



cpcab

The only awarding body  
run *by* counsellors  
*for* counsellors

2024 - 2025

## Candidate Guide

# Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2)

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

Qualification/learning aim number: 500/7938/4

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Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

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Please note:

This document, along with candidate support materials, can be downloaded from the [CPCAB website](#). These provide you with the information needed to enable you to maximise your learning and to complete the qualification successfully. If you need help with the accessibility of this document, please email [contact@cpcab.co.uk](mailto:contact@cpcab.co.uk) with your request.

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# 1. Introduction for Candidates

You are undertaking a course that leads to a nationally regulated qualification awarded by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB) – the only nationally regulated awarding body to specialise in the field of counselling and supervision. This qualification is designed to give learners the underpinning knowledge, skills and competencies to use counselling skills ethically and safely in a variety of contexts and roles.

This qualification is for:

- Those starting the first level of training as a professional counsellor.
- Those who want to learn counselling skills in other professional or helping roles.
- Those who want to improve their professional and personal relationships as part of personal development.

This qualification will not teach candidates how to be counsellors, but it will help them decide whether or not they want to train as a counsellor.

This qualification leads to employment and increases employability for those whose role is to support others in sectors such as health and social care, 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.

## Tip:

Know your limits: this course won't train you to be a counsellor. However, it will allow you to progress to the next level of counselling training.

Helping work is different from counselling (which is a formally contracted relationship between a counsellor and a client). To make this difference between counselling and helping work clear, CPCAB calls the person using counselling skills the “helper” and the person being helped the “helpee”.<sup>1</sup>

An example of helping work would be a care assistant (the helper) listening to someone they are looking after (the helpee) who is very worried about the health of a family member. The helper will help them to express their feelings and concerns. They may also guide them to a specific professional who may be able to provide them with the more specialised or in-depth help which they may need.

<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘counsellor’ and ‘client’ are not used until CPCAB’s Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Studies (CST-L3) / Level 3 Certificate in Applied Counselling Studies (CAST-L3).

## 2. Qualification Structure

This qualification is made up of 7 learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. This structure is based on the 7 processes of the CPCAB's Model.

### Tip:

Think of the assessment criteria as learning tasks which you complete and then record so that your tutor can see you have achieved the task.

To achieve the qualification, you **MUST** be internally assessed by your tutor as **Proficient** in all seven learning outcomes.

This qualification is eligible for fully in-person, blended or online delivery.

## 3. Internal Assessment

Art students keep a portfolio of their coursework which they use to show other people what they, as artists, have learnt. In a similar way you need to keep a portfolio of your coursework, which you can use to show your tutor what you have learnt. Keeping a portfolio of your coursework will not only provide your tutor with evidence of your learning, but also really help you with the learning process itself.

You also need to complete your (Candidate Learning Record (CLR)), which should be placed at the front of your portfolio to signpost the evidence for each assessment criterion. The CLR has brief notes beside each assessment criterion to help you understand what is being asked for and guidelines on how to record your learning.

You must give **two** pieces of evidence for each criterion. In addition, the CLR (when complete) must include references to the following three types of course work<sup>2</sup>:

- 1. Documents** – You must include the regular exploration of your learning (called the learning review) which contains your reflections on the input, discussions, experiences and readings for the course and which you start right from the beginning of the course. You must also include here 1 self-review (see section below on the tutor-assessed self-review) and at least 1 assignment (such as an essay). You might also include a review of audio/video recordings (including verbatim transcripts), tutorial records (when written by you) and notes on your personal development.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Please note that if it is appropriate you can reference the same section of your portfolio, or the same piece of work, a number of times.

<sup>3</sup> Your personal development may result from insights gained from the course, other personal development work or from personal counselling.

2. **Tutor observation** – You must include records of tutor feedback on your counselling skills practice sessions. You must refer to at least 2 examples of being observed by your tutor and 1 of these must be via audio or video recording.<sup>4</sup> You might also include tutorial records (when written by your tutor), and tutor feedback on group discussions.
3. **Testimony** – You must include records of peer feedback on your counselling skills practice sessions. You might also include peer feedback on group discussions.
  - See [CSK-L2 Specification](#) for a summary of minimum assessment requirements.
  - See the CPCAB film on [How to build a student portfolio](#).

**Tip:**

It is a good idea to outline possible sections in your portfolio, for example:

- Document: learning reviews, self-review, assignments
- Tutor observation: tutor feedback on skills practice
- Testimony: peer feedback on skills practice

An example reference in your CLR might read: *Learning review p 21, para 3, lines 3-6 (document)*

CPCAB recommends that you attach [Criteria Assessment Sheet \(CAS\)](#) to any work you hand in to your tutor for assessment. Your tutor can use the CAS to tell you which criteria you have met and to give you helpful feedback throughout the course. In this way you can gradually collect evidence as you go along and keep track of what evidence you still need to look out for.

**Self-review**

Towards the end of your course your tutor will support you to complete a self-review of your learning. A template document is available on the [CPCAB website](#). This will allow you to reflect on what you have learnt and show your understanding of counselling skills. Your tutor will assess your self-review and provide you with feedback on how you are progressing towards competence in all 7 areas. If you need to undertake any specific activities to address areas for development your tutor's feedback will explain how to do so.

**Tip:**

Meeting criteria is important, but the overall experience of learning about counselling skills should be much richer than criteria. Try to keep a balance.

After you have completed your portfolio your tutor will look at the evidence you have referenced in your Candidate Learning Record (CLR) and assess whether or not you have completed the assessment criteria, achieved the learning outcomes and met all the other qualification requirements. They may well

<sup>4</sup> In the case of the audio or video recording your tutor may choose to listen to (or watch) the recording, rather than observe you directly.

decide that you are not yet Proficient – and will identify what you still need to complete/achieve and how you might work towards doing this.

- Your tutor will give you further guidance on developing your portfolio, the three types of coursework and filling in the Candidate Learning Record.

The final assessment of your work is recorded on the Completion Statement at the end of your Candidate Learning Record.

**Tip:**

It is important to realise that simply presenting evidence to meet criteria may not be sufficient to meet the overall learning outcomes and/or the qualification requirements. Your tutor may have observed substantive evidence which indicates that a specific assessment criterion or learning outcome has not been met despite evidence you have submitted. If that is the case, they may record a final result of Not Proficient on the basis of contraindications.

Please note that all the work you include in your portfolio is *assessable material*, so it may be seen not just by your tutor but also by all those involved in your training centre's internal assessment process or any associated appeal or complaint. Such people will include the internal moderator and verifier as part of internal quality assurance (IQA) as well as the CPCAB external verifier.

## 4. Equal Opportunities and Reasonable Adjustments

In order to make sure that assessment is fair to all candidates, CPCAB requires all recognised centres to have an effective candidate support system in place and to make appropriate arrangements to meet individual assessment needs. You can ensure that your own learning and assessment needs are being met by discussing your own needs/difficulties with your tutor, who can ensure that you receive the appropriate support at your centre. Please talk to your centre prior to your enrolment and about any additional support that you may need regarding learning and assessment.

Please see CPCAB's [Reasonable Adjustment Guidance for Centres](#).

Both CPCAB and centres are required to recognise and comply with both the spirit and the word of equal opportunities legislation. Previous Acts were amalgamated into the Equality Act 2010.

See [CPCAB's Equal Opportunities Policy](#).

## 5. Appeals and Complaints

CPCAB are committed to maintaining standards across our recognised centres so that the public can have confidence in us and our qualifications. We provide our own complaints and appeals policies for the benefit of centres and candidates.

- Please view our policies on Complaints, Appeals and Whistleblowing on the [CPCAB website](#).

All CPCAB approved centres are required to have a complaints and appeals procedure which is available to candidates. Candidates must address all appeals about internal assessment or complaints about any aspect of their learning experience on the course via the centre's own internal complaints and appeals procedures. It is the centre's responsibility to make these procedures available to candidates.

Candidates who contact CPCAB directly on these issues will normally be directed back to their centre.

## 6. Candidate Feedback

Your feedback is vital to CPCAB to ensure the ongoing quality of our qualifications. Feedback enables us to meet our requirements as a regulated Awarding Organisation and contributes towards our annual qualification review process. Please ensure that you complete the online feedback survey at the conclusion of your course.

Please click on this link to access the survey - [Candidate Feedback](#).

# Appendix 1: Candidate Learning Record

## Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2)

**Instruction:**

Print out (or otherwise detach) this Candidate Learning Record (CLR) and the Completion Statement which follows it. Then insert both documents in the front of your portfolio.

When you have completed your Candidate Learning Record please tick the following box to confirm that you have provided evidence all three types of coursework (i.e. documents, tutor observation and testimony):

CSK-L2		
LEARNING OUTCOME:	1. Use counselling skills ethically and safely	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio reference
1.1 Use counselling skills within an ethical framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand safe &amp; ethical practice and why it is needed.</li> <li>• Explore features of safe practice.</li> </ul>	
1.2 Work within personal limits of ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what limits of ability actually means.</li> <li>• Develop and show awareness of own limitations in terms of knowledge and skills.</li> <li>• Communicate limits of own ability during skills practice.</li> </ul>	
1.3 Enable the helpee to find additional sources of support where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand where helping fits into a wider supportive network (e.g. careers advice, CAB, GP's, therapeutic counselling).</li> <li>• Identify a range of referral agencies along with the value and potential of appropriate referral.</li> <li>• Practise using this intervention in skills practice.</li> </ul>	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	2. Establish and sustain the boundaries of the helping role	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio reference
2.1 Establish boundaries as a helper in a particular setting and within the limits of time available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover what boundaries are needed in different helping situations and why.</li> <li>• Learn to work within a time boundary and why keeping to this is important.</li> <li>• Show ability to work within a structured framework (beginning, middle, end) in skills practice.</li> </ul>	
2.2 Establish the nature and limits of confidentiality for helping work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the implications and limitations of confidentiality and apply in skills practice sessions.</li> <li>• Explore what you would personally find difficult to keep confidential.</li> </ul>	

2.3	Maintain the boundaries of the helping role throughout the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on your understanding of the relevance of boundaries in the helping role (e.g. disclosure, relationship, ability).</li> <li>• Rehearse, using role-play, the maintenance of those boundaries.</li> </ul>	
2.4	End the helping interaction appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of sensitivity around ending a helping session and write about the risks of not working with ending appropriately.</li> <li>• Understand the value of summarising and demonstrate how to end a session appropriately.</li> </ul>	
LEARNING OUTCOME:		3. Work empathically as a helper	
<b>Assessment criteria</b>		<b>Candidate guidance to criteria</b>	<b>Portfolio reference</b>
3.1	Define empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the meaning of empathy.</li> <li>• Reflect on the difficulty and challenge of feeling empathic towards others (e.g. in the learning group, family etc.).</li> </ul>	
3.2	Identify and explore differences between self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop understanding and knowledge of self (e.g. beliefs, values and own responses to experiences).</li> <li>• Explore how prejudices may have originated and the effect of some experiences on your own beliefs, feelings, and responses.</li> <li>• Show an understanding of the difference between your own perception of an experience or event and that of another person's.</li> </ul>	
3.3	Explore and challenge personal issues, fears and prejudices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate a range of potential differences between helper and helpee (e.g. gender, race, age, social habits, capability, sexual orientation, physical ability).</li> <li>• Understand why it's important to be aware of difference between the helper and helpee.</li> <li>• Explore stereotyping and prejudice. Identify your own beliefs, feelings and potential responses to certain people and situations.</li> <li>• Reflect on assumptions you have made about people and review how your assumptions have impacted on relationship(s) concerned.</li> <li>• Use skills practice to learn to work effectively with difference.</li> </ul>	
3.4	Communicate empathic understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use skills to develop and communicate empathic understanding of another's perspective.</li> <li>• Identify how it felt to be listened to and empathically understood, as opposed to being given advice.</li> <li>• Reflect on how you used your skills to communicate empathically.</li> </ul>	

LEARNING OUTCOME:	4. Focus on the helpee's needs and concerns	
<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Candidate guidance to criteria</b>	<b>Portfolio reference</b>
4.1. Enable the helpee to identify and focus on their needs and concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the difficulties the helpee might have of verbalising concerns and prioritising them.</li> <li>• Identify and practise the skills needed to assist the helpee to stay focused throughout.</li> </ul>	
4.2 Identify own feelings in order to set them aside and focus on the helpee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop self-awareness of your own agenda and reactions to the helpee's issues.</li> <li>• Actively explore the consequences of not being aware.</li> <li>• Consider ways of managing your own reactions.</li> </ul>	
4.3 Work with the helpee to meet their objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a range of listening and responding skills to stay focused on the helpee's needs and issues.</li> <li>• Reflect on the challenges of doing this.</li> </ul>	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	5. Use self-awareness in helping work	
<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Candidate guidance to criteria</b>	<b>Portfolio reference</b>
5.1 Describe how reflecting on own personality increases self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify personal blocks to listening and write about them in your learning review.</li> <li>• Explore aspects of your 'self' which contribute to patterns of thought and behaviour (e.g. social preferences, communication style and formative years).</li> <li>• Allow your understanding of the relationship between your personality and helping work to grow – by asking yourself the question "why do I do this work and why do I do it here and in this way?"</li> </ul>	
5.2 Describe how reflecting on own personal history increases self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the ways in which your life history has impacted on your behaviour and life choices.</li> <li>• Identify the insights gained and suggest the potential benefits in relation to your helping work.</li> </ul>	
5.3 Describe how reflecting on own patterns of relating increases self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover and understand the meaning of 'relationship'.</li> <li>• Explore the ways in which you have developed relationships with other people.</li> <li>• Reflect on the difficulties that you have experienced in developing and maintaining relationships with others.</li> </ul>	
5.4 Use self-awareness to inform helping work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify your responses (thinking, feeling, sensing) that occur during a helping interaction.</li> <li>• Develop, during skills practice, a greater awareness of yourself as an individual.</li> <li>• Record what you noticed about yourself during a skills interaction. Use peer feedback to help in this learning activity.</li> </ul>	

LEARNING OUTCOME:	6. Use a range of counselling skills to facilitate the helping interaction	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio reference
6.1 Demonstrate appropriate use of a range of listening and responding skills to facilitate the helping interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, and appropriately use, skills which enable the helpee to experience being heard, understood and accepted (e.g. questioning, paraphrasing, reflecting, summarising) – in a way which enables closer understanding of another.</li> <li>• Choose and use skills to move an interaction forward from beginning to middle stage and then to a conclusion.</li> <li>• Find out about the dangers and benefits of self-disclosure.</li> <li>• Increase your range of skills to support the helpee in finding ways to implement change.</li> </ul>	
6.2 Demonstrate appropriate use of questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the difference between open and closed questions and when to use them appropriately.</li> <li>• Reflect on whose agenda – helper's or helpee's – we are focusing on when we ask questions.</li> </ul>	
6.3 Demonstrate sensitivity in timing responses and staying with silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on personal response to silence. How do you usually react to silence?</li> <li>• Practise skills in role-play and reflect on the process.</li> </ul>	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	7. Use feedback and reflection to enhance counselling skills	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio reference
7.1 Use reflection and feedback to assess personal progress and identify learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a record of feedback received from peers and tutor observation – note and monitor your capacity to hear and work with constructive feedback.</li> <li>• Record reflections on your personal development and competence as a helper.</li> <li>• Identify your progress, any barriers to progress and any areas of skills or knowledge that need to be developed further.</li> </ul>	
7.2 Use feedback skills to provide constructive feedback to other learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide verbal and written feedback to other learners using a constructive and honest approach – e.g. the feedback sandwich – offering positive observations at the beginning and end of the feedback. Areas for growth are offered in a constructive manner.</li> <li>• Identify personal areas of difficulty in feedback – e.g. are you overly critical or overly “nice”? Explore and reflect on this and write about it in your learning review.</li> <li>• Practise this skill in the skills practice sessions.</li> <li>• Look critically at your own responses to the process of giving feedback to others.</li> </ul>	

Where do you plan to progress once you've finished this qualification?

Please enter corresponding number here:

1. Employment as a Counsellor (Full Time, Part Time or Self Employed)
2. Employment within Allied Professions (Full Time, Part Time or Self Employed)
3. Employment in Non Allied Professions Sector (Full Time, Part Time or Self Employed)
4. Further Study in Further Education (Counselling related subjects)
5. Further Study in Higher Education (Counselling related subjects)
6. Further Study in Further Education (Non-Counselling related subjects)
7. Further Study in Higher Education (Non-Counselling related subjects)
8. Voluntary Work – Counselling Sector
9. Voluntary Work – Allied Professions\*
10. Voluntary Work – Non-Counselling/Allied Professions
11. Not in employment
12. I don't know

\*Example list of allied professions (not an exhaustive list):

- 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

## Appendix 2: Completion Statement for CSK-L2

Completion Statement for Candidate Learning Record Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2)			
Learning outcome		Contra-indications present Y/N	Tutor signature if learning outcome has been achieved
1	Use counselling skills ethically and safely		
2	Establish and sustain the boundaries of the helping role		
3	Work empathically as a helper		
4	Focus on the helpee's needs and concerns		
5	Use self-awareness in helping work		
6	Use a range of counselling skills to facilitate the helping interaction		
7	Use feedback and reflection to enhance counselling skills		

*To be completed by tutor:*

Where the learning outcome has not been achieved please:

- (a) State clearly which learning outcome this relates to.
- (b) Give specific and relevant reasons why the learning outcome has not been achieved.
- (c) Record proposed course of action agreed between tutor and candidate to address/remedy concerns.

Learning outcome	Details of relevant contra-indications	Proposed course of action

I declare this Candidate Learning Record to be a true and authentic record of evidence submitted in my portfolio:

Candidate name: ..... Candidate signature: ..... Date: .....

I declare that this Completion Statement is a true record of the candidate's achievement:

I declare that this candidate has achieved all the above qualification requirements for CSK-L2:

Tutor name: ..... Tutor signature: ..... Date: .....

# Appendix 3: Criteria Assessment Sheet (CAS)

Candidate: .....

Group: .....

Qualification: .....

Coursework: .....

**Candidates:** In the table below, identify the criteria evidenced in the assignment concerned and cross-reference these in the relevant page margin of your assignment.  
**Assessors:** Grade the robustness of the evidence identified by the candidate against the Assessment Criteria: YES (achieved) or NO (not yet achieved).

For completion by the candidate: Candidate reference to coursework			For completion by the tutor: Tutor assessment	
Unit (CAST-L3 and TC-L4 only)	Criteria number	Page number	YES/NO	Tutor feedback

General comments:

Tutor name:

Date: