s)</u> <u>Higher Education Credit Framework for</u> <u>England</u>	Counselling and Psychotherapy (including masters)
Birkbeck Course Code	TMSPSYDP_C TMSPSYDW_C (weekend study, Jan start)
HECoS Code	Counselling: 100495 Psychotherapy: 100254
Start date of programme	Autumn 2010
Date of programme approval	Spring 2010
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2022
Valid for academic entry year	2026-27
Date of last revision to document	24.08.26

Admissions requirements

You will need to have a minimum of six month's full-time experience in a helping/listening role or equivalent experience.

You should also have prior completion of a counselling/psychotherapy course at Certificate of Higher Education level or equivalent.

Our standard postgraduate entry requirement is a second-class honours degree (2:2 or above) or an equivalent international qualification, however, professional qualifications and/or relevant work experience are taken into consideration positively and may be accepted in place of a degree. We will request a short assignment from non-standard entrants.

Applications are reviewed on their individual merits and your professional qualifications and/or relevant work experience will be taken into consideration positively. We actively support and encourage applications from mature learners.

Course aims

The MSc has the following aims:

Knowledge and understanding

- provide a psychoanalytic understanding of the mind, its modes of functioning (conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious), structures, dynamics, and its relationship to personality, experience and behaviour
- provide knowledge of human growth and development
- provide understanding of psychoanalytic theory as the basis for clinical understanding and intervention
- promote a critical understanding of psychoanalytic theory through the exploration of relevant research and knowledge and understanding from other relevant disciplines
- provide knowledge and understanding of a psychosocial perspective as a way of understanding the interplay between psychic and social reality
- provide knowledge and understanding of institutional life and organizational dynamics, as a particular form of psychosocial understanding which informs psychodynamic practice
- provide other forms of knowledge, e.g. of psychiatry, social context etc. which informs psychoanalytic theory and psychodynamic practice

Clinical Skills and competencies

- enable students to practice psychodynamic counselling /therapy in a highly skilled way.
- enable students to practice in a way that is informed by psychoanalytic theory ("clinical thinking")
- enable students to become reflective practitioners, that is practice in a way that is informed by research, and open to ongoing evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the aims, strategies and interventions adopted
- enable students to practice in an ethical and responsible way
- enable students to acquire competence in the basic psychoanalytic skills and competences:
 - listening to the unconscious
 - developing the capacity to observe the client and interaction with the therapist taking up the professional and clinical role
 - develop a working alliance with the client
 - make use of transference

- develop a capacity to use countertransference
- develop a capacity to contain
- develop the capacity to use the psychoanalytic model in an informed and flexible way, appropriate to the needs of each client

Professional attitude

- provide the knowledge and understanding to develop an understanding of one's professional role to the client
- provide knowledge and understanding of the therapist's ethical responsibilities to the client
- foster the development of the attitudes, skills and competencies to become an effective member of a professional network or multi-disciplinary team of practitioners

Course structure

The MSc Psychodynamic Counselling and Psychotherapy offers a part-time route only (see module map below).

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Part-time – 3 years					
Year 1					
6	Module 1 SSPA022S6	Introduction to theoretical and organizational concepts	30	Core	T1-3
6	Module 2 SSPA023S6	Introduction to clinical and observational skills	30	Core	T1-3
6	Module 3 SSPA021S6	Introduction to the Analytic Attitude	30	Core	T1-3
Year 2					
7	Module 1 SSPA026S7	Basic psychodynamic theory & organisational understanding	30	Core	T1-3
7	Module 2 SSPA025S7	Basic psychodynamic skills & principles/techniques of practice	30	Core	T1-3
7	Module 3 SSPA027S7	Basic psychodynamic competencies & professional attitude	30	Core	T1-3
Year 3					
7	Module 3 SSPA028S7	Clinical Thinking	30	Core	T1-3
7	Module 1 SSPA086S7	Evidence based practice	30	Core	T1
7	Module 2 SSPA030S7	Psychosocial and Psychodynamic Practice	30	Core	T2

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student
 Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)
 Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Teaching on this course is offered as a combination of seminars, workshops and large and small groupwork. Each year of the programme consists of three modules, which are taught concurrently throughout the year and across the different groups (as the teaching in each module links closely to the teaching of the other modules in the year). Three main types of teaching are used: intellectual and academic teaching, teaching observational and clinical skills and experiential learning. Students are expected to complete between 8-10 hours of reading each week and to write an average of three assignments during each course year. The central element of self-development is pursued through experiential learning and compulsory personal therapy. Professional and clinical development is assessed on your clinical placement which takes place in an organisation external to the College.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through the following types of assessment.

- written assignments, ie. academic essays, clinical essays and a take-away exam;
- continuous assessment of personal and professional development (CPD) from your performance in groups and seminars, via termly one-to-one CPD meetings with your personal tutor, and a biannual supervisor's report from your clinical placement. All of these will feed into your yearly Student Review which is completed by your tutor.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course:

Academic Knowledge

- i. You will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of psychodynamic theory and clinical concepts, both historical and contemporary, and their social context,
- ii. You will demonstrate an understanding of human growth and development from a psychoanalytic perspective,
- ii. You will demonstrate a critical understanding of psychosocial issues and their significance in the practice of psychodynamic counselling,
- iii. You will be able to discuss and evaluate a range of counselling and psychotherapy research and its relation to clinical psychodynamic practice,

Personal and Professional Development

- iv. You will have achieved sufficient personal development to become a self-reflexive practitioner,

- v. You will have consolidated a commitment to personal therapy and developed a capacity to learn from experience,
- vi. You will be able to use supervision as a tool for learning on placement.

Clinical Outcomes

- v. You will have achieved a sufficient level of clinical competence to practice independently under supervision,

This includes,

- a. demonstrating sufficient knowledge of clinical practice and common mental health problems; demonstrating a thorough understanding of the BACP ethical framework
- b. demonstrating an understanding the professional context within which counsellors and psychotherapists work
- c. demonstrating an understanding of the nature and quality of the counselling relationship with particular attention to application of psychodynamic clinical concepts
- d. demonstrating sufficient skill and competence in psychodynamic work to have met the clinical competencies in the learning objectives
- e. having achieved sufficient professional development to take up a role as a psychodynamic practitioner in an organisation.

Careers and further study

You will find graduates of our MSc Psychodynamic Counselling and Psychotherapy in the following kinds of roles: university counsellors, counsellors and psychotherapists in NHS Psychotherapy Departments, bereavement counsellors, employee assistance programme counsellors.

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website.](#)

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

All modules are core and must be passed in order to proceed to the next academic year and to graduate.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

Please check our website for more information about student support services. This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Your personal tutor will have a scheduled meeting with you once a term, additional tutorials are available on request. The Placement Coordinator can be contacted for any queries about placements.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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