

COU781

# Pluralistic Couple and Family Counselling

**School:** School of Law and Society

2025 | Semester 2

UniSC Sunshine Coast

**BLENDED  
LEARNING**

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

*Please go to [usc.edu.au](http://usc.edu.au) for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.*

## 1. What is this course about?

### 1.1. Description

This course develops your practice of advanced counselling skills enabling you to apply a cutting-edge approach to your work supporting couples and families. This course includes the extended understanding of recent developments in counselling and its professional practice. You will develop advanced skills for working within family systems and relationship issues. A key element of the course will be the development of an appreciation and understanding of therapeutic integration, and your own personal counselling style.

### 1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
<b>BLENDED LEARNING</b>			
<b>Tutorial/Workshop 1</b> – On campus workshop - 3 hours	3hrs	Week 1	11 times

### 1.3. Course Topics

#### Course Topics

**Course and Assessment Overview.** The creative counsellor. The composite model of counsellor competence. Becoming a 'master' therapist.

**Psychodynamic approaches** - origins, evolution and research findings. Freud and Jung; conscious vs. unconscious - contemporary discussions; defence mechanisms; theories of personality; therapeutic strategies.

**The Implications of Attachment Theory** for counsellors and couples' therapy. Approaches that use attachment theory; recognising "internal working models"; attachment patterns.

**Emotion-focused Therapy** – with individuals and couples. Emotion schemes; layers of emotion; empathic attunement; experiential processing; the 2-chair process.

#### Systemic Thinking, Family & Couple Therapy – 1

Supporting Families. Schools of Family Therapy; Family system boundaries; structuring sessions.

#### Systemic Thinking, Family & Couple Therapy – 2

Supporting Families and Couples. Types of families; multi-generational family therapy (Bowen); Family resilience; Couples Therapy.

#### Systemic Thinking, Family & Couple Therapy – 3

Supporting Families. Genograms; Role-play practice; life cycle perspective.

**A Post-Modern Approach: Narrative Therapy** in supporting couples. Use of language; dealing with dominant stories; use of metaphors; externalising problems.

**Art-making approaches** with families and couples. Rationale for creative activities; projective techniques; symbol work; visual art.

**Integrative Approaches** in Counselling. Client preferences and collaboration; eclectic practice; use of cultural resources.

### 2. What level is this course?

700 Level (Specialised)

Demonstrating a specialised body of knowledge and set of skills for professional practice or further learning. Advanced application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts.

### 3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

### 4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES		GRADUATE QUALITIES
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...		Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...
1	Develop and apply deep knowledge of theoretical underpinnings of counselling through meta-cognition and self-reasoning.	Knowledgeable
2	Demonstrate an ability to engage with family systems and sociocultural systems within the context of counselling in an ethical and professional manner.	Ethical Engaged
3	Demonstrate expertise in the knowledge and skills of therapeutic integration.	Knowledgeable Empowered
4	Identify and develop decision making pathways in counselling that maintain sustainable outcomes for clients and families.	Sustainability-focussed
5	Articulate and demonstrate your personal approach to counselling and psychotherapy.	Knowledgeable Creative and critical thinker

### 5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [UniSC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of "pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites".

### 5.1. Pre-requisites

COU701 and enrolled in Program AR708

### 5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

### 5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

### 5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

## 6. How am I going to be assessed?

### 6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

### 6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

Timely and detailed feedback is provided for each assessment. Early feedback available in class through Task 1. Feedback is provided both within text and general comments to build scholarly skills. Students are able to seek feedback through face-to-face discussion with the course coordinator. Workshops will include extended discussion and review of the assessment task requirements

### 6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Oral	Group	0%	A five-minute oral presentation in class in week 4.	Week 4	In Class
All	2	Essay	Individual	30%	1,750 words	Week 5	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	3	Oral	Individual	35%	20-30 Minutes	Week 10	Online Submission
All	4	Essay	Individual	35%	1750 words	Week 12	Online Submission

**All - Assessment Task 1:** In class, oral presentation on micro skills and counselling couples and families

GOAL:	To demonstrate, through a 5 minute talk, that skills from weeks 1 to 3 have been integrated and understood, and receive Course Coordinator and class feedback.		
PRODUCT:	Oral		
FORMAT:	This is a group task. Working in trios, prepare a 5-minute oral presentation that identifies how foundation counselling skills or 'micro skills' could be applied to counselling with small groups (i.e. families or couples). Choose 3 - 4 of the most valuable skills to focus on, and provide a rationale for this choice.		
CRITERIA:	No.		Learning Outcome assessed
	1	Demonstrate awareness of key foundational counselling skills, and how these are utilised within the small group context;	3
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Collaboration, Organisation, Information literacy		

### All - Assessment Task 2: Applying Theory to Family & Couple Counselling

GOAL:	To reflect on workshop content in weeks 1 to 5, and apply the various theories to the practice of Couple & Family Counselling.		
PRODUCT:	Essay		
FORMAT:	A written essay that compares and contrasts two theories from weeks one to five of the course, and describes the implications of these theories for practical implementation during group counselling sessions.		
CRITERIA:	No.		Learning Outcome assessed
	1	You will be assessed on: The quality, content, and theoretical underpinnings applied to practice	1 4 5
	2	Demonstration of analytical and complex thinking that is translated to practice methods	1 3 5
	3	Ability to conceive an integrative approach that is informed by basic counselling (micro) skills, systems thinking, psychodynamic principles, and the implications of attachment theory.	1 3 5
	4	Ability to cite evidence to support the proposed plans for counselling practice	1 2 4
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Information literacy		

### All - Assessment Task 3: Family or Couples Counselling Recorded Demonstration

GOAL:	Present a video recording of a counselling session demonstrating your use of family or relationship counselling skills.					
PRODUCT:	Oral					
FORMAT:	Working with two student colleagues from COU781 you will complete a 20 to 30 minute video session demonstrating your use of family or couple counselling skills within the context of family systems. The video will demonstrate how you are integrating your personal style of counselling. Full details of the requirement will be posted on Canvas.					
CRITERIA:	No.				Learning Outcome assessed	
	1	Clear video recording demonstrating use of advanced skills and techniques;		1	2	
	2	Demonstration of client engagement.		1	2	3
	3	Evidence of exploring the clients' relationship to their "system";		2	4	5
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Applying technologies					

#### All - Assessment Task 4: Self-critique of Recorded Demonstration

<b>GOAL:</b>	Demonstrate your ability to critically reflect on your skills in conducting a family or couple's session		
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Essay		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	A written self-assessment and reflective critique of your session.		
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>		<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1	Ability to critique your use of advanced family or couple skills and techniques;	1 4
	2	Comment on your engagement and efforts at alliance formation with clients	1 3
	3	Self-assessment reflection using supplied reflection questions	1 3
	4	Overall critique of your competence and skills and recognition of what needs to be developed further.	1 3
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Problem solving, Applying technologies, Information literacy		

## 7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

## 8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site– Please log in as soon as possible.

### 8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

### 8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

## 9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

## 10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

### 10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

## 10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

### Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

- (a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
- (b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

## 10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:

- (a) One day: deduct 5%;
- (b) Two days: deduct 10%;
- (c) Three days: deduct 20%;
- (d) Four days: deduct 40%;
- (e) Five days: deduct 60%;
- (f) Six days: deduct 80%;
- (g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:

Less than 15 minutes: No penalty

From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty

More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

## 10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](tel:0754301168) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](tel:0754563864) or email [safe@usc.edu.au](mailto:safe@usc.edu.au).

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](tel:0754301226) or email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au).

## 10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au).

## 10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 1226.

## 10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 2890.

## 10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit <https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

## 10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The [Student Charter](#) sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

## 10.10. General Enquiries

### In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

**Tel:** +61 7 5430 2890

**Email:** [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au)