



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH



The **MSc in Play Therapy** is a collaboration programme with QMU (Queen Margaret University) and With Kids Charity.

Course Overview

- **Professional accreditation and registration:** This course is accredited by the [British Association of Play Therapists](#) and on graduation you can register as a Full Member of the British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT). On qualification you will be able to practice as a Play Therapist registered by BAPT.
- **Staff expertise:** You will enjoy learning on a course taught by qualified and experienced BAPT-registered play therapists, who bring teaching to life with clinical experience and case material.
- **Placements:** Your practice placements are an invaluable way of consolidating the theoretical knowledge you learn from weekly teaching, experiential opportunities, and small group tutorials.
- **Employability:** The opportunities for employment as a play therapist continue to develop rapidly and graduates find themselves working in a variety of settings.
- **Flexible delivery:** The course is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine your studies with your current work role.

The key purpose of the profession of play therapy is defined by the British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT):

'Play therapy is the dynamic process between child and play therapist in which the child explores at his or her own pace and with his or her own agenda those issues, past and current, conscious, and unconscious, that are affecting the child's life in the present. The child's inner resources are enabled by the therapeutic alliance to bring about growth and change. Play therapy is child-centred, in which play is the primary medium and speech is the secondary medium.'

This innovative course is structured to develop your skills through a variety of modules and learning experiences. You will gain a thorough understanding of the fundamental inter-relatedness of the theory of a child's physical, social, and emotional world, and will develop the skills to work effectively and therapeutically to enhance emotional wellbeing and transform life chances. You will work directly with children and families with increasing complexity on practice placement over the three years and this will include clinical observation of a child/children from infancy to primary.

The teaching and learning approaches used, encourage you to be an independent, participative learner. These approaches will engage you in lectures, problem-based learning, workshops, small group discussion, seminars, experiential groups, observation, and skills practice.

The content has its basis in psychodynamic, child centred, non-directive practice, and is delivered by qualified and experienced Play Therapy practitioners, who draw on their professional experience to illustrate teaching.

Assessment methods include essays, group and individual presentations, observation synopsis, e-portfolios, practice placement sessions and reports and a dissertation. As a postgraduate student you will predominantly be working independently, but there is a strong structure for academic support.

Course Teaching and Placement Hours

Start Date:

September 2026

Duration of course:

Part-Time 3 years

Lectures and tutorials:

One day per week during term time.

1st year – **Tuesday**

2nd year and 3rd year – **Wednesday**

Please note: In addition to the training day delivered at our Glasgow centre, it is also advised to have an **additional day** available for your practice placement, observations, supervision, and personal therapy.

Hours of Attendance:

Will vary over the 3 years.

1st year and 2nd year – **11.00am – 5.15pm.**

3rd year you will have a much-reduced timetable for attendance.

Location:

With Kids, Glasgow – One day per week during term time.

Placement, observations and personal therapy can be carried out in location of choice.

Practice Placement, Observation and Personal therapy hours:

Over 3 years:

100 hours of practice in placement,

30 hours of child observation

60 hours of personal therapy.

Advice on balancing working and study can be found here:

[Working while studying | Prospects.ac.uk](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/working-while-studying)

Course Semester Dates

Semester Dates for teaching 2026–2029			
1 st Year	Start	End	Notes
Semester 1	Tuesday 1 st September 2026	Tuesday 8 th December 2026	
Semester 2	Tuesday 12 th January 2027	Tuesday 18 th May 2027	This may be extended if the placement has not been completed.
2 nd Year	Start	End	Notes
Semester 1	Wednesday 8 th September 2027	Wednesday 15 th December 2027	
Semester 2	Wednesday 12 th January 2028	Wednesday 17 th May 2028	This may be extended if the placement has not been completed.
3 rd Year	Start	End	Notes
Semester 1	Wednesday 6 th September 2028	Wednesday 13 th December 2028	
Semester 2	Wednesday 10 th January 2029	Wednesday 16 th May 2028	This may be extended if the placement has not been completed.

Course Content

The following modules will be completed over the 3 years.

- Practice, Theory & Placement 1 (40 credits)
- Practice, Theory & Placement 2 (20 credits)
- Practice, Theory & Placement 3 (20 credits)
- Child Development & Observations 1 (20 credits)
- Child Development & Observations 2 (20 credits)
- Play Therapy Research, Theory & Practice (20 credits)
- Dissertation (60 credits)

Outline of Modules		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Child Development Theory and Observations 1 (20 Credits)	Child Development Theory and Observations 2 (20 credits)	Dissertation (60 credits)
Practice Theory and Placement 1 (40 credits)	Practice Theory and Placement 2 (20 credits)	Practice Theory and Placement 3 (20 credits)
	Play Therapy Theory, Research and Practice Begins in Semester 1 Year 2 completes in Semester 1 Year 3	Play Therapy Theory, Research and Practice, Concludes in Year 3 (20 Credits total)
Infant Observations -20 sessions Clinical Practice – Practicum 1- 8 sessions Practicum 2- 10 sessions	Child Observations – 10 sessions Clinical Practice Practicum 3 -15 sessions Practicum 4 – 20 sessions	Clinical Practice – Practicum 5 – 30 sessions OR Practicum 5 – 25 sessions and Practicum 6 – 10 sessions
Total Credits – 60	Total Credits – 40	Total Credits – 100
200 Credits		
Personal Therapy 60 sessions		

Please note: The information provided is accurate as of September 2025.

However, the course is scheduled for re-validation in April 2026, which may result in changes for students applying for September 2026 entry. Should any changes occur, With Kids and QMU will make reasonable efforts to ensure that students are not adversely affected.

Application

Entry Requirements and Selection Process

A UK honours degree or learning equivalent in a related discipline e.g., Health, Education, Social work etc together with 2 years post qualifying experience. In the absence of a degree, 5 years relevant experience working with children, young people and their families may be considered.

Due to the part-time nature of this course, it is only open to applicants who do not require a Student Visa.

If your application is successful, you will be invited for interview. The interview will be in-person at the With Kids Centre in Glasgow.

Application Process:



Other requirements

Criminal Records Check: A satisfactory PVG/ DBS check will be required for all students; this will be carried out by With Kids prior to 1st placement and the cost will be invoiced to you. Further details can be found here: [Types of PVG disclosure record - mygov.scot](#)

For students resident in England or Wales, you will carry out your own application for an enhanced check around time of 1st placement (the Course team will advise of process at that time) : [DBS update service: guide for applicants - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Fees and Costs

The fees are currently set at **£5500 per annum**. The Course is run in conjunction with QMU, who set the fees which are subject to annual review. The fees are payable to QMU each year and can be paid in instalments.

The course is eligible for a **SAAS Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan**, however this loan will not cover the full course fees, as it is a part time course. See the Fees and Funding sources section of this document for further information.

Supervision:

Clinical Supervision will be paid for by With Kids throughout the 3 years of training.

Other costs:

Personal Therapy:

You will be required to have 60 sessions of Personal Therapy over the 3 years. The cost for these sessions can vary from £40-60 per session.

PVG/DBS:

The cost of an update to your PVG/DBS (With Kids will apply for PVG and the cost of this (£18 for an update or £59 if you don't already hold a PVG) will be invoiced to you once the certificate is received by us. This will usually be in late September. England/Wales-domiciled students: DBS update costs are payable directly by the student at point of applying for DBS check.

Play Kit:

As part of preparation for placement you will be expected to provide a play therapy kit. You will be given guidance on the contents of the kit in the first few weeks of the course offering some ways to easily collect materials and equipment as inexpensively as possible.

Membership of BAPT:

It will be a requirement of the course that you become a student BAPT member.

The yearly cost of this is £38.

<https://www.bapt.info>

Funding Sources

We would recommend spending some time researching ways to fund your tuition fees, additional costs and living costs while undertaking the MSc, before you apply.

We have collated information below on where to begin.

Loans, Government Funding and Other Sources

Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS) offer a tuition fee loan to help pay for a proportion of the cost of fees. To find out more please visit the SAAS website - [Part-time Postgraduate Funding Guide - SAAS](#)

Your employer may sponsor you to take a part-time graduate course or be able to offer you study leave or flexible working around your studies, especially if the qualification will help you and them in your current role. More information on this can be found here - [Employer sponsorship | Prospects.ac.uk](#)

You may be entitled to claim benefits from the government while you study. Information on this can be obtained from - [Fees and Finance @ NUS](#) (Covers England, Wales, NI) [Student Information Scotland - Funding, Finance and Student Life](#) (Covers Scottish domiciled students).

[Fees and Funding | Study Here | Queen Margaret University \(qmu.ac.uk\)](#) QMU offers a Finance Advice service which exists to provide information and guidance for all students regarding the funding available to them. If you require further advice on funding then please contact Bill Stronach, Student Funding Adviser, Student Services on: studentfunding@qmu.ac.uk or phone 0131 474 0000 and ask for 'Bill Stronach' or 'Student Services'.

Your eligibility for each funding source depends on your personal circumstances, such as where you live, your current income, and whether you have already studied at Postgraduate level.

Trusts and Foundations

You may be able to apply for support from a Trust or Foundation. Trusts and Foundations are **extremely varied with their requirements**, so it is worth looking to see if you fit the criteria. It is advisable to contact the trust beforehand to check if they have deadlines for submissions and that they are open.

Below is a list of trusts that provide funding to individuals for educational purposes:

[GEMT - A Grant Giving Trust for the People of Glasgow](#)

[Stirlingshire Educational Trust \(stirlingeducationaltrust.org.uk\)](http://stirlingeducationaltrust.org.uk)

[The City of Dundee Educational Trust](#)

[Perth and Kinross Educational Trust - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](http://pkc.gov.uk)

[East Lothian Educational Trust | East Lothian Educational Trust | East Lothian Council](#)

[The Fitzgerald Trust | Fife Council](#)

[Assistive Awards | The Sutherland Trust](#)

[Our Trusts - The Merchant Company \(mcoe.org.uk\)](http://mcoe.org.uk)

[Funding for women - RCVS Knowledge](#)

[Thomas Wall Trust | Thomas Wall Trust](#)

[Acorn Charitable Trust - "TALL OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW"](#)

[ANONYMOUS](#)

[Education Fund | The Trades House of Glasgow](#)

Care experienced applicants may wish to explore the funding support

available from QMU by contacting: **Gayle Green tel:0131 474 0000**

ggreen@qmu.ac.uk

[Care Experienced Students | QM Cares | Queen Margaret University \(qmu.ac.uk\)](#)

This is not an exhaustive list, and further information can be found from doing an internet search, including:

[Funding postgraduate study | Prospects.ac.uk](http://Prospects.ac.uk)

[Postgraduate Funding | Scholarships and Student Bursaries \(postgraduatesearch.com\)](http://postgraduatesearch.com)

[Gateway \(postgraduate-funding.com\)](http://postgraduate-funding.com)

Play Therapy Career Opportunities

The opportunities for employment as a play therapist continue to develop rapidly. Some Play Therapists work within a range of statutory, government funded or voluntary and independent organisations – for example, within fostering and adoption services, schools, and children’s centres, in hospitals, hospices or community contexts as well as Child and Adolescent Mental health services, social work and other social services teams. A number are employed directly by children’s charities and private children’s residential homes. Many Play Therapists also work independently in private practice or are commissioned by agencies to provide services for specific groups of children. A small number of play therapists in the UK work as academics, teachers, and clinical supervisors. For further information, visit:

<https://www.bapt.info>

About With Kids

With Kids is a children’s mental health charity currently focusing our work where there is greatest need in areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow and working across the central belt. We provide specialist Play Therapy to children whose mental well-being is affected by adversity. With the child at the centre, we work collaboratively with the child’s family and community to improve their well-being and build their capacity to provide a nurturing environment for the child.

Our vision is to create nurturing communities where every child can survive, thrive, and fulfil their potential.

What makes us unique is the holistic nature of our work in not just dealing with the needs of an individual child but the needs of the whole family and the wider community, both practically and emotionally.

QMU

Please find all the information on QMU at:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/postgraduate-study/2024/msc-play-therapy>

A History of Play Therapy

The use of play in therapy was first developed by the pioneers of Child Psychotherapy. Anna Freud (1928, 1964, and 1965), Margaret Lowenfeld (1935, 1970) and Melanie Klein (1961, 1987) put forward the theoretical premise for the use of play. For example, Klein (1961, 1987) stipulated that a child's spontaneous play was a substitute for the free association used within adult psychoanalysis.

Theories and practices surrounding play differ within each Child Psychotherapy tradition. However, each tradition is connected by the central proposition that play transmits and communicates the child's unconscious experiences, desires, thoughts, and emotions.

Play Therapy has emerged from elements of Child Psychotherapy with the specific theoretical foundations emerging from the Humanistic Psychology tradition and Attachment Theory.

In the 1940's Carl Rogers (1951, 1955) established a new model of psychotherapy – client centred therapy (later termed person-centred therapy). This new tradition was born as a protest to the diagnostic, prescriptive perspectives of that time. Emphasis was placed upon a relationship between the therapist and client based upon genuineness, acceptance, and trust. As such, the person-centred approach provided a new and original theoretical perspective of personality structure, psychological health, acquisition of psychological difficulty and the change process within therapy.

Largely influenced by this person-centred approach, Axline (1969, 1971) developed a new therapeutic approach for working with children – nondirective Play Therapy. Utilising the person-centred theoretical foundations, Axline devised a clear and succinct Play Therapy theory and method. Her account of how she worked with a young boy called Dibs is well known (*Dibs: In Search of Self*, 1964). Axline described in detail how she worked with Dibs and how he was able to heal himself over a period of time. She said "No-one ever knows as much about a human being's inner world as the individual himself. Responsible freedom grows and develops from inside the person".

Her eight principles of the therapeutic relationship inform the work of many Play Therapists to this day.

For over 50 years, Play Therapy has been practiced and researched within America. This has been led by many Play Therapists, including Moustakas (1953, 1966, 1973, 1981, 1992), Schaefer (1976, 1986, 1993) and Landreth (1991, 2002). They have progressed Axline's original formulations and devised differing models integrating elements of systemic family therapy, narrative therapy, solution focused therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy.

In Britain, Play Therapy started to emerge as a new and differing tradition in the 1980's. Initially the Children's Hour Trust taught professionals the basic techniques of Axline's Play Therapy used in a multitude of settings. In parallel, two Dramatherapists started using Play Therapy methods to inform their Dramatherapy practice with children. Sue Jennings (1994) and Ann Cattanach (1993, 1994, 1998) integrated elements of non-directive Play Therapy to formulate a British Play Therapy movement. In 1990, the Institute of Dramatherapy started to offer a Certificate and Diploma in Play Therapy.

In 1992, the British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT) was started by a group of professionals studying at the Institute of Dramatherapy. Since then, BAPT has developed the British Play Therapy movement and now accredits training courses in the UK including the Masters level programmes currently running at the University of Roehampton (London), University of South Wales, and With Kids in collaboration with Queen Margaret University, (Glasgow/Edinburgh) (Taken from BAPT website, 2018).