

Quality Assurance Committee

Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Students in Person Graduation

Date of Meeting: [15/04/2026]

1. Purpose of the Paper

1.1 This paper seeks approval for students on the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Counselling programme to be permitted to graduate in person. At present, students on the PGDip in Person-Centred Counselling are already eligible to graduate in person, while students on the PGDip in Counselling are not. This inconsistency has created confusion for students and staff and has raised concerns about equity across programmes that are academically comparable and professionally aligned.

1.2 Options available:

- (i) **Maintain the status quo** – Only PGDip Person-Centred Counselling students graduate in person.
- (ii) **Extend in-person graduation eligibility to all PGDip Counselling students** (recommended).
- (iii) **Remove in-person graduation for all PGDip students** – Not recommended due to negative student-experience implications.

1.3 **Recommendation:** That the Quality Assurance Committee approve in-person graduation eligibility for all PGDip Counselling students, aligning practice across counselling programmes and ensuring consistency, fairness, and clarity.

2. Previous Consideration by / Further Approval Required

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by		
Further consideration/ approval required by	Quality Assurance Committee	[15/04/2026]

3. Recommended Action

- 3.1 The Quality Assurance Committee is invited to **approve** in-person graduation eligibility for all PGDip Counselling students, aligning practice across counselling programmes and ensuring consistency, fairness, and clarity.

4. Discussion

- 4.1 The PGDip in Counselling and the PGDip in Person-Centred Counselling are closely aligned programmes that share:

- A common academic level (SCQF Level 11)
- Equivalent credit volume (120 credits)
- Professional training components
- Placement requirements
- Assessment structures

- 4.2 The only substantive difference lies in the counselling modality or specialism. Despite this, only the Person-Centred Counselling cohort currently graduates in person.

4.3 Rationale for Change

(i) **Equity and Consistency**

Students undertaking equivalent postgraduate counselling qualifications should have access to the same graduation opportunities. The current distinction is arbitrary and not based on academic or professional criteria.

(ii) **Professional Recognition**

For many students, the PGDip is the qualification that enables professional registration and qualification as a Counsellor. In-person graduation acknowledges the significance of this milestone.

(iii) **Student Experience and Wellbeing**

Graduation ceremonies are meaningful events for students, families, and communities. Ensuring equal access supports inclusivity and enhances the overall student experience.

(iv) **Reputational Considerations**

Maintaining inconsistent practices risks confusion and dissatisfaction, which may negatively affect recruitment and programme reputation.

5. Further Information

- 5.1 Further Information is available from Sharon Palla (School Administration Manager for the School of Education, s.palla@abdn.ac.uk).

Date Paper Was Written: *02/04/2026*

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status

Open

This paper contains no sensitive personal or commercial information and may be shared in full following the meeting.