

# **COSCA Certificate in Counselling Skills**

## **Course Information**

### Qualification gained

The Certificate in Counselling Skills was developed in 1994 by The Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies (COSCA). COSCA is the professional accrediting organisation for Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland and has become established as one of the main Certificate level counselling trainings in Scotland.

Participants will receive a Flourish certificate for each successfully completed module and will be registered with COSCA after successful completion of each module.

COSCA will provide a Certificate in Counselling Skills to students who complete all four modules.

### SCQF Levels and Credits

The COSCA Certificate has been awarded 40 SCQF credits at Level 8 by the University of the West of Scotland.

### Entry requirements

There are no formal entry requirements. Some applicants may have done some counselling training at Introductory level. This is not essential but can be a useful preparation for the Certificate. Applicants are not required to already be working in a helping role. However, students tend to find that their experience of the course is very much enhanced by having a context outside the course to develop their practice and learning still further. Selection for the Certificate is based on an application form that includes a personal statement, followed by a groupwork selection session.

### What the course offers

The Certificate offers a solid training in using a counselling approach. It provides a theoretical and practice framework for people in a broad range of helping roles. The course provides the opportunity to further develop the ability to establish a safe, trusting helping relationship with the other person. The trainee will complete the course a competent Reflective Practitioner and a skilled listener.

There is a strong emphasis on the student becoming a Reflective Practitioner. Students are asked to reflect on their own developmental processes and experiences, and how these have shaped the person that they are now in relationship with others. Students are asked to develop

the capacity to be aware of ways their own qualities, values, attitudes and personality traits affect how they practise within the helping relationship. Most students become proficient at monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness in the helping role.

The learning environment of the Certificate is also a rich source of all sorts of other – often unexpected - possibilities for professional and personal development.

## The Theoretical and Practice Framework

COSCA does not identify the theoretical and practice framework of the course with a particular counselling model. The current staff team are all experienced Person-Centred counsellors, supervisors and trainers, and the Person-Centred approach influences the way in which the course is delivered and facilitated.

## Career progression

Over the last two decades the Certificate has become increasingly recognized as a valuable and relevant training by employers in the Statutory, Third and Private sectors.

Course students come from a wide range of life and work backgrounds. Many are working in a helping capacity and use the course to consolidate and develop their current work practice, and to further their personal development. Participating on the Certificate has often led to students changing roles within their organisation or finding other work with more of an emphasis on using a counselling approach.

A number of applicants have been working in 'non-helping' roles or taking a break from paid work to bring up children or not working because of illness or unemployment and use the course as a means to further explore an interest in counselling.

The course has also been structured and designed as a stepping-stone to a formal counselling training at Diploma level and is recognised by most training institutions as a pre-Diploma training. However, Edinburgh University does not accept the COSCA Certificate for entry on to their Diploma course. It requires Diploma applicants to have done Edinburgh University's own Certificate.

## Course Structure

The certificate consists of four consecutive developmental modules. It is a part-time course of three hours per week, either from 9.15 am to 12.15pm or 5.30pm to 8.30pm.

The course lasts for fifteen months with breaks between Modules in line with CEC school holidays. There will be an intake in September and possibly a further intake in January subject to demand.

Students also attend at least one individual tutorial per module with the tutor, usually in the hour before or after the weekly session. Students will also be required to do some study, reading, journal writing and written assignment out with the weekly course sessions.

## Attendance

COSCA expect students to attend each weekly session. For the student to be able to successfully complete a module, they must not miss attending more than two sessions per module. However, extenuating circumstances will be given careful consideration.

## Cost

The fee for courses starting in August 2024 is £375 per module. The fee is paid or part paid just before the beginning of each module to secure the place, and it may be possible to pay the module fee in three instalments. The cost includes the COSCA course handbook and registration with COSCA for each module.

## Funding

At the moment, as Flourish is a new organisation it doesn't yet qualify for SDS's Individual Training account. A provider has to have been operating for two years for its courses to become eligible for ITA Registration.

Again, as a new CIC, Flourish has not yet sourced funding for financial help for students but will be pursuing this.

## Contact information

Apply online for the Flourish COSCA Certificate at

[www.flourishcounsellingtraining.com](http://www.flourishcounsellingtraining.com)

or email at

[flourishcounsellingtraining@gmail.com](mailto:flourishcounsellingtraining@gmail.com)



## **Learning and teaching methods**

The material of the course is learned in an experiential way. This means that the student learns by working together with peers and the tutor in the whole course group or by breaking off into smaller groups to do various exercises or listening practice.

The course is a discussion-based, interactive and practical way to learn, with less of an academic emphasis. On the Certificate course, the tutor works as a facilitator, introducing ideas and some theoretical input and along with the students helps create an environment in which discussion and dialogue can take place. The quality of the course group relationship is therefore central to each student's individual learning process and so time is spent discussing how the group is functioning and developing. As well as helping sustain the learning environment these discussions are also another valuable source of learning.

Learning in this way can be exciting and challenging. It requires students to actively enter into discussions with their own experiences, knowledge and ideas. This way of learning in relationship with other people can also be quite emotionally demanding and students often discover all sorts of things about themselves of which they were previously unaware. This learning is often very valuable and it can also be a difficult process to go through.

Colleagues on the course and the tutor will offer some support to students but it is also important that students have the ability to access extra support should they need it. Tutors will provide information about support and counselling services.

### **Assessment Process**

One aspect of the Certificate that is often new to students is the assessment process. From the very beginning of the course students are asked to engage in a continuous process of self-assessment. Students carry out this process in conjunction with the course group and the tutor. There are a number of instruments that students use to help monitor and evaluate their development as they go along, and to come to an assessment decision at the end of each module:

- The COSCA handbook. This contains the Aims and Objectives of the course as well as the Competences, Learning Outcomes and Performance Criteria that the student is meant to achieve.
- The Journal. Students are required to keep a personal reflective journal of their experience of the course. The journal is private and

not seen by anyone else. Students use the journal to record, explore and learn from what they are doing on the course and to think about how they are progressing in relation to the Competences, Learning outcomes and Performance Criteria.

- Listening skills practice sessions. These take place regularly and students use them to develop their listening ability with help from two colleagues who will act as Observer and Speaker. After students have been in the listening role, they will each be helped to reflect on their listening by the others and will be given feedback that they can then use to evaluate their listening. The tutor will also sit in and observe at times and give each student feedback.
- Video work. This happens once during each module and gives students the opportunity to 'stand outside' themselves and notice the areas in which their listening is strong, and also those areas they need to develop.
- Written Assignments. There is one written assignment towards the end of each module. These offer students the opportunity to pull together their learning during that module. In writing it they will identify both the areas in which they are competent, as well as those they need to take on and develop further. With reference to the Competences and Performance Criteria each student will decide whether or not they have successfully completed the module. In Modules Two, Three and Four the student receives written feedback from the tutor on their assignment, that they can then incorporate into their assessment decision.
- Tutorials. During each module students have at least one individual meeting with the tutor. The student can use the tutorials to reflect on their development and to work on areas that are troubling them. The tutorial is another opportunity for students to get feedback from the tutor.
- Groupwork. There are many other small and large group exercises and discussions that also provide the students with the opportunity to receive and work with feedback from colleagues. This ongoing feedback is an important source of information that the students can use to gauge their self-development.

So, these are the elements that students can draw on to help them continually monitor and assess their progress on the course. At the end of

each module in conjunction with the tutor and peers the student decides whether or not they have successfully completed the module. For most students, to have both the responsibility for continually monitoring and evaluating their development against the course criteria is an entirely new experience and one that takes a bit of getting used to. It is also an integral part of the learning on the course, and the tutors will support students to take on that responsibility and will affirm or at times challenge their evaluations.

## **Course Content**

There are four core elements that run through the whole Certificate – Theory, Skills, Self-Development and Ethics.

### **Module One**

The theoretical component in this module is an exploration of the attitudes and skills essential to establishing a safe and supportive helping relationship. The theoretical concepts are learned by tutor input and discussion, along with regular listening skills sessions in small groups where students can practise and develop their ability to embody these concepts.

The ethical strand to the knowledge base for this Module is an exploration of the importance of Confidentiality when using a counselling approach.

The self-development process will arise mainly from students working experientially in the different group contexts on the course, and then reflecting on their experience in between sessions, with some of this reflection being done in the journal. There is also one session where students do various exercises, including a guided visualization, to encourage self-reflection.

### **Module Two**

The theoretical emphasis of Module Two is on Process. Students will look at their own life experiences and the helping relationship in relation to two theoretical frameworks of process – Beginnings, Middles and Endings, and Transition Theory. The other theoretical input is on Attachment and Loss theory. As with all theoretical inputs, students are also asked to consider their own early experiences of attachment, separation and loss and the impact of those experiences throughout their life.

The skills element of Module Two is to some extent linked to these theoretical frameworks. The main emphasis in skills work is for students to build on and develop their competence as a listener in the weekly practice sessions.

There are two Self-Awareness units. One is an exploration of Sexuality, and the other an examination of Motives and Values. Students also consider the Boundaries that are in place in a helping relationship, again drawing on personal experience. The ethical focus in this module is on working with Difference and Diversity.

### **Module Three**

In Modules Three and Four the theoretical element is a consideration of the key principles of five different counselling models. Students are encouraged to reflect on aspects of the different models that are meaningful to them, and to consider with which model - if any - they have an affinity.

Students will be asked to link up with colleagues in a study group to research one approach to then present their findings and learning to the rest of the group.

In Module Three the three counselling models studied will be Person-centred, Cognitive Behavioural, and Psychodynamic.

As with the previous two modules there will be regular listening skills work in which students will be helped to further develop their listening competence. The written assignment for Module Three is an analysis of a videotape of listening practice that the student makes in a listening skills session.

There is a slightly greater emphasis on Self-Awareness written into the course content in Module Three. Students are asked to look at significant earlier life experiences and relationships, and the impact of those on their development. There is also a session in which the students are encouraged to explore their relationship with Spirituality.

The ethical focus is on Power. Students draw on their own experience of power as a way into reflecting on the importance of the helper having a keen awareness of the structural power inherent in the helping role and a sensitivity towards the power dynamic in the helping relationship.

### **Module Four**

In Module Four the study groups will research and present the core theoretical and practice principles of Gestalt Therapy and Transactional Analysis. Having researched and presented all five models there will be discussion of the similarities and differences in theory and practice across the five approaches. As part of the written assignment students will explore the aspects of the different models that had particular resonance and meaning for them.

The listening skills work in Module Four is structured differently. Towards the end of the module, for four consecutive weeks students spend the whole session in the same small group, listening to the same Speaker for up to half an hour each week. This structure gives the student the opportunity to develop an ongoing listening relationship with the Speaker and to experience a greater immersion in the listening relationship and process than in previous modules.

In this module the ethical issues that are examined are Boundaries and Responsibilities including the importance of the helper being in regular and effective supervision. The 'named' Self-Awareness unit is on Stress, and students are also encouraged to think of their own experiences of being excluded as a way of leading in to considering the effects of Social Exclusion on people they may be helping.

