



**Connexions
Training**

Vital Connexions Diploma
in Integrative Counselling –
A Christian Perspective
2023–25

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

Entry Requirements: Certificate in Counselling with a Christian Perspective – or similar foundation course in Counselling.

Starting: Every two years (next course September 2023-August 2025)

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

Introduction

Vital Connexions has been delivering the Integrative Diploma in Counselling for 22 years, and one of the unique features of this course is the inclusion of a Christian perspective.

This Diploma is fully validated by COSCA, the National Accrediting Body for Counselling in Scotland. The course is delivered face-to-face and includes a blended/online (real time) format to maximise learning needs. This blended approach is approved by COSCA. If for any reason we are unable to offer live face-to-face teaching due to the Covid-19 restrictions or other pandemics, students will be directed to the Vital Connexions Learning site to participate in online lectures, skills practice, large and small group discussion in zoom break-out rooms. Students will have interaction with full tutor support.

As part of the new Diploma some of the theoretical lectures will be presented from the learning platform catalogue of teaching. Lectures are facilitated by Andrea Wigglesworth & Vicky McEvoy, who will remain as online/blended learning lecturers on the course on. In Northern Ireland, the face to face elements will be facilitated by a new team of qualified tutors and the new Course Director is Laura Wylie.



Laura Wylie

Laura is CEO of Links Counselling Service where she has built up a thriving community counselling service which has 8 centres across Northern Ireland and a team of counsellors working in over 30 schools across the country. Laura trained as a counsellor in 2009 and has added to her experience throughout the years, obtaining an Advanced Diploma in Person Centred Counselling at Queens University Belfast, Advanced Diploma in Supervision, Diploma in working therapeutically with children and young people and a Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Laura is also undertaking a Masters in Pluralistic Psychotherapy where she is developing research around the impact of Single Session Therapy. Laura is a BACP accredited counsellor.



Andrea Wigglesworth & Vicky McEvoy

Vital Connexions Course Tutors

Andrea Wigglesworth has extensive experience in training counsellors. Andrea has a M.Sc. in Health Promotion and a M.Sc. in Counselling Studies (Advanced Practice), a postgraduate Diploma in Counselling/ Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling Supervision. She is a trained teacher and an accredited COSCA Trainer. Andrea has a special interest in Positive Psychology and is passionate about emotional and spiritual health in relationships

Vicky McEvoy is a counsellor and supervisor accredited by the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) She has an M.A Cross Professional Supervisory Practice, a B.Th. Applied Theology, a Diploma in Counselling, and H.Dip in Adult and Community Education, Vicky is also a COSCA Trainer, an Imago Couples Therapist and a Life Plan Facilitator. She has a special interest in teaching Reality Therapy (Glasser) and its application into generic counselling.



Diploma Programme

This Diploma programme is embedded in an integrative approach to counselling, embracing the concepts of Person Centred Counselling, Psychodynamic Counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

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, facilitated media and video presentations, small and large group discussion and skills practice. 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 hrs of client work in a suitable centre, with a ratio of Supervision 1:5.

Following completion of the Diploma, students 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 or IICP in Dublin. Those with a primary degree may even been admitted to the Masters Programmes in these colleges.

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. 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

By application form and Interview with 2 core tutors and 2 references. Students must:

- Be able to articulate their interest in the therapeutic field and their reasons for pursuing this course of study both on their application form and in the interview process 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,
- Selection procedures will apply.

Interviews will be held between January and April 2023

Overview

The course programme is highly interactive and taught through role-play, live lectures, group-work and audio/ video presentations and lectures. 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.

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 (Friday and Saturday once a month) for 10 months each year (September to June), followed by a 4 day summer school in July both years)



Fees

£2,750 per annum (This can be paid in full Per Annum or monthly)

Payment of fees can be made by bank transfer of full amount of £2750 in September of each year or by 11 monthly instalments of £250 in year 1 and again 11 monthly instalments in year two.

Summer school

Expected cost approx. £475 for accommodation and food and facilities, plus £10 conference fee. The aim is to bring the Belfast and Edinburgh Courses together. In first year the summer school we usually travel to Newcastle Co.Down to the Slieve Donard Hotel in the heart of the Mourne mountains in Northern Ireland. In second year we all gather in Crieff Hydro Hotel in Perthshire in Scotland . Students responsible for their flights and travel costs.

Personal therapy and supervision

You and your therapist and supervisor will agree costs of Personal Therapy and Supervision of your client work. You will be able to choose a Therapist and a Supervisor yourself, but they must be fully accredited and have an understanding of the Core models that you are learning.



Feedback from previous cohorts of students

Students who undertook this course said:

"This course has been transformational. I have learnt so much and so enjoyed the journey."

"Great teaching, great learning experience!"

"I am now working in Private Practice as a Counsellor and am delighted that I was able to retrain and do a job I love."

"I completed this course and then in one year completed the BSc Hons programme and am now working in private practice. It was fantastic to do the first 2 years of the Degree through a Christian Worldview. Thanks Vital Connexions."

Venue

T3 Conference Centre
Moir Road, Lisburn
Co. Antrim, BT282RF



Programme Structure

Brief overview of YEAR 1 of the Diploma:

N.B. This programme is a guideline and is subject to change depending on 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 and developing a healthy therapeutic relationship
- 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)



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 – Core Conditions

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 & The History of CBT

- Knowing your ABC's (Activating Events, Beliefs and Consequences)
- Negative thinking traps
- The Hot Cross Bun (Padesky) and Total Behaviour (Glasser)
- Language of Choice • Goal setting
- Socratic Questions
- Grounding skills
- Skills and triad work – using worksheets (Thought Record Sheet, Downward Arrow, STOPP etc)



Module 5 – May

Difference, Diversity and Power and an Introduction to Existential Psychotherapy

- Issues of Social context and Class
- Power and its use and abuse in the Counselling relationship – ensuring ethical excellence
- including gender, age, ability/disability and race and culture
- Existential Psychotherapy
- Purpose, meaning and "awakenings"
- Existential concerns – death, meaninglessness, isolation, and freedom Yalom, Rollo May, Glasser
- Practical skills to help clients explore these big life questions
- Gratitude diary

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 (Tim Bonds Model)
- 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
- Note keeping, safe guarding, GDPR and Professional membership

Summer Residential – July

- Loss and Bereavement with creative interventions (2 days)
- Working with Dreams (2 days)
- 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
- Attachment Theory and understanding the implications for clients
- Creative techniques (use of stones and figures)
- 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
- Group Supervision

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
- Exploration of the integrative model – ethical boundaries for those living within and without the culture and context of church and community
- Exploration of homosexuality, trans-sexual, lesbian and bi sexuality in a way that is consistent with the core theoretical model.
- Erotic transference in the counselling relationship and professional boundaries
- Evaluate the core theoretical model in relation to the subject of sexuality
- Personal Development around sexuality
- Group Supervision



Module 5 – January

Addictions and Habits

- Habits
- Models of addiction and dependency
- Sexual addictions and internet pornography
- Core theoretical model explored in relation to this subject
- Group projects – presentations

Module 6 – February

Trauma and recovery

- Main features of intense stress including Posttraumatic 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
- Skills and practice
- Group Presentations

Module 7 March

Working with couples and Adult Attachment

- Dynamics of working with two people rather than one
 - Suitability of clients for couple counselling
 - Work of Sue Johnston and EFT in couple work
- Skills work and Group Supervision

Module 8 April

Imago Relationship therapy

Exploring childhood hurts and the Imago profile with Couples and Individuals

Conscious and Unconscious Relationships

The Space Between

Skills work



Module 9 May

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
- Group Superviison

Module 10

Mindfulness and working with stress and panic attacks

- Introducing techniques to help clients use mindfulness 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
- Endings explored

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



Applications are welcomed from January 2023

A non-refundable application fee of £50.00 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. 2 references are also required.

There is usually a high demand for the Diploma Programme, both in Edinburgh and in Belfast so early application is always advisable. (From January 2023).

Prospective students are encouraged to do the Vital Connexions Certificate in Counselling, with a Christian Perspective and Soaring in Your Strength course in a live facilitated group. Further details on www.vitalconnexions.org

The venue for the Belfast course will be:

T3 Conference Centre

Moira Road, Lisburn,

Co.Antrim, BT28 2RF

Proposed dates for Belfast 2023–25

Edinburgh dates and venue to be confirmed

Year 1

8/9 Sep 23

13/14 Oct 23

10/11 Nov 23

8/9 Dec 23

12/13 Jan 24

9/10 Feb 24

8/9 Mar 24

19th/20th April 24

10/11 May 24

14/15 Jun 24

Summer school to be confirmed



Year 2

13/14 Sep 24
11/12 Oct 24
15/16 November 24
6th/7th December 24

10/11 Jan 25
7th/8th Feb 25
14/15 Mar 25
11/12 Apr 25
9/10 May 25
13/14 Jun 25

Summer School to be confirmed

**

For students living in Southern Ireland, – there is now a mandatory requirement to complete a Degree in Counselling in order to become accredited in Counselling and a Masters in order to become accredited in Psychotherapy. This means that you will have to use The Vital Connexions Diploma as Accredited Prior Learning and then complete your degree with with IICP college in Dublin , or PCI college in Belfast or ZestLife College in Dublin.



