

DPsych Counselling Psychology, Regent's University London

Frequently asked questions for applicants

Overview

This document aims to answer the typical questions you might have when considering whether to apply to the DPsych Counselling Psychology at Regent's. We hope the information below will help you understand the requirements of the programme and support you in your decision. If your question is not answered below, then please do not hesitate to contact our Admissions team (admit@regents.ac.uk) or Head of Programme, Dr Isabel Henton (hentoni@regents.ac.uk).

How is counselling psychology different from other therapy professions?

Before you apply to any counselling psychology programme, we think it is important you have some knowledge of the profession and its training. Trainings in counselling psychology are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council ([HCPC](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)); the title "Counselling Psychologist" is a legally protected title. This means you can only use the title if you have completed an HCPC approved training and subsequently registered as a practitioner psychologist with the HCPC.

Counselling psychology integrates psychological theories and research with counselling and psychotherapeutic skills and concepts, so its practitioners develop a breadth and depth of skills transferrable to a wide variety of professional, practice and academic contexts. The Regent's DPsych programme is a "professional doctorate" and as such, it involves the completion of a doctoral research project; taught academic modules relating to counselling psychology theory, research and practice; and a training over three years in practice placements.

Counselling and psychotherapy disciplines differ from counselling psychology in various ways although all these disciplines practice what may be referred to as "talking therapy," and practitioners may work with people experiencing similar kinds of difficulty or distress. However, counselling and psychotherapy trainings do not require a previous degree in psychology, nor do they lead to a psychology qualification. Counselling psychologist trainings are trainings in applied psychology; they engage critically in concepts such as the "scientist-practitioner." Since 2009, institutional counselling psychology trainings have involved the completion of a doctoral research degree, that is, the completion of a doctoral thesis of the same academic standard as a PhD, whereas many counselling and psychotherapy trainings do not involve this, although some do.

Counselling psychology trainings train people to think and practice therapy “integratively” or “pluralistically,” and our DPsych espouses *pluralism* as the core of the training. Pluralism is a way of thinking about knowledge that proposes that there is no one answer or single objective truth. Instead there are multiple ways of knowing, understanding or experiencing, and multiple ways to go about working with or studying people’s experiences. These ways of knowing and methods may represent conflicting ideas, conceptualised as operating in fields of uncertainty. The ability to hold tensions between different ways of knowing enables counselling psychologists to work highly flexibly and competently in situations of complexity, adjusting to new information as it emerges.

The HCPC requires that counselling psychologists receive in-depth training in more than one therapeutic “model” or way of working with people; counselling psychology trainees must gain an in-depth knowledge of one model and a working knowledge of at least one other model. Here at Regent’s, our DPsych includes training in *three* therapeutic models – primarily, models influenced by existentialism and phenomenology; secondly, cognitive behavioural models (inclusive substantive modules in second and third wave approaches), and thirdly, psychodynamic models.

To summarise, there is considerable overlap between the helping professions, but we hope the above gives you some sense of the divergences and convergences between them. For further information, you might find the [BACP](#), [UKCP](#), [BPC](#) and [BPS](#) websites useful.

What qualifications does the DPsych lead to?

Once you have completed your DPsych at Regent’s, you are automatically conferred with eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register of Practitioner Psychologists as a Registered Counselling Psychologist. Additionally, you are conferred with eligibility to apply for Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol) status with the British Psychological Society and to apply for Full Membership of the BPS Division of Counselling Psychology. Both these processes involve completion of an application form and payment of a fee.

What kind of practice experience will I gain while training?

The DPsych programme encourages practice work within a variety of generalised and specialist contexts. We encourage trainees to follow their personal and professional areas of interest, and to gain a breadth and depth of experience on placements, to generate a range of employment opportunities when qualified. The following is a list of the typical placements trainees tend to undertake:

- Primary care settings - psychological services within GP practices. Therapy in such settings is usually time-limited and can address a wide range of difficulties.

- Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services - IAPT is an umbrella term for a programme of psychological services primarily at primary care level, although the programme is expanding to secondary care services and services for children and young people.
- Secondary care settings – these may be general or specialist inpatient or outpatient psychotherapy and psychology settings that liaise with multidisciplinary mental health teams (sometimes called Community Mental Health Teams or CMHTs). These settings tend to focus on providing psychological therapy to people perceived to have more complex, severe or chronic difficulties than those seen in primary care settings.
- Psychotherapy departments - generally offering relatively longer-term therapy for a wide range of difficulties and client groups. Group therapy is often offered in these settings, as well as systemic or psychodynamic work with families or couples.
- Eating disorders services - specialist multi-disciplinary inpatient and outpatient services specialising in the provision of therapy for presenting issues around eating.
- Substance misuse services - multi-disciplinary services that focus upon services for substance misuse and recovery.
- Forensic settings - work with offenders in prisons or other forensic settings.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – multi-disciplinary services offering a range of support and therapies for children, young people and their families.
- University counselling centres - psychological support for students. Difficulties may relate to university life or be wider in scope. These can be excellent placements for the early gaining of skills. Brief contracts are often used.
- Third sector settings and independent psychotherapy organisations – charities and independent counselling or psychotherapy organisations can be eminently suitable starting points for gaining experience in the early stages of the programme.
- Organisational settings and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) - primarily in-house or contracted out employee assistance services within large companies or public services. The work tends to be time-limited and may revolve around stress, bullying, conflict and resolution, time management issues, and misconduct.

What are the career prospects once I qualify?

Counselling psychology training equips you with resilience and considerable skills in communication and management that are key in negotiating the complexities and uncertainties of working life. Counselling psychologists can be found in leadership positions across a wide variety of organisations. There is some excellent information about careers for counselling psychologists on the BPS's website [here](#).

Employability is at the heart of the DPsych and much of our final year of training is focused on preparing you for employment and life post-qualification. We equip you with the specific skills and competencies the HCPC require of counselling psychologists, including skills in influencing and leading, supervision, service evaluation and audit, psychometrics and outcome measurement, to name but a few. We dedicate time to support your CV preparation, job applications, and interview practice to support you in securing employment once you have completed your training.

Our DPsych trainees secure jobs for themselves post-qualification without difficulty; many trainees find employment well before finishing the training. Of our Year 3 DPsych trainees finishing the taught programme in Summer 2018, by October 2018:

- 67% had been offered or accepted paid roles in the NHS or third sector.
- 78% had started a private practice or were setting up their own business.
- 89% were already employed or self-employed.

Career prospects for counselling psychologists are very promising and varied. Counselling psychologists work in a range of settings including but not limited to:

- The NHS (primary or secondary care, clinical health, specialist services, CAMHS services)
- Private practice and consultancy work
- Clinical work and management posts in the third sector
- School, college and university counselling services
- Academia including counselling psychology trainings
- Forensic and prison settings
- Employee assistance programmes (EAPs)
- Occupational health settings and services
- Expert witness services

Within these settings, counselling psychologists undertake a range of responsibilities and tasks. As well as therapeutic practice, these might include clinical or research supervision, teaching and lecturing, consultancy and advisory, research and scholarship, service evaluation and audit, leadership and management, and specialised services or assessments. To summarise, it is typical for counselling psychologists to be involved in a range of roles in a range of settings, living their lives as “portfolio practitioners.”

What is the application process?

There are two parts to the application process. First you will need to submit a written application along with supporting documents. In your application, you will need to demonstrate how you meet our entry criteria,

which can be found on the programme web pages. We advise you to proof-read your application and to ensure the application is complete, as incomplete applications may lead to a delay in the process.

As part of your application, and to demonstrate some of the entry criteria, you will need to write a personal statement, to include:

- What led you to want to train in counselling psychology.
- Your interest in training on Regent's counselling psychology programme.
- Any experience to date that will support you in working on placements with vulnerable people from the start of the programme.
- Evidence of your interpersonal skills, self-awareness and reflective capacities.
- How you will approach the challenges of undertaking a programme that includes a practitioner training, academic components, and postgraduate research.
- Any research interests relevant to the field of counselling psychology, and a starting point for how you might develop these into a counselling psychology research project.

We advise you not to:

- Tell us what counselling psychology is: we already know this, so we would prefer to hear why it interests you!
- Submit a generic statement or a statement meant for a different qualification or university.

Your application is then reviewed by the programme team. If your application demonstrates suitability, you will be invited to attend an interview. We will ask you about the areas above, and you will also be asked to complete a written task and an experiential task. The outcome will be communicated to you by our Admissions team soon after the interview.

What is graduate basis for chartership (GBC)?

Graduate basis for chartership (GBC) is a prerequisite for any British Psychological Society accredited training programme in applied psychology that confers eligibility for qualification as a chartered psychologist. It is achieved by completing a BPS accredited bachelor's degree in psychology. If your original undergraduate degree was not in psychology or did not provide you with GBC, you can complete a diploma or master's level conversion course that will convert your existing qualification to the equivalent honours degree required for GBC. Regent's offers a conversion MSc in Psychology, details of which can be found [here](#). For further details about GBC or any questions you may have, please visit the [BPS website](#).

What kind of practice experience do I need?

Gaining substantive relevant practice experience is fundamental to entry to the programme, given that it involves working with vulnerable people and beginning practice placements from the outset. Additionally, providers of placements to counselling psychology trainees tend to want to employ appropriately skilled and experienced individuals. For all these reasons, it is important that you take the time to secure sufficient relevant practice experience before applying. We find that applicants who have invested this time tend to be more successful in gaining a place on the programme and in securing a placement in their first year of training.

Relevant counselling or practitioner experience generally refers to face-to-face counselling or therapeutic practice, or other work involving a formal helping role. Such experience may be gained in a variety of contexts, and can include one-to-one work with individuals, group work or both. Ideally, we suggest you gain a year or more experience, however we will consider applicants with experience of less than a year, for example, six months in duration, if solid skills, competence and learning can be evidenced. Through this kind of work, you will gain skills in building a therapeutic relationship with a client. You will also develop your ability to reflect on being in a helping relationship and perhaps on the challenges or ethical issues that can sometimes arise.

Generally, the more psychologically or theoretically driven the practice work, the better, for instance if you have been able to gain experience of working with or being under the supervision of a practitioner psychologist. This is particularly so if your experience is not directly counselling or therapy experience but is perhaps, for example, befriending or support work.

Occasionally we will consider applicants who have gained experience areas that may bear some less direct relevance to counselling such as human resources or teaching. However, it is typically harder to demonstrate the necessary skills if this is the *only* experience you have; it is better if you can supplement this with some counselling experience or completion of a counselling skills course (see below).

Here are some examples of work experience or employment in approximate order of suitability and relevance:

- Voluntary or paid counselling work.
- Clinical work as an assistant psychologist.
- Work as a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) in an IAPT setting.
- Mental health work.
- Telephone counselling.

- A voluntary or healthcare role that entails supportive one-to-one work, for example, nursing or nursing assistance, support work, befriending, social work, or occupational therapy.

You might find it helpful to look for relevant experience through the following organisations:

- [Do-it!](#)
- [TimeBank](#)
- [V-inspired](#)
- [National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#)
- The Samaritans
- Cruse Bereavement Care
- MIND
- Childline
- Anxiety UK
- The Place2Be

Is it necessary to have completed a counselling skills course before applying?

Prior therapeutic training or completion of a counselling skills course can strengthen your application, so do let us know if you have undertaken this sort of training. However, it is not mandatory to have done a counselling skills course prior to joining the programme, and we are primarily looking for real-world practical experience, as detailed above. A counselling skills course is usually not enough on its own without practical experience, unless it involved working in placements. Occasionally, completion of a skills course is condition of offer to join the programme.

Can I defer my place if I receive an offer?

At present, you are permitted to defer your place to the subsequent academic year - this deferral is only valid for one academic year. Please be advised that tuition fees and non-refundable deposits are subject to change and so do keep an eye on the programme website for further information. If you choose to defer and you have paid a non-refundable deposit to secure your place, then this deposit will transfer to the next academic year.

Can I apply again if my application is unsuccessful?

Yes, you can apply again but not within the same year – you are welcome to apply to the subsequent academic year's programme. If you are unsuccessful in your application, we will always endeavour to give you helpful feedback via our Admissions team to facilitate you in attending to this and improving your application if you would like to apply in the future.

Where can I find information about study visas?

The programme team do not hold information about study visa applications or any other visa issues. Please contact the Admissions team for further information or [click here](#).

What if I have a disability?

Regent's is committed to promoting an inclusive environment and providing fair and equal treatment to applicants and students. Guidance for applicants on disclosing disabilities on the application form and support for individuals once enrolled at the university can be found [here](#). If you are invited for an interview during the application stage and you require special arrangements for your attendance, please do let the Admissions team know as soon as possible so that we can ensure these are met. The university's student support department also assists those with learning or other difficulties. They will be happy to work closely with you to produce a student support agreement (SSA) detailing the arrangements you need to facilitate your participation and learning.

What if I have a criminal conviction?

Applicants are asked to disclose any criminal convictions on their application form, and we may require further details regarding any disclosures to assess your suitability for the programme. Please note this does not mean you will be excluded from being invited for interview or from joining the programme. It is also important to be aware that entry to the programme does preclude the HCPC from assessing your criminal convictions for entry on their register separately. In other words, completion of the DPsych confers *eligibility to apply* for HCPC registration and BPS chartership but does not automatically mean these bodies will confer these; assessments are made on a case-by-case basis. If you have any questions about criminal convictions or previous offences, we advise you to contact the HCPC. You may want to do so before applying for the course. We would also advise you to read the HCPC's [Guidance on Health and Character](#) document which contains information on certain offences that may preclude applicants from joining the register.

What about DBS checks?

DBS checks are not a requirement of entry on the Regent's DPsych. However, we ask you to obtain an Enhanced DBS check if you are successful in gaining a place on the programme, and if you do not hold an up to date Enhanced DBS check from your year of entry. We do not arrange DBS checks, but we advise you to contact the BPS who offer DBS checks for a discounted fee. Please visit the BPS webpage [here](#) for further information. DBS checks can sometimes take up to eight weeks to come through, so if one is required, it is better to get these completed as soon as you can.

Can I work while I train?

The programme at Regent's is *full-time*. While you are only on campus for a maximum of two days, the rest of the programme's requirements, such as practice placements, supervision, personal therapy, academic work and assignments, and research, will quickly fill up the rest of your week. There is little time for paid work outside of these demands. We have found that trainees have often struggled to maintain paid work while staying on top of all the training asks of them. This can have a significant impact on learning, engagement, practice and academic work, well-being and ultimately success on the programme, so we do advise you to consider this issue carefully.

In some circumstances, trainees find paid practice placements, although this tends to happen more often in the second or third year of the programme. Alternatively, it is sometimes possible to use an existing salaried job as a practice placement. If trainees are also employed by their placement provider in another capacity, their work and titles must be clearly delineated and distinguished for clients, colleagues, any other relevant stakeholders, and in any public information about their work, for example online. Where trainees are paid for work that includes their training hours, their title while undertaking these hours must continue to reflect their training status.

What are the costs of the training?

Aside from the annual course fees determined by Regent's and subject to annual increase, counselling psychology training also entails various additional costs and fees. These are listed below with approximate amounts in £s, which are subject to change:

- External supervision, if supervision is not offered or offered sufficiently within placements: £40-£60 per supervision session.
- Personal therapy - 120 hours over three years and 40 hours per year: £40-£70 per session.
- Professional indemnity insurance: £50-£70 per year.
- BPS graduate membership (MBPsS): £135 - some discounts may be available.
- BPS Division of Counselling Psychology membership (recommended): £12.
- Enhanced DBS check, for example, as available via the BPS: £65-£85.
- Thesis printing costs, miscellanea: variable.
- Thesis submission fee: £2700.

Can I meet the programme team?

Our programme team are all HCPC registered practitioner psychologists, academics, and "portfolio professionals" who take up roles outside the university, whether this is as practitioners in the health,

education or third sectors; as private practitioners or supervisors; in academic consultancy work; in the external examining of other programmes; or in public interest and activism work.

The DPsych team includes:

- Dr Isabel Henton, CPsychol, HCPC reg., AFBPsS, AFHEA, RAPPs, Senior Lecturer, Head of Programme
- Professor Martin Milton, CPsychol, HCPC reg., FBPsS, SFHEA, Professor in Counselling Psychology
- Dr Rosemary Lodge, CPsychol, HCPC reg., Senior Lecturer, Research Lead
- Dr Anna Butcher, CPsychol, HCPC reg., AFBPsS, FHEA, Senior Lecturer, Course Leader (Academic)
- Dr Andreas Vassiliou, CPsychol, HCPC reg., RAPPs, Lecturer, Professional Practice Lead
- Dr Helen Damon, CPsychol, HCPC reg., FHEA, Lecturer, Placement Coordinator
- Dr Selina Goldberg, CPsychol, HCPC reg., Lecturer, Admissions, Research Degrees Officer
- Dr Kate du Toit, CPsychol, HCPC reg., Lecturer in Counselling Psychology

The programme also benefits from lecturing, research and supervision contributions from the wider Regent's School of Psychotherapy and Psychology (RSPP), a variety of guest speakers and visiting staff. If you would like to meet the team and hear more about the programme, we would be delighted to see you at one of our open evenings – dates and times are advertised on our web pages.

Useful preparatory reading

Douglas, B., Woolfe, R., Strawbridge, S., Kasket, E., & Galbraith, V. (2016). *Handbook of counselling psychology* (4th ed.). London, England: Sage.

Galbraith, V. (2017). *Counselling psychology*. London, England: Taylor and Francis.

Kasket, E. (2017). *How to become a counselling psychologist*. London, England: Taylor and Francis.

Orlans, V., & Van Scoyoc, S. (2008). *A short introduction to counselling psychology*. London, England: Sage.