AWARDS STANDARDS -
COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

FOREWORD

This document presents QQI's standards for educational and training awards in counselling and psychotherapy. The standards are for 'intended programme learning outcomes' and are designed to help programme designers and developers ensure that programmes provide a suitable grounding in counselling or psychotherapy for prospective practitioners. They are not suitable for use as criteria for assessing candidates for particular qualifications.

The standards will be used by QQI validation[1] panels (and those of bodies with delegated authority from QQI to make awards concerned) when recommending whether a new programme should be validated for a specific qualification in counselling or psychotherapy.

The awards standards are cumulative, meaning that the outcomes required at Level N are those specified in the Level N column plus those in all lower level columns. Not withstanding that the descriptors are cumulative they are not intended to imply there is a sequence of qualifications at level 6 to 9 that all must accumulate. For example, a programme leading to a qualification meeting the Level 9 standard here could be targeted at people who did not hold a qualification meeting the Level 8 standard here.

Excepting special validation conditions, the standards do not constrain how particular programmes of education and training enable learners to achieve the expected programme learning outcomes as long as the outcomes are achieved. Nor do they specify how actual learning outcomes are assessed.

Interpretation of these draft awards standards will be aided by a reflection on their context, scope and purposes. These are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The context is intricate. There is a wide variety of programmes of education and training offering to prepare graduates for careers as counsellors or psychotherapists. There is a relatively large number of learners enrolled on these programmes. There are around twenty professional associations and a wide diversity of theoretical orientations. The professional associations may regulate their own members to an extent but practices vary. Colloquially the term counselling is widely used in diverse settings. The terms 'counsellor' and 'psychotherapist' have no specific legal protection. At the time of writing, there is no statutory regulation of 'counsellor' or 'psychotherapist' in Ireland but regulation under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act

2005 is anticipated within the next few years. The professional associations in counselling and psychotherapy would generally favour the establishment of statutory regulation. Most of them are members of the Psychological Therapies Forum (PTF). There are no shared national educational standards for programmes of higher education in counselling and psychotherapy.

For regulated professions in Ireland it is typical for educational (academic) standards and professional standards to be distinct. In essence meeting the educational standards entitles a person to an educational qualification but entitlement to practise requires a person to meet (and continue to meet) a distinct professional standard. An approved (accredited) qualification is necessary but insufficient for professional practice. The key point here is that educational standards, while relevant to professional regulation have a different purpose. The draft awards standards are educational (and training) standards and they are not designed to regulate the profession and are (alone) not fit for that purpose. However, it is hoped that the existence of widely agreed educational standards will assist in progressing better regulation and regulatory initiatives whether they be voluntary or statutory.

The awards standards translate the National Framework of Qualifications' descriptors into language that is accessible to those involved in the provision of programmes of education and training in counselling and in psychotherapy at Level 6, 7, 8 or 9 in the NFQ. They accomplish this by setting down broad expectations concerning knowledge, skill and competence that must be achieved before a qualification can be awarded at a particular level in the NFQ.

In developing the standards it has been assumed that counselling and psychotherapy can each be served by a common framework of standards. The awards standards have been designed to accommodate the diversity of current approaches to counselling and psychotherapy and indeed future ones. They emphasise expected learning outcomes which apply to all theoretical orientations[2] in both counselling and psychotherapy. The awards standards make no attempt (beyond the stated assumptions) to define counselling and psychotherapy or distinguish between them. These are matters for the professional associations and any future statutory regulators.

It is recognised there are multiple specialisations[3] (e.g. involving addiction, children, sexuality, families, and groups) in counselling and psychotherapy. When using these standards in the context of weighting the coverage of multiple specialisations, the breadth and depth of the respective intended programme learning outcomes must be both relevant and proportionate to the particular programme's objectives.

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1   A programme of education and training is validated where QQI confirms under section 45 (or the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012) that the provider of the programme has satisfied QQI that an enrolled learner of that provider who completes that programme will acquire, and where appropriate, be able to demonstrate, the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify an award of QQI being offered in respect of that programme. (see Section 2(1) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012)

2   Some practitioners used term 'modality' to signify 'theoretical orientation'.
3   Or therapeutic applications.

It is also recognised that entry to some professionally oriented education and training programmes in counselling and psychotherapy, some of up to four years duration, will require an honour's bachelor degree degree in human sciences or equivalent.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

The awards standards here are not for qualifications for Guidance Counselling in the education sector and not intended to be involved in the regulation of this activity.

SPECIAL VALIDATION CONDITIONS FOR PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNSELLORS OR PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

Not everybody is personally suited to providing therapeutic services in the context of a given counselling or psychotherapy related theoretical orientation. It is, therefore, expected that a prospective practitioner's suitability would be assessed as part of any educational programme designed to prepare her or him for therapeutic practice. This does not imply that access to knowledge is to be privileged to those who are suitable but rather that access to endorsement for professional practice is only provided to those who deserve it.

A prospective practitioner must be afforded sufficient time and opportunities to develop and demonstrate his or her counselling or psychotherapeutic skills in practice placement settings. Programmes designed to prepare people for careers in therapeutic practice must therefore allocate sufficient time for simulated practice (or equivalent) and in the latter stages practice placements including supervised direct client work. These should be formally supervised and assessed against explicitly stated intended learning outcomes. Programmes not including such a placement may still have academic validity but they should not be presented as being sufficient for providing the educational foundations required for professional therapeutic practice with clients. Exclusively theoretical programmes cannot enable learners to meet the Awards Standards for Counselling and Psychotherapy therefore; practice-oriented programmes must contain mutually supporting theory and practice learning opportunities. The volume of supervised direct client work and practice placement to be incorporated into programmes will, it is anticipated, be eventually guided by CORU. In the meantime, for example, a minimum of 120 hours of direct client work under supervision is required to be included in any programme leading to an honours bachelor's degree qualification (NFQ Level 8).

SELF

In developing programmes in these areas it is important that self-knowledge of the learner, academic learning and professional performance are given due cognisance. Counselling and psychotherapy practice require the development and demonstration of a suitable level of self-knowledge. This may be achieved through personal psychotherapeutic experience (or equivalent learning). Programmes must include a suitable volume and kinds of learning opportunities for the development of this learning. The QQI awards standards do not prescribe the volume or kind of learning opportunities. Professional bodies can be expected to be more prescriptive.[4]

ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS

The awards standards here are intended for persons wishing to qualify as counsellors or psychotherapists. Not everybody is suited to psychotherapeutic practice and individuals might only discover after following a programme of education for a period that they are not suited to counselling or psychotherapy practice. Such individuals may yet have the ability to qualify for an academic qualification reflecting their learning. It is important that alternative pathways and qualifications be available for such individuals. Such alternative qualifications must be unambiguously differentiated (by award title, programme title, certification, and diploma supplement) from qualifications that meet the educational requirements for professional counselling or psychotherapy practice.

PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Programmes should ensure that graduates can achieve sufficient supervised clinical practice to satisfy the requirements of the relevant professional body. Where a post-qualification internship is required, it is currently the norm that the infrastructure for this will be established by the professional body concerned which will also monitor the internships. In the longer term it is expected that Counsellors and Psychotherapists will be regulated in Ireland under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005.

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4   For example, the following quotation is from the European Association for Psychotherapy's document describing requirements for its Certificate in Psychotherapy.

"4.2.1. Personal Psychotherapeutic Experience, or equivalent. This should be taken to include training analysis, self-experience, and other methods involving elements of self-reflection, therapy, and personal experience (not less than 250 hours). No single term is agreed by all psychotherapy methods. Any training shall include arrangements to ensure that the trainees can identify and appropriately manage their involvement in and contributions to the processes of the psychotherapies that they practice in accordance with their specific methods." (http://www.europsyche.org/download/cms/100510/EAP_ECP_Details_2009.pdf Section 4.2.1 retrieved 16/03/2012)

Knowledge				
	NFQ Level 6	**NFQ Level 7**	**NFQ Level 8**	**NFQ Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:
Knowledge-Breadth	*Specialised knowledge of a broad area*	*Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas*	*Understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning.*	*A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning*
Knowledge-Kind	*Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory*	*Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas*	*Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s).*	*A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning*
Core knowledge base	Broad elementary knowledge of the theories underpinning counselling and psychotherapeutic practice including historical context and e.g. • theories of mind • communication theories • lifespan developmental perspectives, and transitions • psychological theories • sociological theories • ethics • behavioural theories	Knowledge of the theories underpinning counselling and psychotherapeutic practice and in depth understanding of selected core theories	Detailed knowledge of how counselling and psychotherapeutic practice-relevant theories and literature relate to each other and broad knowledge of related approaches to therapeutic engagement • Understanding to enable comparison and integration of theories Detailed knowledge of theories of human development including life transitions and relationships as well as personality theories e.g. • attachment theory • object relations • family life cycle • cognitive behavioural/learning theory • Piagetian constructivist theory • social constructivist theory • systemic developmental theories • psychoanalytic and humanistic theories • theories of assessment and intervention etc Detailed knowledge of theory and practice for selected theoretical orientation(s)	Critical awareness and integration of current counselling and psychotherapy process and outcome research literature Knowledge and understanding sufficient to enable one to critically evaluate theory including how relevant theories and literature relate to each other Forefront knowledge in an identified theoretical area A critical knowledge of a range of other non-pathologising and non-labelling therapeutic positions and approaches e.g. • strengths based • collaborative and non-expert • client led intervention • narrative • psychodynamic • Constructivist and solution focussed etc
Philosophical base	Awareness of the broad philosophical foundations for counselling and psychotherapy e.g. • concepts of science • institutional and ideological debates • neuroscience compared with psychoanalysis • personal narratives and moral quests	Knowledge of the philosophical underpinnings of major counselling and psychotherapeutic theories e.g. • theories of mind, thinking, and interrelatedness • familiarity with influences of key philosophers e.g. Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Sartre and schools of philosophy e.g. Berlin School • knowledge of theories of learning and change • philosophical schools such as existentialism, phenomenology, post- modernism • ethics • different understandings of therapy • issues concerning knowledge and knowing: privileged knowledge, knowledge ownership.	Critical understanding required to engage in philosophical discourse on counselling and psychotherapeutic practice including its influences and impacts e.g. • contemporary debates regarding counselling and psychotherapy schools • current key issues: e.g. theory of self, nature of the unconscious, philosophy of language, hermeneutics • ethics of regulation: public versus private relationship Critical understanding of theories of learning and change and of how counselling and psychotherapy facilitate change	Critical understanding of the current philosophical debates in the field, how they relate to counselling and psychotherapy research and practice, and clarity about the nature of the debates

Contextual knowledge	Knowledge of the historical context for the origins and emergence of counselling and psychotherapeutic practices, particularly contemporary practices	Knowledge of the field, conceptualised and situated within a broader understanding of healthcare sciences, organisation and practices Understanding of the multidisciplinary contexts in which counselling and psychotherapeutic practices are undertaken	Knowledge of, and engagement with, national and international (inter- and intra-) professional discourses	Knowledge to enable contribution to national and international professional discourses
	Knowledge of systems of organisation of counselling and psychotherapeutic practices Broad knowledge of social and behavioural sciences Broad knowledge of health, ethnic, racial, poverty, and cultural discourses	Specialised knowledge of social and cultural systems related to counselling and psychotherapeutic practice e.g. • socio-political systems • culturally sensitive practice • power and its use and abuse in therapeutic relationships	Awareness of the boundaries, relationships and distinctions between social care and counselling / psychotherapy	
	Knowledge of the mental health continuum and of the interrelationship between mental health and bio-psychosocial factors	Knowledge of manifestations of mental illness and of the interrelationship between mental health and bio-psychosocial factors Knowledge and understanding of the distinct roles of different practitioners who work with mental health issues Knowledge of the limitations of counselling / psychotherapy in relation to mental health issues and of when to refer to other mental health professionals Knowledge of the implications of the mental health legislation for therapeutic practice	Knowledge of the major mental illnesses including contemporary understandings and debates; natural histories and treatment outcomes Knowledge of diverse systems of classification of psychopathology e.g. • DSM –IV (DSM V) or ICD-10 and non-pathologising classificatory systems e.g. • constructivist, social constructivist, systemic developmental theories, psychoanalytic and humanistic theories etc	Knowledge of neuroscience, psychopharmacology
	Broad knowledge of the history of mental illness its treatment and of different historical perspectives e.g • the shared history of counselling, psychotherapy and psychiatry; Jaspers, Janet, Bleuler, Jung, Freud	Critical understanding of the history of mental illness and its treatment from a global perspective including current debates Knowledge of discourses about madness and sanity		
	Broad knowledge of biological and physiological functioning (understanding the body)	Knowledge of the interrelationship between physiological, psychological and social systems	Knowledge of psychopathology from a biological perspective e.g. knowledge neurological and endocrine systems in relation to physiological impacts on mental health)	Critical appraisal of the interrelationship between human systems e.g. neuroscience and psych-social functioning; Understanding of the influence of genetic factors
Knowledge of the importance of inclusive and equitable practice	Knowledge of the principles of equity Understanding how one's own culture and cultural style, race and racial origins and belief systems can impact upon professional relationships in counselling and psychotherapeutic practice	Awareness of national and international standards, laws and agreements on human rights • respect for values and belief systems	Detailed working knowledge of the importance of equality, diversity and inclusive practice e.g. • Detailed contextual knowledge concerning the influences of power, society and culture with particular reference to the management of professional interpersonal relationships in changing cultural and health care contexts	Critical and reflective understanding of the importance of promoting equality and inclusive practice e.g. • Critical understanding of issues of power, equality and social justice with an emphasis on service organisation management and accessibility to minority groups

Awards Standards - Counselling and Psychotherapy

Scope of practice	Identification of the scope, benefits and limitations of inter-personal work with clients in counselling and psychotherapeutic practice e.g. • identify appropriate reasons for offering counselling or psychotherapy Knowledge of organisational and regulatory systems relevant to counselling and psychotherapeutic practice	Specialised knowledge of the scope and limitations of professional counselling and psychotherapeutic practice Knowledge of professional counselling and psychotherapeutic practices e.g. psychodynamic • integrative and humanistic • cognitive behavioural therapy • family • constructivist and systemic approaches	Detailed knowledge of the scope and limitations of particular theoretical orientation(s) of counselling and psychotherapeutic practice Detailed understanding of the role and contribution of counselling and psychotherapy in mental health services Detailed working knowledge of the organisation and regulation of counselling and psychotherapeutic practice including • scope of practice • interface between counselling/psychotherapy and other health care professionals • professional policies and guidelines • regulatory context	Critical analytic knowledge of the scope and limitations of particular theoretical orientation(s) of counselling and psychotherapeutic practice Critical appraisal of contemporary issues concerning scope of practice including power and control in relation to safe and ethical practice, practice regulation, public protection, legal, social and ethical frameworks
Therapeutic relationship	Knowledge of the essential components of the therapeutic relationship e.g. • scope and limitations of professional relationships • critique of what is taken as given/taken for granted • client and therapist characteristics • distinctions between therapeutic and social relationships	Specialised knowledge of relationship dynamics, transference and counter-transference • detailed knowledge of the distinctions between counselling and psychotherapeutic relationships and social relationships Critical understanding of counselling and psychotherapeutic relationship issues compared with those in other caring professions Critique of the assumption that counselling and psychotherapeutic relationships exist Awareness of multiple factors and contexts in assessment and intervention	Detailed theoretical and practical knowledge of relationship dynamics, therapeutic alliance and the management of transference and counter-transference • power relationships and of the characteristic correlations between real relationships and theoretical constructs • theoretical underpinnings of the therapeutic relationship • concepts of alliance, collaboration, shared states of mind • kinds of relationship issues in different professional and workplace settings, e.g. private clinics, public services, prisons • knowledge of the therapeutic relationship issues and challenges associated with certain patient/client histories: e.g. survivors of abuse, personality disorder, dangerousness, psychosis. • reflective critique of self as therapeutic instrument Knowledge of the potential contribution of innovative approaches to counselling and psychotherapy practice	Critical analytic knowledge of the therapeutic relationship • power and its management in the context of a therapeutic alliance • empowerment and ownership • role of self (the therapist) particularly in terms of counter-transference and transference Critical appraisal of the use of innovative approaches to counselling and psychotherapeutic engagement
Supervisory relationship and process	Understanding of the supervision relationship as formative, normative and restorative	Specialised knowledge of supervision's purposes, functions and processes	Detailed understanding of supervision's purposes, functions and processes	

Ethics and the law	Knowledge of the application of the basic philosophical concepts underpinning ethics e.g. • ethical principles for working with others Awareness of context for ethics and counselling and psychotherapeutic practice e.g. • relevant codes of ethics and legislation	Knowledge of the theory of consent Specialised knowledge of applicable professional code(s) of ethics and of how they are applied in selected theoretical orientations	Detailed knowledge of the • legal and statutory requirements • professional policies and guidelines • codes of ethics and the principles that underpin them and their implications for counselling and psychotherapeutic work	Critical appraisal of: • codes of ethics and their limitations • scope of practice in relation to ethical issues; • ethics of counselling/psychotherapy
Communication	Understanding of the vocabulary and style of discourse in counselling and psychotherapy e.g. • the terminology used in the research literature and in public reports on equality	Practical knowledge of the vocabulary, context and style required for the presentation of professional reports Recognition of the distinctions between therapeutic and non-therapeutic communications	Detailed knowledge of the appropriate channels and styles for discourses in professional practice Practical knowledge of the vocabulary, context and style required for the presentation of independent research Discriminative knowledge of verbal and non verbal communication in therapeutic engagement	Critical understanding of the of the impact the selected channel and style of discourse on the effectiveness of communication • optimal channels and methods for disseminating innovations in theory, policy and practice
Knowledge for research	Understanding of how knowledge is created and changed within the field Elementary qualitative research methods Knowledge of mathematical methods and statistical research tools (see the Skills Outcomes section for detail on expected skills associated with this)	Knowledge of counselling and psychotherapy's main research, enquiry and analysis methods Elementary quantitative research methods Knowledge of the various research tools and instruments available to researchers including relevant software	Detailed knowledge of counselling and psychotherapy's research and analysis methods Knowledge of the philosophies of science sufficiently detailed to support research activity in the field Knowledge of ethical principles in human research	Systematic and critical understanding of methods for the generation of new knowledge (whether theory, policy or practice) through original research or scholarship A critical awareness of practitioners' roles in upholding ethical principles in human research Critical appraisal of tools for quantitative research

Knowledge – breadth

Knowledge outcomes are associated with facts and concepts; that is, they refer to knowledge of, or about, something. The more diverse, complex and varied the facts and concepts, the greater the breadth of knowledge and this is a matter of level. Breadth is be distinguished from the number of different facts and concepts learned, which relates to volume.

Knowledge – kind

The representation of facts and concepts, including ideas, events or happenings, is cumulative. The more facts and concepts are layered on top of each other, and draw successively upon each other to construct meaning, the higher the level of learning. This process is typically associated with progressively greater abstraction from concrete phenomena into theory.

Awards Standards - Counselling and Psychotherapy

Skill				
	NFQ Level 6	**NFQ Level 7**	**NFQ Level 8**	**NFQ Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:
Know-How and Skill- Range	*Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools*	*Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study*	*Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity*	*Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry*
Know-How and Skill- Selectivity	*Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems*	*Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes*	*Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing*	*Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques*
Professional practice	Engage effectively • in simulated client work • in self-development Transfer and apply theoretical knowledge to simulated practice (or equivalent) situations	Engage effectively • in supervised clinical practice with volunteers; • in reflective supervised practice Develop and maintain a safe confidential context for (supervised) counselling and psychotherapeutic work with volunteers	Engage effectively • with theoretical orientation-relevant supervision of clinical practice • in reflective independent practice Exercise the skills required for managing clinical practice e.g. • referrals, therapeutic contracting, complying with clinical governance structures Use creative approaches for engaging with clients in counselling and psychotherapeutic work taking account of culture and diversity	Engage effectively and innovatively • with theoretical orientation-relevant or where appropriate alternative forms of supervised clinical practice • in reflective independent practice Evaluate current debates and discourses with reference to the person within society
Acting ethically legally and responsibly	Act responsibly and ethically in a practice • context and in accordance with relevant • legislation, regulations, and legitimate • policy, and procedures Recognise ethical contexts and situations which are governed by codes of ethics and legislative requirements pertaining to practice Distinguish between social and therapeutic relationships	Act professionally and ethically with an • appropriate level of autonomy • proficiency, accountability and • responsibility in practice contexts Demonstrate skills to support robust adherence to applicable codes of ethics and legislation pertaining to practice e.g. • evaluate ethical questions such as the validity of consent • apply codes of ethics in selected theoretical orientations • balancing duty of care to the individual with responsibilities to society Engage in philosophical discourse Exercise (under supervision) appropriate judgement in the development, maintenance and termination of client relationships	Act to assure the maintenance of ethical and • counselling and psychotherapeutic service provision • professional standards within the sphere of Comply with all ethical and professional practice requirements in relation to clinical practice and supervision Demonstrate ability to maintain confidentiality using knowledge of its limits within the therapeutic setting given the statutory and legal framework Articulate, and support with argument, one's theoretical stances in ethical therapeutic practice and research Reflect creatively on therapeutic relationship dilemmas e.g. • write and evaluate case studies of client work that emphasise relationship management	Evaluate ethical issues and actions in a variety of professional and inter-professional contexts Comply with all ethical and professional practice requirements in relation to practice-innovation and research activity Critically appraise one's theoretical stances in ethical therapeutic practice and research Research and appraise contemporary ethical considerations Critically appraise the transferability of relationship management skills in social and professional contexts

Diagnosis judgement, intervention, and follow-up	Elementary use of client assessment and formulation processes	Practice client assessment, engagement and intervention, identifying the multiplicity of personal factors and their contexts e.g. • assess client readiness to engage in therapeutic work • identify clients who are unsuitable for counselling / psychotherapy and to refer these to appropriate professionals • engage in a therapeutic relationship which respects the client's autonomy while facilitating change Identify (under supervision) risk factors and clients who are at risk	Engage and assess clients and develop intervention strategies • conceptualise psychotherapeutic processes • make appropriate clinical decisions informed by current research and best practice • express the rationale underlying the interventions • manage the state of uncertainty ("of not-knowing") between client and therapist • case formulation and practice regulation Assess risk factors and clients who are at risk and manage as appropriate within one's scope of practice including referral to other professionals as required	Assess, intervene and evaluate intervention outcomes in complex clinical situations involving risks • critically evaluate counselling and psychotherapy processes and outcomes • demonstrate advanced decision-making in the application of counselling and psychotherapeutic skills in the context of risk and ethical dilemmas • critically appraise the interventions of the therapist as an agent of change Assess and manage risk factors in complex cases
Psychotherapeutic skills	Demonstrate listening (reflecting an understanding of its importance) and other relevant interpersonal skills for counselling and psychotherapy	Demonstrate competence in the core interpersonal/ micro-skills for counselling and psychotherapy	Demonstrate the interpersonal skills required for the professional practice of counselling/psychotherapy	Demonstrate the interpersonal skills required for the professional practice of counselling/psychotherapy
Supervision	Give and receive feedback in simulated supervised therapeutic contexts • act in appreciation of the need for professional support systems including clinical supervision and personal psychotherapeutic experience	Respond to and engage with supervision • negotiate an effective working alliance with a supervisor and review as required taking into account organisational considerations	Engage in individual and group clinical supervision and develop a clinical portfolio of learning • develop a collaborative working alliance with supervisor consistent with the roles and responsibilities of supervisor, supervisee and organisation	Critically evaluate the supervisory contract and outcomes of supervision • critically analyse the origins of clinical supervision • integrate theory and practice in case work
Communications skills	Write clear and accurate academic assignment submissions	Write precise, accurate, clear and insightful reports that comply with professional style conventions	Articulate complex situations and draw appropriate conclusions including verbally in real-time in the context of teams Write present and defend material that articulates ideas, insights and analysis	Verbally articulate one's critical evaluation of complex situations drawing conclusions in real-time in the context of team meetings Write and present material suitable for conference presentation and/or publication
Data protection and Information Technology	Use information and communication technology with the proficiency required in professional practice contexts		Manage client records and act to comply with applicable law and professional codes	

Practice-relevant research	Acquire, comprehend and discuss examples of qualitative research reports Access field-specific literature using traditional and electronic information sources	Conduct and report on structured reviews of established literature in the field (and other similar professional resources) • read and analyse the field's research literature • use databases and search tools • use systematic search strategies • demonstrate effective data management practices • comprehend and discuss quantitative research reports • distinguish between information that provides evidence of a given hypothesis and that which does not	Conduct , write up and present systematic literature reviews • critically analyse and evaluate relevant knowledge in the field in the context of the field • evaluate and critique the current evidence base for a given approach	Critically appraise counselling/psychotherapy research • take an ethical and reflexive stance in the conduct of research • think through the theoretical stances of the different theoretical orientations • consider and critique diverse counselling/psychotherapeutic ideas and approaches • contribute to promoting a culture of practice and research that values and respects the diversity of individuals
	Apply mathematical methods		Select and apply appropriate methods (including qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) in the design of simple research projects evaluating the contributions and limitations of same Distinguish between different research paradigms and traditions common to the field Use a quantitative tools such as statistical software	Select and apply appropriate methods (including qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) in the design of complex or innovative research projects justifying the selection and evaluating the contributions and limitations of same to particular projects Critically evaluate and demonstrate reliability and validity in quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research approaches (trustworthiness, credibility etc)
	Present and defend an argument	Express the philosophical underpinnings of research	Undertake supervised research projects • design research proposals in a systematic step-by-step manner	Perform original and translational research • evaluate research methodologies and reliability, validity trustworthiness of findings Demonstrate critical thinking in writing up coherent research projects

Know-how and skill – range

Skills, in both their execution and the demonstration of underpinning procedural knowledge, encompass the use of many different kinds of tools. 'Tool' refers to any device or process that facilitates individuals having some effect on their physical, informational or social environment. Tools include cognitive and social processes as well as physical implements. Tools, and the skills to use them, range from commonplace or familiar to novel or newly-invented. The sheer number of skills acquired is a matter of volume, rather than of level. The diversity of skills is a feature of this strand that contributes to differentiation in level. The completeness of the set of skills (and associated know-how) in respect of an area of activity is another feature that helps indicate the level.

Know-how and skill – selectivity

The performance of tasks depends on the learner having an appropriate understanding of the environment in which the tasks are performed and being aware of his/her own ability and limitations, while at the same time being able to correctly judge the fit between the demands and ability. Whereas the range of know-how and skill refers to what a learner can do, selectivity (which might also be called procedural responsiveness) refers to the judgement that the learner exercises in carrying out procedures, through selecting from the range of know-how and skills available to him/her, in accordance with his/her appraisal of the demands of the task.

Awards Standards - Counselling and Psychotherapy

Competence - Context				
	NFQ Level 6	**NFQ Level 7**	**NFQ Level 8**	**NFQ Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:
Competence-Context	*Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts*	*Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts*	*Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts*	*Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts*
Safe practice	Demonstrate interpersonal skills in the context of simulated practice (or equivalent) settings	Demonstrate the ability to apply counselling or psychotherapeutic skills in the context of controlled practice with volunteers under supervision	Act responsibly in a practice context Adopt systematic approaches to therapeutic practice based on best available evidence Practice safely accepting accountability for client well-being Recognise when it is necessary to make a referral to another professional practitioner and act accordingly	Manage complex cases including the context within which the work is taking place within the principles of best practice in a particular theoretical orientation
Reflective professional practice	Participate in reflective exercises in a group context in simulated practice (or equivalent) settings	Develop a portfolio of reflective work in relation to a particular theoretical orientation	Evaluate current practice and use current research findings to underpin clinical practice Critically appraise one's own and others' reflective skills Use advanced knowledge and critical thinking skills to provide optimum therapeutic care	Apply advanced reflection skills to complex matter Engage in non-partisan critique and debate Critically appraise professional practice through analysis of the underlying epistemology Demonstrate a vision for professional practice that can contribute to the ongoing development of psychotherapeutic practice
Equality and inclusive practice	Engage in practice contexts situated within diverse and heterogeneous socio-cultural environments	Engage in situations involving diverse professions, professional settings, discourses and populations	Practice within the context of the diverse professional environments and with diverse populations	Research and represent practice within the context of the diverse professional environments and with diverse populations
Developing the profession	Recognise and act within professionally expected boundaries of competence	Recognise the organisational contexts in which practice occurs	Articulate one's own professional identity Engage in the maintenance of professional standards and the development of one's profession	Innovate in clinical practice and contribute to professional knowledge

Competence – context

Human situations, whether occupational or general social and civic ones, supply the context within which knowledge and skill are deployed for practical purposes. Such situations range in complexity and hence in the demands they place upon the person acting in them. Highly defined and structured situations or contexts constrain the behaviour of the individual and require lower levels of learning. The range of responses required, and hence the extent to which a broader range or higher level of knowledge and skill have to be drawn upon also depends on how predictable the context is. Acting effectively and autonomously in complex, ill-defined and unpredictable situations or contexts requires higher levels of learning.

Competence - Role				
	NFQ Level 6	**NFQ Level 7**	**NFQ Level 8**	**NFQ Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:
Competence-Role	*Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for allocation of resources: form and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups*	*Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work*	*Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups*	*Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity*
Professional practice	Demonstrate capacity for counselling and psychotherapeutic related interpersonal engagement in a classroom setting e.g. active listening.	Exercise relevant judgement in the planning, provision and evaluation of therapy with volunteers under supervision	Engage in self-directed practice congruent with the theoretical orientation of therapy and in accordance with supervision Develop and deploy methods for effective therapeutic practice Seek guidance as appropriate in situations beyond one's professional competence Engage with multi-disciplinary teams	Provide professional leadership in ensuring congruence between practice and theoretical orientations of therapeutic intervention
Ethical practice	Demonstrate the attitude and capacity required to recognise ethical issues which demand action and to seek appropriate advice	Recognise the applicability of, and apply, codes of ethical practice	Critically analyse and respond appropriately to ethical issues in professional therapeutic practice Assure the maintenance of ethical and professional standards	Work with complex and emerging ethical issues and dilemmas
Evaluate client engagement		Exercise judgement in the planning of practice	Exercise judgement in the evaluation of interventions and client engagement Critically evaluate interventions and assess client engagement and respond to this informed by research and supervision and within the principles of one's theoretical orientation of therapy	Critically assess complex clinical presentations client progress and creatively respond to this informed by research and within the principles of the theoretical orientation of one's therapy Critically assess, and work with, complex presentations

Competence – role

For many purposes, joining and functioning in various kinds of group is a key component in putting knowledge and skill to effective use. Joining a group successfully requires individuals to adopt appropriate roles within the group. This requires the application of social skills and an understanding of the tasks of the group. Higher levels of competence are associated with playing multiple roles as well as with roles requiring leadership, initiative and autonomy. Higher competence is also associated with participation in more complex and internally diverse groups.

Awards Standards - Counselling and Psychotherapy

Competence - Learning to Learn				
	NFQ Level 6	**NFQ Level 7**	**NFQ Level 8**	**NFQ Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:
Competence-Learning to Learn	*Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs*	*Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group*	*Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically*	*Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development*
Supervision	Discuss the principles of supervision	Take direction, accept criticism and use feedback to enhance own practice	Actively participate in the supervision process and develop a clinical supervision log and portfolio with identified learning targets	Critically evaluate one's own participation in the supervision process and demonstrate skills in 'practice' supervision settings
Reflect critically on practice in order to improve	Recognise limitations of own knowledge, skill and competence

Demonstrate a capacity for independent and self managed learning

Take appropriate opportunities to enhance one's own level of knowledge, skill, attitude or competence by means of collaboration and self-study | Identify personal and professional development needs and act to address these needs

Show self-direction in use of time, motivation and commitment to enhancing professional development and capacity for engagement in life-long learning

Utilise knowledge, experience and learning resources to enhance competence

Identify how skills and self study can support individual practice and the practice of others by working collaboratively

Participate in group work projects that demonstrate the ability to negotiate learning with others | Reflect on own practice, and recognise and acknowledge limitations of current knowledge, skills, competence

Develop and present a training session for peers that utilises knowledge, experience and learning resources to enhance competence | Undertake complex and systematic analysis of practice and outcomes

Demonstrate capacity to critically appraise research advancing the body of knowledge in counselling/ psychotherapeutic practice |

Competence – learning to learn

This strand encompasses the extent to which an individual can recognise and acknowledge the limitations of his/her current knowledge, skill and competence and plan to transcend these limitations through further learning.

Learning to learn is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to extract and retain meaning from these experiences. While drawing on other aspects of knowledge, skill and competence, this sub-strand places an emphasis on the relationship of the learner to his/her own learning processes. This provides a basis for abstraction and generalisation that, in principle, facilitates regarding this as a separate sub-strand of competence.

Competence - Insight				
	NFQ Level 6	NFQ Level 7	NFQ Level 8	NFQ Level 9
	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:	The graduate should be able to:
Competence-Insight	*Express an internalised personal world view, reflecting engagement with others*	*Express an internalised personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others*	*Express a comprehensive internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others*	*Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them*
Personal Insight	Capacity for self-reflection	Capacity for structured reflection within a therapeutic context	Identify and manage involvement of self in the counselling/psychotherapeutic process Critical personal and professional reflection	Reflexivity (use reflection within the moment to define responses)
Therapeutic Insight	Engage with another in a classroom setting	Engage with another in a therapeutic setting (with volunteers) under direct supervision	Engage therapeutically with another in a therapeutic setting under indirect supervision	Engage therapeutically and autonomously with another in a therapeutic setting under indirect supervision
Supervisory Insight	Recognise the necessity for supervision	Engage with supervision	Reflect on professional practice and development through supervision	Reflect critically on professional practice and development through supervision
Worldview	Appreciate current issues of concern to society and an appreciation of the ethical issues involved	Challenge assumptions and question values, beliefs and policies underpinning care at individual, team and organisational level	Express a comprehensive professional identity Challenge assumptions and question values, beliefs and policies underpinning care at individual, team and organisational level	Scrutinise and reflect on professional norms and act to improve them Critically appraise belief systems on which contemporary societal issues are founded

Competence – insight

Insight refers to ability to engage in increasingly complex understanding and consciousness, both internally and externally, through the process of reflection on experience. Insight involves the integration of the other strands of knowledge, skill and competence with the learner's attitudes, motivation, values, beliefs, cognitive style and personality. This integration is made clear in the learners' mode of interaction with social and cultural structures of his/her community and society, while also being an individual cognitive phenomenon. A learner's self-understanding develops through evaluating the feedback received from the general environment, particularly other people, and is essential to acting in the world in a manner that is increasingly autonomous.

References

1. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2003) Policies and Criteria for the establishment of the NFQ (Chapter 3) Dublin.
2. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2003) Extract from Determinations for the Outline NFQ pp19-21
3. Other sources are cited in the body.