

Readiness to Practice Guidelines

In Year 2, each student is assessed by Matrix staff for their suitability to commence working with clients in a placement. Students are assessed on the following points:

Personal Readiness – assessed by the Programme Lead and tutors

Ability of the student to:

- Show a commitment to personal & professional development including self-awareness and an awareness of fitness to practice in relation to clients.
- Reflect on personal development including ways in which life experiences affect self and relationships with peers, clients and other professionals.
- Demonstrate the psychological and emotional robustness necessary to work with intense feelings and uncertainties.
- Engage in rigorous self-examination, monitoring thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and behaviours.
- Recognise personal and professional limitations and clarify ways of addressing these.
- Recognise and show an ability to maintain appropriate professional boundaries even when these are challenged by others.
- Understand the values underpinning the profession, and the qualities expected of practitioners as exemplified in the [UKCP Code of Ethics and Professional Practice 2019](#)
- Demonstrate the capacity for reflective thinking.
- Understand the importance of supervision and show willingness to use it to address both professional and developmental needs.
- Understand the importance of professional responsibility to vulnerable clients.
- Understand and use a relevant ethical framework to make critical decisions about the practice of counselling.
- Give and receive feedback constructively, reflect and make appropriate changes.
- Regularly evaluate and review personal integrative progress, making links with theoretical knowledge, the counselling process and their own personal development.
- Understand the importance of being an ambassador for Matrix College in a placement position.

Counselling skills – to be observed in ‘readiness to practice’ triads

The following summary highlights some basic effective relational counselling skills useful for positive interactions with clients:

Listening –

- a. Attending - orienting physically to the client to indicate awareness of the client, and that the client has the full, undivided attention and care of the counsellor.
- b. Listening/observing - capturing and understanding the verbal and non-verbal information communicated by that client.

Empathy – The ability to perceive another's experience and then to communicate that perception back to the individual to clarify and amplify their own experiencing and meaning. (Not "I know how you feel" or offering a 'silver lining')

Attunement – Ability to recognise the moods and emotions in the client and adapt their own response in accordance.

Immediacy – Ability to speak openly about something that is occurring in the present moment, especially in the counselling relationship.

Genuineness – Ability of counsellor to be *freely themselves*. Includes congruence between outer words/behaviours and inner feelings; non-defensiveness; non-role-playing; and being unpretentious.

Unconditional positive regard – An expression of caring and nurturance conveying warmth, acceptance and respect.

Concreteness – Keeping communications specific and focused on facts and feelings of relevant concerns, while avoiding tangents, generalizations, abstract discussions, or talking about the counsellor rather than the client.

Open Questions – Ability to frame the questioning process to assist the client in clarifying or exploring thoughts or feelings. So, not requesting specific information and not purposively limiting the nature of the response to only a yes or no, or very brief answer.

- Has an intention or therapeutic purpose for every question asked.
- Can follow a response to an open-ended question with a paraphrase or reflection which encourages the client to share more and avoids repetitive patterns of question/answer or interrogation.

Interpretation – Used to help the client make connections between seemingly isolated statements of events; can point out themes or patterns, or can offer a new framework for understanding. Lightly used in the client's best interest; not to be seen to be clever.

Removing Obstacles to Change – Can explore with client possible problems which may delay or prevent their change process. *In collaboration with the client* can identify possible solutions and alternatives. (Not advice-giving!)

Process for Readiness to Practice Assessment

The assessment process generally starts near to the beginning of year 2. A tutor will observe triad practice sessions and assess students on the criteria outlined above.

Because it is not possible to assess all students at once, this process may take several teaching units to complete. Matrix may invite an additional tutor to come in and conduct observation/assessments so that the process can be completed in a timely manner.

All students will have at least 2 assessments. If an assessment is passed this is sometimes called a 'tick' – and two 'ticks' (2 successful assessments) are required for Readiness to Practice.

Not all students will attain 2 'ticks' immediately. This is normal. It usually indicates that a student needs a little more time to develop their skills – and feedback will be offered in order to support and optimize this development. Sometimes, a re-assessment may be scheduled with a gap in between (i.e. *not* the very next teaching unit) in order to give time for more skills practice.

Students should note that they will not be told immediately after the triad session whether they have passed the assessment. Tutors will always go away and reflect on the session, considering the criteria. Then they inform the Programme Lead if the 'tick' has been attained.

Therefore, ***students will hear if they have their 'ticks' from the Programme Lead, after the unit*** – and should not ask the tutor at the time of the triad; the observing tutor will not give an assessment at that time.

It is important to remember that this process helps to safeguard all concerned; students, placements, but (most of all) clients.

The Readiness to Practice assessment can be anxiety-provoking. However, many students find that having their 'ticks' helps them feel more confident about starting with clients. It would be unhelpful, going to work with potentially vulnerable clients with a great deal of anxiety about one's skills – so the process of getting the 'ticks' may contribute to a more comfortable start in placement work.