

MSc
Loss & Bereavement

MSc
Loss & Bereavement
(Clinical Practice)

2024/2026



RCSI

UNIVERSITY
OF MEDICINE
AND HEALTH
SCIENCES



**Irish
Hospice
Foundation**

To die and grieve well wherever the place

At Irish Hospice Foundation,
learning is integral to our mission to
work towards the best end-of-life
and bereavement care, for all.

Welcome

Dealing with the loss of a loved one is never easy. Grief and bereavement are amongst the most challenging experiences we will ever have as human beings. Whether it takes place over a long period of time or happens unexpectedly, the death of someone close is difficult to come to terms with. Often, it's only when it happens that we realise how unprepared we are. Most people will be able to cope within their own social circle, but others, will need someone to support and guide them. It takes a special kind of person to be that someone. Someone who cares, empathises and truly understands, but also someone with very specific skills and a desire to continually learn.

We know the best response to bereavement spans community, health, social services, education and voluntary sectors. Our understanding of grief has changed over recent years and we are better placed to plan for, and provide, appropriate bereavement education and care. Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) place high value on loss and bereavement education with two of our seven core strategic pillars dedicated to (i) bereavement (ii) education and transfer of learning, and we are passionate about providing counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, healthcare workers, nurses and bereavement co-ordinators with the contemporary clinical skills and knowledge necessary to support clients who have suffered a bereavement.



Accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and National University of Ireland, our MSc Loss & Bereavement and MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) are two-year, part-time professional courses.

They promote the core skills required for all professionals who encounter bereavement or loss in their role, with highly-specialised grief training based on current evidence and best practice. A central principle of this training is our priority on self-care – we believe you cannot care for others unless you have the skills to care for yourself first.

In addition to real learning, which you will be able to apply day-to-day, you will build lasting relationships with other professionals in your community. In joining this programme, you will also become a member of our community of graduates including nurses, social workers, educators, counsellors and psychotherapists and will have the support of our Education team over the course of the two-year programme.

Paula O'Reilly,
CEO, Irish Hospice Foundation

Testimonials



Dr Cathal Delaney

Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor and RCSI Lecturer

MSc Loss & Bereavement 2021 - 2023

The MSc in Loss and Bereavement has been an incredibly rewarding experience both personally and professionally. Working as a non-consultant hospital doctor, the learning during the master's has deepened my knowledge of bereavement and increased my confidence in recognising grief and supporting patients and families experiencing loss. The teaching staff are extremely supportive, and I am very grateful to my classmates for the shared learning and collaboration. I would highly recommend this master's to any healthcare professional.



Deirdre Callis

I.A.C.P. accredited Therapist and Supervisor | Head of Family Support Service

MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) 2021 - 2023

Working within the charity sector as Head of Services for families with rare genetic disorder has allowed me to develop an insight into loss like never before. ... We as an organisation have been able to apply the learning from the MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) at a strategic level with the design and introduction of a new bereavement policy. We have introduced new supports for the team, and I have been able to apply key interventions at clinical level. I would highly recommend this master's to any counsellor/psychologist or service working within the community and believe the more professionals who are engaging and learning about the topic of bereavement and loss will add such value at many levels.



Aine McArdle

Bereavement Support Midwife

MSc Loss & Bereavement 2021 - 2023

Undertaking this MSc Loss and Bereavement was both a challenging and rewarding experience. ... The entire course was based around providing the student with a deeper insight into bereavement and loss and the impact it has on the individual, the family and wider society. Gaining an understanding of the theories of grief and the wider impact it can have has given me more confidence when I am supporting families experiencing perinatal loss within my role as a bereavement support midwife.



Dr Edel Quinn

Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychologist

MSc Loss & Bereavement 2021 - 2023

I frequently encounter bereavement and loss in my professional capacity and, as such, sought specific training in the area. ... The academic staff were knowledgeable and passionate about the topic and committed to providing a positive, practical and beneficial learning experience. ... In addition, the opportunity to develop connections with others who work in, or have a particular interest in, the area of bereavement and loss has been invaluable.



Joan Garvey

Retired Emergency Dept. Nurse

MSc Loss & Bereavement 2021 - 2023

Completing the MSc in Loss and Bereavement has been a deeply enriching and enjoyable journey for me. ... I have gained a profound understanding of grief and loss through the comprehensive course curriculum, expert guidance and constant support offered by the staff and my peers. This experience has had a significant positive impact on me, both personally and professionally. It has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to offer valuable, informed assistance to those who may require support in their journey through grief and loss.



Julianna Crowley

Healthcare Chaplain, Cork University Maternity Hospital | Cork University Hospital

MSc Loss & Bereavement 2021 - 2023

The course provides a spectrum of information from grief theories, counselling skills, to actively engaging with action research on the ground in a chosen area of interest. The knowledge I have gained is of immeasurable value that has enabled me in a professional capacity to become more competent and better placed to provide the necessary bereavement support to those whom I meet each day in both an acute healthcare setting and a maternity hospital.

Background

Loss and bereavement are universal life experiences. While they have been the subject of major scientific and social study over the past 30 years, the application of our new knowledge lags behind. The Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI) postgraduate programmes, in association with Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF), are designed to impact on health, social and community systems and ultimately enhance quality of life. They are rooted in contemporary scientific research as well as being designed against a policy and professional regulation backdrop. There is an increasing impetus with Irish policy¹ and legislation² makers to develop competencies in loss/bereavement and discussions about dying. Our programmes address some of the educational needs associated with these competencies.

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- (1) ConnectingLives, 2016; Palliative Care Competence Framework, 2014; National Standards for Bereavement Care following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death, 2016.
 - (2) Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we think about loss and grief, from mourning the death of a loved one, loss of significant relationships or loss of identity. We have never been so aware of what really matters to us. These programmes are designed to deepen the knowledge, skills and understanding of professionals working in the field, in a supportive environment.

During 2020 we received new accreditation to allow for two distinct pathways.

The clinical practice pathway is for those working therapeutically with bereaved people. The second pathway is a general education route for participants who work in other areas of bereavement care including education, management, policy and support.

The programme is structured into three exit qualifications: Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters award.

These programmes aim to promote critical inquiry into the place of loss, death and bereavement in Irish society and in health and social care systems.

Course Structure

IHF and RCSI are now inviting applications for these part-time postgraduate programmes delivered over two years.

For MSc Loss & Bereavement, applications are invited from representatives of a wide range of professional disciplines who wish to develop a deeper understanding of loss and grief at individual and societal level or whose work/volunteering roles involve the organisation of bereavement support in community, health or other areas of general bereavement care

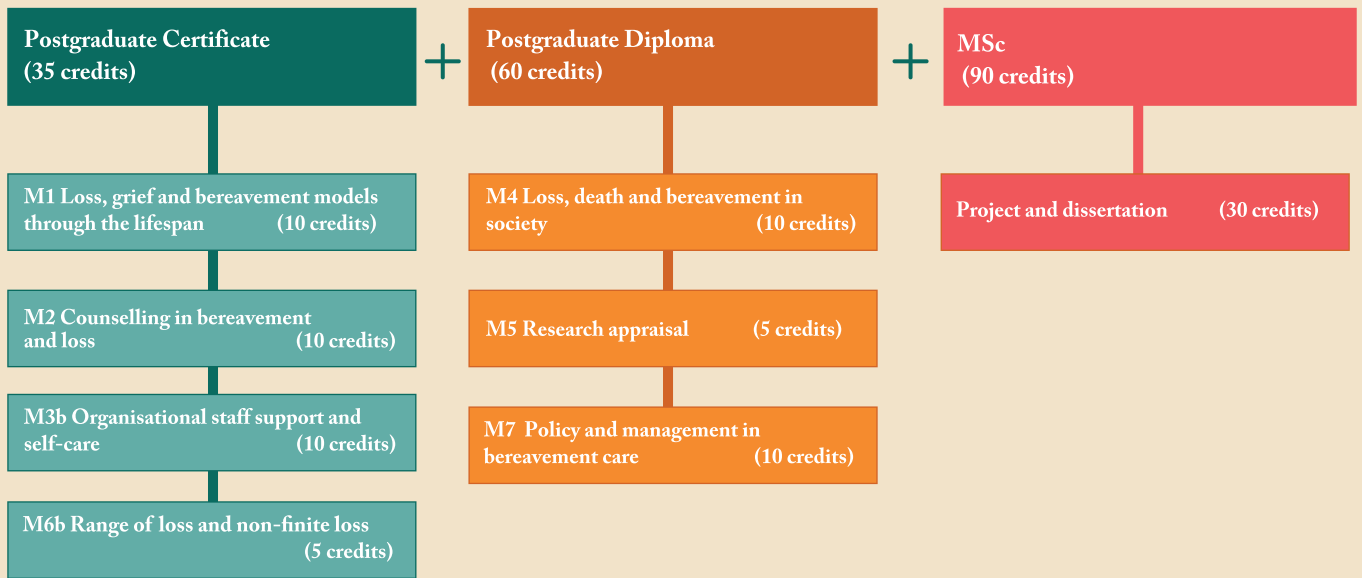
For MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice), applications are invited from mental health professionals such as counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers, bereavement coordinators and others who design and implement clinical bereavement interventions as part of their practice.

Modules are aligned into minor awards on the path to the MSc.

These awards are set out in Figures 1 and 2 on the next page and show the accumulation of credits required for each variant of the MSc.

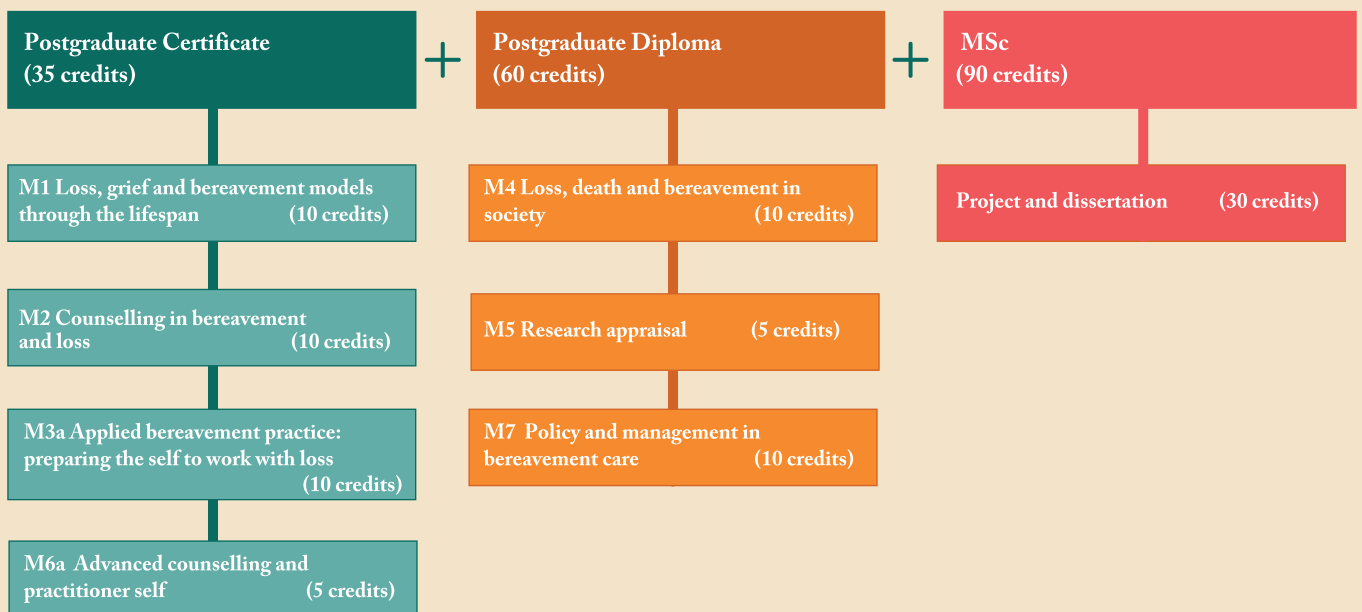
Minor award on MSc Loss & Bereavement pathway

Figure 1



Minor award on MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) pathway

Figure 2



Aims and objectives

These programmes aim to promote critical inquiry into the place of loss, death and bereavement in Irish society and in health and social care systems. Through this process we aim to equip practitioners and managers to promote and provide a range of appropriate supports in their communities, work places and professional practices.

Programme Learning Outcomes

- Critically debate and contribute to theoretical understanding and knowledge about loss and grief across the lifecycle and grief support structures relating to health, community and work organisations and in the voluntary sector.
- Evaluate different contemporary perspectives on death, dying and loss in society – including social history, cultural issues, cause and circumstance of death in contemporary Ireland, death education, loss through the life cycle, family bereavement, cultural issues, gender issues, research and ethical issues.
- Critically appraise, apply and design bereavement research, audit and evaluation.
- Critique, select and utilise support and therapeutic skills in the context of loss and bereavement.
- Develop and utilise advanced bereavement therapeutic skills as part of professional practice.
- Analyse the organisation of bereavement support and formulate strategic and systematic developments in bereavement care in different settings.
- Design models for self-care and staff support in environments where people are consistently working with or meeting dying, death and bereavement.
- Manage and evaluate changes in work practices relative to an area of bereavement care.
- Reflect on personal development and personal growth through the educational experience.
- Display an integrated value-based and evidence-based approach to the support of bereaved people.

Course Details

The courses are part-time over two years. There are seven modules in year one and a dissertation in year two.

A 10-credit module consists of 250 hours of learning including lecture time, self-directed learning, course preparation, examination time, and supervision. The two-year programme equates to 90 credits and it is devised to support Level 9 learning outcomes.

Module & Module Title(s)	Programme	Credit
Year 1		
1 Loss, grief and bereavement models through the lifespan		10
2 Counselling in loss and bereavement		10
3 <u>3a Applied Bereavement practice; preparing the self to work with loss</u>	MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) only	10
3b Organisational Staff support and self-care	MSc Loss & Bereavement only	10
4 Loss, death and bereavement in society		10
5 Research Appraisal		5
6 <u>6a Advanced therapeutic practice and practitioner self</u>	MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) only	5
6b Range of loss and non-finite loss	MSc Loss & Bereavement only	5
7 Policy and management in bereavement care		10
Year 2		
8 Dissertation		30



Module 1

Loss, grief and bereavement models through the life span

Scientific research and conceptualisation of loss, bereavement and grief has developed over the past 30 years – moving from staged prescriptive understandings to more fluid and social constructionist models. This module seeks to provide a thorough grounding in historical, theoretical and contemporary thinking around grief and loss. The module aims to explore how psychological theory has evolved to explain, predict and ameliorate the human response to loss and death.

Module 2

Counselling in loss and bereavement

The core conditions of counselling are relevant to good bereavement care. Basic counselling skills can and should be used by all who seek to support the bereaved in professional and volunteering capacities. These core conditions need to be made explicit and linked to our knowledge about loss and bereavement.

This module will focus on the practical and theoretical aspects of bereavement counselling and how it pertains to different work roles and environments. Individual, family and group approaches will be considered. The module will also provide a structure to facilitate informed decisions about when and where to refer clients for professional help.

Module 3a

Applied bereavement practice; preparing the self to work with loss

MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) only.

The module aims to distinguish and clarify the role and personal responses in respect of bereavement support. It seeks to develop self-insight into loss, death and a worldview and how these are manifest in the relationship.

To equip students with advanced skills in self-reflection and self-preparation. To enable them to stay present in loss and to manage death anxiety and activation when working with bereaved clients.



Module 3b

Organisational staff support and self-care

MSc Loss & Bereavement only.

Death is universal and comes to us all. Working constantly in the face of loss and grief has an impact on individual carers. While there are individual strategies, practices and insights which can be developed to ameliorate specific stressors, organisations also hold responsibility for developing healthy workplaces.

The aim of this module is to provide both a theoretical and experiential basis for the development of self-care and staff care capacity.

Module 4

Loss, death and bereavement in society

Our encounters with death and our experiences of grief and mourning are not static. Contemporary Western death is institutionalised, primarily happening in hospital and institutional care. Causes of death shift in line with medical and social developments. Cultural, gender-based, technological, ethical and political/social justice narratives all impact on how death and bereavement are interpreted and managed and individual psychological models are not sufficient to expand our understanding of loss. New developments such as public health models of dying and bereavement will be used to examine how death may be managed in our communities and how compassion may be maximised. A life-cycle approach will underpin the module.

The module aims to go beyond the individual perspective on loss, bereavement and death and to examine broader influences on our behaviour and attitudes.

Module 5

Research appraisal

The research-practice gap is a feature of much social and health research, and similarly is evident in the field of loss and bereavement. A sound understanding of the limits of research methods and conclusions and a strong competence in critical appraisal is appropriate to the development of bereavement care.

This module aims to develop an understanding of research approaches and to develop critical appraisal skills relating to statements about grief and bereavement. Research specific to bereavement will be explored and the contemporary sources identified. The mechanisms, dynamics and current discourses around evidence-based decision-making and evidence-based policy making will be explored.



Year 1 (continued)

Module 6a

Advanced therapeutic practice and practitioner self

MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) only

A small proportion of the bereaved population experience complicated grief and these symptoms can be targeted with a range of defined therapeutic approaches, tested in the research literature.

The module aims to equip with advanced therapeutic techniques and understanding of treating complicated grief. Further development of the self will also be supported.

Module 6b

Range of loss and non-finite loss

MSc Loss & Bereavement only

Loss is an intrinsic feature of change. This module examines common life losses and how they are theorised and supported.

This module seeks to identify the ways in which loss presents in a range of situations, not always concerned with death. Specifically mental illness, dementia, fertility and addiction will be examined with consideration also of loss of place and role.

Module 7

Policy and management in bereavement care

Bereavement impacts on all citizens of our society and an integrated approach to bereavement care requires strategic direction. Bereavement care should be integrated into national policy and priority in health and non-health areas. The need to maximise natural support, to identify those at risk of poor outcomes and to resource appropriate specialist service underpins a common framework.

This module identifies the broad context of bereavement care at community and national level. It also identifies and critiques the main modes of bereavement care, assessment, audit and governance of voluntary organisations. Specific content is provided for maternity settings. The module aims to uncover the features of excellent bereavement care at national, local and workplace level.



Year 2

Module 8

Dissertation

The module aims to integrate learning into action, in order to promote the development of bereavement care in an area.

This module provides the directive content to prepare the final dissertation of the MSc. An action research project will be devised, designed and executed.

Assessment

There are no exams but there will be continuous assessment based on a range of methods. These include written assignments, reaction papers and a dissertation/work-based project in year two.

Accreditation

This is an RCSI programme run in association with Irish Hospice Foundation. It is accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland as a Level 9 qualification.

Admission Requirements

MSc Loss & Bereavement and associated minor awards PGDip and PGCert

Applicants must have a Level 8 degree in a relevant area or equivalent demonstrated through a defined Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. RPL requires demonstration of significant professional experience in social/health care in a loss/bereavement related area or as a bereavement support volunteer; completion of CPD and other training relevant to loss and bereavement; evidence of personal insight into loss history.

MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) and associated minor awards PGDip and PGCert

The participants on this course will be mental health professionals such as counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers, bereavement coordinators and others who design and implement clinical bereavement interventions as part of their practice.

Applicants should hold

Current accreditation/membership through a national body overseeing counselling/psychotherapy/psychology or other relevant clinical practice, and a relevant Level 8 degree (or equivalent as demonstrated through RPL).

RPL involves demonstration of formal training in counselling/ psychotherapy; significant professional experience, including client caseload, in loss/bereavement related work; clinical supervision and evidence of personal insight into loss and bereavement.

For all applicants

All candidates must fulfil the NUI entry requirements or be eligible for matriculation.

An academic transcript will be requested. An academic transcript lists your complete academic history: programmes attended, a breakdown of marks/grades achieved, the degree awarded, your overall grade and conferring date.

International degrees' equivalency is to be verified by using the [NARIC service from QQI](#).

All modules must be successfully completed before a candidate can progress to the subsequent year of the programme.

"This has been the most rewarding academic experience of my life. The subject is profound beyond words and the staff teach it with compassion and care."

English Language Requirement

Prospective students applying for the MSc Loss & Bereavement/ MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice) for whom English is not their native language may need to arrange a test to confirm proficiency in English with the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

For more detailed information on requirements, exceptions and test centres, click [here](#).

Exit Awards

Award of Postgraduate Certificate Loss & Bereavement

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3b and M6b equating to 35 credits can exit with a Postgraduate Certificate Loss & Bereavement.

Award of Postgraduate Diploma Loss & Bereavement

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3b, M4, M5, M6b and M7 equating to 60 credits can exit with a Postgraduate Diploma Loss & Bereavement.

Award of MSc Loss & Bereavement

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3b, M4, M5, M6b, M7 and a dissertation for M8 equating to 90 credits will be awarded an MSc Loss & Bereavement.

Award of Postgraduate Certificate Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice)

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3a and M6a equating to 35 credits can exit with a Postgraduate Certificate Loss & Bereavement.

Award of Postgraduate Diploma Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice)

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3a, M4, M5, M6a and M7 equating to 60 credits can exit with a Postgraduate Diploma Loss & Bereavement.

Award of MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice)

Candidates who complete and pass M1, M2, M3a, M4, M5, M6a, M7 and a dissertation for M8 equating to 90 credits will be awarded an MSc Loss & Bereavement.

Time Commitment

The programme runs from September 2024 to June 2026. One class held online once a month, usually on Saturday and two class will take place face-to-face over two consecutive days (Thursday and Friday) later in the month. Classes in Year 1 commence at 9:15 am and finish at 5:30pm

Classes for Year 2 are normally held in two day blocks once a month (Mondays and Tuesdays). As the format is blended, some classes will be face-to-face and others will take place online. The exception to this is at the beginning of Year 2 (September 2025) where there will be a requirement to attend for three days. These dates will be made available before September 2025.

Participants are expected to attend all sessions and to devote time to the self-directed learning and assignments associated with the programme.

While contact hours or lectures make up 30 hours per module, this course is designed relative to the QQI and ECT systems. A guideline of 250 student hours per module to include contact time, course work preparation, self-directed learning and reading is suggested, although individual students may vary in the time commitment required.

From time to time, there may be a change to this timetable. You will be notified of any changes in a timely manner via email and Moodle.

Timetable

Year	Module	Day	Month	Format
2024	Induction Day	Wednesday	September 4	Classroom
	M1 Loss, Grief & Bereavement Models through the life span	Saturday	September 7	Online
	M1 Loss, Grief & Bereavement Models through the life span	Thursday	September 12	Classroom
	M1 Loss, Grief & Bereavement Models through the life span	Friday	September 13	Classroom
	M2 Counselling in Loss and Bereavement	Saturday	October 5	Online
	M2 Counselling in Loss and Bereavement	Thursday	October 10	Classroom
	M2 Counselling in Loss and Bereavement	Friday	October 11	Classroom
	M3(a) Applied Bereavement Practice (Clinical Practice group)	Saturday	November 2	Online
	M3(b) Organisational Staff Support (General group)	Saturday	November 2	Online
	M3 (a) Applied Bereavement Practice (Clinical Practice group)	Thursday	November 7	Classroom
	M3b Organisational Staff Support (General group)	Thursday	November 7	Classroom
	M1 Loss, Grief & Bereavement Models through the life span and M2 Counselling in Loss and Bereavement	Friday	November 8	Classroom

Year	Module	Day	Month	Format	
2024	M5 Research Appraisal	Saturday	December 7	Online	
	Integration Day and RCSI Library	Thursday	December 12	Classroom	
	M3a Applied Bereavement Practice (Clinical Practice Group)	Friday	December 13	Classroom	
	M3b Organisational Staff Support (General Group)	Friday	December 13	Classroom	
Year	Module	Day	Month	Format	
2025	M 6(a) Advanced Counselling and Practitioner Self	Saturday	January 11	Online	
	M6(b) Range of Loss and Finite Loss	Saturday	January 11	Online	
	M 6(a) Advanced Counselling and Practitioner Self (Clinical Practice group)	Thursday	January 16	Classroom	
	M 6(b) Range of Loss and Finite Loss (General group)	Thursday	January 16	Classroom	
	M5 Research and Integration day	Friday	January 17	Classroom	
	M4 Loss, Death & Bereavement in Society	Saturday	February 8	Online	
	M4 Loss, Death & Bereavement in Society	Thursday	February 13	Classroom	
	M4 Loss, Death & Bereavement in Society	Friday	February 14	Classroom	
	M7 Policy & Management in Bereavement Care	Saturday	March 1	Online	
	M7 Policy & Management in Bereavement Care	Thursday	March 6	Classroom	
	M7 Policy & Management in Bereavement Care	Thursday	April 10	Classroom	
	M7 Policy & Management in Bereavement Care	Friday	April 11	Classroom	
	Integration Day	Thursday	May 8	Classroom	

Staff

The programmes are directed by the professional staff of Irish Hospice Foundation with core modules and inputs from the academic, hospice, and community sectors in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Application and Selection Procedure

Applicants **MUST APPLY ONLINE**. Applications can be accessed and completed on the RCSI website through the following links:

www.rcsi.ie/pgbereavementstudies

Applications will be processed through Irish Hospice Foundation and final selection may be based on interview. In completing your application form please provide full details of your experience and potential to apply learning in your work or volunteering role. This application form will be used for selection purposes.

Participants

Participants on the course will reflect a range of disciplines from clinical therapy, social work, psychology and non-clinical backgrounds – e.g. nurses, teachers and community, voluntary and statutory personnel.

Fees

For EU students (non EU students, please contact for rates).

A non-refundable deposit of €1,000 is required on acceptance.

Year 1 Fees: €5,000.00

Year 2 Fees: €5,000.00

An invoice for the balance of fees will be issued at beginning of August 2024 and payment will be required by Friday 6th September 2024. Fees are eligible for tax relief.

Cancellations up to three weeks prior to the course commencing will be given a full refund, minus a cancellation fee of €500 - thereafter no refunds will be made.

Location

All classes will be delivered in a blending learning format.



Irish Hospice Foundation is a national charity that addresses dying, death and bereavement. From advocacy and education, to services such as Nurses for Night Care and our Bereavement Support Line, we believe in the importance of dying well and grieving well wherever the place.

Our vision is an Ireland where people facing end of life or bereavement, and those who care for them, are provided with the care and support that they need.

Our Bereavement & Education Resource Centre was established in 2003. It provides education and training as well as a public and information service on loss and bereavement.

Current education & training programmes

- MSc Loss & Bereavement
- MSc Loss & Bereavement (Clinical Practice)
- Professional Certificate in Children and Loss
- Annual series of Loss & Bereavement Workshops
- E-Learning
- Grief in the Workplace

For more information

www.hospicefoundation.ie





You can access the online application by following these clickable links:

[MSc Loss & Bereavement](#)

[MSc Loss & Bereavement \(Clinical Practice\)](#)

For general queries, contact:

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