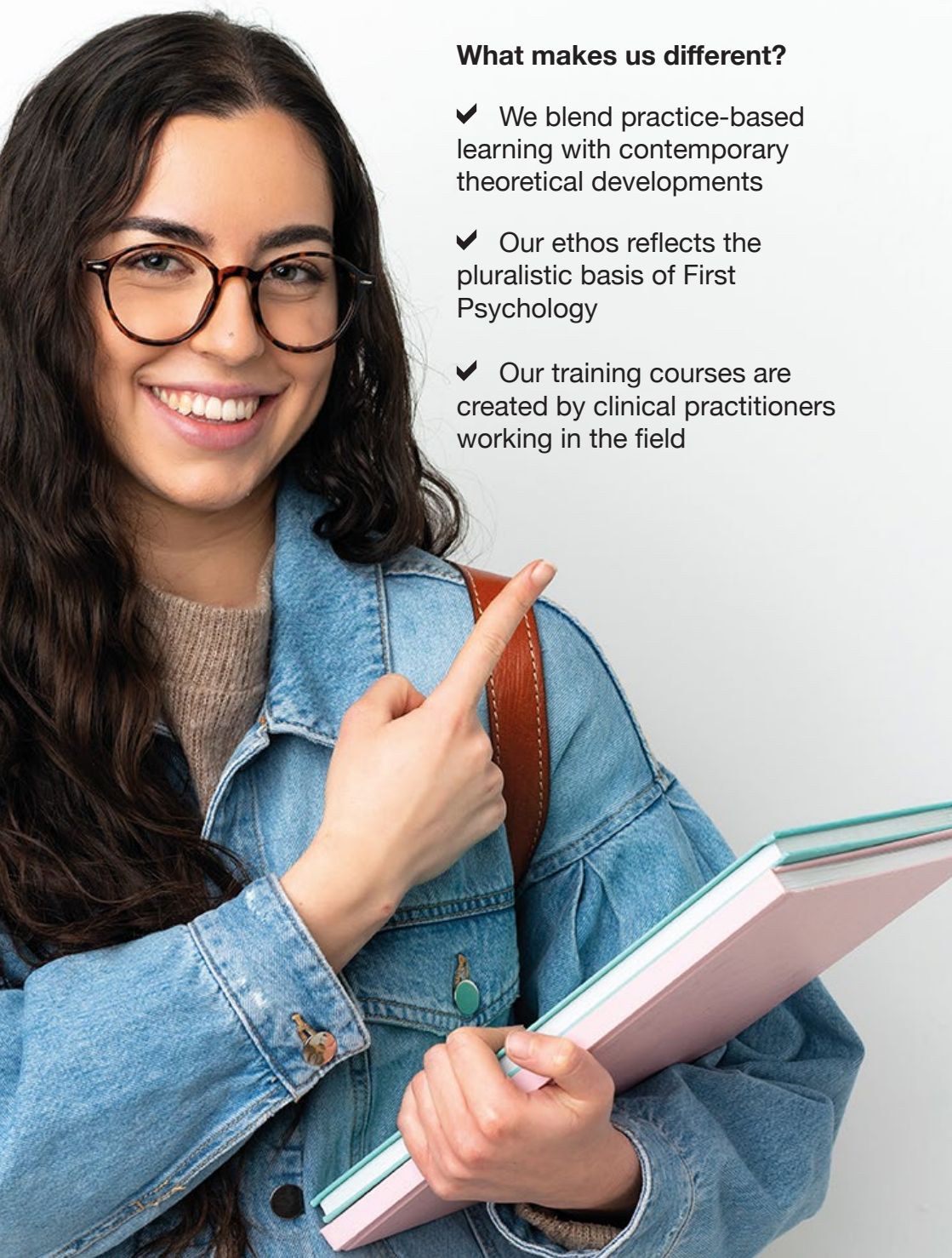


Professional Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Psychological Therapy



Course Prospectus 2025



What makes us different?

- ✓ We blend practice-based learning with contemporary theoretical developments
- ✓ Our ethos reflects the pluralistic basis of First Psychology
- ✓ Our training courses are created by clinical practitioners working in the field

About First Psychology Training

First Psychology is a leading independent provider of counselling, psychological therapy/CBT and applied psychology in Scotland and Northern England. We have multiple consulting venues and work with practitioners from a range of backgrounds to offer the best possible therapeutic care to all our clients – adults, children/young people, families and businesses/organisations.

Established in 2009, we have a particular emphasis on training and development and have an internal CPD institute for practitioners, an advanced skills academy to employ and support recently qualified practitioners and a graduate programme for graduates seeking experience in the therapeutic/mental health field.

First Psychology Training was launched in 2024 to offer professional training and continuing professional development programmes to those wishing to work in the field of counselling/psychological therapy or those who are existing practitioners wishing to update/develop skills in specific areas.

Unlike many training organisations in this area, the programmes offered by First Psychology Training have been created by clinical practitioners working in the field and represent a blend of ‘practice-based’ learning alongside contemporary theoretical developments.

Our ethos reflects the pluralistic basis of First Psychology encompassing practitioners from counselling/psychotherapy, CBT/psychological therapy and applied psychology backgrounds. All programmes reflect the breadth and innovation of this approach, integrating knowledge and ideas from different perspectives. This allows us to ensure what we offer is at the ‘cutting edge’ of contemporary developments in the field.



Professional Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Psychological Therapy

Our professional diploma in integrative counselling and psychological therapy offers a formal training that has been designed to equip students with skills and capabilities to become professional practitioners in the field. Delivered by expert practitioners, it offers a solid grounding in person-centred counselling as well as training in compassion-focused therapy (CFT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). The programme is practice-based and informed by both the counselling/psychotherapy and applied psychology/psychological therapy/CBT traditions. It has a strong grounding in research and evidence-based approaches in mental health.

Programme philosophy and approach

The programme is rooted within the person-centred approach (PCA) and person-centred therapy (PCT) and takes as its starting point a view of persons as unique, agential beings with the potential for constructive growth and change. This humanistic/existential orientation is non-pathologising, holistic and prioritises a phenomenological orientation in its approach to therapeutic practice. The emphasis in therapy is placed upon the therapeutic relationship to create the conditions within which change can be facilitated, either through the terms of the relationship itself (classical person-centred therapy) or via the use of appropriate techniques designed to facilitate emotional experiencing (process-experiential therapy)

The emphasis on relationships is fundamental to the programme as is the placing of the personal experiences and meanings of the client at the heart of the therapeutic endeavour. We build upon this through the recognition that meanings differ and people may relate to their



experiences and define their needs in different ways that may also change over time. This takes us toward a pluralistic perspective, challenging meta-narrative approaches to therapy and the standardisation of one-size-fits-all assumptions. Such a perspective does not represent a disregard of our fundamental humanistic/existential values. Instead it extends these into encompassing a more active, ongoing process of exploration and transparent dialogue with clients about experiencing, their needs, and how these may best be met as part of the therapeutic endeavour. Fundamental to this is the process of psychological formulation.

We see ‘psychological formulation’ as an expansion of our underlying person-centred orientation that allows us to consider therapeutic strategies and activities that lie outwith either classical or process-experiential person-centred ways of working and/or derive from different therapeutic traditions. We think it is most fruitful to work with specific approaches that offer synergies with the person-centred approach while at the same time offering different ways of therapeutic thinking and doing as part of a collaborative therapeutic process.

Our intention is therefore integration through assimilation, maintaining our core humanistic/existential value base while at the same time presenting new and creative therapeutic opportunities in ways that offer a constructive enhancement in what we are able to offer clients.

A key approach for us in this regard is Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT). This approach represents a meshing of cognitive-behavioural and humanistic thinking in encouraging the restructuring of a client’s internal and external relational world. CFT relates well to PCTs understanding of psychological difficulties in a range of ways – philosophically and practically – while offering a range of understandings and clinical techniques that may enhance therapeutic practice in relation to various difficulties. In addition to CFT, the programme explores the tools and resources offered by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), again in terms of how these may be assimilated into a coherently integrated therapeutic approach.



Photo: Our training room

To reflect the different traditions, histories and professional contexts we associate with the approaches we are working with, we have termed the therapeutic orientation of the programme as ‘integrative counselling and psychological therapy’. Our emphasis is on professional training and cultivating an ability to work between different contexts and therapeutic philosophies, rather than presenting a single model of therapy as a solution to each and every problem encountered.

Programme modules

Year 1

Understanding Therapy 1A & 1B – introduces the history and development of person-centred therapy, including its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, some of the developmental and personality theories that relate to it, and some of the key ways in which therapeutic interventions are created and delivered.

Core Skills Development 1A & 1B – offers a significant and in-depth introduction to the therapeutic skills necessary to undertake counselling work in a clinical setting. The focus is on person-centred therapeutic skills including the ability to offer empathy, unconditional positive regard and remain congruent in the therapeutic encounter. It provides a framework for developing the skills involved in the establishment, maintenance and ending of an effective and ethical therapeutic relationship. These skills are explored in an applied way and with reference to working with common mental health presentations.

Contemporary Approaches in Mental Health 1 – explores the wider context of counselling practice, including a focus on contemporary mental health contexts, critical perspectives, power and anti-discriminatory practice, and the role of evidence and research in supporting good practice.

Personal and Professional Development 1 – focuses on the integration of personal management skills and professional behaviours as part of becoming a practitioner with integrity, an ethical base, and the ability to reflect on self in a fluid and open way.

Year 2

Understanding Therapy 2A & 2B – focuses on the history and development of compassion-focused therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy and their integration into person-centred practice, including their theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, some of the developmental and personality theories that relate to it, and some of the key ways in which therapeutic interventions are created and delivered.

Core Skills Development 2A & 2B – offers an introduction to the integration of additional therapeutic skills to enhance counselling work in a clinical setting. The focus is on compassion-focussed therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy, and the experiential and behavioural interventions these models offer. It provides a continued framework for developing the skills involved in the establishment, maintenance and ending of an effective and ethical therapeutic relationship. These skills are explored in an applied way and with reference to working with common mental health presentations.

Contemporary Approaches in Mental Health 2 – a continued and advanced exploration of the wider context of counselling practice, including a continued focus on contemporary mental health contexts and critical perspectives, culture, difference, diversity and anti-discriminatory practice, and the role of evidence and research in supporting good practice.

Personal and Professional Development 2 – continued focus on the integration of personal management skills and professional behaviours as part of becoming a practitioner with integrity, an ethical base, and the ability to reflect on self in a fluid and open way. Focus on employability and future practice.



Methods of delivery

The teaching programme is delivered via a range of interactive workshops, theory lectures, video/ audio presentations, group discussions and supervision/case analysis.

Skills training is based mainly in small groups using a triad model allowing appropriate skills development and feedback to take place.

Students will engage in group process work (large and small group) on an ongoing basis throughout the programme.

Programme duration and time commitment

The programme will be delivered on a part-time basis over two years, with students undertaking modules with a value of 60 credits per year at level SQCF 11 (postgraduate).

The teaching programme is delivered over a 30 week 'year' from October to June in three ways:

- **Intensive weekend teaching:** Saturdays and Sundays 10am-6pm (7 hour days plus 1 hour lunch) for eight weekends over the year, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, April, May. Total contact hours: 112

- **Weekly teaching (online):** Thursdays 7pm-9pm.
Total contact hours: 58 (29 weeks – no teaching during retreat)

- **Intensive retreat week five days (June):** Total contact hours: 34

Total teaching contact hours – 204 hours per year (408 in total). Online teaching will comprise 28.5% of all contact teaching each year. Additional independent learning will be 396 hours each year – 600 hours in total for each of the stages (1200 hours for the Diploma, 120 credits).

Clinical practice

In addition to the above, all students will be required to undertake a minimum of 100 hours of supervised clinical practice over the duration of the programme. Placements will be undertaken within First Psychology's Community Clinic or an associated clinical service. All clinical supervision and support will be provided.

Placement work will normally start in April/May of year one and be undertaken by a commitment of four hours a week (normally two to three clients) until completed. Students may be able to arrange additional and external placements should they wish to do so and provided appropriate support is provided as part of the placement arrangements.

All placement work will be subject to the contractual and supervisory requirements of First Psychology Training. Students are not permitted to undertake any placement or clinical activity unless these requirements are fully met and the placement formally agreed by the programme leader. Failure to adhere to this requirement is likely to result in termination of training.



Photo: First Psychology Training is nestled in the heart of Georgian Edinburgh, close to the shops and bars in bustling George Street

Other requirements

Students will be required to undertake a minimum of 20 hours of personal therapy during the course of the two year programme. They are also expected to complete 20 hours of additional personal development activities, utilising expressive or creative methods, to assist self-development and personal reflection.

Students are also expected to attend a monthly peer support group (online) and undertake a minimum of two personal tutor meetings each year (online or in-person).

Attendance

Students are expected to attend **all** aspects of the programme with attendance at a minimum of 80% of all taught components per module. All missed teaching must be compensated for in a manner agreed with the programme leader. Should any student attend fewer than 80% of all taught components per module they will normally be required to suspend their studies and recommence the programme in the following year.



Photo: Hill Street, Edinburgh – the location of First Psychology Training

Location

All weekend teaching will take place in our Hill Street centre in Edinburgh, which is centrally located and easy to reach by public transport.

The programme will have two intensive retreats that students are expected to attend, one each year. These will be as below:

Year 1: Perthshire retreat focusing on the integration of skills acquired over the first year of training and an exploration of personal and professional development in the context of our relationships to the natural and organic world.

Year 2: Southern Spain retreat* focusing on the integration of skills acquired over the second year of training and an exploration of personal and professional development in the context of our relationships to culture, language and interpersonal difference.

Please note: the cost of retreats is not included in the course fee.

*Subject to work permits

Assessment

Assessment on the programme is based on coursework and reports relating to clinical activities, including supervisor reports. Each module has a clear assessment structure designed to ensure that competence is demonstrated in relation to the learning outcomes and at the appropriate level. Methods of assessment include essays, case studies and process reports.

There is no formal written examination although the programme team reserves the right to require an oral (viva) examination linked to any of the modules to further understand and evaluate competence.

An external examiner is involved in overseeing all assessment processes and ensuring these are delivered in a fair and robust manner. There is an independent academic appeals procedure.

Programme management

The programme is led by a programme leader who is responsible for ensuring the quality of all academic and clinical components. They are supported by three core tutors who will contribute towards different aspects of programme delivery (theory and practice). An education and training administrator is responsible for all programme administration.

The programme is overseen by a programme management board (PMB) which includes the programme leader, the core tutors, the external examiner, a number of specialist advisers and both the clinical director and deputy clinical director of First Psychology.

Accreditation

The programme has been designed to meet the requirements of British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) programme accreditation, which would allow all graduates to become BACP registered. An application will be made towards this once the first cohort of students has completed all elements of the programme, in line with BACP requirements. In the meantime the programme will offer a certificate of proficiency in integrative counselling and

psychological therapy that has been designed to support graduates and meet the requirements for individual registration with the BACP. This is in line with current BACP process for individuals whose training has not been undertaken on an accredited programme (see www.bacp.co.uk/membership/registered-membership/certificate-of-proficiency/).

Employability and outcomes

Upon completion of the programme, students will be eligible to apply for employment duties in the third sector, the NHS, occupational health services and in independent practice. Opportunities will also be available to join the First Psychology Advanced Skills Academy in an employed practitioner role.

Fees and costs

Students wishing to start the programme in 2025 will pay an annual fee of £3,750 per year (£7,500 for both years), **which is a discounted fee for the post-launch year.**

The full fee for the programme is £4,500 per year (£9,000 for both years) which will apply to students starting in 2026 and beyond.

The course fee includes all teaching, assessment, support and supervision costs (for placements set up by First Psychology).

Additional costs include: a) study materials, books and equipment, b) personal therapy costs, c) accommodation and travel for the retreat each year (around £300 in year-one (Perthshire), £500 in year-two (Southern Spain)).

Ways to pay

A non-refundable deposit of £1,000 must be paid on acceptance of a place on the programme and the full fee is due by the end of October each year. The deposit is counted towards the year-one fee.

A payment plan is available to students who wish to spread the cost over the nine months of the programme each year, subject to a £50 administration fee. More details of this will be provided at the enrolment stage.

Number of places

There are a maximum of 16 places available each year.

Entry requirements

Prospective students should have the following:

1. An honours degree (2.2 or above) in a related or appropriate discipline and/or significant and demonstrable professional experience commensurate with a graduate level qualification.
2. Prior training in counselling skills to certificate level or related skills/ competencies linked to counselling or psychological therapy
3. A deep understanding of the personal and professional demands of working in the mental health field gained through previous experience in a helping role and/or through personal development activities/personal therapy.

Prospective students will be called for an interview prior to an offer on the programme being made.

How to apply

To apply for the programme, prospective students should complete our online application process, in which the following must be provided:

1. A CV specifying all academic qualifications and relevant professional experience.
2. A 500-word submission explaining how they meet each of the entry requirements above providing a rationale for why they have applied for this professional training programme at this time.
3. An academic or reflective essay (min 1000 words) that they have written in the last three years demonstrating their ability to meet the academic components of the programme.
4. Two references (one must be from an academic/employment background)

[Please click here to start your online application process.](#)

Scan our QR code below to visit our website



Give us a call today on **0131 287 2655**
or visit our website at
www.firstpsychologytraining.co.uk