

Level 4 Counselling Practicum June 2018

Introduction

68 scripts were received from 13 Centres. The briefing paper was designed to assist candidates to record and evaluate 50 hours of their own counselling practice through a Study of Supervised Practice.

The relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria are shown below

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The learner will:	The learner can:
Understand working within legal and ethical requirements as a counselling practitioner	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a professional ethical framework and its application to counselling practice Respond effectively to complex client issues and ethical dilemmas Describe the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement
Understand the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement	Demonstrate the use of counselling supervision Evaluate the effects of using counselling supervision on own practice
Understand how developing self-awareness can contribute as a counselling practitioner	Evaluate how developing self-awareness can contribute to the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship and process

Distribution of marks:

Evidence had to be presented for each assessment criterion and these were graded as PASS or REFER – all assessment criteria had to attract a PASS grade for this assessment to PASS overall.

Comments

Overall, the standards achieved by candidates in this examination were considered by the examiners to be much improved compared to previous series and to comparable tests held elsewhere. The familiarity of the template helped candidates structure their work to meet the brief set out in the briefing paper.

That the examiners noted that there were no studies that were simply retelling the client's 'story' or quoting large 'chunks' of the BACP Ethical Framework. Largely the advice of choosing two or three ethical principles and demonstrating how these applied to the client in the study was followed by the candidates. General descriptions/definitions of these principles was a feature of the weaker (and therefore, referred studies).

The examiners were concerned that most referred studies failed to reach the required standard in understanding what constitutes ethical practice. It remains the case that the commonest was failing to appreciate the influence of Gillick competence on offering young people confidentiality.

A Describe the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement

There were five obvious potential ways of providing evidence that this assessment criterion had been met:

- Legal and ethical requirements
- Ethical decision making
- Counselling, confidentiality and the law
- Use of supervision
- Developing self-awareness

The examiners however allowed credit for other relevant examples. In the most work the candidates focused on one of the above and specifically explained how it related to the subject of the study. General and vague descriptions that could apply to ANY client should be avoided.

B Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a professional ethical framework and its application to counselling practice

Here the examiners were looking for a description and explanation of 3 or 4 examples of the principles, qualities or undertakings contained in an ethical framework or code. In particular emphasis should be placed on how these were relevant to particular client work under discussion and with some attempt to evaluate their usefulness. Very good answers focussed on the ethical issues of working with the client who was the subject of the study a few were rather more general. Long quotations from professional body documents should be avoided and lists of principles and qualities are not going to achieve a pass grade.

C Respond effectively to complex client issues and ethical dilemmas

In this area, the examiners expected that the candidate would identify clearly what was particularly challenging about their client's presentation, their relationship, or any ethical dilemma which arose or could readily have done so; or indeed any combination of these features. After identifying the features of the counselling for discussion candidates were expected to give a coherent account of attempts to *respond* constructively, with examples of choice of interventions, rationale for so doing, and apparent effectiveness. As above answers that could apply to any client did not reach the standard required for a pass. *The examiners were concerned to note that some students were working with clients with very complex presentations (e.g. multiple suicide attempts). Centres must accept the responsibility of vetting placements for beginning counsellors and requiring placement personnel to assess clients against the experience of the student on placement.*

D Demonstrate the use of counselling supervision and evaluate the effects of using counselling supervision on own practice

Most candidates discussed the effective use of supervision and/or other support mechanisms to enable them to work effectively with the client who was the subject of the study. However, more focus on how supervision translates back into work with the client is recommended.

F Evaluate how developing self-awareness can contribute to the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship and process

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of self-awareness and gave examples of how it affected the counselling relationship.

Recommendations

Centres are recommended to:

Encourage candidates to provide a clear introduction (as required on the briefing paper) that states the core theoretical model of the study as well as addressing issues of Gillick competence if the client is under the age of 16. *In this introduction remind candidates to anonymise placement agencies as well as the client.* Many students provided the full name of the agency therefore risking identification of the client by examining personnel. Some examiners live close to some centres and may have supervisory or other relationships with placement personnel. Generic descriptions such as “a large urban secondary school” or “a charity providing help for clients with terminal diagnoses” are acceptable ways to anonymise the agency.

Continue to encourage candidates to provide more analysis and less description in the finished work. Examiners are looking for clear, coherent, and consistent analysis of the client work which goes beyond simple description.

Remind candidates that the examiners are looking for *knowledge* and *understanding* (not simply inserting the principles) of an Ethical Framework together with the ability to correctly relate this to their client

Encourage candidates to provide more evidence of counselling supervision and its effect upon the candidates work with clients rather than a description of the client narrative discussed with supervisor.

Make sure that candidates are using the most up to date version of the ethical framework or code used on the course. [e.g. from now on the 2018 version of the BACP Ethical Framework –although as that did not come into effect until 1 July either the 2016 or 2018 version was allowed]

Encourage candidates to review how the finished work looks on the page and to manipulate the template to avoid hanging sub headings; the examiners comment box becoming orphaned on a separate page; and, unnecessary blank pages.