

OPCP-L5 Scenarios for Simulated Skills Practice (with guidance) –To Support the Internal Assessment Process

The following simulated scenarios can be used to assess online and phone counselling skills during counselling skills practice sessions. Several types of portfolio evidence can be generated from these activities. For example:

Document	Candidates could write a learning review or self-review following the experience of being any or all of the participants in the triad. Questions could include: What did you learn about yourself? How did you feel? What did you discover about this type of interaction? What impact did the feedback have on your perception/understanding of self and others? How did the online or phone medium impact on the therapeutic relationship?
Tutor observation	Tutors can give written feedback using the observation sheet.
Testimony	Both observer and client can give written feedback using the observation sheet.

As **client**, work with the counsellor to choose to use one of role play scenarios.

As **counsellor**, refer to the chosen role-play scenario and use the guidance and assessment criteria below to review how you demonstrate safe and effective online and phone counselling practice.

As the **observer**, use the Tutor or Peer Skills Observation sheet to provide feedback.

As the **tutor**, use the Tutor or Peer Skills Observation sheet to provide feedback.

Role-play scenario examples

These role-play scenarios offer valuable opportunities for candidates to practice their counselling skills in tackling the common challenges and ethical dilemmas that arise in online and phone counselling practice, within the context of a therapeutic relationship. It is important to approach these scenarios with sensitivity, always keeping ethical guidelines and client well-being at the forefront of interactions.

The role-play scenarios presented here cover a range of challenges and ethical dilemmas specific to online and phone counselling. They serve as practice grounds for counsellors to develop essential skills like risk assessment, cultural competence, legal compliance, informed consent, managing distractions, and addressing client motivation. Engaging in these scenarios helps candidates enhance their ability to navigate complex situations and provide effective support to their clients.

Guidance for tutors and peers on what to look for in an appropriate response is provided in italics.

For online counselling

Establishing a working agreement for online and phone counselling:

Scenario: The client has experienced previous negative counselling experiences and enters online or phone counselling with apprehension and scepticism. The client is hesitant about building rapport and trust with their new counsellor. They are not sure what they initially want to work on in counselling, just that they don't feel 'right' at the moment.

The counsellor should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, empathy, and understanding to establish a solid foundation of connection, safety, and trust with the client while negotiating the working agreement.

Technological issues:

Scenario: During a counselling session, the call drops due to a poor internet connection.

The counsellor needs to quickly establish a plan B to resume the session without compromising confidentiality or the therapeutic flow. Ideally this will have been established in the contracting stage and agreed by both parties.

Security and confidentiality:

Scenario: A client expresses concerns about using online platforms for counselling due to worries about their personal information being accessed or shared.

The counsellor should address the client's fears, explain the security measures in place, and reassure them about maintaining confidentiality.

Establishing rapport:

Scenario: A new client feels apprehensive about opening up to a counsellor they have never met in person.

The counsellor should establish rapport and build trust through effective verbal communication, active listening, and empathy.

Boundaries and dual relationships:

Scenario: A client sends a friend request to the counsellor on a social media platform, blurring the boundaries between their professional relationship and personal connections.

The counsellor should address the situation, establish clear boundaries, and discuss the importance of maintaining a professional therapeutic relationship with the client.

Cultural considerations and language barriers:

Scenario: A client from a different cultural background expresses difficulty in fully articulating their experiences and emotions in the language of counselling.

The counsellor should navigate language barriers, adapt their communication style, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity to ensure effective therapeutic engagement.

Ethical guidelines and legal requirements:

Scenario: A client residing in a different country seeks counselling services online, and the counsellor is unsure about the legal and ethical guidelines governing cross-border practice.

The counsellor needs to demonstrate awareness of differences in laws and guidelines to provide appropriate and ethical services or signposting/referral.

Informed consent:

Scenario: A potential client is considering online counselling but has limited knowledge about the process and what to expect.

The counsellor should provide detailed information about the benefits, risks, limitations, and expectations of online counselling to obtain informed consent before initiating the therapeutic relationship.

Interruptions and distractions:

Scenario: During an online counselling session, the client's family members frequently enter the room and engage in conversations, causing distractions and inhibiting open dialogue.

The counsellor needs to address the issue, explore strategies for creating a more private and focused space, and ensure the client's comfort and confidentiality.

Assessing client motivation:

Scenario: A client engages in online counselling but frequently misses or cancels sessions without providing a clear reason.

The counsellor needs to explore the client's motivation and commitment to the therapeutic process, address any underlying issues, and collaborate on establishing a consistent treatment plan.

Risk from a perpetrator present during the session:

Scenario: A client, who is in an abusive relationship, seeks online counselling but suspects that their perpetrator may be monitoring their activities, including the counselling sessions.

The counsellor needs to assess the level of risk, establish safety measures, and develop a plan to ensure the client's well-being and confidentiality while providing support.

For phone counselling

Establishing a working agreement for phone counselling:

Scenario: The client has experienced previous negative counselling experiences and enters phone counselling with apprehension and scepticism. The client is hesitant about building rapport and trust with their new counsellor. They are not sure what they initially want to work on in counselling, just that they don't feel 'right' at the moment.

The counsellor should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, empathy, and understanding to establish a solid foundation of connection, safety, and trust with the client while negotiating the working agreement.

Limited non-verbal cues:

Scenario: A client is discussing a recent traumatic event, but their voice remains calm and monotone throughout the conversation.

The counsellor must rely solely on the client's verbal expression to assess their emotional state and provide appropriate support.

Establishing rapport:

Scenario: A new client feels apprehensive about opening up to a counsellor they have never met in person.

The counsellor should establish rapport and build trust through effective verbal communication, active listening, and empathy.

Assessing client suitability:

Scenario: A potential client seeks counselling services via phone but has limited verbal communication skills due to a speech disorder.

The counsellor needs to assess whether phone counselling is suitable for their needs or if an alternative approach would be more appropriate.

Emergency situations and risk assessment:

Scenario: A client expresses immediate thoughts of self-harm during a phone counselling session.

The counsellor must assess the level of risk, provide necessary support, and collaborate with the client to ensure their safety while working within the limitations of a remote counselling setting.

Cultural considerations and language barriers:

Scenario: A client from a different cultural background expresses difficulty in fully articulating their experiences and emotions in the language of counselling.

The counsellor should navigate language barriers, adapt their communication style, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity to ensure effective therapeutic engagement.

Interruptions and distractions:

Scenario: During a phone counselling session, the client's family members frequently enter the room and engage in conversations, causing distractions and inhibiting open dialogue.

The counsellor needs to address the issue, explore strategies for creating a more private and focused space, and ensure the client's comfort and confidentiality.

Risk from a perpetrator present during the session:

Scenario: A client, who is in an abusive relationship, seeks phone counselling but suspects that their perpetrator may be monitoring their activities, including the counselling sessions.

The counsellor needs to assess the level of risk, establish safety measures, and develop a plan to ensure the client's well-being and confidentiality while providing support.