

Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

Information Sheet: 2026 intake

Doctorate in Counselling Psychology 2026 Intake Information Sheet

"I have found the first year of this course over and above anything I could have anticipated. The freedom we were given with assignments meant we could engage in a topic or area which felt meaningful to us. I have been pushed to be self-reflective and critical in ways I didn't even know possible, and this has made me really think about why I am doing this and what sort of practitioner I want to be."

(DCounsPsych student, 2019)

"The programme continues to innovate and strive for the highest standards and, in the field, offers excellent in teaching, learning, student experience and practice development."

(External Examiner, 2022)

"The visiting team commend the excellent supportive nature of the programme team to their trainees, particularly in terms of placement opportunities. It was evident that having a dedicated placement director ensures good communication between the programme team, trainees, and placement providers. The students also emphasised how helpful, supportive, and approachable all the staff are."

(British Psychological Society Partnership and Accreditation Team, 2022)

The Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology provides HCPC and BPS approved Doctoral training in counselling psychology situated at a Russell Group University and is the only UK programme in North-West England.

Ultimately students completing this course will be equipped as competent counselling psychologists who are eligible to apply for HCPC registration and BPS Chartered status.

The course offers a professional training in counselling psychology and has four major components. These are:

- (1) The development of appropriate theoretical knowledge
- (2) The development of research skills
- (3) A substantial therapeutic practice component
- (4) An emphasis upon personal development

We have small cohorts, and we work closely with our students to support their development as reflexive scientist-practitioners.

PLEASE NOTE:

An online programme open evening will be held on Monday 1st December 2025, 5-7pm. For further information please visit the programme webpages.

We accept applications from 30th October 2025 and will be holding interviews for the 2026 cohort in February 2026 and April 2026. We advise that where possible applicants attend the open evening prior to applying.

Increasingly we offer most of our places in the February interview round, with only waiting list places available in the second round. Therefore, we strongly encourage people to apply early.

This document provides an overview of the programme's core philosophy; a brief introduction to programme staff; an overview of the programme of study; and information about the application process.

Programme Philosophy

We have a particular emphasis throughout the programme on understanding counselling psychology as relational, social and political, and we consider social justice, intersectionality and decolonisation throughout the doctorate.

The University of Manchester's Doctorate in Counselling Psychology is a pluralistic therapeutic training programme that acknowledges that "any substantial question admits of a variety of plausible but mutually conflicting responses" (Rescher, 1993, p.79; see also Cooper and McLeod [2011] for a discussion of pluralistic counselling and psychotherapy). It adopts a stance that values the social and political contexts in which the profession of counselling psychology has developed and in which therapeutic work is undertaken (Winter, 2019; Winter & Charura, 2023). Furthermore, it values the phenomenological intersubjective experience of those involved in the therapeutic process. With this in mind, the person seeking support is viewed as an active agent of psychological change with whom any intervention should be centred (see Bohart and Tallman [1999] and Duncan et al. [2004] for more discussion on service user agency within therapy). Such a collaborative view values both the scientist-practitioner model of professional practice and the reflexive-practitioner approach (Hanley & Amos, 2017).

The pluralistic approach and attitude are used to harness the many different approaches introduced on the programme. At the core of this approach is the need to develop a strong therapeutic relationship that is both sensitive to the particular needs of the person seeking support, and collaborative in nature. As such, students are encouraged to consider with clients their specific goals for therapy and the associated tasks and methods that might be needed to achieve them (Hanley, Sefi & Ersahin, 2016). Such a perspective is embedded within a humanistic psychology tradition (Hanley & Winter, 2016) and is also informed by social justice and intersectionality (Winter & Charura, 2023). The programme encourages consideration of the impact that broader cultural and political constructs might have on the types of work that counselling psychologists engage with. The pluralistic framework therefore acts as scaffolding for students to make sense of the numerous tensions that are present within and across the core therapeutic models presented within the programme.

Programme Overview

In the first year of the programme students are supported in learning in several different units of study, including: (1) Humanistic Counselling Psychology Theory and Practice, (2) Core Counselling Psychology Skills, (3) Researching Education and Therapy 1, (4) Critical Perspectives on Distress, (6) Advancing Counselling Psychology Skills and (6) Challenging Oppression, Discrimination, and Inequalities in Counselling Psychology.

Within these units, students are supported in understanding the key postulates of humanistic psychology (Bugental, 1964) and the core competencies of humanistic counselling (Roth, Hill & Pilling, 2009). This approach has its foundation in the person-centred approach (e.g., Gillon,

2007) and introduces students to the model of psychological change first proposed by Carl Rogers (1951; 1959) and subsequently developed by contemporary thinkers (e.g. Hanley, Scott & Winter, 2016; Cooper, 2007). Fundamentally, the emphasis is upon the importance of the relationship within therapeutic work. Students also consider the socio-political context, intersectionality, and social justice in counselling psychology (Crenshaw, 1989; Chung & Bemak, 2012; Cutts, 2013; Davies, 2000; Lago, 2005; Winter, Guo, Wilk & Hanley 2016; Winter & Hanley, 2015).

In the second year of the programme students take part in further units of study including: (1) Cognitive Behavioural Counselling Psychology, (2) Researching Education and Therapy 2 (3) Pluralistic Counselling Psychology Theory and Practice, (4) Working in different modalities and across the lifespan. Within this, students consider the core competencies of cognitive behavioural therapy (Roth & Pilling, 2007). Students are encouraged to reflect upon therapeutic interventions and models of personality development in line with the original proponents of the approaches (e.g. Beck, 1991; Beck et al. 1987; Ellis, 1962) and more contemporary thinking (e.g. Ost, 2008; Trower et al, 2011). These models of change are considered in relation to those presented within the first year of the programme and the differences and similarities between them reflected upon in relation to the framework provided by the pluralistic approach.

Across the programme, students work in small groups in our Formulation Discussion unit for one semester and Reflexive Practice for another.

In the final year of the programme students complete their 50,000-word thesis. They also continue with weekly personal and professional development sessions.

Students are encouraged to learn through doing with regular skills activities and video assessed work. Complementing the structured theoretical input and practical sessions are substantial placement activities (a minimum of 450 hours working as a trainee counselling psychologist). These are delivered in a range of placement settings (between 2 and 5 over the course of the three-year programme). Students are required to complete therapeutic practice hours in a minimum of two modalities (e.g. individual therapy, group work, couple therapy, family therapy), with two different client groups (these may be defined and vary according to, for example, age group of the client or presenting issue), and in the two different therapeutic models taught on the programme (i.e. person-centred counselling psychology and cognitive-behaviour therapy-informed counselling psychology). They are well supported by appropriate placement providers. Students are required to attend supervision at a ratio of 1 hour per 8 client hours as a minimum.

In line with the scientist-practitioner model of training (Belar & Perry, 1992), emphasis is placed both on therapeutic practice and research (Hanley, Lennie & West, 2013). Students are required to complete a number of research papers in years one and two of the course, in addition to the 50,000-word thesis submitted at the end of the third year. The counselling psychology team are situated in the Manchester Institute of Education and therefore our research aligns with the research groups noted here: <https://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/education/research/groups/> and connects to the work of the core staff team.

The programme has a strong history of supporting trainee counselling psychologists on the course to publish their assignments and research papers. Students have published their work in a range of peer reviewed journals, and staff members also regularly provide opportunities for co-authoring book chapters or research papers (see the 'research' tab for information). We also encourage attendance at the annual BPS Division of Counselling Psychology conference, and

support students to attend and present at other national and international conferences. The University often provides funding for students to present at such conferences.

Personal development also plays a major part within the programme. Students are encouraged to develop as reflective practitioners and to regularly consider their own growth during the programme through reflexive assignments and groupwork. Additionally, students are required to undertake 40 hours of personal therapy. It is anticipated that these personal development activities help to consolidate students' integration of psychological understanding with personal learning, their understanding of how the scientist practitioner works alongside being a reflexive practitioner and in a 'way of being' that proves congruent with personal values and allows appropriate navigation of professional roles.

Assessments reflect on the philosophical, theoretical and practical components to the programme. These take the form of theoretical papers, case studies and practice reports related to placement activities. It also involves conducting a substantial research project which is presented as a final thesis. Each of these pieces should represent a contribution to the body of psychological knowledge regarding the discipline of counselling psychology.

Supporting students to develop professional profiles that can lead to employment is a central concern for the programme team. Graduates from the University of Manchester Doctorate in Counselling Psychology have gone on to secure employment in NHS, private, academic and third sector settings. Some students have secured paid positions during their time on the programme. Graduates are also invited to take part in a BPS accredited supervision programme which enables individuals to apply to join the Register of Applied Psychologist Supervisors.

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Current Staff Team

Programme Director:

[Dr Ishba Rehman](#)

Core Staff:

- [Dr Andre Etchebarne \(Placement Director\)](#)
- [Professor Erica Burman](#)
- Dr Sara Chaudhrey
- [Professor Terry Hanley](#)
- [Dr Laura Winter](#)

All members of staff are psychologists who are active in the fields of both research and clinical practice in counselling psychology.

In terms of clinical practice, their work is ongoing within NHS, private healthcare and third-sector settings.

Their training backgrounds include skills in humanistic therapies, cognitive-behaviour therapy, and group analytic approaches.

Staff members publish their research and write widely in the fields of counselling, counselling psychology, psychotherapy, applied psychology, and education, including exploring critical and methodological innovations between psychotherapy and education. For instance, Professor Terry Hanley and Dr Laura Winter have recently edited the fifth edition of the well-known SAGE Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy and authored the BPS and Routledge text Key Issues in Counselling Psychology.

In recent years they have been successful in receiving research funding to conduct work looking at topics such as how wellbeing is supported in educational settings, online therapeutic approaches, and the impact of austerity measures on the wellbeing and education of children and families.

The team also has excellent connections within the community of counselling psychology in the UK, as well as strong local links with voluntary sector organisations working around mental health provision for disadvantaged and minority populations.

Some examples include:

Dr Ishba Rehman is a HCPC registered, BPS Chartered Counselling Psychologist currently working within the NHS and third sector organisations for eating disorders and sexual trauma.

In the wider therapeutic fields, Professor Erica Burman is registered with the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapists (UKCP), via the Institute of Group Analysis, as a Group Analyst.

Dr Andre Etchebarne is an HCPC registered Counselling Psychologist specialising in chronic pain and long-term health conditions.

Professor Terry Hanley is a Fellow of the BPS and was the Research Lead for the Division of Counselling Psychology and Editor of Counselling Psychology Review.

Dr Laura Winter previously established the division's Social Justice Networking and Special Interest Group, which she led until 2018 and is Deputy Chair of the Training Committee in Counselling Psychology for the BPS.

We also have significant links with the local counselling psychology and counselling networks and inputs are often provided by specialists who are external to the University.

Programme Administrative contact:

Liam Grindell
Tel: 0161 275 1200 option 5
Email: hums.dcp@manchester.ac.uk

Programme Timetable

This full-time programme consists of three days contact with the University for the first two years (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday*). This reduces to one day within the third year (Friday). During this time students take part in lectures regarding therapeutic theory, skills work (including skills development work, case discussion and professional issues seminars) and research seminars. The remaining time each week is dedicated to practice placement work and academic assignments and research.

Teaching runs for two 10-week semesters, and outside of that time trainees continue to be engaged in placement and research work.

* Please note the teaching days for years one and two have previously rotated annually and these are the planned days for the 2026-27 academic year. Teaching days would be confirmed nearer the time for successful applicants as this is subject to change.

Teaching Methods

There is an emphasis on experiential learning across the programme. Professional input combines lectures with workshop-based activities. Inputs are facilitated by the core staff team, other University staff, and professionals with expertise in specific areas.

Throughout the programme students have an allocated course tutor, with whom they can arrange tutorials and meetings. Students are also supported by the wider programme staff team and their primary and secondary research supervisors. A significant amount of learning also occurs whilst on placement. Students are supported here by placement practice educators and placement practice supervisors.

Assessment

We utilise a range of assessment methods on the course. This includes assessment of:

Videoed classroom-based therapeutic skills work

Written theoretical assignments, research papers and process reports. Research poster presentations

Students' practice portfolios (we ask that targets of 75 hours, 250* hours and 450* hours of therapeutic practice are met across the three years of the programme)

50,000 word thesis in the final year of studies

Students also present their research work at a conference during their time on the course.

*Please note these are cumulative totals including the previous years.

Progression

In addition to successfully completing academic assignments, throughout Years 1 to 3, students must also satisfy progression panels related to their therapeutic practice and research. Only those successfully completing all components may progress to the next year of study.

Registration date

Annually in September

Duration

3 Years Full Time.

How to apply

Applications should be made online at www.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate.

It is essential to read the **how to apply** document found under the application and selection tab on the [Doctorate in Counselling Psychology page](#), before applying.

Email : hums.dcp@manchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 0161 275 1200 option 5.

Application information

The course is intended for people with an academic background in psychology who are interested in and committed to pursuing a professional career in counselling psychology. Students come from a range of professional backgrounds, e.g. teaching; social work; the medical professions, pastoral ministry and community voluntary organisations. We expect applicants to have substantive academic and professional experience on which to draw.

Entry Requirements:

Candidates must hold one or more of the following:

- Bachelor's degree in Psychology (minimum 2:1 or international equivalent)
- Masters in Psychology or related subject (minimum Merit or international equivalent) - this includes a Masters in Psychology (Conversion) (minimum Merit or international equivalent)

One of these qualifications must confer eligibility for Graduate Basis Chartered Membership with the British Psychological Society.

Additional entry requirements relate to initial counselling training and work experience.

- You will require a minimum level of **basic counselling skills training**. Normally, this criterion might be met by completing a Certificate in Counselling Skills which is typically a 90 - 100-hour part time course (over the course of one academic year).
- You also need to evidence **professional experience of using counselling skills**, for example gained through voluntary work or paid employment in supportive roles.
- Evidence you hold **Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership Status with the British Psychological Society** or your current qualification deems you eligible.
- Satisfactory **Criminal Convictions Check** (undertaken and paid for by the University)

Admission procedures are delivered in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity policies. We encourage applications from individuals from groups that are currently under-represented in applied psychology and higher education.

Application deadlines

Main application deadline - 19/01/2026

- Interview round 1 (Week commencing 02/03/2026) (Exact dates will be confirmed with candidates who are invited to interview)

Application deadline 2 - 16/03/2026

- Interview round 2 (Week commencing 13/04/2026) (Exact dates will be confirmed with candidates who are invited to interview)

Application details:

You are required to upload the following supporting documents to your application:

- A personal statement (maximum 3,000 words, with appropriate academic referencing). This should outline your reasons for wishing to study on the programme, your academic experience, counselling training and theoretical knowledge, and your personal readiness. Candidates are required to follow the guidance (in the 'how to apply' document) on this personal statement.
- A brief research proposal for your proposed thesis in counselling psychology (1500 words). This should include your proposed title, an overview of the rationale for the research, research question and proposed methodology (See the 'how to apply' document). You should include how it fits with the counselling psychology team at Manchester (see team details above), as well as highlighting connections to the Manchester Institute of Education research and scholarship groups. **Please note - DCounsPsych candidates are not required to approach a particular research supervisor ahead of applying, as supervisors are allocated during the first year of training.**
- Two references, one of which should be familiar with your academic work, on headed paper from the institution, signed, dated and stamped. Note that as part of your application you will be required to nominate two referees. Our automated system will contact your referees once your application has been submitted.
- Degree certificate(s) and transcript(s) for your bachelor's and master's degrees
- Evidence you hold Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership Status with the British Psychological Society or your current qualification deems you eligible.
- Evidence of your basic counselling skills training (such as training certificates)
- Evidence of your English language proficiency. In line with requirements of our accrediting bodies, this can only be evidenced via an IELTS.
- A detailed CV.
- A copy of the data pages of your passport.

Further instructions on supporting documents follow. Please note we can only consider applications that comply with these instructions. **Please also see the guidance on the 'how to apply' document provided on our website.**

1. Supporting statement

In a short statement please outline your academic, personal and professional readiness to undertake the doctorate programme. You should explain why you would like to be selected to study the course at Manchester. Please note the following important requirements for this statement:

- Include your name and date at the top
- A maximum of 3000 words (not including final reference list)
- Include academic source material and demonstrate appropriate academic referencing skills

Within the statement we expect you to explain the following areas:

- *Research knowledge and experience*

Please tell us about your research background – the sorts of projects you have been involved in and your methodological expertise, as how your proposed research study fits with the research conducted by the counselling psychology team at University of Manchester. You should also reflect on your strengths and areas for development in terms of research.

- *Counselling training experience*

Tell us about your previous counselling skills training: what was involved in the course(s) you completed and how this developed your skill set (e.g. did you engage in practice training and assessment or was it largely theoretical); and specifically how it provides you with the necessary basic counselling skills to commence doctoral study and practice. Please also explain the strengths and areas for development in terms of your therapeutic training to date.

Where possible please tell us how many hours of study were involved (e.g. it was a part time course over XX months, XX hours per week).

- *Professional experience of client work in mental health and emotional wellbeing settings*

Please include a brief description of the relevant professional practice work you have undertaken. This may be in a voluntary or paid capacity where you have been supporting client emotional wellbeing or providing counselling services, or other work which allowed you to develop your counselling skills.

Please let us know how many hours or years of counselling practice you have completed (excluding classroom exercises) and how much of your counselling work has been as part of a team or sole working. Please also explain the strengths and areas for development in your therapeutic practice to date.

- *Knowledge and understanding of counselling and psychology theoretical models*

Briefly describe the theoretical models of counselling psychology you have had exposure to (referencing appropriate source material) and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the approach(es).

- *Personal readiness and reflexivity*

Briefly tell us why you are personally ready to undertake the doctorate programme and reflect on how your experiences to date demonstrate this. It is useful in relation to this to think about what you have learned about yourself from prior experiences and how you can apply this learning going forward in your training.

2. Brief research proposal

We would like you to submit a brief (maximum 1500 words) research proposal for your proposed thesis in counselling psychology. This should include your proposed title, an overview of the rationale for the research, research question and proposed methodology. You should include how it fits with the counselling psychology team at Manchester, as well as highlighting connections to the Manchester Institute of Education research and scholarship groups. See for information the Manchester Institute of Education research themes here:

<https://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/education/research/groups/>

Please ensure you clearly connect the proposal to members of staff who work on the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology team.

The research proposal forms an important part of our assessment criteria, and in particular decisions about SEED scholarship eligibility (alongside other elements of our assessment including that relating to professional practice). Please remember to include both a brief literature review and an outline methodology for your proposed research.

Please see advice on constructing a research proposal here:

<https://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/applying/writing-your-proposal/>

3. Two references

One of these should be familiar with your academic work and the second from a professional setting. Our system will automatically contact your nominated referees once your application has been formally submitted.

4. Copies of certificates and transcripts for all previous degree qualifications; and copies of certificates from all counselling training courses

Please ensure that you include any certificates from counselling training in addition to academic qualifications.

5. Evidence of your basic counselling skills training and professional experience of using such skills.

Evidence of training must take the form of certificates and/or transcripts evidencing prior training and qualifications (see point 4 above).

Your practice experience to date must be described in your personal statement and on your CV.

6. Evidence of Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership of the British Psychological Society

To meet this requirement please include in your application a copy of your membership letter or a document including the web address on the BPS website where we can find evidence that your degree meets the criteria. Those with international degrees must approach the BPS personally to check the compatibility of their degree.

7. CV

This should be up-to-date and professionally presented with your most recent experience first. It should detail your relevant educational and work experience.

8. A copy of the data pages of your passport

9. Evidence of your English Language proficiency if applicable: IELTS certificate minimum overall score 7.5 with 7 in each section

Interview process

The interview process consists of the following:

- All candidates are individually interviewed. Questions focus on training and experience in counselling and therapeutic skills; theoretical knowledge and understanding; research experiences and ideas; and personal readiness to complete the training. Candidates are given a score for each of these areas as part of the interview process.
- All candidates conduct a therapeutic skills activity to demonstrate their basic counselling skills. This is assessed in relation to time management, curiosity, empathy, acceptance, and other core counselling skills.
- All candidates deliver a presentation to staff members. The topic will be provided with the invitation to interview. This will be assessed in relation to time management, engagement with source material, criticality, structure, and delivery.

We run face to face interview days where possible but are able to offer some online interviews were required (for example for international applicants). Details will be provided when you are invited to interview.

Course Fees and Funding

Please see the University website for details of fees and funding.