

DIPLOMA IN ONLINE COUNSELLING

A Brief Course Guide

The Diploma builds on the work already achieved in the *General Certificate* and considers how to build an online therapeutic practice with clients from around the world. It is held in two parts of 12-weeks each (see example timetable).

How do you learn in an Online Group?



1. A **weekly email** outlines the **tasks for the week** and reminds you of any deadlines for completed work.
2. **Whole group live discussions** (synchronous communications) are conducted online from our virtual classroom or from a chat program such as Skype or Windows Live Messenger. There are weekly audio and text meetings with a themed discussion led by a tutor.
3. There are also **group discussions** using **emails** or the **Campus Noticeboard** (asynchronous discussions).
4. **Practical Work**. Throughout the Diploma, course members work online with clients (either their own online clients or with a client supplied by Counselling Online Ltd.) They receive online supervision from a Counselling Online Ltd. supervisor.
5. **Assessment** of learning is ongoing through **personal tutorials** and completion of a **Student Learning Record**. At the end of the Diploma, students are asked to present one of their clients as a **Case Study** and to submit their **Student Learning Record** for a **final assessment** which is moderated by a member of Counselling Online Ltd. who is not a member of the tutorial team.
6. In addition, the **Campus website** is an online learning resource, with many different areas including a **Library** (regularly updated with useful articles) and a **Practice Laboratory** where "virtual" clients seek online help and course members can contribute an answer and read other course members' answers.

An Example of Course Timetable - Diploma

Part 1

Week No.	Discussion Themes		Practice
1	Introductions - making a contract for the Diploma. Discussion - setting up in online practice - checking credentials online.	Relevant legislation, DPA + other Acts, pre-counselling information for clients/ insurance + checking out your credentials.	
2	Assessment of clients for online work including referral where necessary (e.g. suicidal clients)	Read/share relevant articles + discuss tools for assessment/referral on, etc.	From Week 2 onwards and throughout both Parts of the Diploma, students will be offering low-cost counselling to clients who may be students on the General Course or may have applied for counseling through our website. They will receive fortnightly online supervision during the taught weeks of the Diploma and will keep a log of these discussions. In addition they will provide evidence in their SLR of at least 10 hours of online personal therapy with an OLT approved online counsellor.
3	Contracting with an online client	Preparing client contract - including info. to protect client clinically. Compare differences	
4	Private Study Week (individual tutorials - assess needs)		
5	The online therapeutic relationship (1)	Evaluating the therapeutic relationship and core theory	
6	Online supervision	Getting supervision needs met online	
7	Confidentiality online (3) encryption and storage of client work and digital signatures	Relevant legislation, DPA + other Acts, information for clients. Security and storage online - protecting the client and the computer Obtain an encryption address	
8	Private Study Week (individual tutorials)		
9	The online therapeutic relationship (2)	working therapeutically online with client's frame of reference	
10	Portfolio question time - filling in the SLR	Begin the SLR (1, 2,3, in particular)	
11	Private Study Week (tutorials - check individual SLR)		
12	Ending week for Part 1 - managing the break, looking ahead to Part 2.	Explore endings/breaks /interruptions online	

Part 2

Week No.	Discussion/theme		
13	Discuss/set learning objectives	Questions from Part 1 - checking what still needs to be covered.	
14	Managing difficulties and conflict online	Discuss/read/share experience and relevant articles	
15	Practising ethically in a global setting - following relevant codes of ethics and practice,	Read/share articles about different codes of practice	From Week 2 onwards and throughout both Parts of the Diploma, students will be offering low-cost counselling to clients who may be students on the General Course or may have applied for counseling through our website.
16	Private Study Week (tutorials - check individual SLR/Case Presentation)		
17	Theme 2 – Working ethically with difference in a global setting. Cultural sensitivity – discussion in whole group.	Share individual experiences + work in Practice Lab. Discuss including diversity issues in evaluation	They will receive fortnightly online supervision during the taught weeks of the Diploma and will keep a log of these discussions.
18	Review/evaluate your online practice	Assess how far you meet needs of enquirers + your needs as a sole practitioner (supervision + 'internal supervisor').	
19	Portfolio Q & A + Discussion - keeping up to date, continuing research	Discover/share examples of evidence-based research in online counselling + personal research plans	In addition they will provide evidence in their SLR of at least 10 hours of online personal therapy with an OLT approved online counsellor.
20	Private Study Week (tutorials - check individual SLR/Case Presentation)		
21	Maintaining personal and professional development	Discussion of good practice and individual plans	
22	Endings and obtaining feedback/evaluation from clients – Discussion	Explore and share findings re client feedback/evaluation and endings online	
23	Private Study Week (tutorials - check individual SLR/Case Presentation)		
24	Portfolio Q & A.	Student-led discussion	
25	Ending of Diploma		

In Parts 1 and 2 students research and examine the challenges of setting up an ethical online practice in a global setting, making the most effective use of technology and the internet. All students meet once a week during term time (on a Saturday morning) for a live text or audio discussion and may continue the discussion during the remainder of the course week by email or the course Noticeboard. Throughout the course they will be working online as a counsellor, attending fortnightly online supervision meetings during term time. There will also be six individual tutorials with their course tutor to review progress and identify individual learning needs.

At the end of the Course, students are asked to present their learning portfolio for a final assessment. Their Portfolio will contain 3 pieces of work which are described below.

1: Setting up and managing an Online Practice

At the end of Part 1 students are asked to write an assignment on setting up and managing an ethical online counselling practice.

2: Case Presentation

Students are asked to present one of their clients (anonymised) as a Case Presentation which demonstrates their work as an online counsellor and shows their personal model for working online which fits with their core theoretical approach.

3: Student Learning Record

During both Parts of the Diploma, students will be asked to keep evidence of their learning. This Learning Record (together with its evidence) is presented as part of the final Assessment. It will include a brief reflection on their experience of being an online client as well as evidence of their understanding of specific online counselling criteria.

By the end of the Diploma, students will have:

- Developed a **model for online counselling** which suits their core theoretical approach and is evidenced in the Case Study.
- Demonstrated the **counselling and process skills needed** for initiating, maintaining and ending an ethical and therapeutic online counselling relationship.
- **Used online supervision** to encourage awareness and development of these skills.
- Explored the **potential for using new technologies** in online counselling.
- Researched ways and circumstances in which **onward referral** may become necessary or appropriate.
- Discussed how **client assessment** (both initial and ongoing) may be conducted online.
- Discussed how **regular monitoring and evaluation** can inform their online counselling practice.
- Discussed and researched what information is useful for **online counselling websites**.
- Considered the **ethical and legal** implications of working globally with clients.
- Explored and researched how **confidentiality and privacy** may be offered online.
- Assembled, assimilated, and **presented evidence** of their learning in their SLR.
- Reflected on being an online client in **Personal Therapy**
- **Worked** as an online counsellor with online clients and received regular online supervision (group and individual).
- Considered ways in which they can **maintain and update** their online skills and knowledge.
- Explored how they can receive **ongoing collegial online support**.



Course Contract

✧ Counselling Online Ltd undertakes to offer course members such individual encouragement and support as is needed for them to fulfil the requirements of the Course. In return ✧ Counselling Online Ltd expects its course members to take responsibility for the following:

- ✧ **keep information about each other and their clients confidential. Agree to disguise their clients' true identify and not include identifiable information about them in their Professional Portfolios.**
- ✧ **act as professional therapists throughout the duration of the Course, offering interventions which they consider to be suitable to that role and within the code of ethics and practice to which they are professionally bound.**

Student Counselling Service

Whilst students are following a course of study with us, they may make use of our free online counselling service for students. Our Campus Counsellor has a profile in the Members' area of the website, with a direct email link from there.

Gill Jones
September, 2008

**For further information about this Course please contact:
annestokes@onlineuk.org**

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Mission Statement

✧ Counselling Online Ltd. aims to become a world-wide centre of excellence in developing and delivering training in Internet Communications skills for qualified counsellors and psychotherapists.

Our Training

Our group training courses are delivered entirely online and are designed to assist counsellors and psychotherapists set up and provide counselling services online. Our graduating course members are trained to the highest levels of skill and professionalism in the use of a range of digital media to communicate with their clients.

Equal Opportunities

✧ Counselling Online Ltd. recognises and encourages the valuable and enriching contribution which people from a range of backgrounds and experiences can bring to the life and development of its training courses. It is therefore committed to achieving a service which, in its teaching, administration and support services, actively promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation in both education and employment.

The ✧ Counselling Online Ltd. Directorate
Alex Chew, Technology
Anne Stokes, Admissions
Gill Jones, Training
Pauline Matthews, Counselling
Peter Heck, Finance