



SCoPEd: Views and Perspectives

*Responses to Counselling Tutor audience questions
around SCoPEd Feb 2023*

CPCAB

Q: Will Level 4 be phased out?

There are no plans to phase out the CPCAB - Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling, as SCoPEd does not affect the relevance or value of this qualification in the counselling landscape in any way. The Level 4 is still the most popular, and well respected, route to becoming a qualified counsellor via the vocational training sector.

CPCAB's Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling, meets the requirements of a wide range of professional membership associations, including the those in the SCoPEd partnership. This qualification does still meet your needs as a trainee counsellor to achieve qualified status, enter employment and become a member of a range of professional associations recognised by the Professional Standards Authority.

The qualification is fully represented in the SCoPEd framework. Column A in the framework has been directly drawn from existing qualification competencies on the market. If anything, what SCoPEd does do is reinforce that the competencies you are taught on the Level 4 match what is being looked for in the field, they are accurately defined, evidence-based, and provide what employers and professional associations are looking for in a competent counsellor.

Q: What impact will SCoPEd have on my qualification? Is Level 4 relevant now?

As said above, SCoPEd fully acknowledges the range of competencies you will gain on your Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling from CPCAB. SCoPEd shows that these are what is being asked for from a qualified counsellor, and that your Level 4 training should provide these to you, as a basic minimum (if not more!). We are proud at CPCAB that our qualifications are highly respected in the field and many employers comment that CPCAB qualified counsellors often exceed their expectations of recently graduated learners.

Q: I will finish my level 3 in May 2023. Should I move on to level 7 rather than level 4?

This is entirely personal choice and depends on your career goals and personal circumstances. If you intended to study Level 4 before and were happy with that option, there isn't anything new that SCoPEd has brought in that should change that decision. The Level 4 Diploma from CPCAB is just as valid as it ever was, and is now additionally recognised within the SCoPEd framework.

If your aim is to study a vocational training route, part-time over 2 years at your local college or independent training centre whilst engaging in a work placement as a trainee counsellor, and qualifying as a counsellor after that period of study then the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling is likely for you.

If you are interested in alternative routes, for example like a degree at university, or post-graduate study (if you have the correct pre-requisite qualifications). And if this fits your personal circumstances, finances and available time, then you should look to source a degree that provides all the elements that you are looking for, including practice elements, which would enable you to become a practicing counsellor at the end of it.

Q: How does Level 5 fit into SCoPEd?

CPCAB offer a range of Level 5 qualifications, including 3 regulated qualifications which build on the initial competencies gained in the Level 4 Diploma. These additional competencies are also represented in the SCoPEd framework.

The framework can be used as a mapping tool to see where the range of additional competences that are taught in further studies fit into the SCoPEd framework.

For example in CPCAB's Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling (PC-L5) the Assessment Criteria 4.1 and 4.2 focus on the use of a coherent client assessment strategy. In SCoPEd this is seen in Column B competences such as 2.1.b. It is not a requirement for the Level 4 Diploma to cover assessment in this depth, whereas it is in the Level 5 qualification.

So essentially with the enhanced competencies in the framework, and the qualification specifications for our Level 5 training, or other further studies such as CPD or CPCAB's Tailormade qualifications, any learner or practitioner can map their training to the correct column.

They can even use the framework to identify areas of competence they would like to gain in future and then seek out learning opportunities to do so.

As SCoPEd was primarily designed to reflect competencies when working safely with adults, it does not represent the CPCAB Level 5 Diploma in Counselling Children and Young People. However, this new CPCAB qualification was fully mapped, at design stage, to the existing competence frameworks for working with young people published by both BACP and NCS.

Q: Will CPCAB make it clear which column their training sits in?

In our annual review of our documentation this year we will make reference to the SCoPEd framework and give indications of where it represents our qualification competencies.

If you take away one thing, take away that your vocational training qualifications from CPCAB map seamlessly to the framework, and are not lacking in any of the competence areas that you will need to be a counsellor.

We are advocating that the SCoPEd partners continue their work to communicate the meaning and application of SCoPEd to the public, as it appears that it has stirred up a bit of fear and uncertainty where it has not been fully understood.

At this stage, we would encourage people to read through the framework in detail and to avoid letting misunderstandings or rumours undermine your decisions around what training is right for you. If in doubt, do contact your centre, tutors, or us to ask any questions you have. We are always here to help.

BACP

Following BACP's decisions to adopt SCoPEd we have now entered a period of implementation. We've been looking at agreed mechanisms, pathways and routes with partners for moving between membership categories that will be aligned to the SCoPEd framework. These will need to be reflected within BACP's processes and systems with our existing membership and accreditation standards being refined.

This means that all BACP's current membership processes and criteria for applying for membership, individual accreditation and moving between membership categories will remain as they are until towards the end of 2023.

A transition period will start early 2024 and will last for approximately two years. During this time individual members will still be able to apply to become a registered member. Our Membership categories will be aligned to the SCoPEd columns and members will be able to move to a different category and therefore SCoPEd column where they have the skills knowledge and experience to do so.

Q: How will SCoPEd impact those who are accredited/Senior Accredited?

Accredited BACP Members will sit in column B as the entry points for column B already align to our accredited membership category. If you are an accredited BACP member sitting in column B you will still be able to practise column C competences where you have the right skills, knowledge and training.

If you meet all the practice standards and competences of column C but have chosen not to apply for the current senior accreditation scheme, you could choose to move membership category during the transition period if you're eligible. We'll advise members of the mechanisms to do this ahead of the transition period opening in early 2024.

Senior accredited BACP members will be aligned with column B as the current senior accreditation schemes don't align with column C competences. During the transition period we'll work with eligible senior accredited members to move to column C. There will not be a cost to this.

Following the transition period there will be a new senior accreditation scheme which will fully align with column C.

If you are a senior accredited BACP member sitting in column B you will still be able to practise column C competences where you have the right skills, knowledge and training.

Some members may be interested in specialist accreditation schemes such as those we've had previously for supervisors and CYP therapists. We're reviewing these schemes and are planning to create new specialist accreditation schemes for these specialisms that'll sit outside of the SCoPEd framework but will be mapped to corresponding BACP competence frameworks.

Senior accredited members who already have a specialist accreditation such as CYP or Supervision will keep their specialist accreditation alongside their membership category, regardless of whether they choose to stay in the accredited membership category (i.e. column B), or move to the new Senior Accreditation category that will be aligned with column C.

At this stage we're working with the SCoPEd partners to agree the mechanism for moving between membership categories during the transition process. We'll advise members of these ahead of the transition period opening. Following the transition period there will be additional mechanisms and routes and we'll update members of this in due course. BACP members will be able to move membership categories and therefore SCoPEd columns A, B and C.

Q: I will finish my level 3 in May. Should I move on to level 7 rather than level 4?

It is up to Individuals what course they choose to do.

Following the BACP transition period, new accreditation schemes with new routes to move between membership categories / columns will be available. The new routes will reflect the various routes that our members take including training and experience gained through practice and CPD. Therefore, holding an appropriate Level 7 qualification will not be the only route to the column C membership category, as we know that for many, undertaking a Masters level course won't be feasible. We'll provide more detail of the routes in due course.

Q: Does SCoPEd imply that those with Level 7 qualifications should be paid more than those with level 4 qualifications?

The framework is a powerful way to represent the training and skills of all qualified therapists who are members of professional bodies that have membership categories

mapped to the framework. The majority of these skills are within column A and so these people should be paid fairly just as therapists in column B and C should.

We believe that the SCoPEd framework will support employers and commissioners to make more evidence-based and informed choices by improving their understanding of the skills, knowledge and experience of a wider pool of qualified therapists.

BACP is actively engaged in ongoing conversations about how we ensure that all qualified therapists are paid fairly and appropriately. Ultimately, we hope that SCoPEd will lead to all qualified counsellors and psychotherapists having greater access to more opportunities.

Q: How do you move from column A to columns B and C?

Membership categories will be aligned to the SCoPEd columns, rather than members being mapped to SCoPEd columns.

If members believe their training, knowledge and experience is represented in another BACP membership category (and therefore a different SCoPEd column) they will be able to go through a process of evidencing that during or after the transition period.

As is the case now, when a member wishes to move to a different membership category, they have to evidence that they have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to do so. This will not change.

It would be up to members as to whether they would want to apply to change their BACP membership category and therefore move between SCoPEd columns.

Members will still be able to practise competences in other columns, providing they have the skills, knowledge, and experience to do so.

At this stage we're working with the SCoPEd partners to agree the mechanisms for moving membership categories during the transition period. We'll advise members of these ahead of the transition period opening.

Following the transition period there will be additional mechanisms and routes and we'll update members of this in due course. BACP members will be able to move membership categories and therefore SCoPEd columns A, B and C.

Q: By accepting this framework, are you, as a professional body, essentially saying/defining that there is a difference between counselling and psychotherapy?

There are some areas of differentiation between trainings which are associated with the title of counselling and those with the title of psychotherapy, in terms of entry points, associated competences and practice standards and, in some cases, the length and level of training and experience. This is not surprising as some trainings are longer, at a higher academic level and require more client hours, supervision, levels of reflective practice and associated skills, like research and some have specific personal therapy requirements.

There is no evidence of psychotherapy training in column A, but counselling trainings span all three columns with the majority being in columns A and B. This suggests there is a continuum of practice not a clear point of distinction. Furthermore, there are some counsellors who meet the column C competences and some psychotherapists who choose to work under the title 'counsellor'.

Q: Will the BACP inform practitioners where client presentations fit within the columns (Ie can a practitioner in column A work with depression)

The framework does not categorise the range of client presentations into the columns, it represents the range of training, knowledge and skills of all qualified therapists who are members of professional bodies that have membership categories mapped to the framework.

As is the case now, BACP members will be able to work with clients and offer the services they currently do where they have the right skills, knowledge and training. This aligns with our current position within the Ethical Framework around 'working within our competence'.

Q: Can a purely Person Centred Practitioner enter column C? If so how?

SCoPED is a competence framework that maps the core competences, training and practice standards for counselling and psychotherapy with adults.

The framework is generic across counselling and psychotherapy, it represents the range of training, knowledge and skills of all qualified therapists who are members of professional bodies that have membership categories mapped to the framework.

We expect that practitioners of any theoretical orientation will be able to represent themselves within any of the membership categories (and therefore columns) if they can evidence the relevant competencies.

Membership categories would be aligned to the SCoPEd columns, rather than members being mapped to SCoPEd columns.

If a Person Centred Practitioner thought their training, knowledge and experience would be best represented in another BACP membership category (and therefore a different SCoPEd column) they would be able to go through a process of evidencing that during or after the transition period.

Q: Will those therapists in employment with level 4 qualifications currently working with clients in column C lose their jobs?

The framework does not categorise clients into columns, it represents the range of training, knowledge and skills of all qualified therapists who are members of professional bodies that have membership categories mapped to the framework.

There is no evidence that counselling services will only want to employ therapists in column C. Services have welcomed the framework because it's a way of understanding the different membership categories across organisations as well as identifying the skills that applicants have, especially those in column A. We believe it will help to create paid employment opportunities for people in column A.

It's already had a positive effect as we're aware for example, that a particular employee assistance programme (EAP) organisation has removed the requirement to be accredited and are looking at the evidence of what they need for their counselling service and how column A therapists can meet that need.

As is the case now, BACP members are required to work within their limits of competence, meaning that sometimes it is necessary and appropriate to refer clients on. If you have the knowledge and skills to work competently with certain clients, then there is no reason why you should stop working with them unless there is an ethical reason to refer them on.

There are more FAQs available on our website www.bacp.co.uk/scopedfaqs or members can contact BACP customer services on 01455 883300 to talk through any questions.

NCS

NCS members voted to adopt SCoPEd by aligning our existing membership grades to the SCoPEd columns of competencies. We're now working on this alongside our partners. We'll also be launching a member consultation exercise in March to ensure that members who voted against adoption are still heard and included in the Society in a meaningful way.

We're now in the implementation period, which is a lot of behind the scenes work both with the other partners, and on our own processes and procedures. An important part of the work is changing processes both for members joining us, and for members who wish to change their membership grade. In SCoPEd terms this is about moving between the columns.

Our processes will remain the same for most of this year, and then we'll begin to align our membership grades to the SCoPEd categories. In practice, the vast majority of our members will notice little difference and won't have to do anything differently. Members will be told what's happening at each step.

Q: How will SCoPEd impact those who are accredited/Senior Accredited?

With the NCS, our first category of membership is called Accredited Registrant. All our Accredited Registrants will be mapped to Column A and this will be an automatic process.

Our second category is called Accredited Professional, and this will be mapped to Column B – again an automatic process.

Our third category is Senior Accredited. This grade is currently based on additional experience for established practitioners. This will change to be a grade based on Column C. Our existing Senior members will be asked to undergo a free assessment to ensure they map to the Column C competencies. Our internal audit suggests that the vast majority would indeed map to column C. Those that don't will be allowed to stay as Senior members for at least three years to be given time to meet the new criteria.

Our Senior members won't have to complete a level 7 qualification as there will be an additional route in place for all members wishing to transition from Column B to C in the future. This may take a little time to develop.

Q: I will finish my level 3 in May. Should I move on to level 7 rather than level 4?

Your main consideration for any training you want to do should be what's right for you in terms of your practice and your personal journey. You won't need a Level 7 to move through the Columns, and the NCS has consistently advocated that our professional competencies shouldn't be about academic qualifications, but rather about the whole of a counsellor or psychotherapist's development and growth. We're pleased that the framework supports this.

Q: Does SCoPEd imply that those with Level 7 qualifications should be paid more than those with level 4 qualifications?

While any job market in any profession has a reality where people with more qualifications and experience have more opportunity, NCS has always strongly advocated maximising opportunities for all qualified counsellors and we continue to push for this. We've been particularly concerned with two issues: an over use of volunteering on the one hand, and too many roles being benchmarked to higher membership grades on the other.

We don't feel SCoPEd changes the job market in the sense that, whether or not you call someone with a particular set of qualifications Column A, B or C, employers will still no doubt offer a variety of roles for counsellors with different levels of experience.

For example, one role may ask for a qualified counsellor. Another may ask for a qualified counsellor with at least 5 years' experience who has worked with a particular kind of presenting issue or a particular setting. The latter role will likely attract more remuneration. SCoPEd then won't change that.

There are two potential advantages to the framework in terms of employment opportunity. The first is that if your membership body is within the framework, we would anticipate over time that roles, increasingly, map to it and so are only available to counsellors within it.

The second potential advantage is the wider context. Counselling and psychotherapy sit within a wider world of psychological professionals: clinical psychologists, psychological wellbeing practitioners etc. Having a common framework should make it easier for the SCoPEd partners to "pitch" counselling and psychotherapy to Government and organisations who commission work.

A long standing issue has been that Governments can't get to grips with the wide variety of qualifications and approaches in counselling and psychotherapy. So historically, Government response has been to create a new and separate kind of practitioner to meet a specific need rather than create roles for counsellors. This means the work doesn't go to counsellors but to something else entirely. SCoPEd could change this for the better and we hope it does.

Q: How do you move from column A to columns B and C?

You won't be mapped to the columns as an individual counsellor – our membership grades are mapped to the columns. So to move between the columns, you'll need to look at our criteria for changing membership grades and work towards that.

We offer membership grade change as a free service and hope to continue to be able to do this after SCoPEd.

Many of our members have been concerned that if they're in the "wrong column" they can't practice in a certain way or would have to stop seeing certain kinds of clients.

This isn't correct. There's a difference between your being able and competent to do some work, and having been assessed as being competent as part of a membership grade process or a framework. Just because you haven't been assessed by an organisation doesn't mean you can't do the work.

In terms of ethical practice, rest assured that for example, if an NCS member is subject to a complaint, we would never apply a test such as "you're in the wrong column." That would not be appropriate. Our ethical framework is clear that a counsellor must work within their skills and competencies.

Q: By accepting this framework, are you, as a professional body, essentially saying/defining that there is a difference between counselling and psychotherapy?

As you will be aware, we are shortly to change our name to the National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society to better represent the variety of our membership. Our position is that, in the absence of regulation, our members are free to choose their professional title.

Whereas the first iteration of SCoPEd did map the title “psychotherapist” onto Column C, the final form of SCoPEd isn’t defining the difference between titles and neither are we.

Q: Will the NCS inform practitioners where client presentations fit within the columns (Ie can a practitioner in column A work with depression)

Client presentations aren’t aligned with the Columns.

We trust our members to work ethically and within their training and understand of their own individual journey and competency, getting supervisor support or referring on when needed, and SCoPEd doesn’t change that.

Q: Can a purely Person Centred Practitioner enter column C? If so how?

If we have a purely person centred member who wishes to change their NCS membership grade, they can go through the same process as a member expressing another modality and would need to demonstrate the competencies in the framework in some way.

We will have a section of our forthcoming member consultation specifically for our person centred members to help inform them of our SCoPEd processes.

In addition, and unrelated to SCoPEd, NCS does highly value person centred practice and we hold an Accredited Register for Person Centred Experiential Therapy (PCET) which will be available to all members on our AR and will be launched this year.

Q: Will those therapists in employment with level 4 qualifications currently working with clients in column C lose their jobs?

Clients aren’t mapped to columns and neither are therapists. Membership grades are though.

So the question might be best framed as something like this: “I currently have a job as an NCS Accredited Registrant. Should I be worried that my employer will tell me I need to be a Senior Accredited Registrant to keep my job?”

Our answer to this would be that it's extremely unlikely – why would they? You can demonstrate you're competent for the work without being in a particular membership grade, and they employed you without said grade.

Perhaps unpacking this a bit, the concern is that employers will over time ask counsellors to all be in higher and higher columns and so many people could be left high and dry.

NCS doesn't believe this is the case and on the contrary, more clearly defining competencies could lead to employers dropping the current equivalent of "Column B" requirements, i.e. roles which ask for Accredited Professional grade members. We will be campaigning for this.

Also do remember you will be able to move between the columns without having to acquire additional Ofqual levels of qualification in the future.

While this remains to be seen, NCS's view is that over time we should see a better job market for our members because of SCoPEd rather than a worse one.

Response from a Psychotherapist ('Catherine')

I'm grateful for your offer of anonymity which I'd like to accept given the challenges this debate is creating.

As I discussed I am largely in favour of the proposition both as a psychotherapist and as a trainer in various institutions on training programmes.

I hear the valid frustration of many people who feel they have been offered a glass ceiling, however what I understand from the framework is that there will be clear pathways through the "columns".

The reason I am in favour of this stems from many years as an employer in the third sector and the difficulties in wading through the differing qualifications presented and not understanding these (in my pre practice and training days). Clients and employers alike do need access to a valid framework to help them understand the myriad of roles presenting.

The reality on the ground is that many people present for positions before they are qualified or experienced to do so.

As a qualified psychotherapist who undertook over 500 hours of my own personal training therapy I know first hand the difference this level of personal emotional investment and what it has given me in terms of what I'm able to offer my clients.

Moreover I now work in institutions where this is not a requirement and I see the difficulties that this can present for both counsellor and client alike. I would like to see training providers seriously reflect and review the quality of the courses they are offering.

I am invariably troubled by a "bums on seats" approach to training that fails to interview and simply accepts as many people on training as possible approach that offers unrealistic hope to many applicants.

There is a debate about the use of personal therapy in training, and put simply I do believe it increases competency in terms of self awareness in practice, in terms of development, and in terms of the degree to which we are able to hold the pain of our clients.

We live in a world that asks much of us that can feel unnecessarily "merit based" in terms of reliance on higher qualifications and there are valid rationales for academic development being irrelevant to the quality of a good therapist.

There is also rationale for it being very relevant indeed, particularly when we are working with fragile process.

The cost of this level of training are indeed high, and there is no reason why membership bodies should not look to supporting trainees with this to ensure the glass ceiling isn't one based on societal inequalities through provision of scholarships etc. they certainly take a lots from us in fees, offering very little in return!

Ultimately this debate seems to have lost sight of the client, who deserves not only an empathic listener, but a deeply reflective, capable, knowledgeable and competent therapist, which I see is what SCOPed has set out to do.

We can never guarantee competence, but surely, we should be doing everything we can to enhance this, for those we serve.

Response from a Counsellor ('Thomas')

I will start by saying I am very apprehensive about the direction SCoPED is heading towards. It feels that it has gone way beyond the scope of an idea. It has doggedly dragged on for years, causing so much division, costing a great deal of money.

Money that could have been utilised on research evidencing the effectiveness to the public of various forms of therapies that better serves the now dwindling diversity of membership the BACP currently has the pleasure of representing.

One can't help but feel the amount of time, money, bickering and energy gone into this project that SCoPED has entered the realm of the sunk-cost fallacy. At this late stage so much has been invested that it seems like a place of no return.

A point in time where it is hard to imagine that they could ever hold up their hands and admit "perhaps we may have gotten this thing wrong".

It appears that SCoPED begun with a set agenda in mind and will determinedly end with the exact same agenda. The representing bodies will hammer their chosen 'circle' firmly into the square hole whether it can be justified or not.

SCoPED does not stack up well when using the BACP Ethical Framework as a guiding template for practicing what you preach. It does not appear that the quality of 'Fairness' has been considered when it comes to promoting '...equality of opportunity...'.

One of the main concerns expressed by many therapists is the divisive nature of the project and the perceived elitism of the columns (the categorisation/ranking of therapists/modalities). Essentially pitting therapist against therapist by devaluing certain routes of education and hard earned experience.

I stand by the points expressed on the Person Centred Association's website:

<https://www.the-pca.org.uk/blog/welcomeandscoped.html>