

Counselling Psychology

Counselling psychology as a career path is a relatively new opportunity in Aotearoa New Zealand, although it is well established in other countries, including in Britain, USA, South Africa and Australia. Counselling psychology has been established as a scope of practice by the New Zealand Psychologists Board. To register as a counselling psychologist you require a minimum of a Master's degree in psychology from an accredited educational organisation and an accredited Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology, or equivalent qualification. Eligibility for the counselling psychologist scope of practice also requires a Psychologists Board approved practicum or internship involving 1500 hours of supervised practice which is normally included in the Postgraduate Diploma.

Training in New Zealand is currently available at Auckland University of Technology (AUT University), which offers an accredited programme comprising a Masters in Health Science and Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology.

Counselling psychologists are trained in therapeutic relationship skills as well as psychological assessment, diagnosis and intervention. While counselling psychologists class themselves as scientist-practitioners, many prefer the term "practitioner-scholar" as this recognises the importance of practice based evidence as well as evidence based practice. Frameworks for practice include psychodynamic, phenomenological, developmental, systemic, prevention/educational, empowerment, cultural and ethical. A hallmark of counselling psychology is that the discipline takes a contextual approach. This means that counselling psychologists endeavour to take account of the person/whanau/family's whole context, including their world views, cultural identity, social networks, and strengths, in order to collaboratively develop an intervention that will work best to resolve their issues. AUT's counselling psychology programme provides an overview of a range of therapeutic approaches, with foundation training in cognitive behavioural therapy and narrative therapy. In common with other scopes, case formulation is a crucial part of the training and at the heart of the work. A comprehensive assessment leads to an ever-evolving formulation that informs the therapeutic approach and specific interventions, targeted to agreed goals for therapy. For counselling psychologists, the formulation is explicitly multi-perspective, including relevant contextual elements as well as psychological elements.

Counselling psychologists work across the spectrum from everyday adjustment difficulties, to existential crises, through to severe mental health problems. Work settings may include NGOs, community agencies, rehabilitation, health, education, care and protection, youth justice, addiction and mental health services. Interns and graduates from AUT's counselling psychology programme are working with a diversity of presenting issues including eating disorders, drugs and alcohol, gambling, child and adolescent mental health, youth behaviour/family therapy, relationship issues, physical health concerns and palliative care. In summary, counselling psychologists work collaboratively with children and families, adults, groups, organisations and communities to assist people to adjust to life's demands and developmental challenges and to facilitate opportunities for living full and productive lives.

To find out more about training as a counselling psychologist go to
Auckland University of Technology

<http://www.aut.ac.nz/study-at-aut/study-areas/health-sciences/postgraduate-study/psychology>.

To find out more about registering in the counselling psychology scope of practice go to <http://www.psychologistsboard.org.nz/scopes-of-practice2>