

UNIT 3: Assignment 1

An Ethical Framework

1 Understand what is meant by an ethical framework

1.1 Explain the key features of a recognised ethical framework for counselling

Students should complete an essay explaining the key features of a recognised ethical framework for counselling.

Word count: 400 minimum.

1.2 Compare chosen ethical framework with that of another professional body or organisation

Students should complete an essay in which they compare their chosen ethical framework with that of another professional body or organisation.

Word count: 500 minimum.

1.1 - Explain the key features of a recognised ethical framework for counselling

For a student studying counselling within the UK, the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) has one of the most important ethical frameworks to be aware of; this is due to the BACP's central role in accrediting courses which qualify an individual to practice counselling. The BACP's Ethical Framework - which is easily accessible online - was formally adopted in 2016. It is divided into three main avenues: commitment to clients, ethics and good practice; these expectations often overlap in their ideas.

BACP says that commitment to clients should be practiced in six main ways: by putting the clients first, abiding by professional standards, demonstrating respect, forming a positive appropriate relationship with the client, practicing integrity, and being accountable. Abiding by professional standards requires the counsellor to work within their own competence and ability, be decimated in their commitment to maintaining the relevance of their skills and knowledge, ensuring that their own emotional health and wellbeing is strong enough to provide a quality service to clients and maintaining accurate records in regards to client history and progress. Respecting a client encompasses a holistic value of the client's uniqueness through their own frame of reference, protecting their confidentiality, and working in partnership with clients to agree goals. An appropriate relationship should be built through a counsellor's commitment to: transparency, clear communication, respecting the boundaries between what constitutes as work with the client and what resides beyond that dynamic, and never abusing or exploiting a client. Integrity is practiced through ones honesty, acquiring the appropriate qualifications and working within the law. Being an accountable counsellor means discussing with clients possible risks involved, and being able to be prompt in consulting the client should any problems manifest during one's working together.

Good Practice encompasses not only one's commitment to clients (as discussed above) - but also supervision, one's commitment to ongoing research, care of oneself as a practitioner and also how to respond to ethical issues. Supervision is imperative in one's training to become a counsellor, when supervisors are expected to model exceptional standards of good practice. A

practicing counsellor will also be expected to be supervised at least once a year to ensure that their work is being practiced in accordance with ethical framework standards. Regarding training, the BACP requires all teachers to have the appropriate skills and knowledge required to facilitate learning. There is also an emphasis on the importance of informing a client when they are receiving a service from a trainee. Commitment to research which will enhance professional knowledge for the benefit of clients is valued by the BACP. However, it is important that all research abides by the BACP's Ethical framework, that research methods comply with standards of good practice and that all participants in research projects will be explicitly informed before consenting. Care of oneself as a practitioner is important in regards to physical and psychological wellbeing. It is important that one reflects on their own safety and actively seeks professional help should the need arise. The BACP's ethical framework also notes that ethical issues and dilemmas are an unavoidable facet of the practice. When these issues arise, it is imperative for one to take full responsibility for how best to respond, and to similarly be ready to explain why the relevant decision was made.

Regarding Ethics, there are three predominant strands to consider: values, principles and personal qualities. Principles include - but are not limited to - being trustworthy, respecting the autonomy of clients and having a commitment to justice. Values expected of the counsellor include: respecting human rights, enhancing the emotional health and wellbeing of clients, increasing personal resilience and protecting the safety of clients. Personal qualities are the characteristics expected of the counsellor including courage, empathy, humility, integrity, resilience, sincerity and wisdom.

1.2 - Compare chosen ethical framework with that of another organisation or professional body.

Ethical frameworks provide professionals with a solid point of reference in regards to their performance, attitudes and behaviours within the working environment. Abiding by an ethical framework is especially important to care professions, which include counselling, teaching, nursing and practicing medicine. Following my own experience as a teaching assistant in a secondary school in Manchester, I am particularly interested in exploring the similarities between the BACP's Ethical Framework and expectations of teachers.

The Department for Education (DE) offer their own ethical framework to those working in schools, called *Teaching Standards*. It is made available online, and as a download. The document states the legal expectations of teachers, as educators and care professionals.

Like the BACP's Ethical Framework, the DE also emphasises the usefulness of the Teacher's Standards document in the appraisal of school staff throughout an academic year which ensures that staff are abiding by professional standards.

The framework of Teacher's Standards, like the BACP, also necessitates a consideration of the environment. However, whilst counsellors must consider their practicing environment within the context of what is relaxing and inviting, teachers must consider the learning environment within the context of what is educationally stimulating for the learner.

Within both Teacher's Standards and the BACP Ethical framework, there is an emphasis on monitoring progress. The Teacher's Standards documents states that staff must 'guide pupils to reflect on the progress they have made' (Department for Education, 2011) whilst being 'accountable for pupils' attainment, progress and outcomes'. Similarly, BACP requires counsellors to empower clients by reflecting on progress they have made - whilst also monitoring and reviewing this progress through the means of confidential record-keeping. Likewise, the BACP also recognises 'accountability' as being inherent to 'good practice'.

Due to the nature of teaching, it is unsurprising that professional teacher's standards require staff to have a dedication to knowledge within their subject area. However, there is not the same emphasis on ongoing and active research as the BACP's ethical framework.

Just as the BACP requires the counsellor to value the uniqueness of each client and respond to their individual case accordingly, Teaching Standards also emphasises the importance of responding idiosyncratically to the individual learning needs of different students. For instance, a teacher must be culturally aware of the diversity within their students as well as understanding how to communicate information appropriately for those with different learning difficulties. However, facilitating lessons for thirty students may naturally compromise, or at least limit, the potential for idiosyncratic response.

Unlike the BACP's ethical framework, Teaching Standards places an emphasis on managing behaviour within the working environment, requiring staff to 'establish a framework for discipline' (Department for Education, 2011). Whilst the BACP makes clear that counsellors should not *condone* destructive and negative behaviours, counsellors are encouraged to be more objective in their viewing of different behaviours by practicing unconditional positive regard.

Just as the relationship between the counsellor and the client must be appropriate within the context of the professional environment - as well as positive to maximise the full potential of the client - the relationship between the teacher and pupil must be built on 'mutual respect' (Department for Education, 2011). Likewise, staff must observe the 'boundaries' of the professional relationship in a similar way that the BACP expects counsellors to do the same.

Most similarly of all, the code for Teaching Standards as provided by the DE emphasises the professional requirement for teachers to have 'regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being' (Department for Education, 2011). This could mean a staff making a referral for a child to access assessments for different learning difficulties or access to counselling via senior staff. The BACP, within good practice, encourages counsellors to recognise the limits of their own training and make appropriate client referrals when necessary.

References

BACP (2016) 'Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions' Accessed at: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/> Accessed on: 12.02.18

Department for Education (2011) 'Teachers Standards' Accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665522/Teachers_standard_information.pdf Accessed on: 12.02.18