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The only awarding body
run *by* counsellors
for counsellors

2026-2027

Specification

Level 3 Certificate in Applied Counselling Studies (CAST-L3)

This RQF qualification is regulated by Ofqual in England, and CCEA in Northern Ireland

Qualification/learning aim number 610/3341/8

Sector subject area: 1.3 Health and Social Care

Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

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Please note:

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1. Qualification Information

Purpose Statement This qualification is intended for candidates who have already acquired a recognised qualification in counselling skills and want to:

- Take the next step in training to become a counsellor.
- Learn more about counselling theory, ethics and mental health.
- Understand the use of counselling skills in allied professions.
- Be prepared for work as a professional counsellor in an agency setting.

This qualification leads to employment and increases employability opportunities across a range of health, care and allied sectors, such as, teaching and learning, advocacy and mediation, support and project work, and other helping roles. It provides additional skills for those already in employment and is likely to lead to increased opportunities for promotion and advancement towards practitioner-level qualifications (TC-L4).

Unit 2 enables an understanding of the successful application of counselling skills in non-counselling roles and helps deepen understanding of professional frameworks and approaches to helping.

This qualification will enable successful candidates to work as skilled supporters within a range of job and career opportunities, which include but are not limited to:

- Advice and advocacy support
- Befriender role
- Care worker
- Childline administrator
- Contact centre advisor
- Customer facing role
- Customer relations advisor
- Customer service representative/ advisor/ officer
- Family support worker
- Healthcare professionals
- Helpline operator
- Home care assistant
- Housing support worker
- Mentoring and support worker
- Promotion in current role
- Public services, including probation, substance misuse agencies and criminal justice sector
- Roles in health and social care
- Welfare and advice worker
- Youth worker

Please see below for progression opportunities.

Funding	This qualification is eligible in England for Advanced Learner Loans and Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs Offer, from 1st January 2024. The link to the government website which provides details of funding for this qualification can be found here: DfE: funding rules, rates and formula
Level	3 ¹
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	150 (minimum)
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	320
Credit value	32
Minimum Age	18 years ² .
Entry Requirements	CPCAB Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2) or an equivalent qualification of at least 75 GLH. Please see: • CPCAB Candidate Entry Requirements for criteria considered important in selecting applicants for a programme leading to CAST-L3. • CPCAB's Entry Requirements and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.
Assessment	This qualification is composed of 2 Units. Unit 1 - Counselling studies Unit 2 - Application of counselling skills in a range of occupational settings Proficient (Pass)/Not Proficient (Fail) Candidates must be Proficient in internal assessment across both units to achieve the qualification. Unit 1 & 2 Internal assessment: tutor assessment of candidate portfolio evidencing minimum assessment requirements and verified by CPCAB. See CPCAB's Minimum Assessment Requirements.
Additional Qualification Requirements	None required.

¹ Equivalent to level 4 on the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

² This age requirement is linked to Ofqual's system for categorising qualifications.

Staffing and Resources	At least one tutor-assessor must be involved in all aspects of internal candidate assessment. See Tutor-Assessor Qualifications and Experience for further details of CPCAB requirements.
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	Centres are required to have robust IQA (internal moderation and verification) processes that are verified by CPCAB. See CPCAB IQA Policy.
Progression	Candidates completing the Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2) and CPCAB Level 3 Certificate in Applied Counselling Studies (CAST-L3), or their equivalent, may progress to CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4). Tutors can allow progression to the first year of TC-L4 for candidates who have not yet completed their assessment for CAST-L3. However, such candidates must successfully complete the qualification prior to entry into the 2nd year of TC-L4. See CPCAB's Progression Route for details. This qualification has been allocated UCAS points. Please refer to the UCAS website for further details of the points allocation and the most up-to-date information.
Candidate Registration Fee	£195
Centre Application for CPCAB Approval to Offer the Qualification	Centre application fee: £233 (one-off fee).³ Centres are expected to design their own training programmes.⁴ A sample scheme of work for Unit 2 is available on the CPCAB website.
Online Delivery Options	This qualification is eligible for fully in-person, blended or online delivery. Please see how to run CPCAB's qualifications online for more information.

³ In order for your application to be processed the application fee will need to accompany your application. This is non-refundable. Payment can be made by cheque payable to CPCAB or via Bacs payment. Please contact finance@cpcab.co.uk for more information.

⁴ All centre-designed courses must be approved by CPCAB before candidates can be registered. Although the delivery of courses may differ from centre to centre, all delivery must enable the candidates to achieve the learning outcomes of the qualification.

2. Qualification Summary

Learning Outcomes & Assessment Criteria (CAST-L3)

Unit 1: Counselling Studies Learning outcomes (<i>skills, knowledge, understanding</i>) The learner will/will be able to:	Assessment criteria (<i>to assess learning outcome</i>) The learner can:
1. Prepare to work within an ethical framework for counselling	1.1 Apply understanding of an ethical framework to counselling practice sessions. 1.2 Explain the importance of working within limits of proficiency. 1.3 Describe the ethical, legal and procedural framework in which an agency operates. 1.4 Demonstrate understanding of client assessment and referral in an agency setting.
2. Understand the counselling relationship	2.1 Explain the nature and constraints of the counsellor role within different settings. 2.2 Establish and sustain the boundaries of the counsellor role in counselling practice sessions. 2.3 Explain how the counselling relationship contributes to the counselling work. 2.4 Manage the stages of the counselling relationship.
3. Understand difference and diversity issues to develop empathic understanding	3.1 Identify and reflect on diversity within personal relationships. 3.2 Identify and reflect on a range of diversity issues in the wider social context. 3.3 Apply awareness of diversity issues to enhance empathic understanding.
4. Work within a user-centred approach to counselling	4.1 Establish the client's needs and expectations when agreeing to work together. 4.2 Maintain the focus on the client's agenda and needs.
5. Use counselling theory to develop self-awareness in counselling practice	5.1 Use counselling theory to understand own personality. 5.2 Use counselling theory to understand own personal history. 5.3 Use counselling theory to understand own relationships. 5.4 Evidence how self-awareness contributes to the ability to empathise with others.

6. Understand theories of counselling and mental health	6.1 Explain why theory is important in counselling work. 6.2 Describe the main theoretical approaches to counselling. 6.3 Use counselling theory to understand the client. 6.4 Explain the nature of common mental health problems. 6.5 Describe how counselling can promote positive mental health. 6.6 Explain why research findings are important in counselling work.
7. Use feedback, reflection and supervision to support counselling studies	7.1 Use feedback from others to develop understanding of counselling. 7.2 Give constructive feedback to other counselling trainees. 7.3 Describe the nature and use of clinical supervision. 7.4 Use supervisee skills to contribute to, and learn from, case discussion.

Unit 2: Application of counselling skills in a range of occupational settings

Learning outcomes (*skills, knowledge, understanding*)

Assessment criteria (*to assess learning outcome*)

The learner will/will be able to:

The learner can:

1. Understand ethical, legal and professional frameworks for the use of counselling skills in a range of occupational settings	1.1 Describe the ethical, legal and professional frameworks of one allied profession where counselling skills are used 1.2 Identify a range of occupational contexts and allied professions where counselling skills are used to enhance the primary professional role
2. Understand the nature of relationships in a range of occupational settings	2.1 Explain the difference between counselling skills used in non-counselling roles, and the role of an employed counsellor in the workplace. 2.2 Explain how counselling skills are used effectively within non-counselling roles, without changing the nature of the primary professional role

3. Know the importance of using empathy and understanding diversity in a range of occupational settings	3.1 Reflect on the importance of empathy and responsiveness in a range of primary professional roles 3.2 Identify a range of organisations focused on working with marginalised groups, or individuals subject to prejudice and discrimination 3.3 Research and describe the organisational diversity, equity, equality, or anti-oppression policy/statement from at least one allied profession where counselling skills are used
4. Understand the nature of working alliances in a range of occupational settings	4.1 Explain how working alliances are formed based on the primary professional role, but enhanced by the use of counselling skills 4.2 Explain reasons for contracting (either formally or informally) for the use of counselling skills, in at least one allied profession 4.3 Consider how working alliances are formed, maintained and ended in different settings
5. Understand the importance of self-awareness in the application of counselling skills in different occupations	5.1 Reflect on own professional aspirations and consider the type of occupational contexts where own skills and personal attributes would be transferable 5.2 Explain the importance of maintaining boundaries when working in different settings
6. Understand frameworks for the use of counselling skills in non-counselling settings	6.1 Explain a range of frameworks and approaches to helping work and the use of counselling skills in non-counselling settings 6.2 Describe the approach used by at least one allied profession where counselling skills are used to enhance the primary role 6.3 Examine the diverse terminology that is used to describe the use of counselling skills in different occupational settings
7. Understand the role of feedback and reflection in applied counselling skills	7.1 Describe how different settings offer staff support and consider how this differs to the support accessed by professional counsellors 7.2 Use feedback from others to improve own understanding of the use of counselling skills in a range of occupational contexts

See the [CAST-L3 Tutor Guide](#) for candidate guidance to criteria and notes for tutors.

3. Minimum Assessment Requirements

To achieve the qualification, candidates must be internally assessed as **Proficient** in all 7 learning outcomes of **both units** of the qualification.

Candidates must give **two** pieces of evidence for each criterion. In addition, the Candidate Learning Record (CLR), when complete, must include references to all three assessment methods (documents, tutor observation and testimony).

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT of UNIT 1 & 2 – must include all three methods of assessment		
Course activities	Assessment method ⁵	Types of evidence (2 references for each assessment criterion)
- Professional discussion and workshops - Seminars, personal development workshops and group work - Projects and presentations - Review of skills work - Review of learning - Tutorials - Project report and presentation	Documents	2 assignments⁶ 1 self-review⁷ - Learning review (throughout programme)⁸ 1 practice case presentation - Tutorial records (when written by candidate) 1 Project report and presentation notes/slides
- Assessed simulated counselling practice - Assessed case presentations - Assessed workplace simulations - Group work - Group training supervision - Seminars and workshops - Tutorials - Project report and presentation	Tutor observation	- Minimum 1 tutor-observed counselling practice session - Feedback on practice case presentation⁹ - Tutorial records (when written by the tutor) - Tutor observation of project presentation
- Simulated counselling practice - Case presentations - Group work - Group training supervision - Seminars and workshops - Project report and presentation	Testimony	- Peer feedback - Peer feedback on project presentation

⁵ Proforma and guide sheets for internal assessment can be downloaded from the [CPCAB website](#).

⁶ Suggested assignments are available on the [CPCAB website](#).

⁷ Self-review of learning, progress, and completion of the learning tasks (criteria). Template available on the [CPCAB website](#).

⁸ This is an on-going review of learning during the course (also called a “learning journal”).

⁹ For example when a tutor observes and makes records of the candidate presenting this in group training supervision

MARKING SCHEME

Internal assessment:	Candidates must achieve both units of the qualification. Candidates must achieve all seven learning outcomes of each unit.
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4. Tutor-Assessor Qualifications and Experience

Level 3 Certificate in Applied Counselling Studies (CAST-L3)					
	Minimum qualification	Personal therapy + professional association membership	On-going Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	Minimum practice experience	Minimum experience as a tutor
Tutor	420 hours therapeutic counselling qualification at level 4 or above. e.g. TC-L4	10 hours personal therapy And Member of a professional association for counselling or psychotherapy.	30 hours per year CPD activities.	Current supervised counselling practice And Supervision qualification or experience of supervising groups or individuals in a counselling setting.	Teaching qualification or be working towards one And 6 months teaching and assessing at level 2 or above.

5. Candidate Entry Requirements

This qualification is not suitable for those who are currently in a state of severe emotional difficulty and/or severe psychological distress. Centres need to ensure that all potential candidates are made aware of the nature of the course, and in particular that the course involves experiential elements that will involve some personal disclosure and associated personal developmental activities.

Title	Age	Entry requirements	Criteria considered important for selecting candidates
CAST-L3	18 or over	CSK-L2 or an equivalent qualification of at least 75 GLH	✓ Ability to translate intra-personal experience into language ✓ Able to benefit from self-development ✓ Emotional stability ✓ Evidence personal insight ✓ Ability to form a counselling relationship ✓ Awareness of difference and diversity ✓ Able to cope with course content ✓ Identify reasons for training beyond just personal development ✓ Be motivated towards developing as a counselling practitioner ✓ Provide references (centre option)

6. Fit for Purpose

This qualification is part of the CPCAB core progression route which leads to being a qualified counsellor and fulfils the requirements of a range of professional association registers. It also maps to a range of competency frameworks, and occupational standards. This section is intended to help learners make informed choices about the qualifications they wish to study and how they will enable learners to reach their personal and professional goals.

As a learner continues their journey with the **CPCAB Level 3 Certificate in Applied Counselling Studies**, they are embarking on the next step of the CPCAB progression route that leads them into professional practitioner training, and beyond.

CPCAB qualifications are designed to build upon each other, ensuring that the required skills and knowledge are developed alongside the personal growth of the learner. This qualification is based on current research and adheres to the [CPCAB's model](#) for practitioner development, ensuring that training meets the highest professional standards. This applied studies qualification includes additional content to develop a learner's understanding and use of counselling skills in allied professions and maximise the potential for employment in a broad range of roles.

Learners will receive live teaching either in-person or in an online classroom, which will include real-time interaction with peers and tutor(s). They will practice what they are learning, receive feedback on their use of counselling skills, and gain insights about themselves through their engagement with others. This live human connection is considered essential when training in an area such as counselling.

Counselling and Psychotherapy Career Progression

The CST-L3 is designed to prepare learners for a career as a counsellor, or entry into a range of other linked professions. The CPCAB progression route prepares learners for registration with the following counselling professional association registers, which are accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA):

- ✓ BACP – British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
 - ✓ NCPS – National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society
 - ✓ ACC – Association of Christians in Counselling and Linked Professions
 - ✓ COSCA – Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland
 - ✓ UKCP – United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (Standards for Psychotherapeutic Counselling).
- Please note that progressing to UKCP will also require a CPCAB Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic counselling (see separate mapping for more information on additional requirements).

The qualification progression route is also mapped to the requirements of the Scope of Practice and Education (SCoPEd) framework. The CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling meets the requirements of SCoPEd Column A.

This qualification has been given [Recognised Qualification status by the National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society \(NCPS\)](#). This qualification has been assessed and deemed to have met the standards expected for introduction level training for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

This qualification forms an important part of a progression route in counselling training, but on its own, it does not allow a graduate to practice as a qualified counsellor, gain entry to an Accredited Register or refer to themselves as ‘a specialist’ in the subject matter unless they have other qualifications/training to support this.

This qualification fully maps to the competencies from the following professional framework:

- ✓ BACP Counselling Skills Competence Framework (2020)

Occupational Mapping

This qualification is mapped to a range of the competencies within the following suites of National Occupational Standards (NOS). developed and maintained by the Sector Skills Council – Skills for Health:

- ✓ General Health Care
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Mental Health - Adults

This qualification also provides a range of competencies for allied and linked professions for those who are completing this training to improve employability and progression in a range of other occupations. The

skills and knowledge gained in this qualification contribute towards employability in a range of occupational standards represented in the Skills England occupational maps.

This alignment ensures that this qualification is not only comprehensive but also up-to-date with the latest practices in counselling, psychotherapy and other linked professions.

The assessment strategy maintains a focus on practitioner skills and qualities as well as on written evidence. The combination of tutor assessment and separate external verification by CPCAB values both objective independent scrutiny and the relational knowledge of the candidate and their work. The qualification is reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose

Centres have to meet robust centre approval requirements before they can deliver this qualification. All tutors are approved and standardised by CPCAB and centres are visited twice a year by a CPCAB external verifier.

7. Progression Routes

The CAST-L3 qualification is one step in a series of CPCAB qualifications. Once the candidate has completed this qualification they can continue training to become a counsellor by doing CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) or move into the area of life coaching by doing the Level 4 Diploma in Life Coaching (LC-L4).

For details of all CPCAB qualifications please see below or click here: [Qualifications - CPCAB](#) for further information.

This qualification also provides employability skills across a range of allied professions where counselling skills enhance a primary professional role (see purpose statement).

