



Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy (COSCA validated, credit rated by SQA at SCQF Level 11 with 88 SCQF credit points)

FAQ's

Starting the course

What is the Diploma course equivalent to academically?

The level of the qualification shows how demanding it is. There are 12 SCQF levels, with level 1 being the least demanding (the introductory level of qualification) and level 12 the most demanding (for example, PhDs).

Our custom award has undergone SCQF levelling by SQA and has been awarded Level 11, and we maintain sole ownership of it. This equates to an MSc and qualifies for Band B in SCoPEd.

What does the course consist of in terms of learning hours?

The course hours are made up of:	Hours
• Taught hours	498**
• Supervised counselling practice (placement) [Your placement may require you to commit to certain timeframe (ie a year) in which you may exceed the 100hrs stated. At least 80hours must be with clients aged 16+ and 20hrs with clients aged 10-15]	100
• 121 clinical supervisions at a ratio of 1:6 [You will be required to engage in 1hr individual supervision for every six hours of client work you complete, as a counsellor in training as per COSCA guidelines]	22



- Private study and assignment preparation

400+

****The 498 teaching hours are inclusive of teaching weekends and personal tutor time.**

It's important to note that we can only offer an approximate estimate for private study and assignment preparation, as each learner's approach may vary.

What makes your Diploma different?

Our Diploma equips you to engage with persons aged 10 and above, **spanning children, young people, and adults.** Rooted in Person-Centred, Psychodynamic, and Cognitive Behavioural theories, our course underscores the importance of the therapeutic relationship, self-awareness, client empowerment, and an understanding of social and cultural contexts as fundamental to therapeutic change.

The course aims to equip students with the requisite skills and knowledge for roles as counsellors or psychotherapists across various sectors, including voluntary, statutory, and private.

Our Diploma also includes online learning in Safeguarding Level 2

The Awarding body for our course is SQA and COSCA

We will be COSCA qualified on completion of the Diploma – is this the organisation we have to be a member of?

You must be a member of COSCA during the course. However, if you chose to seek membership with the BACP you would only have to do a conversion certificate of proficiency test online which is multiple choice and you will then be eligible for BACP membership.

What is the difference between registration and accreditation?

Accreditation is an additional membership level. Accredited membership is the next step for registered members who have been in practice for at least three years. You need to meet COSCA or BACP eligibility requirements and complete a detailed application and assessment process to become accredited.

Is there support in between the weekends not in class?

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You will be offered a 1-2-1 with your personal tutor twice per academic year and these meetings can take place face to face or online.

Will we practice telephone/walk and talk counselling?

We will not practice telephone / walk and talk counselling however we will discuss it as part of the course. (Unfortunately. methods such as walk and talk and telephone counselling come with far too many complications to be considered (e.g. risk).

ScoPEd

The SCoPEd framework is a ground-breaking shared standards framework, developed by six Professional Standards Authority accredited bodies, including BACP, which represent over 75,000 counsellors and psychotherapists.

[SCoPEd: Enabling a credible, diverse and thriving profession - YouTube](#)

I am working my way through the COSCA list of approved training courses and some do attract SAAS funding, why is it that your course does not?

SAAS funding doesn't offer postgraduate funding for Graduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates or PhDs. [[saas-postgrad-quick-guide.pdf](#)]



Are there any additional costs?

Apart from your course fee costs please be aware that you will have additional costs to take into account. These will include supervision, personal therapy/personal development, books and resources, membership fees for COSCA and personal liability insurance.

We have an approved list of clinical supervisors for our students, and they will typically charge between £40-£50 per supervision. Your ratio of client hours to supervision is 1 hour to every 6 sessions. Personal therapy can cost from £40+ for each session with a minimum of 16 hours personal therapy suggested. Currently, the COSCA student membership is £10 (1st Year of training) and then £28.00 (2024 price). [[Student CURRENT July 23 Fillable.pdf \(cosca.org.uk\)](#)]

If for any reason you are absent and miss a significant proportion of any module which results in you having to retake this module of then please note that there will be an additional cost to take into account such as delivery of training, group supervision costs (not including individual supervision which is separate), 1-2-1's with personal tutor, marking of assignments and any associated administrative costs.

If you complete all your academic hours but do not complete your 100 clinical hours by the end of Year 2 there will be an additional cost of £65 per month to administer your clinical practice which includes personal tutor time, supervisory checks, placement hours and recording, monitoring and administration.

There will be an additional cost if you choose to attend your Graduation Ceremony. These will be reviewed annually.

A 10-month payment plan is available for our course fees to help spread the cost over each year [more information on this can be found on our website].



How does your application process work?

We highly recommend applying early as our available spots are limited to 26. It's important to note that completion of the COSCA Certificate in Counselling Skills is a prerequisite for enrolment in our Diploma Course.

Our interview process consists of several stages, starting with your application followed by an academic assignment (you'll be required to submit a brief essay of approximately 1,500 words) and if successful you will be invited to interview. The essay serves as an opportunity to showcase your academic writing skills, ability for self-directed learning, and understanding of Harvard Referencing.

Upon receiving the essay assignment, you'll have a four-week period to complete and return it to us. All components of the application process are thoroughly assessed, and we will inform you of the outcome once evaluations are complete.

What are your entry requirements?

All applicants are considered based on suitability for the programme, irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

Entry requirements will be that applicants will normally:

- Have undertaken the COSCA certificate in Counselling Skills (SCQF Level 8) or equivalent.
- Have experience of working with people in a field relevant to counselling, and a readiness to engage effectively in a counselling placement.
- Have the capacity to work independently to ensure that they can achieve the standards necessary to complete the course satisfactorily.
- Have a willingness to engage actively in all aspects of the course, including their own personal therapy.
- It is desirable that potential students will be educated to Degree level in a related field

Applicants who have prior/experiential learning can apply to be considered under our APL (accredited prior learning) procedure and will be invited to submit evidence.



Further information

Graduates of the 2-year Diploma course will have satisfied the training requirements necessary for individual accreditation with COSCA. At this point students will be qualified counsellors working towards accreditation.

For more information of accreditation, please see the COSCA website

<http://www.cosca.org.uk/our-services/accreditation/counsellor-accreditation>

Commitment to Net Zero: Reducing Print Materials

In alignment with our commitment to achieving a net zero policy, we are minimising our environmental footprint by significantly reducing the printing of materials and handbooks. Print copies will only be provided when absolutely necessary and in cases of extenuating circumstances. We encourage all students and staff to utilise digital resources whenever possible to support our sustainability goals.



Placement

How soon should I have my placement in place?

Ideally, we would be looking for you to start your placement asap. We would be looking for you to start your placement after Unit 2 of Module 1. You will meet with your supervisor and course tutors who will discuss with you your feelings around your fitness to practice and anything you think might be a blocker for you.

The course tutors and supervisor will support you, to be able to be fit to practice should you have any reservations. The training manager will sign off any relevant paperwork.

What is fitness to practice?

Your fitness to practice is to determine whether you are in a good place to begin your placement. This will be based on:

- Completion of COSCA Certificate in Counselling Skills
- Attended a supervision session
- Completed initial observed skills practice session
- Suitable for PVG check
- Have student membership of COSCA in place
- Have indemnity insurance in place

Successful completion of Fitness to Practice will mean that you have achieved one of the requirements to begin working with clients aged 16 plus within an approved placement setting. Fitness to Practice with Children and Young People will be assessed on the completion of 80 hours counselling practice with adults.



Placement Hours

Having consulted with some placement providers, we have updated our requirements for placement hours in order to support you as much as possible as you develop within your placement.

0-20 client hours achieved - no more than 2 clients

21-49 client hours achieved - no more than 3 clients

50-100 client hours achieved - no more than 4 clients (on completion of 80 practice hours with adults, students will be considered for fitness to practice with Children and Young People. This process will include feedback from course tutors and counselling supervisor).

The above is a minimum guide. It is not an automatic development. Your competence to take on a number of clients will be assessed and approved by your Diploma supervisor. It is your responsibility to adhere to the decision of your supervisor.

Supervision

In securing a placement, some of you may be able to have group supervision as part of the support. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to develop as a counsellor. We recognise how valuable group supervision is and this is why we offer it as part of your weekend learning.

Group supervision does not take the place of individual one-to-one supervision. The rules for the Diploma make this clear. You must source your individual supervisor from the Diploma list you have been provided with. S.M.I.L.E. Training has interviewed the supervisors on the list and they are approved supervisors for the course.



Beginning placement

Before meeting any client, you must be able to demonstrate you have:

- Fitness to Practice confirmation from the course
- Appropriate insurance
- Appropriate membership of a governing body
- Engaged a supervisor from the Diploma approved list
- You, your placement provider, your supervisor from the approved Diploma list and a representative from the Diploma have signed the four-way agreement

What if I don't have a placement ready to start on the allocated start date?

This will not affect your place on the course. Most people doing diplomas don't have a placement ready to start exactly on their start date.

You can complete your hours up to an additional 3 years time (5 years in total). This is outlined in your course handbook. However, please note that if more time is required this will impact on your graduation date.



What should my placement provider have in place for me to be able to start my placement with them?

- ✓ They should have a dedicated counselling space for you to practice
- ✓ They should have the appropriate insurance as an organisation
- ✓ They should have the correct policies and processes in place for therapeutic support such as safeguarding, confidentiality policy, suicide policy etc.
- ✓ You are required to carry out recordings of clinical work as per the recording agreement. The organisation must agree to this as a process for your learning and assessment. We are aware some clients may not wish to be recorded, your recording hours must be over 60% / hours.
- ✓ The placement should have someone in place who will be able to offer your support and guidance from a clinical standpoint – for example, a counsellor (or other suitable professional who is senior, a clinical team leader or service manager. It should not be a general member of staff or other volunteer or counsellor in training. The person should have knowledge and understanding of the work being carried out.
- ✓ You can never be left alone to practice, there must always be someone there to provide you support should you need it either mid session or post session reflection if needed.

What are the expected placement hours initially?

- ✓ We recommend that for at least the first 2 months you only work with 2 clients per week maximum. This is for a variety of reasons:
- ✓ To give you time to build your confidence around you practice and find your space in the room.
- ✓ To enable you to complete any onboarding that your placement has that requires you to be able to practice such as: PVG check, safeguarding training, lone working training, getting used to their CRM systems and get up to date with all their policies and procedures.
- ✓ Also, to ensure that this is the right organisation for you. You may start somewhere that may seem right but then doesn't fit your ethics, morals or just logistically doesn't work. Having a reduced number of clients allows you the space to transition without you having to end relationships with clients that may be damaging.
- ✓ After 2 months and if you, your organisation, and the course supervisor are confident then you can then increase your hours to 3 or 4 over the week.

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What else do I need to have in place for beginning my placements?

To begin your placement, **you must have the following in place** before Unit 2 Module 1:

- ✓ COSCA Membership
- ✓ Personal Clinical Insurance
- ✓ PVG completed by your placement

Remember COSCA panels only sit every 8 weeks to consider applications so not applying for membership may delay placement start date.

Can I have multiple placements?

Yes, you can have multiple placements, but we would recommend no more than 2 otherwise it can be difficult to track where one organisations policy begin, and the others ends. Don't make work for yourself when you don't need too.

If you are in a placement that specialises in a specific demographic such as women's aid, LGBT Youth Scotland etc. You must ensure that you have a placement that provides you with the experience of working with a wide range of mild to moderate client presentations.

Remember there is a lot of time to find the field you want to specialise in. This is about getting as much experience as possible during your training to be supported with multiple presenting issues with tutors, supervisors, and peers. Also be mindful of your need to work with at least 20 hours of CYP counselling practice. You ideally want to find somewhere that will allow this opportunity also.



Can I have a placement with someone who is in private practice (PP)?

You cannot have a placement where you are working with someone else in a private practice of one. This creates too many unknown issues such as:

- ✓ You can only practice if they are there and accessible. What happens if they are ill, on holidays or just decide not to continue PP?
- ✓ They will also likely only have individual insurance and they require organisational insurance to be able to take on a trainee.
- ✓ You will also not have the same opportunity as you do in an organisation to have peer support, CPD opportunities or team development

Can I carry out online counselling as part of my placement?

S.M.I.L.E. Counselling and Training have decided to accept 20% of the 80 hours required with 16+ to be online (via zoom or another secure platform). These sessions must be clearly marked as 'online' in your client hours log. Please note that online sessions should only be undertaken at the placement organisation's request.

Furthermore, you must familiarise yourself with the BACP working online documents before any online practice commences. These will be found in your S.M.I.L.E. SharePoint folder resources under the folder headed Policies/S.M.I.L.E. Diploma Policies for Placement.

Responsibility for training with regard to online practice lies with the student and placement provider. The remainder of your placement must be based on face-to-face practice for you to maximise on the learning from the course weekends.



Where can I get a placement?

You can get a placement in any organisation that has the infrastructure to support your practice as outlined in previous points and under the questions for placement and practice handout.

Do you help us get placements?

It is the student's responsibility to find their own placement for their diploma. You will source placements that are likely in line with your own ethos and values. There may be, on occasion, where an organisation may approach us to source students for placement, but this is not guaranteed.



Can we have a placement at S.M.I.L.E.?

Students are encouraged to identify and access a suitable placement within which to practice 20 hours with under 16's. If this proves to be difficult, please discuss the possibility of a placement at S.M.I.L.E with the course team.

What if I can't get a placement?

If you can't get a placement we will discuss this at the end of year one. You effectively have 5 years to complete the practical part of the course. We would however advise that you may not always get a placement close to home and need to travel. It is important to take this into consideration.

Recordings

You are required to record your counselling practice sessions by Dictaphone. There are multiple reasons for this:

Recordings will be used for the following purposes:

1. Therapeutic assessment - Recordings can provide feedback to individuals on their interactions.
2. Aid to reflection on the therapy process - counsellors in training will want to reflect on a session through listening to the session.
3. For discussion in supervision – to use in clinical supervision is a way to provide direct access to sessions and enables greater objectivity.
4. A training course requirement - Recorded material may be required by S.M.I.L.E Counselling for assessment of a counsellor in training's competence, or for case discussion with tutor's or peers
5. Evidence of competence within therapeutic model used – used for accreditation bodies and for counsellors to maintain their clinical skills around the modality they are using.

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see diploma recording contract

Data Recording

The Placement organisation is the data controller for everything to do with the client. For example referrals, client file kept on site and their organisational paperwork.

S.M.I.L.E. is the data controller for audio recordings and portfolio content as we request that the student gathers this information.

Any student who falls out with the legislative requirements related to data processors requires a recording consent agreement with the client (ICO are happy with the one we use).

As the data controller, if any **client recordings or portfolio information** is lost or stolen **the student** must inform S.M.I.L.E. immediately.

What information do we give to placement, and when do we apply?

Every placement may ask for something different, we advise preparing a CV at the beginning of the course, you will share your handbook of what you will be learning and a placement questions form that we have prepared that hopefully helps answer any of the placements queries. You will likely need to attend an interview.

How many hours of placement are we required to do per week?

In your first 2 months we suggest seeing no more than 2 clients per week. However, this does not reflect the expected hours at placement as you will need prep time before sessions, time for notes and reflections after, internal support with the manager etc. This time should all be counted and not just client session time.

Is it compulsory to take holidays whilst on placement?

You are eligible to take holidays just like anyone else while on placement. Speak to the placement provider and ensure that you give them and clients enough lead time for time off as it could unsettle clients with last minute changes.

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Can I use my current work environment to complete placement hours?

Completing counselling placement hours in one's current work environment might seem convenient at first glance, but it's important to understand why this isn't typically allowed. Here are some expanded reasons:

Widening Learning Opportunities: Counselling is a field where exposure to diverse client populations, settings, and therapeutic approaches is crucial for growth and competence. By staying within one's current work environment, students might limit their exposure to different demographics, issues, and therapeutic modalities. This could hinder their ability to develop a well-rounded skill set and adaptability as a counsellor.

Avoiding Comfort Zone: Counselling often requires practitioners to step out of their comfort zones to effectively address clients' needs. Remaining in a familiar work environment might prevent students from challenging themselves and exploring new approaches or techniques. Growth occurs through facing new challenges and pushing boundaries, which may not happen if one remains in a familiar setting.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries: Counselling placements are designed to provide students with opportunities to practice within professional boundaries, including establishing appropriate relationships with clients. If a student were to counsel individuals within their current workplace, it could blur the lines between personal and professional relationships, potentially compromising ethical standards and confidentiality.

Demonstrating Competence: Part of the purpose of completing counselling placement hours is to demonstrate competence in various aspects of counselling practice. By experiencing different environments and client populations, students can showcase their ability to adapt and apply their skills effectively across diverse settings. This diversity of experience strengthens their resumes and demonstrates readiness for independent practice.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest: Counselling within one's workplace can lead to conflicts of interest, as the student may have pre-existing relationships with clients or colleagues. This can impact the therapeutic process and compromise the integrity of counselling sessions. Placing students in neutral settings helps mitigate these potential conflicts and ensures a focus on the client's best interests.



Supporting materials

Are there academic resources available to use for study/assignments?

Yes, we have a small lending library which you can access as well as all the reading materials, handouts for the evenings will be copied and dropped into your shared drive.

Is there a list of the course literature to advise what to buy?

There is a suggested reading list within the handbook.

Sharepoint – shared drive

You will be given an access to a password protected shared drive where you will have full digital access to all module information, presentations, policies and procedures.



Assignments

Course Assessment

A minimum attendance of 85% of the teaching sessions is required. There are formative and summative assessments throughout each module. Assessment methods may include essays, presentations, recorded transcripts, case study and observed clinical skills practice. You will also receive feedback from your peer group. To ensure fairness and consistency, all marking is internally verified, and a sample will be reviewed by an external examiner. You will receive feedback on all formal assessments to support your learning. Your placement and clinical supervisor will also submit a report at the end of each module. Students are assessed each year and given specific recommendations on areas they need to work on and whether they are ready to progress to the next year. As a result of ongoing assessment students may be asked to repeat modules or take time out of training.

Confirmation of assignment dates?

Over the two years there are various assignments, presentations and research projects for each module that need to be completed.

Assignment dates and guidelines for each module will be uploaded to Turnitin prior to the course start date.

Assessment Procedures and Regulations

Essay Layout and Word Limit The essay layout should follow the conventions listed:

- A4 'paper' should be used and saved in Word DOCX format.
- 12-point type should be used for main text.
- The required typeface is Arial.

No italicised or other unusual fonts are acceptable (except for occasional words and phrases where conventionally appropriate).

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- Typescript to be in at least 1½ spacing.
- Fully Aligned Text
- It is recommended that a further line space be left between paragraphs and that sub-headings be in bold type.
- Number the pages.
- Reference in accordance with Harvard Author/Date style in text accompanied with reference list at the end of assignment where page number(s) must be included.

Assessments will have a word limit set unless otherwise stated. The word limit excludes author/date, tables/diagrams (minimal use of these) and reference list.

Word count must be made clear on the front page of the submission.

The S.M.I.L.E. team has adopted a word limit policy for written assessments. This is to remain in line with sector standards and meets with the approval of the external examiners.

Generally, the student will be allowed + 10% of the given word count without penalty; over 10% and the following penalties will be applied:

Word count exceeded by 11-20% 5% of mark will be deducted e.g., 65 – 3 = 62.

Word count exceeded by 21-30% 10% of mark will be deducted e.g., 65 – 6.5 = 58.5 (59 rounded).

Word count exceeded by 31-40% 20% of mark will be deducted e.g., 65 - 13 = 52.

Word count exceeded by 41-50% 30% of mark will be deducted e.g., 65 – 19.5 = 45.5 (46 rounded).

Word count exceeded by 51% or more 50% of mark will be deducted e.g., 65 – 32.5 = 32.5 (33 rounded).



Presentations and Case Studies

You will be expected to deliver presentations and case studies to your peer group throughout the course. Everyone is required to do this as part of their course.



Supervision

How many supervisors do we have, and how many hours is supervised?

You will be provided with a list of external counselling supervisors approved by S.M.I.L.E. **It is required that you choose and make contact with your counselling supervisor one month from the course start date.** Your ratio of client hours to supervision is 1 hour to every 6 sessions.

What if my session hours exceed more than 6 before the month?

The hours are worked out pro rata but if you continue to see more than 6 hours over the month you will be required to pay for additional supervision to make up the shortfall. This will be an additional half hour and you can choose to agree payment with your supervisor to see you or an alternative supervisor.

What if I want to continue my supervision over summer? Do I still get course group supervision?

As this course is based around the academic year you will not receive course group supervision from your course supervisor. It is required that you continue to meet with your counselling supervisor to discuss your external practice over the summer months should you continue to practice.

What if I don't have a placement, do I still get course group supervision?

Yes, you will still receive course group supervision. You will use supervision not only to speak about clients but around your development on the course, your challenges during triad work and assignments.



Attendance

Full attendance where at all possible is important. You will be provided with the full 2-year schedule of the course prior to beginning the course. If you feel there are dates that you can't attend, please let your tutors know as soon as possible.

Committing to full attendance before signing up is essential for successful learning and accreditation. Here are key reasons why attendance is essential and the consequences of incomplete attendance:

- ✓ **Covering the Full Syllabus:**
 - Attending each session ensures that participants cover the entire syllabus as outlined in the 2-year schedule. The syllabus is carefully designed to provide a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter.
- ✓ **Experiential Learning:**
 - The course is highly experiential in nature. This implies that learning is not only theoretical but also involves practical and interactive elements that contribute significantly to the overall learning experience.
- ✓ **Group Dynamics and Learning:**
 - Absences can disrupt the group dynamics and learning process. Group discussions, collaborative projects, and shared experiences contribute to a holistic understanding of the material. Regular attendance helps maintain continuity in these group interactions.
- ✓ **Impact on Accreditation:**
 - Completing the full course is often a requirement for accreditation. If participants miss portions of the training, they may not acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to meet accreditation standards. This, in turn, affects the credibility and recognition of the accreditation received.
- ✓ **Commitment to Professional Development:**
 - Full attendance demonstrates a commitment to professional development. It shows that participants take their education seriously and are dedicated to gaining the skills and knowledge required for their chosen field.



- ✓ **Informed Decision-Making:**
 - Providing the course schedule beforehand allows potential participants to make informed decisions. Being aware of the time commitment helps individuals assess whether they can fully commit to the course before enrolling.
- ✓ **Communication with Tutors:**
 - Participants are encouraged to communicate any potential scheduling conflicts with tutors in advance. This proactive approach allows for discussion and possible accommodations, emphasising the importance of clear communication in the learning process.
- ✓ **Guidelines and Expectations:**
 - COSCA guidance sets clear expectations for attendance, with a recommended 100% attendance and a minimum requirement of 85%. These guidelines are in place to ensure that participants get the most out of the course and that the learning environment is not negatively impacted by frequent absences.

In conclusion, full attendance is not only a prerequisite for accreditation but also a fundamental aspect of effective learning in a comprehensive training program. Participants should carefully consider the commitment required before enrolling in the course and actively communicate with tutors regarding any potential challenges to attendance.

This approach ensures a positive and productive learning experience for all participants.