



# Top Five Tips for Writing an Assignment on Ethics in Counselling

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Writing an assignment on ethics can sometimes feel a bit daunting. However, most UK awarding bodies are looking for the same or very similar criteria to be satisfied.

Below are five statements you may find useful when writing your assignment.

## **1. Counselling has codes of ethics to protect all parties.**

The reasons that ethical codes exist are:

- to offer reassurance and protection to the general public through counsellors working to an agreed professional standard that can be measured
- to ensure counsellors know what conduct is held to be right/wrong by their profession and professional body
- to provide a benchmark for professional bodies against which complaints/concerns can be evaluated and practitioners held to account.

## **2. Ethical codes help ensure the quality of service offered to the general public.**

Ethical frameworks set out the standards expected of counsellors and the service they provide to clients. For example, the BACP's Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions lists the values, principles and personal moral qualities it expects of its members – before defining what it considers as good practice. Typical areas of good practice covered by an ethical code include:

- use of titles
- advertising
- contracting
- confidentiality
- appropriate relationships with clients
- working with minors and vulnerable adults
- keeping records
- breaks and endings
- team-working
- supervision
- training and education
- research
- continuing professional development (CPD).

### **3. An ethical code allows clients to make an informed complaint.**

Sometimes, things go wrong. Clients may feel the service they are receiving is poor or that the counsellor is acting in an abusive way.

A code of ethics provides clients with the ability to understand what a counsellor's roles and responsibilities are. If a client feels that they are being treated unfairly, a complaint can be made to a professional body. All professional bodies offer guidance to the public on how to make a complaint against its members, and what they can expect of the ensuing process.

### **4. A code of ethics gives counsellors a structure for defensible decision-making.**

Sometimes, counsellors may have to break confidentiality or report a colleague who is acting unethically. In cases like this, they will need to provide an overview of how and why they decided to take this course of action.

An ethical framework can provide a structure to support this, and professional bodies often produce additional guidance to support members in this process. For example, the BACP publishes a Good Practice in Action factsheet entitled [Ethical decision making in the context of the counselling professions](#).

## **5. A code of ethic puts counselling on a par with other professions.**

All healthcare professionals work under a code of ethics or a set of guidelines that states what kind of behaviour is expected from a practitioner. Thus, having a code of ethics as counsellors helps give our work the status of an equal profession.

When working in a multi-disciplinary team, it is important to be aware that ethical codes between professions may vary. This means that there may at times be conflicts between the ethical codes to which colleagues in different professions are working. An additional complexity may be superimposed by the employing organisation having policies and procedures that are somehow at odds with one or more of these ethical codes. In this situation, it is vital to notice any such inconsistencies and to initiate an open discussion about them, in order to find an agreed way of working that is ethically sound for all parties.

## **Professional Bodies for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the UK**

There are many professional bodies that overview counselling and psychotherapy throughout the UK. Below are links to the different organisations that represent counselling and psychotherapy in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

[UKCP](#)

[BACP](#)

[COSCA](#) (Scotland)

[National Counselling Society](#)

[IACP](#) (Republic of Ireland)