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2026-2027

Specification Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills (ICSK-L2)

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

Qualification/learning aim number: 500/7762/4

Sector subject area: 1.3 Health and Social Care

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Please note:

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1. Qualification Information

Purpose Statement

This qualification is intended for candidates who want to:

- Learn basic counselling skills (listening and responding skills) in helping roles¹.
- Find out more about counselling (this qualification won't teach them to be a counsellor but may help them decide whether or not they want to train as one).
- Improve professional and personal relationships.

This qualification does not lead directly to an employed role. However, it could enhance an existing role or increase the general employability of those seeking to enter the job market.

Other potential job roles 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 professional
- Helpline operator
- Home care assistant
- Mentoring and support worker
- Promotion in current role
- Roles in health and social care
- Welfare and advice worker
- Youth worker

Please see below for progression opportunities.

¹ In order to make a clear distinction between a professional counsellor and a person who uses counselling skills, the person using counselling skills is referred to as a 'helper' and the person being helped as a 'helped,' rather than 'counsellor' and 'client.'

Funding	This qualification is eligible for funding in England under the Local Flexibility Scheme (part of the DfE's adult education budget funding). Candidates in England may also be able to access funding according to individual entitlement criteria (e.g. related to age and/or employment status and/or prior qualifications).
Level	2 ²
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	30 (minimum)
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	51
Credit value	5
Minimum Age	16 years ³ .
Entry Requirements	No previous training or experience required. Please see CPCAB Candidate Entry Requirements for criteria considered important in selecting applicants for a programme leading to ICSK-L2. CPCAB's Entry Requirements and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.
Assessment	Proficient (Pass)/Not Proficient (Fail) Tutor assessment of candidate portfolio evidencing minimum assessment requirements. External verification by CPCAB. See CPCAB's Minimum Assessment Requirements.
Additional Qualification Requirements	None required.
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.

² Equivalent to level 3 on the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

³ This age requirement is linked to Ofqual's system for categorising qualifications.

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 aged 18+ can progress to CPCAB Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2) or aged 19+ to CPCAB Level 3 Certificate in Life Coaching Skills (LCS-L3.) See CPCAB's Progression Route for details.
Candidate Registration Fee	£62
Centre Application for CPCAB Approval to Offer the Qualification	Centre application fee: £165 (one-off fee). ⁴ Centres are expected to design their own training programmes. ⁵ Sample schemes of work are available from CPCAB on request.
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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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 and Assessment Criteria (ICSK-L2)

Learning outcomes (<i>skills, knowledge, understanding</i>)	Assessment criteria (<i>to assess learning outcome</i>)
The learner will/will be able to:	The learner can:
1. Work within the limitations of the helping role	1.1 Explain the nature of helping work and how it differs from other support e.g. counselling, coaching, friendship 1.2 Communicate limits of ability as a helper
2. Establish boundaries for helping work	2.1 Set the boundaries of the helping interaction including the limits of confidentiality and time available 2.2 End the helping interaction appropriately
3. Communicate empathic understanding	3.1 Differentiate between empathy and sympathy 3.2 Apply initial counselling skills to communicate empathic understanding 3.3 Demonstrate sensitivity to individual needs
4. Focus on the helpee's agenda	4.1 Identify the helpee's needs 4.2 Describe why it is important to identify and stay focused on what is most important to the helpee
5. Understand the importance of self-awareness in helping work	5.1 Explain the importance of developing self-awareness in helping work 5.2 Describe how own personality impacts on helping work
6. Use listening and responding skills	6.1 Describe the significance of non-verbal communication 6.2 Describe and demonstrate open and attentive posture in helping work 6.3 Describe and demonstrate the listening and responding skills of paraphrasing, reflecting and summarising 6.4 Describe the difference between open and closed questions and use these appropriately in helping work
7. Use review and feedback to develop initial counselling skills	7.1 Use reflection and feedback to identify personal progress and learning needs 7.2 Provide feedback to other learners

See the [ICSK-L2 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 the qualification.

Candidate portfolios are externally verified by CPCAB.

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

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – must include all three methods of assessment		
Course activities	Assessment method ⁷	Types of evidence (1 reference for each assessment criterion)
❖ Seminars and workshops ❖ Review of skills work ❖ Review of learning	Documents	❖ Learning review (throughout programme) ⁸ ❖ Self-review ❖ Tutorial records (when written by the candidate)
❖ Tutor assessed skills practice	Tutor observation	❖ 1 written tutor-assessment of initial helping session⁹ ❖ Tutorial records (when written by the tutor)
❖ Skills practice ❖ Seminars and workshops	Testimony	❖ Peer/‘helpee’ feedback
MARKING SCHEME		
Internal assessment:	Candidate portfolio externally verified by CPCAB.	

⁷ Proforma and guide sheets for internal assessment can be downloaded from the [CPCAB Website](#).

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

⁹ All tutor-observed skills sessions can form part of the course and do not need to be formal assessments.

4. Tutor-Assessor Qualifications and Experience

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	Minimum qualification	On-going Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	Minimum practice experience	Minimum experience as a tutor
Tutor	90 hours counselling skills training at level 2 or above. e.g. CSK-L2	10 hours per year CPD activities.	1 years' experience using counselling skills in a workplace setting.	Teaching qualification or be working towards one. Experience of delivering group training

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.

6. Fit for Purpose

This qualification has been designed to take account of the [latest research findings](#) on what makes counselling effective and is underpinned by the [CPCAB model](#) of practitioner development.

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
- ✓ Customer Service
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Mental Health - Adults

The assessment strategy maintains a focus on practical skills and qualities as well as on written evidence. The tutor assessment is externally verified by CPCAB. 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 by CPCAB.

7. Progression Routes

The ICSK-L2 qualification is part of a suite of CPCAB qualifications. Once the candidate has completed this qualification, they may wish to progress (if aged 18+) to CPCAB Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills (CSK-L2) or (if aged 19+) move into the area of life coaching by doing the Level 3 Certificate in Life Coaching Studies (LCS-L3).

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

