

COURSE
HANDBOOK



Level 2 + 3 Fast Track course



Welcome to the Astranti Connect Counselling Hub



We would like to extend a warm welcome to all Learners enrolling on our courses.

Whether you are an experienced Learner or are returning to study after a break, our aim is to support you in the successful achievement of the qualification you have chosen.

We are a specialist counselling training organisation and bring a decade of experience in the design and delivery of counselling courses to our work. We run courses from various locations and online.

Everyone involved in the work of Connect hopes that your time with us will be rewarding and enjoyable and, most importantly, that it will help you to achieve your learning goals. We are all practising counsellors and therapists, as well as experienced teachers and university lecturers. We bring our passion for teaching and counselling to the groups that we teach.





This handbook provides information on the course you have chosen and contains important information about what is required from us and from the awarding body, which in your case is the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB). CPCAB courses are nationally accredited and offer a unique pathway to the Open University foundation degree in counselling. All courses are approved by Ofqual and accredited by the qualifications and credit framework (QCF).

We actively promote the ethical framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

It may be that your question isn't answered within this course document, and if this is the case, do feel free to ask your course tutors, who will be delighted to answer any questions you may have.

Level 2 + 3 Fast Track Course



The Level 2 +3 Fast-Track Course provides you with the opportunity to study the Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills and Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Studies back-to-back, allowing you to gain both qualifications in less than six months.

It is a part-time course and is intended for candidates who:

- Want to take the first steps towards training to become a counsellor (the Level 2 + 3 combined course prepares you for the Level 4 qualification - the final step to becoming a qualified counsellor).
- Want to become competent in the use of counselling skills to help others – either in a voluntary or an employed situation.
- Want to learn more about counselling theory and agency work.

No previous experience or training is required to enrol on this course. You do need to be over 18 years old, however.

We do not recommend that you begin this course if you are currently struggling with strong emotional difficulties that you are finding hard to manage. For example, recovery from substance addiction or a severe and enduring mental health problem. Whilst we can all experience depression, stress and anxiety from time to time, these may not impact your

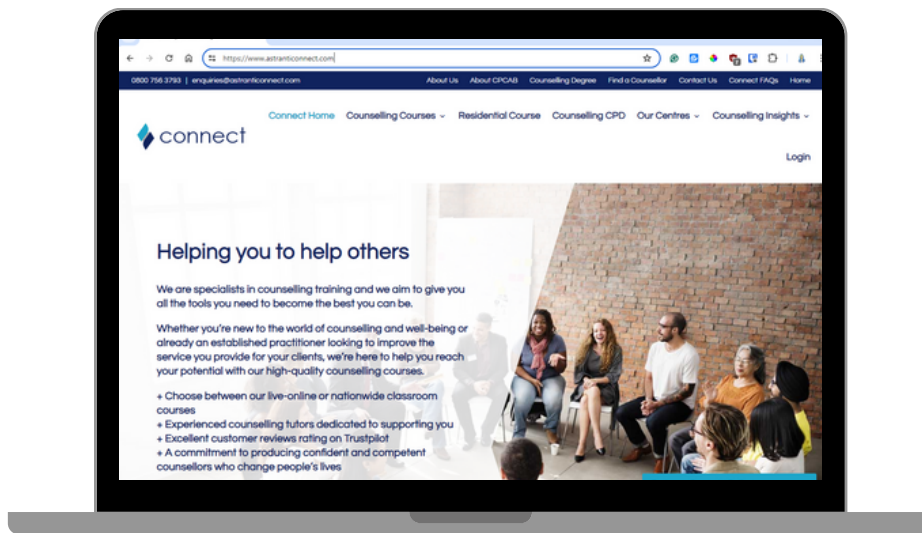




ability to engage with the course in the same way that severe emotional difficulties, such as the ones mentioned above, might. It may be that we suggest you have personal counselling before taking the course.

You will need to be able to read, have sufficient writing skills and be able to use a computer to meet the written work requirements for the course. You will need access to a computer and printer.

The programme for this course includes theory lectures, demonstrations, group work, skills practices, tutor and peer-assessed observations of practice, a weekly learning journal, self-review and tutorials. You will need to allow around 2-3 hours per week for homework. The course is made up of seven learning outcomes, which are based on the seven processes of the CPCAB model. Successful completion of the course will give you the option to progress to the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling.



Online courses

If you are taking this course online, you will need to make sure you have access to a good broadband signal and be able to work from a place that is private and where you will be uninterrupted during the course sessions. This is essential for privacy and for your own and others' confidentiality.

Key topics that will be covered:

Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills

The Level 2 Certificate equips you with a comprehensive set of counselling skills, including active listening, working with silence, verbal communication tools, body and non-verbal communication and asking appropriate questions.



You will be introduced to the fundamentals of person-centred counselling, a client-focused approach that places great emphasis on empathy and the therapeutic relationship with the client.

You will learn about the importance of working within an ethical framework, setting appropriate boundaries and recognising the limits of your own abilities to ensure both your safety and that of the person you are helping. The course will broaden your perspective by teaching you about difference and diversity, encouraging you to confront and understand your own personal prejudices and biases.

In addition, you'll discover how to put aside your personal feelings to focus solely on the needs of the person you're helping. Throughout the course, self-awareness is a key theme, offering you tools to deepen your understanding of yourself, your relationships and your journey through life.

You will have the opportunity to undertake regular skills practise with your peers, and you will be encouraged to identify and deal with key personal development points in order to develop your skills and confidence in helping others

Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills

The Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills offers a more advanced exploration into the world of counselling, setting the stage for you to work as a trainee counsellor at Level 4. You'll gain insights into different agency settings and how these will impact your role as a trainee counsellor. You'll learn about adhering to an agency's policies and procedures, as well as key legislation that affects both agencies and counsellors.

Ethical considerations continue to be a focal point, covering not only the importance of grounding your work within an ethical framework but also how to navigate ethical dilemmas. You will build on your practical skills from Level 2 as you explore contracting with clients, personal and professional boundaries, and client assessment and referral. There is a strong emphasis on a user-centred approach, ensuring the therapy is tailored to the needs of the client.

Building on the diversity and difference concepts introduced at Level 2, the course takes a deeper dive into understanding diversity and difference within the class and society at large. Mental health is another key area, introducing you to common mental health issues and their societal context, as well as the features of positive mental health.

Beyond person-centred counselling, you will be introduced to two further major theoretical approaches in counselling: psychodynamic therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. You will have the opportunity to apply each of these theories to yourself to understand your personality and self, relationships and personal history in a new light. You will also have the chance to apply some of the key tools and techniques from these theoretical approaches in practice sessions, providing you with a taster of different types of counselling.

Throughout the course, you will again have the opportunity to undertake regular skills practise with your peers to develop your skills and confidence. Later in the course, you will also be expected to take part in group supervision sessions, where you can discuss your 'client' work and receive support from your peers.



Progression Opportunities

We will help you from the time you take the first step until you have reached your goal.

IfAt Connect, we offer a complete progression route from Level 2 through to Level 6. All of these courses are accredited by The Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB). Full details of its progression route are available on its website. The progression route available through ourselves is outlined below.



Open University Foundation Degree

Learners who complete a CPCAB Level 4 course can go on to do a CPCAB Level 5 and some open university modules in order to obtain a foundation degree. More information about this can be found on both our website and the CPCAB website.

What to Expect

A typical course session will begin with a check-in. This is a chance to share with the group something about how you are feeling and what is going on for you. It is a good way of “arriving” and an opportunity to practise empathic listening and to get to know more about the other members of the group.

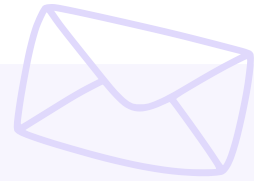
This is followed by the delivery of some theory or the introduction of a new concept, and small group work, pair work and skills practices provide you with the opportunity to practise the new ideas you have learnt.

Attendance

You will need to attend 85% of the course sessions in order to complete the training successfully.

There may be times when there are exceptional circumstances which make this difficult, and such situations will be discussed with you personally. Please refer to our attendance policy for further details.





Support

At this level of training, we promote autonomous learning, and so if you would like a tutorial to discuss any aspect of the course, you can request one. They will be available at the start and the end of the session. If you need to talk to a tutor, please let one of them know and arrange an appointment. Likewise, if we need to talk to you about an aspect of the course that cannot be addressed in the group, we will invite you to a tutorial. Formal one-to-one tutorials will be offered as part of your course from time-to-time.

As a small organisation, we do not currently offer learning support but can signpost you to places where you could access this if required. Your application form will ask for details of any special needs you may have, and we will discuss these with you upon receipt to ensure we can accommodate your requirements.



Online Learning Materials

You will also have access to our accompanying online video course and course workbooks, which means you will be able to revisit the key concepts taught in class or catch up if you ever miss a session. You will be provided with a login to this course library at the beginning of the course.





Course dates, deadlines, times and important dates

A list of all course dates, times, deadlines for course work and details of the external assessment will be provided separately. Please make a note of important dates and times, such as deadlines and external assessment dates, as missing these could compromise your successful qualification from the course. Failure to meet a deadline without an extension agreed via an extenuating circumstances application may mean you do not pass the internal assessment of the course.



Policies and procedures

Connect and its associates are committed to working ethically and in line with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ethical framework.

We have a range of policies and procedures which will be available to you via our website once you have enrolled. These policies are designed to keep you safe, offer you the best opportunities, and to ensure that the learning environment is ethical, fair and adheres to legal requirements. If you would like any information on any of our policies or procedures before you enrol, please ask, and we will be delighted to provide you with a copy. Upon registration, you will be given access to the students area of the website, where these documents can easily be accessed.

Internal moderation and verification



Internal Moderation

To ensure that the assessment of your coursework is fair and consistent, a sample from each group will be examined by an internal moderator. The moderator will check the marking of coursework, such as assignments and learning reviews, and provide feedback to the teaching team on the nature, quality and consistency of their assessments. You will need to make your portfolio available for the moderator's visit.

Internal Verification

Verification is the 'BIG' picture, an overview of the whole process of developing, delivering, assessing and moderating units/qualifications.

Our internal verifier will monitor that our programmes are properly in place and are operating effectively.



Assessment

The course is assessed both internally and externally. CPCAB has set a list of criteria for the course that you must meet in order to qualify. You will need to write reflectively on your learning in each session using the provided worksheets and templates, write assignments and be observed using practical skills by both tutors and peers. Together, these pieces of work provide you with the opportunity to meet the criteria for the course.



Internal assessment

We will assess the internal part of your work via your reflective writing, assignments and observation. You will be given feedback by tutors and peers as the course progresses, and this will help you to meet the criteria for the course as well as give you opportunities for developing your skills and understanding.

External assessment

You will sit an external exam as part of the course, and this will take the form of an open book assessment, which means you complete the exam paper at home and can access textbooks, internet sites, etc., to help you complete it.

You need to pass both the internal and external assessments to obtain the qualification.

Reading List



You may find the following title useful while studying this course. There is no requirement to read any books as the course material will provide you with all you need to know, but some people like to do a little background reading in addition to the handouts and materials used in the course.

Counselling Skills and Studies by Dykes, Kopp and Postings (recommended) - Available from SAGE with a 30% using the code UKCPCAB30.

