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2024-2025

# Specification

# Level 5 Award in Online and Phone Counselling Practice (OPCP-L5)

Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

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Please note:

This document, along with candidate support materials, can be downloaded from the CPCAB website. If you need help with the accessibility of this document, please email [contact@cpcab.co.uk](mailto:contact@cpcab.co.uk) with your request.

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# 1. Qualification Information

## Purpose Statement

This qualification is designed to give qualified counsellors the additional skills and proficiencies to work effectively using online and phone mediums. It equips candidates to work in a counselling role offering online and phone therapy in an organisational context or in independent practice.

Candidates studying this qualification must first have completed the two Open University courses below which provide the theoretical basis for this level 5 award:

[Online counselling: getting started](#)

And

[Online counselling: advancing your knowledge](#)

This qualification will enable successful candidates to work as online and phone counsellors in a range of job and career opportunities, which include but are not limited to:

- An online and phone counsellor in private practice or agency settings.
- The candidate may choose to diversify into the area of teaching counselling (including online delivery) within a FE or HE context providing they hold suitable teaching experience or qualifications.

<b>Level</b>	5
<b>Guided Learning Hours (GLH)</b>	45 (minimum)
<b>Total Qualification Time (TQT)</b>	100
<b>Credit value</b>	10
<b>Minimum Age</b>	19 years. Please see <a href="#">CPCAB Candidate Entry Requirements</a> .

<b>Entry Requirements</b>	<p>CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) or the Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) equivalent (minimum 420 Guided Learning Hours), in addition to appropriate pre-TC-L4 (or equivalent) training.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>And</p> <p><a href="#">Online counselling: getting started</a></p> <p>And</p> <p><a href="#">Online counselling: advancing your knowledge</a></p> <p>Please see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CPCAB Candidate Entry Requirements</a> for criteria considered important in selecting applicants for a programme leading to OPCP-L5.</li> <li>• CPCAB's <a href="#">RPL Guidance</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	<p>Proficient (Pass)/Not Proficient (Fail)</p> <p>Candidates must be Proficient in the internal assessment and meet all the qualification requirements to achieve the qualification.</p> <p><b>Internal assessment:</b> tutor assessment of candidate portfolio evidencing minimum assessment requirements and independently verified by CPCAB.</p> <p>See CPCAB's <a href="#">Minimum Assessment Requirements</a>.</p>
<b>Staffing and Resources</b>	<p>At least <b>one</b> tutor-assessor must be involved in all aspects of internal candidate assessment. (CPCAB recommends the use of 2 tutors for OPCP-L5 to maximise assessment of practical elements e.g. tutor observations of online and phone counselling skills practice).</p> <p>See <a href="#">Tutor-Assessor Qualifications and Experience</a> for further details of CPCAB requirements.</p>
<b>Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)</b>	<p>Centres are required to have robust IQA (internal moderation and verification) processes that are verified by CPCAB.</p> <p>See <a href="#">Guide to Internal Moderation and Verification for Centres</a>.</p>
<b>Candidate Registration Fee</b>	£99

<sup>1</sup> CPCAB recommends a minimum of 450 practice hours in line with [BACP](#) individual accreditation requirements.

<b>Centre Application for CPCAB Approval to Offer the Qualification</b>	Centre application fee: £259 (one-off fee). <sup>2</sup> Centres are provided with an example scheme of work or may design their own training programmes. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Online Delivery Options</b>	This qualification is eligible for fully online delivery only. Please see <a href="#">how to run CPCAB's qualifications online</a> for more information.

## 2. Qualification Summary

### Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria (OPCP-L5)

<i>Learning outcomes (skills, knowledge, understanding)</i>	<i>Assessment criteria (to assess learning outcome)</i>
The learner will/will be able to:	The learner can:
1. Work safely, legally and ethically as an online and phone counsellor	1.1 Work within a professional, legal and ethical framework for online and phone counselling. 1.2 Work within limits of competence and make referrals or signpost appropriately. 1.3 Demonstrate ability to manage ethical dilemmas in online and phone counselling. 1.4 Respond to and manage issues of confidentiality and data protection. 1.5 Monitor and work with issues of safeguarding, risk and emergency situations in online and phone counselling.

<sup>2</sup> In order for your application to be processed the approval fee will need to accompany your application. This is non-refundable. Payment can be made by cheque payable to CPCAB or via Bacs payment. Please contact [finance@cpcab.co.uk](mailto:finance@cpcab.co.uk) for more information.

<sup>3</sup> All centre-designed courses must be approved by CPCAB before candidates can be registered. Although the delivery of courses may differ from centre to centre, all delivery must enable the candidates to achieve the learning outcomes of the qualification.

2. Work with complex aspects of the online and phone counselling relationship	<p>2.1 Establish and maintain therapeutic relationships in online and phone counselling settings.</p> <p>2.2 Establish and sustain personal and professional boundaries for the duration of online and phone counselling relationships.</p> <p>2.3 Work with challenges, difficulties and containment issues that arise in online and phone counselling relationships.</p>
3. Work with difference and diversity in online and phone practice	<p>3.1 Evaluate ability to work with diverse communities in online and phone counselling.</p> <p>3.2 Reflect on diversity issues that can challenge access to online or phone counselling.</p> <p>3.3 Use empathy to communicate understanding and acceptance in online and phone counselling.</p>
4. Use a coherent approach to respond to the needs of individual clients in online and phone counselling	<p>4.1 Use a recognised client assessment tool to assess client suitability for online and phone counselling.</p> <p>4.2 Negotiate a collaborative working agreement to establish a focus for the work for online and phone counselling.</p> <p>4.3 Review and respond to the changing needs of the client in online and phone counselling.</p>
5. Work with self-awareness as an online and phone practitioner	<p>5.1 Evaluate own use of self to create meaningful therapeutic connections in online and phone counselling.</p> <p>5.2 Evaluate the personal and professional impact and risks of lone working in online and phone counselling.</p> <p>5.3 Reflect on own experiences that might enhance or limit working with online and phone counselling</p>
6. Use theory, research and skills within a coherent framework for online and counselling practice	<p>6.1 Evaluate the application of your own modality within an online and phone counselling format.</p> <p>6.2 Demonstrate use of the skills and techniques associated with your modality in online and phone counselling.</p> <p>6.3 Use research findings to evaluate application of skills in online and phone counselling.</p>
7. Work self-reflectively to monitor and maintain professional effectiveness as a counsellor in online and phone practice	<p>7.1 Use feedback to evaluate own effectiveness as an online and phone counsellor.</p> <p>7.2 Reflect on areas for development as an online and phone counsellor and outline a plan for continuing professional development.</p>

See the [OPCP-L5 Tutor Guide](#) for candidate guidance to criteria and notes for tutors.

## 3. Minimum Assessment Requirements

To achieve the qualification, candidates must be internally assessed as **Proficient** in all 7 learning outcomes of the qualification.

Candidates must give **two** pieces of evidence for each criterion. In addition, the Candidate Learning Record (must include references to all three assessment methods (documents, tutor observation and testimony) across the whole CLR.

<b>INTERNAL ASSESSMENT – must include all three methods of assessment</b>		
<b>Course activities</b>	<b>Assessment method <sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Types of evidence</b> (2 references for each assessment criterion)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group training supervision</li> <li>Group work</li> <li>Tutorials</li> </ul>	<b>Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning review <sup>6</sup></li> <li>1 Practice Review (3,000 - 3,500 words)</li> <li>1 Self-review <sup>7</sup></li> <li>Tutorial records (when written by the candidate)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessed simulated online and phone counselling skills practice</li> <li>Tutorials</li> </ul>	<b>Tutor observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 tutor-observed online and or phone counselling practice sessions</li> <li>Tutorial records (when written by the tutor)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online and phone counselling Skills practice</li> <li>Group work</li> <li>Group training supervision</li> </ul>	<b>Testimony</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer feedback</li> </ul>
<b>MARKING SCHEME</b>		
<b>Internal assessment:</b>	Candidates must achieve all seven learning outcomes to be assessed as Proficient.	

<sup>5</sup> Proforma and guide sheets for internal assessment can be downloaded from the [CPCAB Website](#).

<sup>6</sup> This is an on-going review of learning during the course (also called a learning journal).

<sup>7</sup> Self-evaluation of learning, goals, progress, learning needs and completion of the learning tasks (criteria).

## 4. Tutor-Assessor Qualifications and Experience

Level 5 Award in Online and Phone Counselling Practice (OPCP-L5)					
	Minimum qualification	Personal therapy + professional association membership	On-going Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	Minimum practice experience	Minimum experience as tutor
<b>Tutor</b>	420 hours therapeutic counselling qualification at level 4 or above e.g. TC-L4	10 hours of personal therapy  And  Member of a professional association for counselling or psychotherapy	30 hours per year CPD activities including online and phone counselling activities	Current practitioner with 2 years' supervised counselling practice or minimum 450 counselling hours  And  Minimum of 1 year experience of working in online and phone counselling	Teaching qualification  And  1 year teaching and assessing at level 3 and 4 or above



## 5. Candidate Entry Requirements

This qualification is not suitable for those who are currently in a state of severe emotional difficulty and/or severe psychological distress. Centres need to ensure that all potential candidates are made aware of the nature of the course, and in particular that the course involves experiential elements that may involve some personal disclosure. We recommend that tutors carry out an individual interview to ascertain a candidate's suitability for this level of training.

Title	Age	Entry requirements/ RPL	Criteria considered important for selecting candidates
<b>OPCP-L5</b>	19+	<p>TC-L4 <b>or</b> an equivalent qualification (minimum 420 GLH)</p> <p><b>plus</b> appropriate pre-TC-L4 training (or equivalent).</p> <p><b>And</b></p> <p>Open University Courses:</p> <p><a href="#">Online counselling: getting started</a></p> <p><b>And</b></p> <p><a href="#">Online counselling: advancing your knowledge</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ability to identify reasons for training</li> <li>✓ Provide references</li> <li>✓ Academically able to cope with this level of training</li> <li>✓ Possess digital skills and resources required for online study and counselling.</li> <li>✓ Ability to work with difference and diversity</li> <li>✓ Possess personal qualities of imagination, intuition, openness and ability to benefit from professional development</li> <li>✓ Ability to form a therapeutic relationship</li> <li>✓ Have self-awareness, insight, honesty and integrity</li> <li>✓ Emotional stability and the absence of personality disturbance</li> <li>✓ Ability to challenge and be challenged</li> <li>✓ Ability to respond sensitively and empathically to others</li> <li>✓ Professional qualities required for autonomous practice</li> </ul>

## 6. Fit for Purpose

This qualification builds upon practitioner level training to provide an additional specialism in working online or on the phone. This section is intended to help learners make informed choices about the qualifications they wish to study and how they will enable them to reach their personal and professional goals.

As a learner continues their journey with the **CPCAB Level 5 Award in Online and Phone Counselling Practice**, they are embarking on post-practitioner training which enables them to work confidently and competently in the field of counselling using online and phone methods of communicating.

CPCAB qualifications are designed to build upon each other, ensuring that the required skills and knowledge are developed alongside the personal growth of the learner. This qualification is based on current research and adheres to the CPCAB's model for practitioner development, ensuring your training meets the highest professional standards.

Learners will receive live teaching in an online classroom, which will include real-time interaction with peers and tutor(s). They will practice what they are learning, receive feedback on their use of skills, and gain insights about themselves through their engagement with others. This live human connection is considered essential when training in an area such as counselling.

The OPCP-L5 enables learners to register with the following counselling professional association registers, which are accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA):

- ✓ BACP – British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
  - ✓ NCPS – National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society
  - ✓ ACC – Association of Christians in Counselling and Linked Professions
  - ✓ COSCA – Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland
  - ✓ UKCP – United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy – SET's for Psychotherapeutic Counselling.
- Please note that progressing to UKCP will also require a CPCAB Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) and The CPCAB Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling (PC-L5) (see separate mapping for more information on additional centre requirements).

This qualification maps to the competencies from the following frameworks:

- ✓ BACP Online and phone therapy (OPT) competence framework
- ✓ BACP Top-Up OPT Training Curriculum
- ✓ SCoPEd Framework competencies related to OPT

This qualification provides training in the practical application of OPT skills and builds upon the theoretical knowledge gained from the prerequisite Open University courses:

- Online counselling: getting started

- Online counselling: advancing your knowledge

This alignment ensures that this qualification is not only comprehensive but also up-to-date with the latest practices in counselling, psychotherapy and other linked professions.

The assessment strategy maintains a focus on practitioner skills and qualities as well as on written evidence. The combination of tutor assessment and separate independent verification by CPCAB values both objective independent quality assurance and the relational knowledge of the candidate and their work. A separate external assessment was not considered appropriate for the purpose and length of this qualification. The qualification is reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Centres have to meet robust centre approval requirements before they can deliver this qualification. All tutors are approved by CPCAB.