



Access and Participation Statement

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1. Introduction

Matrix College is a leading provider in East Anglia of specialist higher education in psychotherapeutic counselling. It was formed in 2000 by a small group of impassioned individuals with shared values of integration, holism and integrity who decided to establish an integrative counselling training organisation due to a lack of opportunities for this in this area.

Matrix has since become a thriving centre for the education of individuals who wish to train and qualify as integrative therapeutic counsellors. At Matrix we have a strong vision of facilitating excellence in counselling through heightening knowledge, developing skills, emphasising self-reflective practice and promoting ethical and safe standards. We consider the development of the self in relationship with others as a constantly evolving intersubjective process and therefore see that both tutors and students can grow and learn from joint experience.

Programme

Matrix delivers a three-year BSc programme which is validated and supported by Middlesex University. The College is currently planning the development of a Master's programme which would meet the criteria for Middlesex validation and UKCP Standards of Education and Training for Psychotherapy training.

Matrix is a Training Member Organisation of the Psychotherapeutic Counselling & Intersubjective Psychotherapy College (PCIPC College) of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

The student population

The student population is mainly undergraduate with currently 78 students enrolled on the BSc programme (2018/19). We recruit widely from the area having mainly students in residence in both Norfolk and Suffolk. Other areas are represented such as Essex, Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire.

Matrix's student body has a gender ratio of 81% female to 19% male and an age distribution comprising of 9% under 24; 25% 25-29 and the larger proportion of students, 66% over 30 years of age. 3% of students identify as coming from a black or minority ethnicity (BME) and 6% have disclosed a specific disability.

The staff

The staff team is comprised of successful, experienced and well-educated psychotherapists with noted expertise in their areas of training. Matrix is committed to ensuring that they recruit tutors who are of the highest calibre, not only in the delivery of sound theory and practice, but who are also to model a set of values and behaviour that students will absorb.

They must be:

- proficient in the handling of group dynamics that emerge in the students' learning processes.
- able to reflect on their own counselling practice ethically in a group,
- give live supervision in the training group,
- teach theory.

Matrix employs primarily candidates with a Master's qualification in Integrative Psychotherapy but find it enriching to have a mix of staff with different psychotherapy trainings. Although

preferring to bring in those who haven't been trained by Matrix we will also consider applications from previous students. All tutors must be either UKCP registered or BACP accredited.

2. Matrix College Values, Vision and Mission

The values espoused are those of equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice, the principle of integration throughout its theories, practices and its personnel, and the principles of restorative justice in its complaint's procedures.

Matrix College's Vision is to invest in the life of individuals, organisations and communities through excellence in training, practice and the ongoing study in the psychological therapies.

The stated Mission for Matrix is to:

- Create a facilitative learning environment, based on our values of integration and intersubjectivity which is non-discriminatory, mutually respectful and co-created.
- Provide high quality teaching. This means robust, accurate and ongoing self-assessment which leads to improvement in quality. Matrix uses external organisational bench marks (from Middlesex University, QAA and UKCP) to maintain an effective quality assurance process.
- Provide and encourage open communication between students, Director of Training, Matrix Management, Programme Leads, Tutors, and Supervisors
- Provide a secure base for students and graduates so that they may return for guidance and continual professional development in order to continue their personal growth, learning needs or interests.
- Be open to new research and texts from current theoretical perspectives, irrespective of their orientation.
- Have an open door to individuals from all walks of life and theoretical backgrounds and be open to learning from our different theoretical languages.
- Support students in the challenging task of learning to integrate theories and competencies from several traditions to form their personal integrative model of practice alongside supporting their personal development in their integration of self.

3. Commitment to Wider Participation

Matrix College has a long-standing commitment to the widening of participation in the current programme of study. The following documents support and build on this commitment.

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Equality and Diversity Statement
- Safeguarding Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy
- Student Support Strategy

Equal Opportunities Policy

The policy Equal Opportunities Policy confirms our commitment to being an institution with a culture and tradition which encourages diversity and is open, fair and inclusive. It is written with the aims of ensuring that all students, student applicants, staff, and job applicants are treated fairly and equally, and supporting Matrix's objective of providing a working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination.

This long-standing policy is regularly updated and reviewed. The policy applies to all staff, students and alumni (henceforth members) within the College. All members are expected to put this policy into practice.

There are a number of ways in which Matrix aims to ensure equal opportunities including:

- Recruitment and selection of students and staff
- Staff career development
- Terms and Conditions of service for employees
- Employment policies and practices
- Working environment
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring
- An open and fair complaints procedure

Equality and Diversity Statement

Matrix has an Equality and Diversity Statement for all students to recognise through this the College welcomes and celebrates a richness of diversity in ability including: age, belief, ethnicity, experience, gender, size, life stage, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and other areas where individuals experience discrimination and judgement.

The statement recognises that having an aspect of identity which is or has been stigmatised can cause trauma, fear or shame. Students are encouraged to raise any concerns with the group, and can rely on the support of Matrix tutors.

it stresses that identifying with one strand of diversity does not give any of one of us the right to judge, discount, discriminate against or make assumptions about someone because they are in a different strand.

Matrix encourages students and staff to remain open, curious and respectful, and in aiming to learn collective differences it states that we equip ourselves to work positively with a great variety of people in a positive and non-oppressive way.

Safeguarding Policy

The Safeguarding Policy strengthens Matrix College's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of all students. The purpose of this policy is to describe how Matrix aims to protect students from abuse and to outline the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

The three main elements to this policy are prevention, protection and support.

Prevention Matrix will aim to promote a positive, supportive and secure environment in which students feel respected and valued. We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication are important elements in prevention. We will aim to promote an ethos in which students feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.

Protection Matrix will take account of legislation and guidance issued by the Government. The college has a designated senior member of staff who is responsible for Adult Safeguarding (Deputy Head of Training). The college aim to ensure that every member of staff

knows the name of the designated person and her role.

Support Matrix will provide appropriate support for any students who may have been abused, for staff to whom a disclosure has been made, and to staff against whom an allegation may have been made.

Admissions Policy

Matrix is committed to opposing discrimination and all applicants who fulfil the criteria for admission to the programme will be invited for interview. Applicants are interviewed by two senior members of staff.

Counselling training attracts learners who may not have formal academic qualifications. Completion of two sections (each 500 words) required on the application form will demonstrate academic writing level. This is assessed by the interviewers using the Assessment of Literacy criteria.

The policy provides evidence of the College's commitment to making the programme as accessible as possible to students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy confirms the approach Matrix takes to ensure that all students have the opportunities and support they require to succeed, that diverse and individual student needs are met and celebrated through inclusive approaches to curriculum design and delivery. The specifically delineated areas where this strategy comes alive are through: enhanced student learning and achievement; student support; assessment; resources; feedback; curriculum development; partnership; quality assurance and enhancement.

Learner Development and Student Support

Overall, Matrix seeks to identify and remove potential barriers to the quality of the education experience of all students through the early detection and response to, personal and academic issues which may adversely affect a student's study and through the provision of additional support to students who need it.

Matrix holds an essay writing day in each venue once a year. All students are strongly encouraged to attend for support and help to plan and write essays and case studies. Students can attend at either venue.

Matrix also has a Learning Support Tutor, this is a designated student tutor for students with learning support needs such as dyslexia. Students contact her if they require any additional support with their studies. Any student identified at interview requiring additional support will be asked for permission to forward their details to the support tutor so contact can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Additional personal support is also available for all students beyond the compulsory tutorials with their programme Lead Tutor. Programme Lead Tutors are available on request for extra tutorials if needed (on top of the three per year already provided). The Management Team are also available and easily accessible by students for personal and individual support if required.

Recruitment, Selection and Admission

Matrix has a strategic approach to recruitment. The Admissions Policy is reviewed by the Management Team annually prior to each year's intake. This review takes into consideration the College's most recent AER, withdrawals from the Programme, number of essay defers and any specific difficulties for students, such as when English Language is not their first language.

In 2016 'Taster Sessions' were introduced to give potential students detailed information about the course of study; including the opportunity to learn about and discuss the necessary demands and rigors involved in the training. Both the academic demands and the challenges of personal development growth are outlined.

Counselling is traditionally seen as a white, female, middle class occupation. Matrix aims to challenge this perception. 30% of the teaching staff are male and 43% of the programme lead team are male. We have seen an increase of men applying, 8% in 2012/13 compared with 19% in 2017/18. 3% of applicants in 2017/18 were of other ethnic origin than white. We recognise we have more to do to encourage more diversity in the student population. The average age of applicants is 39 years.

Matrix has forged links with a local social enterprise (Realise Futures) which offers courses to those who are long term unemployed, disabled or socially disadvantaged. They offer a counselling skills course and we send an ex-student or a tutor each year to talk to their students about Matrix training.

The college selection process requires a written application form, attendance at an interview and the uptake of two references.

Application and Interview process

The website is updated with information about all aspects of the application process. Prospective applicants are invited and encouraged to phone or email a member of the administration staff or the management team to discuss their application in full. Speaking individually and privately to students at this stage of the application process enables the college to discuss the complexity of counselling training early on and prepares candidates for it.

New application guidelines are available to prospective students as well as guidelines to help them complete the application form. Students are given information about fees on the website, on taster days, in outreach visits, during telephone enquiries and in hard copy at interview. Those who are applying for student loans are informed when their deposit will be returned.

Every prospective student is interviewed by a panel of two staff members; either the Head of Training, the Deputy Head of Training and/or a senior tutor. Each member of interview staff adheres to the Admissions policy and is an experienced practitioner with professional experience of client assessment. This is a transferable skill for an assessment of an applicant's fitness to study on this course.

It is imperative that each applicant's personal readiness to undertake such a demanding course is assessed thoroughly. This involves specific regard to an individual's internal resources, particularly those involved in enabling engagement with the psychotherapeutic demands of the course such as an aptitude for self-awareness and commitment to self-development. The college limits the number of staff undertaking interviews to ensure accuracy and fairness across the applicant cohort. Decisions about acceptance are taken after a process of due reflection from both interviewers and taking both interviewers' assessments account. To be open and transparent and to ensure applicants a fair process at interview, prospective students are all asked the same questions and detailed interview notes are taken for reflection when making the decision to offer a place on the course.

Matrix chooses to select candidates who may not have five GCSEs or what would be considered pre-requisites for study to degree level, believing that training for counselling should be open to all. Each candidate is required to write a 500-word personal statement and

500 words to describe their strengths and personal qualities within their application. This is used as an assessment of their writing ability.

APL Policy

Matrix recruitment strategy was updated and improved by the management team in 2015. The APL Policy is reviewed and updated annually. In 2016 it was re-written to strengthen the requirements for personal therapy and for previous training to ensure that students joining in years 2 or 3 were ready to do so and that they matched the level of training reached by the College's students. They need to be ready to join an existing cohort of students with experience of a year of personal therapy and group process showing the concomitant self-awareness necessary to become successful reflective integrative counsellors. The APL students also need to demonstrate a previous training which matches the learning outcomes of the 'missed' year(s) to facilitate parity of understanding and to mitigate the experience of defensive behaviour and subsequently to smooth an entry into integrative practice and understanding at the level expected of Matrix students.

Matrix publish the ILETS requirements for application on the website. Candidates who have English as an additional language need highly developed skills in communication as counselling training and practice, with its emphasis on speaking and listening, requires a complexity of nuanced language knowledge.

During the interview, staff also identify areas of improvement for an applicant as well as additional support needs. At that stage, the interviewer may refer the applicant to the Student Learning Support Tutor in order to discuss further needs. Upon successful completion of the admission process, and once the applicant accepts the offer to study, the Learning Support Tutor will liaise with staff across the College to ensure that relevant support mechanisms, additional resources and/or reasonable adjustments are put into place.

Resources

Students have access to tutors, study space, study skills websites, the Library Catalogue and Online Resources, the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodie) and Student Loans guidance.

Programme Lead Tutor Support

Each term the Programme Lead Tutor monitors individual student's academic progression as well as attendance, this is formalised during an hour-long one-to-one tutorial. They get to know their allocated students well. As the relationship between the Programme Lead and student is developed, it also contributes to student engagement at much higher levels. The Programme Lead is in constant communication with students and the Management Team and any difficulties identified are dealt with swiftly. When a particular student has been identified as needing further support the Programme Lead refers the individual to the Learning Support Tutor for additional help. The Programme Lead Committee meets every six weeks to discuss student progress and to inform the Management Team of any developing issues with students or curriculum.

Personal Development Planning

Students are required to formulate a personal development plan (PDP) and follow it throughout their studies. PDP is undertaken with the Programme Lead during tutorials and will provide the student with an opportunity to assess the value of the skills and knowledge they are developing as well as identify future learning and development needs. It offers a structured way to reflect on what students are good at and what they need to develop further. The aim is to encourage students to review their own skill levels and assess what they have learned from different situations and environments including their studies, part time work, voluntary work and their own psychotherapy and supervision (where appropriate). The students' learning journal assignment is evidence of their developing reflections and academic progress.

Requiring the recording of the students' personal development reflects the future working environment where practising counsellors are expected to record and assess their own continuous professional development or CPD.

Employment and further career progression

The students' development of employability skills is integral to our programme. The training is aimed to give students the skills to engage in private practice in a reflective and reflexive way that will enable them to develop their work with clients and potential employers such as the NHS, Social Services, Police Forces and Government Bodies.

While employability is embedded in the curriculum, it is still the students' responsibility to actively develop these skills. It is the student's responsibility to find their placement, although Matrix supplies leads and suggestions from a network of well-established connections with local counselling agencies and volunteer placement providers, many of whom approach the college asking for more student counsellors when they have vacancies. This search for a placement provides students with the opportunity to extend and develop confidence in their maturing professional self. Once they take ownership of this, and are successful we support their development in a variety of ways both within the curriculum, outside the curriculum and by helping them to make sense of their experiences and understand how to articulate their learning and development.

The Deputy Head of Training has specific responsibility for placement development. This role involves co-ordinating and assessing clinical placements for students. She is the point of contact for students who have questions, comments, ideas, or feedback on their placement experience. She oversees the implementation of the 4-way Placement Agreement agreed and signed between the student, the placement, the clinical supervisor and Matrix.

With the achievement of UKCP registration, only possible through Matrix College for our students, Matrix graduates become Matrix Members and continue to be supported with their professional registration and the inspection of ongoing CPD requirements to maintain professional status as a Registered UKCP psychotherapeutic counsellor.