



## **Master of Arts (MA) in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development (Level 9, 90 ECTS credits)**

### **Introduction**

The focus of the professional MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development is to qualify practicing teachers and other professionals to become professionally qualified Guidance Counsellors competent to practice in a range of settings. The professional Guidance Counsellor employs specific skills with individuals in the areas of personal, social, educational and career counselling. To fulfil this role, trainees on the programme are educated in a broad range of knowledge, skills and competencies in the context of a lifelong learning framework.

There is a very strong focus on the trainee's personal development on the MA programme which aims to promote self-awareness and insight for a deeper appreciation of the guidance counselling process with clients across the lifespan. Therefore, it is a requirement of the programme that trainees avail of external counselling provided by an accredited counsellor, psychologist or psychotherapist in each academic year of the MA programme. Details of which are provided to trainees when they commence on the programme.

### **Programme Delivery**

The programme is offered over two academic years on a part-time basis. It consists of a combination of seven taught modules, professional practice placements in Year 2 and a research dissertation in Year 2. The average class contact time per week for each of the first three semesters of the programme is **6** hours, with a reduction in Semester 2, Year 2 to take account of the demands of undertaking a research dissertation. It is important to note that this professional programme requires a **significant level of personal commitment** from participants in terms of attendance, contribution, self-directed learning, assignment work and their own time management.

### **Entry Requirements**

Candidates for this initial qualification in guidance counselling shall be required to possess either of the following:

- A Degree in Education at 2.2 or above from a concurrent undergraduate programme, or a Higher Diploma/Masters in Education, or an approved equivalent professional teaching qualification *or*
- An Honours Degree at 2.2 or above in a cognate discipline such as psychology, social and community work, human resources and health sciences.

Consideration will also be given to candidates in line with UL's Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Where candidates are non-native English language speakers, they must also satisfy the English Language Requirements of UL.

As the number of places on the programme is limited the selection process is competitive and will include short listing prior to an interview (group and individual on the same day).

### **Teaching and Assessment on Programme**

The level of award will be determined by the student's overall level of performance as reflected in his/her QCA and in accordance with the University of Limerick's regulations for the award of MA. A combination of lectures, experiential group work, triad and dyad work, problem-based learning, practice placement and reflective journaling underpins students' learning and engagement on the MA programme. A team of lecturers and qualified guidance practitioners deliver instructional classes and student supervision across the two years of the programme. A wide variety of assessment procedures are used on the course, including essays, reports, case studies, presentations, skills based observations, posters, audio taped guidance counselling sessions, portfolios and a final dissertation.

## Programme Structure (90 ECTS)

Year 1: Semester 1	Semester 2	Summer Semester
<p><i>EN6221 Counselling Theory &amp; Practice 1 (9 ECTS)</i></p> <p><i>EN6141 Professional Practice in Guidance Counselling (6 ECTS)</i></p>	<p><i>EN6093 Contemporary Perspectives on Vocational Development and Progression across the Lifespan (6 ECTS)</i></p> <p><i>EN6192 Theory and Skills of Experiential Group Learning (9 ECTS)</i></p>	<p><i>EN5320 Theory and Practice of Psychological Testing (6 ECTS)</i> (1 full week of campus attendance)</p>
Year 2: Semester 1	Semester 2	Summer Semester
<p><i>EN6114 Counselling Theory &amp; Practice 2 (9 ECTS)</i></p> <p><i>EN6091 Advanced Research Methods in Guidance Counselling (6 ECTS)</i></p> <p><i>EN6124 Practicum 1: Practice Placement (6 ECTS)</i></p>	<p><i>EN6015 Practicum 2: Practice Placement (6 ECTS)</i></p> <p><i>EN6044 Dissertation 1 (12 ECTS)</i></p>	<p><i>EN6006 Dissertation 2 (15 ECTS)</i></p>

### **EN6221: Counselling Theory and Practice 1**

Main theoretical frameworks of counselling and their application to guidance counselling practice are taught on this module. Humanistic and person-centred approaches are applied. Module content also includes introduction to psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and existential theories. Assimilative Integration will be explored as a model of mapping diverse theoretical perspectives and counselling practices. The counselling process as reflected in contemporary theoretical models will be experienced and the micro skills of counselling will be practiced. Ethical practice for guidance counsellors is addressed.

### **EN6141: Professional Practice in Guidance Counselling**

Purpose of this module is to introduce students to the key areas of professional practice in guidance counselling within a lifelong guidance counselling context. An overview of philosophical, theoretical and political debates and practice based models in lifelong guidance is provided. The integrated model of guidance counselling (personal, educational and career) in post-primary, FET and higher education are addressed. A range of professional issues pertinent to the role of the guidance counsellor, such as ethics, social justice, multiculturalism and use of ICT are addressed. Also includes methodologies related to service planning and quality assurance in the delivery of a contemporary guidance service.

### **EN6093: Contemporary Perspectives on Vocational Development and Progression across the Lifespan**

The purpose of this module is to develop the student's knowledge base, skills and competencies with regard to lifelong and life-wide career development and decision-making, labour market information and career counselling interviewing skills pertinent to the role of the Guidance Counsellor. Theoretical perspectives of lifelong career development grounded in psychology, sociology, education and labour economics is addressed. Issues related to social justice, gender and multiculturalism in career decision making and progression are covered. The students develop career counselling interviewing skills based on contemporary practice based models to support young people and adults in their career development.

### **EN6192: Theory and Skills of Experiential Group Learning**

This module focuses on the development of techniques to engage clients in personal and social, educational and career learning and development. Focus on of group dynamics and its relevance to classroom and group work for medium sized groups of learners. Major developmental, learning and group work theorists are covered. Students will be empowered to create a safe group or classroom environment in which to explore a broad range of issues specific to guidance areas.

### **EN5320: Theory and Practice of Psychological Testing**

Syllabus focuses on development of knowledge and skills in the selection, administration and provision of feedback of relevant assessment tests appropriate in the practice of guidance counselling. Formal and informal assessment; assessment for instructional decision-making, educational guidance, certification and accountability; high-stakes testing; norm-referenced and criterion referenced testing; principal categories and types of tests; group and individual tests of mental ability; achievement testing; personality; tests for choosing careers; test administration; interpreting test scores; reliability, validity and standardisation of tests; testing and professional ethics.

### **EN6144: Counselling Theory and Practice 2**

This is a follow-on module from EN6221 in Year 1 with a focus on expanding the micro skills of counselling relevant to client's needs in the context of guidance counselling practice. Syllabus includes structured approaches to counselling such as Egan and Nelson-Jones. The personal development component looks specifically at the guidance counsellor as a person and his/her personal and professional trajectory. Specific reference is made to issues relevant to personal, social, educational and career guidance counselling across different settings. The integration of counselling theories will be expanded to include Theoretical Integration, Technical Eclecticism and Common Factors approaches. Relevant research in the field of counselling will be examined in a quest for the most effective schools of counselling in the context of guidance counselling practice.

### **EN6091: Advanced Research Methods in Guidance Counselling**

Module introduces students to practitioner-based research methods in field of guidance counselling. Content involves the preparatory work for the Dissertation in Year 2. Syllabus focuses is on contemporary ontological, epistemological and paradigm debates and methodological strategies relevant to evidence-based research. A strong emphasis is placed on ethical reflexivity and appropriate methods for data collection and analysis in the field. This will involve consideration of the relevance of research into their own practice to help generate new professional insights and perspectives which can ultimately contribute to a broader body of knowledge in the field. In addition, attention will be given to dissemination practices in relation to evidence-based research, including their own work, within the guidance profession and other related fields.

### **EN6044: Dissertation 1 and EN6006: Dissertation 2**

These modules provide a support framework for trainees to carry out a practice based empirical research project in the form of a final dissertation of 15,000 words. Students are required to further develop their research proposal from module EN6091 with the support of an assigned research supervisor. They will be required to conduct an in-depth literature review and apply appropriate research methodologies related to their research topic. They will progress their work through a number of milestones from the fieldwork, data collection and analysis to the discussion, final write up and presentation of the dissertation.

### **EN6124 and EN6124: Practicum Placements**

Students are required to complete two practicum placements: a Main Placement and a Work-Based Learning Placement. Students source both placements themselves and need to have them organised in a timely manner to ensure completion of both by end of Spring semester in Year 2. Both placements need to take place during the working hours operated by the placement host organisation.

**(1) Main Placement:** comprises of a total of **125 hours** in a guidance service under the direct mentorship of a professionally qualified guidance counsellor on site. This placement can be in a post-primary, further education and training, or higher education guidance service, with the agreement of the School Principal/Service Manager and the Guidance Counsellor. The optimal time-frame for this placement is a **minimum of 4 hours per week for 32 weeks** approximately in the guidance service. The placement is be undertaken in Year 2 between end of August/early September (Autumn Semester) and the end of April (Spring Semester).

**(2) Work-Based Learning Placement:** this comprises of a total of **25 hours**, which can be on an hourly, daily or one-week basis. The placement is to be undertaken between Spring Semester Year 1 and the end of Spring Semester Year 2. There are two options for this placement:

(i) An alternative type of guidance service to the guidance service in which the student undertakes the Main Placement, i.e. post-primary, further education and training, higher education guidance service or a public employment service (PES).

**Or**

(ii) A Human Resources (HR) Department in a medium to large organisation (public or private sector), or a specific graduate employer's organisation (see <https://gradireland.com/graduate-employers>). The HR Department cannot be the student's workplace HR Department.