



National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Unit code: H2XN 11

Superclass: PM

Publication date: August 2015

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 03

Unit purpose

This Unit has been designed for candidates who have no previous experience of counselling. The Unit will introduce candidates to the purpose and basic concepts and processes of counselling including reflective practice. This is a free-standing Unit and as such can be delivered in different contexts appropriate to the candidate. As an introductory Unit it provides underpinning and basic knowledge of the subject, it does not in any way permit those who have achieved it to refer to themselves as qualified counsellors.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Investigate the aims and purpose of counselling.
- 2 Describe the counselling process.
- 3 Participate in a role play activity to counsel a client.
- 4 Reflect on own counselling skills.

Credit points and level

1 National Unit credit at SCQF level 5: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5*)

Recommended entry to the Unit

Entry is at the discretion of the centre

National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skill component	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Outcome 1

Investigate the aims and purpose of counselling.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Define what is meant by counselling.
- (b) Describe the main aims of counselling.
- (c) Identify a range of applications for counselling.
- (d) Identify a range of contexts in which counselling takes place.

Outcome 2

Describe the counselling process.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Identify and explain a range of counselling models.
- (b) Describe the core conditions of counselling.
- (c) Identify and describe the components of a counselling session.
- (d) Identify a range of skills used in the counselling process.

Outcome 3

Participate in a role play activity to counsel a client.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Establish client needs using open and closed questioning and active listening skills.
- (b) Apply counselling skills in accordance with the core conditions.
- (c) Maintain a positive attitude, tone and respect confidentiality throughout the counselling session.
- (d) End the counselling session in accordance with client needs.

Outcome 4

Reflect on own counselling skills.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Identify own strengths and weaknesses in specified counselling skills.
- (b) Identify areas of strength and weakness in specified counselling skills based on feedback from others.
- (c) Identify how specified counselling skills can be improved.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

Outcome 1 — Written and/or oral evidence

Evidence for Outcome 1 will be gathered in open-book conditions at appropriate points throughout the Unit. Evidence will be gathered in a candidate folio.

Candidates will investigate the aims and purpose of counselling and the wide range of contexts in which counselling takes place.

Candidates are required to:

- ◆ Define what is meant by counselling.
- ◆ Describe the main aims of counselling.
- ◆ Identify a range of applications for counselling.
- ◆ Identify a range of contexts in which counselling takes place.
- ◆ Organise and present findings in an appropriate format.

Candidates must organise and present findings in an appropriate format. A template for the investigation will be provided.

The applications for counselling are provided in the Support Notes.

Outcome 2 — Written and/or oral evidence

Evidence for Outcome 2 will be gathered at an appropriate point in the Unit.

Candidates will describe the counselling process and identify a range of skills used in the counselling process.

Candidates are required to:

- ◆ Identify and explain **three** counselling models.
- ◆ Describe the core conditions of counselling.
- ◆ Identify and describe the components of a counselling session.
- ◆ Identify **three** skills used in the counselling process.

The core conditions of counselling are:

- ◆ Unconditional Positive Regard
- ◆ Congruence
- ◆ Empathy

Examples of counselling models, components of a counselling session and skills used are provided in the Support Notes.

National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Outcome 3 — Performance and written and /or oral evidence

Candidates will be required to participate in a role play activity to counsel a client to a given brief.

Candidates are required to:

- ◆ Establish client needs using open and closed questioning and active listening skills.
- ◆ Apply counselling skills in accordance with the core conditions.
- ◆ Maintain a positive attitude tone and confidentiality throughout the counselling session.
- ◆ End the counselling session in accordance with client needs.

An assessor observation checklist must be used to support performance evidence.

Outcome 4 — Written and /or oral evidence

Evidence for Outcome 4 must take the form of a completed candidate review record which will give the candidate the opportunity to record their progress in developing counselling skills. Candidates will be provided with a template for the review. Each review will include the following:

- 1 A record of the candidate's analysis of own strengths and weaknesses in relation to **three** of the following counselling skills.

Counselling skills will be selected from the range below:

- ◆ Active listening
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ Paraphrasing
- ◆ Summarising.
- ◆ Open questioning
- ◆ Body language

- 2 A record of feedback from others in relation to counselling skills

Candidates must take account of the feedback from the teacher/lecturer.

- 3 A record of the candidate's identified areas for improvement

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this Unit illustrates the standard that should be applied. It contains an investigation pro forma, candidate brief, a series of structured questions, candidate review and an assessor observation checklist. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard.

National Unit: Support Notes

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit has been designed for candidates who have no previous experience of counselling. The Unit will introduce candidates to the purpose and basic concepts and processes of counselling including reflective practice. This is a freestanding Unit and as such can be delivered in different contexts appropriate to the candidate. As an introductory Unit it provides underpinning and basic knowledge of the subject, it does not in any way permit those who have achieved it to refer to themselves as qualified counsellors.

Outcome 1

This Outcome is intended to introduce candidates to the main aims of counselling and the wide range of applications for counselling help available within the caring professions to tackle emotional problems and lifestyle issues.

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Definition of Counselling

‘Counselling and psychotherapy are umbrella terms that cover a range of talking therapies. They are delivered by trained practitioners who work with people over a short or long term to help them bring about effective change or enhance their wellbeing.’

Aims

Major aims of counselling include information giving; promoting insight; giving support; conflict resolution; problem solving; enabling decisions.

Egan’s 3 stage model has the following aims:

Stage 1 — Exploration: The aim is to develop a relationship which allows the client to explore the problem and focus on specific concerns.

Stage 2 — Understanding: The aim is to help the client see a situation in a new light and focus on what he/she might do to cope more effectively. The worker helps the client to see what strengths and resources he/she might use.

Stage 3 — Action and evaluation: The aim is to help the client consider possible ways to act, consider consequences, plan action, and implement and evaluate planned action.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Applications

The applications of counselling include support; developmental; post-trauma; decision making; crisis; problem focused.

The counsellor uses the relationship with the client as a means of healing and change. The types of problems/issues for which clients may seek counselling help could include:

- ◆ Relationship difficulties. Family and friends, colleagues, commitment, jealousy, abuse.
- ◆ Family issues. Partners, children, parenting, separation and divorce, homesickness.
- ◆ Lack of confidence. Worried about failing, never being good enough, feeling judged.
- ◆ Depression. Feeling isolated, lonely, empty, tearful, unloved, or suicidal.
- ◆ Repeated destructive behaviour. Binge eating, harming yourself, abusive relationships, alcohol, drugs.
- ◆ Exam and study stress. out of control, panic attacks, feelings of inadequacy.
- ◆ Bereavement. Loss, anger, loneliness, sadness and depression.

Contexts

The contexts or settings in which counselling takes place include voluntary agencies; statutory bodies (Social Work Department; Education Department; Health Board); private agencies; telephone helplines, online and e-mail.

The investigation will be recorded in a candidate portfolio and include all performance Criteria specified. The folio could be presented in a variety of formats e.g. a presentation, display, poster or leaflet. Candidates should be encouraged to identify ways in which their folio or presentation reflects and promotes equality and diversity. This could include the use of signs, symbols, pictures, etc.

Outcome 2

This Outcome is intended to introduce candidates to a range of counselling models and to describe the components of a counselling session.

Candidates should be aware of different types of counselling based on whether the counsellor is directive (suggesting courses of action and perhaps giving 'homework' exercises) or non-directive (with the client taking the lead in what's discussed). Each model has its own theory of human development and its own way of working.

Models of counselling include:

Cognitive analytical therapy

CAT explores a person's language and thinking, and the link between historical, cultural and social factors on how we function. It encourages the development of skills to change destructive patterns of behaviour and negative ways of thinking and acting. The therapy is short term structured and directive.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

CBT aims to change negative emotions that relate to an inaccurate view of the events that happen. It helps you to explore your beliefs, thoughts and behaviours and helps you learn new ways of behaving and reacting. CBT is sometimes used with groups of people as well as individuals.

Family therapy

Family therapy explores family relationships. It works by looking at the family as a whole, rather than working with a single person in the family unit. The focus is on how families interact together, and the therapist's aim is to involve the whole family in finding positive solutions.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy uses the technique of hypnosis to induce a deep state of relaxation during which the unconscious mind is highly receptive to new ideas. Accessing this part of the mind through hypnosis can help change behaviour, attitudes and emotions, as well as manage pain, anxiety, stress-related illnesses and bad habits, as well as promote personal development.

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)

The theory of NLP is broken down into three layers:

- ◆ Neuro involves creating our own mental map of the world.
- ◆ Linguistic involves how we each give meaning to the information.
- ◆ Programming involves how we respond to the meaning we have given to information.

NLP techniques are often used to bring about change and improve our personal growth, development and performance.

Person-centred counselling

Person-centred counselling is based on the belief that a person who wants to find an answer to a problem can feel that their counsellor will not judge them, which will help them express their emotions and feelings. Person-centred counselling is for those who would like to tackle specific psychological habits or patterns of thinking.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis deals with the exploration of the mind, using the knowledge of human behaviour. The counsellor can make you aware of unconscious patterns so you can change them. Your relationship with the counsellor is important – as it can highlight your patterns of behaviour within relationships generally.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Psychodynamic psychotherapy

Psychodynamic psychotherapy focuses on the unconscious mind and past experiences, and explores their influence on current behaviour. You will be encouraged to talk about childhood relationships with parents and other significant people. As part of the therapy you may transfer and pass on deep feelings about yourself, parents and others to the therapist.

Relationship counselling

Relationship counselling aims to help people recognise and manage differences and negative patterns within their relationships. The aim is to find ways to change and adapt for a more positive future.

Solution-focused brief therapy

This kind of therapy focuses on a particular issue and promotes positive change, rather than dwelling on the issue or past problems. You are encouraged to focus positively on what you do well, your strengths and resources and to set goals to achieve the changes you want to make.

All models of counselling are based on the principle developed by Carl Rogers that the counsellor provides three 'core conditions' (or essential attributes) that are, in themselves, therapeutic and allow the client to express their feelings freely without having the feeling that they are being judged. These are:

- ◆ Empathy (the ability to imagine oneself in another person's position).
- ◆ Unconditional positive regard (warm, positive feelings, regardless of the person's behaviour).
- ◆ Congruence (honesty and openness).

The counsellor does not attempt to change the client's way of thinking in order to explore the issues that are most important to them.

The components of a counselling session are:

- ◆ Open the session. State the purpose of the counselling and review previously established performance goals.
- ◆ Discuss the issues. Employ active listening; respond and question without dominating the conversation.
- ◆ Develop the plan of action.
- ◆ Record and close the session.

Candidates should be introduced to, and given the opportunity to develop and apply basic counselling skills. Candidates should develop an awareness of their own, and others' body language and non-verbal communication.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Basic counselling skills will include:

- ◆ Active listening
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ Paraphrasing
- ◆ Summarising
- ◆ Open questioning
- ◆ Body language

Outcome 3

This Outcome is intended to provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate specified counselling skills within a practical activity in the form of a role play scenario. Opportunities will arise for the teacher/ lecturer to observe and provide constructive feedback to candidates on how they conduct themselves and perform in relation to the interaction. Candidates should demonstrate a willingness to listen and respond constructively to feedback.

Examples of relevant scenarios could include

- ◆ Life Changes
- ◆ Relationship Issues
- ◆ Work-related problems
- ◆ Feelings of Depression/Sadness/Melancholy
- ◆ Anxiety/Nervousness
- ◆ Grief/Bereavement
- ◆ Eating Disorders
- ◆ Coping with Sexual harassment and assault
- ◆ Addiction/Substance Dependence/Substance Abuse

Outcome 4

This Outcome is intended to give candidates the opportunity to review and evaluate their performance in relation to specified counselling skills. They will be expected to take responsibility for improving their performance by identifying areas for improvement through self-evaluation and taking account of feedback from the teacher/ lecturer. The counselling skills can be practised, reviewed and evaluated through role play and individual classroom or group activities.

Candidates should be given opportunities to exhibit counselling skills in practical contexts such as role play exercises.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

Candidates could be encouraged to identify a range of counselling services in their local area.

Delivery of this Unit could incorporate a variety of teaching and learning methods to encourage a learner-centred, participative and practical approach, including:

- ◆ Teacher/lecturer presentations.
- ◆ DVD presentations.
- ◆ Group work and discussions.
- ◆ Handouts.
- ◆ Books and articles.
- ◆ Visiting speakers.
- ◆ Role play activities.
- ◆ Individual and group research.
- ◆ Internet searches.
- ◆ Reflection.
- ◆ Observation and evaluation of self and others in counselling contexts.

Teachers/lecturers could help candidates develop their counselling skills through demonstration and selecting appropriate role play scenarios to give candidates as much practice as possible before their assessment takes place.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Outcome 1

Evidence can be generated using different types of instruments of assessment. Candidates should present their evidence in an appropriate format. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

This will be in the form of an investigation. The investigation will require candidates to gather information from a variety of sources which could include:

- ◆ Visiting speakers
- ◆ Internet research
- ◆ Library
- ◆ Health boards
- ◆ GP surgery

It may be beneficial for candidates to work in groups and share information although the final investigation must be the candidate's own work. Candidates should discuss and agree with the teacher/lecturer a suitable format for presenting the information. Initial discussions can be carried out in groups and whole class expositions. There is the opportunity for candidates to practise and develop skills of verbal and non-verbal communication, planning and respect and consideration for others. The language and materials used throughout should promote equality and diversity and avoid cultural stereotypes.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

Outcome 2

The evidence will be produced in supervised conditions. The evidence will be produced by the candidate on their own at an appropriate point in the Unit. Evidence could be gathered in response to a series of structured questions with a time limit of one hour.

Outcome 3

An assessor observation checklist must be used to support the performance criteria. The checklist will record participation in a role play exercise which ensures that the candidate has the ability to effectively apply basic counselling skills, a capacity for showing empathy and understanding, and the ability to accept and respect their clients.

Candidates should be given the opportunity to practise the counselling session before being assessed.

Outcome 4

Feedback will be from the teacher/ lecturer and could be from other candidates who have observed the role play. Candidate's reflection should show that they have taken into account their own self-evaluation and the feedback given by others.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use.

E-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

In this Unit, candidates will be involved in an investigation and self-evaluation and review of counselling skills. There may be opportunities in the role play of a counselling session to develop effective communication and interpersonal skills. Candidates will have opportunities to develop communication skills and their skills in *Working with Others* in seeking and responding to feedback from others in the review and evaluation of their counselling skills.

Candidates have to take responsibility for their own performance in the investigation and in the review and evaluation of their counselling skills. This may allow them to develop the three components activities of *Problem Solving* — Critical Thinking, Planning and Organising and Reviewing and Evaluating.

National Unit: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Counselling: An Introduction

If the candidate uses a computer while undertaking any part of this Unit, eg for research, they will have the opportunity to develop *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* skills.

This Unit has the Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving embedded in it. This means that when candidates achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.

General information for learners

Unit title: Counselling: an Introduction

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

The Unit will introduce you to the purpose and basic concepts and processes of counselling including reflective practice. It is an introductory Unit which provides basic knowledge of the subject; it does not in any way allow you to practise as a qualified counsellor.

On successful completion of the Unit you will be able to:

- 1 Investigate the aims and purpose of counselling.
- 2 Describe the counselling process.
- 3 Participate in a role play activity to counsel a client.
- 4 Review and evaluate own counselling skills.

There are four assessments for the Unit:

Outcome 1 is assessed by an investigation which will require you to collect information from a variety of sources.

Outcome 2 is assessed by a series of questions.

Outcome 3 is assessed by a role play exercise.

Outcome 4 is assessed by a reflection on your performance in the role play exercise.

There may be opportunities throughout the Unit to develop your Core Skills, particularly in *Communication, Working with Others, Problem Solving and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
03	Outcome 2 - removal of mandatory requirement for evidence to be gathered under supervision.	25/08/2015
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5 embedded.	04/02/2013

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