

Vital Connexions Diploma Course.

Award: COSCA Recognised Diploma in Integrative Counselling, with a Christian Perspective.

Entry Requirements: Proof of foundation in Counselling - e.g. Vital Connexions Certificate in Counselling with a Christian Perspective (formerly Strength to Strength or similar) and "Soaring in Your Strengths" Vital Connexions online course. Both available on line. There is an interview process and 2 references and a brief CV are required along with your application form and processing fee of £25.

Cost: £2,750 per year plus cost of residential summer schools, (approx £370 x 2 - summer 2022 and 2023)

Starting: September 2021 until August 2023

Duration: 2 Years part time (all day Friday and all day Saturday monthly)

Introduction

Vital Connexions has been offering the Diploma Course for over 20 years and one of the unique features of this course is the inclusion of a Christian worldview.

The programme is integrative in approach embracing the concepts of Person Centred Counselling, Psychodynamic Counselling, Existential Psychotherapy and CBT.

Students are encouraged to grow together in to a learning community that is supportive and mutually inspiring. The course material is taught through didactic teaching, media presentations, group discussion and students are encouraged read, study, practice and process the material that is presented.

Award

Learners exit the programme with an COSCA Recognised Diploma in Integrative Counselling, with a Christian Perspective. Over the years students living in Britain have gone on to be accredited by the BACP and COSCA (in Scotland) and the IACP in Southern Ireland. The course has 450 hours of Class/Tutor Contact, 100 hours on client work in a suitable centre, with a ratio of Supervision 1:5. Those living in Southern Ireland are now required to have a Degree course in order to be accredited but Vital Connexions has a pathway to 2 degree programmes that kindly facilitate this process.

Following completion of the VC Diploma, students in Ireland and Scotland have the option of undertaking further study to obtain a Level 8 BSc Hons in Counselling and Psychotherapy through colleges like PCI College in Dublin and Belfast (2 further years study) or IICP in Dublin, 1 further year study.

Who should apply

This programme is designed for people who wish to become professional therapists or for those who have an opportunity to use counselling skills as part of their work, either in a paid or voluntary capacity. It is of special interest to those who work within the caring professions, community settings or in pastoral care.

Course Aims

- To introduce participants to a practical approach to counselling.
- To encourage psychological wellbeing within the programme and empower and encourage support networks.
- To provide a warm and challenging environment where students can learn and grow as individuals and in community.
- To encourage students to view this course in the context of lifelong learning as professional development and personal growth.

Course Objectives

Students will leave the course with:

- Knowledge of the theories underpinning counselling and psychotherapeutic practice and an in-depth understanding of Person Centred Therapy and Psychodynamic approaches, as well as an understanding of the basic principle of Cognitive Behavioural therapy and Existential Psychotherapy. Exploration of a Christian perspective as well as looking at humanistic counselling theories is a unique feature of this course and makes it particularly attractive to those who work within the culture and context of the church as well as those who wish to work in the community.
- Knowledge of ethical considerations and implications for practice
- Awareness of the importance of equality, diversity and inclusive practice
- Ability to work effectively with suitable clients,
- Competence in the core skills of counselling and psychotherapy,
- Capacity to identify issues of risk with clients
- Ability to apply counselling and psychotherapeutic skills in practice, under supervision,
- Ability to exercise appropriate clinical judgement in planning, provision and evaluation of integrative therapy;
- Reflexivity - the ability to reflect on their work and apply their insights to their practice,
- Awareness of blind spots, professional development needs and the ability to self reflect, give and receive feedback.
- Ability to reflect critically within a therapeutic context, recognising limits of knowledge, skills and competence and giving consideration to self in the therapeutic process.

Entry Requirements

- Be able to articulate their interest in the therapeutic field and their reasons for pursuing this course of study; and
- Produce evidence of prior educational attainment (see application form for further details) and ability to engage in the written assignments
- Evidence of emotional maturity and self awareness,
- Entry onto the Diploma programme is through application and interview follow Selection procedures will apply.

Overview

The course programme is highly interactive and taught through role-play, lectures, group-work and audio/ video presentations. The ethos of the course promotes a warm, safe environment that is free from fear, criticism and coercion. Participants will have the opportunity to produce and participate in individual written assignments, group projects and group work.

In the event of the inability of face to face training, Vital Connexions have an online learning platform and students will be able to continue learning remotely.

Assessment

Vital Connexions uses Continuous Assessment, with feedback for Tutors for written work, opportunities for self and peer feedback for group projects and triad work.

Course Dates

The part-time Diploma in Integrative Counselling with a Christian Perspective is delivered over two years part time, one weekend (all day Friday and all day Saturday once a month) for 10 months each year (September to June), followed by a 4 day summer school in July both years, where the Scottish students and the Irish students join together for some cross cultural interaction and further study.

Programme Structure

Brief overview of YEAR 1 of the Diploma:

N.B. This programme is a guideline and is subject to change slightly depending on the needs and interests of the group and the schedule of visiting lecturers. Some of the modules may be adjusted or the order of delivery may be changed within the year.

Each weekend will consist of:

- An exploration of the weekend's material in the light of the core theoretical model •
- Skills and Triad work

- Professional and Personal Development (individually and in groups)
- An opportunity to explore the dynamics presented within small and large group.

Module 1 September to November

Introduction to the course and the Integrative Model Christian Aspects

- Introduction to the outline and structure of the Diploma
- Champion Lifestyle
- Learning Styles Questionnaire
- Aspects of the Integrative Model - why problems exist - the early years • Human growth and development from Erikson's eight stage model
- Geneo-gram
- Skills and strategies of counselling - Active listening
- Personality theory through a Christian Worldview • The Whole Person - body, soul and spirit
- How problems develop - unmet needs
- Physiology
- Skills and interventions including spiritual resources and interventions in counselling - reflecting and summarising
- Personal Development around core values
- Exploring broken ness, conflict and hurt
- Life crises - life lines
- Working With Difference and Diversity
- Skills and interventions - validation (people make sense)
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Module 2 - December to January

The Integrative Model: Person Centred aspects

- Personality theory through a Rogerian worldview
- Roger's core theoretical conditions, particularly congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard
- Roger's theory of the self-concept and his nineteen propositions
- Roger's theory of human growth and development in relation to personal experience
- Personal Development around the Self concept
- Begin to understand the counselling process in terms of the client, the counsellor and the client/counsellor relationship
- Comparison between Christian and Humanistic approach
- Skills work

Module 3 – February to March

The Integrative Model: Psychodynamic aspects

- Personality theory through a Psychodynamic worldview • The influence of the unconscious
- Defence mechanisms and how they operate
- Personal Development around the power of the past
- Important elements of human growth and development from a psychodynamic perspective
- Concepts of transference and counter-transference in the counselling relationship
- Developing skills and interventions to enable the counsellor to draw upon psychodynamic aspects of the presenting past, such as the triangle of insight Comparison between approaches

Module 4 – April

The Integrative Model: CBT aspects

- Knowing your ABC's
- Negative thinking traps
- Total Behaviour - changing thoughts changing emotions Language of Choice • Goal setting • Needs that drive us
- Skills and triad work

Module 5 - May

- Creative techniques in counselling theory
- The use of creative techniques in client work Using stones, sand trays, poetry, music and art •

- Existential Psychotherapy

Module 6 - June

Supervision, Ethics and the law

- Concepts of supervision and its importance in Professional Counselling practice and how this works
- The tasks relating to supervision, including a grasp of the Normative, Formative and Restorative Tasks of Supervision
- Different settings and ethics relating to counselling and other types of helping, including within the Christian cultural context
- Ethical Problem solving
- Personal Development around power and authority.
- Professional conduct procedures within the counselling framework Reflection on the stage course members have reached in triad work, responsiveness to feedback and feelings of competence
- Limits of competence and follow on referral

Summer Residential - July

- Loss and Bereavement with creative interventions •
- Difference and Diversity
- Working with Dreams
- Attachment Theory
- Skills Development
- Spiritual and Personal development

Outline of Year 2 of the Diploma

Each weekend will consist of:

An exploration of the weekend's material in the light of the integrative model Supervision group work

Group presentations

Professional and Personal Development

An opportunity to explore the dynamics presented within small and large groups

Each weekend will continue the pattern and balance of experiential, reflective and theoretical material established in Year 1. Year 2 will see particular emphasis on group development work and students being able to draw on concurrent counselling practice to enhance their understanding.

Year 2

Module 1 - September

Groups

- Exploration of personal issues involved in working effectively in groups Group and family dynamics
- Use of Group Supervision
- Models of Group Process
- Skills work

Module 2 – October

Psychopathology and Suicide

- Arrival at working definition of psychopathology
- The signs and symptoms of deteriorating mental health
- Factors involved in ongoing clinical assessment of mental illness - clients that are not suitable for counselling but need other mental health support Signs and symptoms of various disorders • Suicidal ideation and prevention
- Types of depression,
- Personal development around mental health

Module 3 – November

Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence

- The damage that sexual/domestic abuse has on the growth and development of the child
- The affects in adolescence and adulthood of the trauma of childhood sexual abuse

- Working with clients to help them tell their story
- Help clients identify and deal with the affect of abuse and move on Legal system with regard to this subject and child protection issues

Module 4 - December

Human Sexuality

- Understanding and evaluation of a view of sexuality that is consistent with the core theoretical model
- Examining the students own issues of bias, and values around sexuality
- The creative use of the erotic transference in the counselling relationship Implications for breaking ethical and professional boundaries in this area
- Evaluate the core theoretical model in relation to the subject of sexuality
- Personal Development around sexuality

Module 5 - January

- Exploration of homosexuality, trans-sexual, lesbian and bi sexual behaviours in a way that is consistent with the core theoretical model.
- Sexual addictions and internet pornography
- Core theoretical model explored in relation to this subject

Module 6 –February

Working with Children and Young People

- The importance of children's counselling Therapeutic Play
- Creative techniques for working with children Working with Teenagers • Legal issues around Child protection

Module 7 March and April

Working with couples

- Dynamics of working with two people rather than one
- Suitability of clients for couple counselling
- Couples work at Adult Attachment theory
- The Work of Sue Johnson
- The work of Harville Hendrix and Imago Relationship Therapy

Module 8

Trauma and recovery

- Main features of intense stress including Post traumatic stress disorder Range of incidents and situations that give rise to traumatisation
- Main features of working with clients who present with PTSD
- Severity and persistence of symptoms
- Exploration of the integrative model in relation to working with trauma

Module 9

Mindfulness and working with stress and panic attacks

- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Model
- Introducing techniques to help clients use creativeness with clients
- Models of working with stress and panic attacks - breathing and total behaviour maps. • CISD model explained, demonstrated and practiced.
- Personal development around students own health and mindful living

Summer School Residential -

- The Counsellors Emotional and Spiritual Health
- Resilience Part 2 – 7 keys to Discovering Your Signature Strengths
- Working with Negative Emotions – Understanding the Ratio Between Positive and Negative
- Experiencing Moments of Break through • Exploring Theme of Destiny
- Psychodrama and Creative Therapies
- The therapeutic use of Music

Applications are welcomed from January 2021 through the website
A non-refundable application fee of £25.00 is required in order to process course applications.

Upon receipt of a completed on line application, students will be invited to attend an interview to demonstrate suitability for the course.

There is usually a high demand for the Diploma Programme, both in Edinburgh and in Belfast so early application is always advisable. (From January 2021).