Access to Higher Education Unit

This unit forms part of an Access to HE Diploma. If delivering the graded version of this unit, please refer to the Provider Handbook for details on grading descriptors and the application of these across units within your programme.

Unit Title: Introduction to Counselling Skills

Graded Unit Reference Number: GA36COU01

Ungraded Unit Reference Number: UA36COU01

Module: Counselling

Level: Three [3]

Credit Value: Six [6]

Minimum Guided Learning Hours: 60

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand the principles and purpose of counselling skills	1.1 Explain the purpose of counselling skills within helping professions.
	1.2 Describe key counselling communication skills, including active listening, questioning, paraphrasing, summarising, reflecting feelings, use of silence and non-verbal communication.
	1.3 Explain internal and external barriers to effective communication and their impact on counselling interactions.
	1.4 Propose strategies to reduce or manage communication barriers.
2. Understand the core conditions and their role in the counselling relationship	2.1 Explain the concepts of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence.
	2.2 Analyse the role of the core conditions in creating a therapeutic environment.
	2.3 Discuss debates or limitations relating to the core conditions in contemporary counselling practice.

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3.	Demonstrate the use of counselling skills in simulated situations	3.1	Demonstrate appropriate use of a range of counselling skills in simulated helping interactions.
		3.2	Adapt communication appropriately to suit different simulated scenarios.
		3.3	Respond to feedback from peers and tutors to improve practice.
4.	Reflect on own development and use of counselling skills	4.1	Evaluate own strengths and areas for development in counselling skills.
		4.2	Explain the importance of self-awareness in the use of counselling skills.
		4.3	Produce an action plan for further skills development.

Indicative Content Learners could cover the following: (The information below is provided for guidance only and is not mandatory)	
LO1	AC1.1 – 1.2 **Purpose of counselling skills:** Role of counselling skills in helping professions (e.g., supporting, not treating). Establishing rapport, trust and psychological safety. **Counselling Communication Skills:** **Active listening:** full attention, minimal encouragers, appropriate silence. **Questioning:** open vs closed questions and their use. **Paraphrasing:** checking understanding by restating content. **Summarising:** consolidating key points to aid clarity. **Reflecting feelings:** identifying and naming emotional content. **Non-verbal communication:** posture, eye contact, facial expression, tone. **Immediacy:** commenting sensitively on the “here and now” interaction. **AC1.3 – 1.4** **Barriers to effective communication:** **Internal:** personal assumptions, stress, emotional triggers, biases, prejudices, lack of self-awareness. **External:** noise, interruptions, poor environment, technology distractions, lack of privacy. **Strategies to manage barriers:** Self-awareness techniques; recognising prejudices and assumptions.

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	Attending skills, maintaining focus, reflective practice. Improving the physical environment where possible. Planning/scheduling sessions to reduce avoidable interruptions.
LO2	AC2.1, 2.2, 2.3 **Core conditions (Person-Centred approach):** **Empathy:** understanding the client's frame of reference, communicating understanding accurately. **Unconditional positive regard:** acceptance, non-judgement, valuing the person. **Congruence:** genuineness, transparency, appropriate openness. **Role in the counselling relationship:** Foundations for trust, openness and psychological growth. How core conditions support client autonomy, safety and self-exploration. **Debates and limitations:** Necessary vs. sufficient conditions. Cultural considerations and communication styles. Situations where additional skills/models may be required.
LO3	AC3.1, 3.2, 3.3 **Practical skills demonstration:** Use of active listening and attending behaviours in simulated sessions. Appropriate use of paraphrasing, summarising and reflecting feelings. Adapting communication to suit different types of scenarios (e.g., emotional distress, anxiety, decision-making situations). **Feedback and adaptation:** Giving and receiving constructive feedback. Responding to observation notes to improve future practice. Awareness of professional boundaries during skills practice.
LO4	AC4.1, 4.2, 4.3 **Self-evaluation:** Strengths and limitations identified from practice sessions. Reviewing own ability to apply counselling communication skills authentically. Considering consistency, presence, and appropriate non-verbal communication. **Role of self-awareness:** Impact of personal values, attitudes and life experience on interactions. Managing emotional responses during helping conversations. **Action planning:** Identifying specific areas for development.

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	Setting achievable goals to enhance future skills use. Using feedback and reflection to guide ongoing development.

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