

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Skilled Helper Model of Counselling: Stage 1 (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J75D 47
SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2023–24

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 1.0) March 2023

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit enables learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need to apply stage 1 of the three-stage counselling model. It gives learners regular opportunities for observation of simulated practice, feedback, discussion and review.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have good communication skills at SCQF level 6 or equivalent. Learners would also benefit from previous study of counselling.

Learners can take the unit as part of a Higher National Group Award (HN Group Award). They can also study it on a stand-alone basis for continuing professional development. Learners' work for the unit should be relevant to the subject matter covered in their group award, or their vocational area or discipline.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 explain the concept of counselling
- 2 describe the three-stage counselling model
- 3 demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients
- 4 evaluate and reflect on personal learning and development within stage 1 of the counselling model

Evidence requirements

You must assess the unit through open-book assessment for outcomes 1, 2 and 4, and observation of performance for outcome 3. Learners provide written, oral and performance evidence. You should give the task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners should submit work for outcomes 1, 2 and 4 for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Explain the concept of counselling (outcome 1)

Learners are assessed by an open-book assessment. They must provide written or oral evidence.

Learners' responses must:

- ◆ identify different helping strategies within the caring professions, including one example of voluntary and one example of statutory provision
- ◆ define counselling
- ◆ explain boundary issues
- ◆ explain the importance of equality of opportunity in the counselling relationship
- ◆ explain the importance of theory in underpinning competence

Describe the three-stage counselling model (outcome 2)

Learners are assessed by an open-book assessment. They must provide written or oral evidence.

Learners' responses must:

- ◆ describe the core conditions
- ◆ outline the counselling process and identify the skills involved
- ◆ explain the theoretical concepts that are fundamental to each stage

Demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients (outcome 3)

Learners must provide performance evidence, which you record using an observation checklist. Only simulation or role-play is acceptable for this outcome, as learners' safety is paramount.

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ evidence of managing the interview
- ◆ an application of counselling skills
- ◆ evidence of negotiating difficulties that commonly arise in stage 1

Evaluate and reflect on personal learning and development within stage 1 of the counselling model (outcome 4)

Learners are assessed by an open-book assessment. They must provide a written or oral reflective account.

Learners' responses must:

- ◆ describe the knowledge and skills they have gained
- ◆ describe the impact of the counselling skills they have gained on relationships
- ◆ describe insights into relationships that they have gained during the unit
- ◆ critically evaluate their own development

Learners must fully reference their assessments, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of this unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

- ◆ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
- ◆ present ideas clearly and coherently
- ◆ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
- ◆ use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
- ◆ provide supporting evidence or references

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ helping strategies in the voluntary and statutory caring professions ◆ the BACP definition of counselling ◆ boundary issues ◆ equality of opportunity ◆ the role of a counsellor ◆ the importance of theory in relation to competence ◆ key features of telephone counselling 	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain the concept of counselling
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ core conditions — empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence ◆ the three-stage model and skills necessary to practise it ◆ theoretical concepts fundamental to each stage 	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ describe the three-stage counselling model
<p>Outcome 3 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the possible range of clients ◆ the counsellor–client relationship ◆ how to use counselling skills ◆ difficulties commonly arising in counselling relationships 	<p>Outcome 3 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 4 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ self-awareness and personal growth in relation to unit content◆ how relationships are impacted by the use of counselling skills	<p>Outcome 4 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ evaluate and reflect on their personal learning and development

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability.

The unit helps learners develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally throughout the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: paying attention to and sorting information by filtering relevant facts and knowledge; completing assessments to clear deadlines; producing appropriate work
- ◆ integrity: acting in ethical ways to source relevant information and while working with clients; including citations and referencing for assessments
- ◆ adapting: acquiring new knowledge and skills; using different technologies to communicate and carry out research; using a virtual learning environment (VLE); reflecting on performance
- ◆ initiative: decision making; reading and thinking about sources to differentiate between valuable information and misinformation; using library facilities; sticking to tasks and making sufficient progress; setting own deadlines during assessments

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: listening to information on counselling issues; explaining ideas; producing suitable, understandable assessment responses; sharing, through writing or orally, ideas and opinions on ideas covered in the unit
- ◆ collaborating: working together in role-play tasks; taking account of others in planning and carrying out tasks; building relationships with peers

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: seeking knowledge about theories; making the most of library research time; taking part in class discussion and debate; questioning ideas
- ◆ sense-making: participating in discussions; blending a range of ideas; considering and evaluating different ideas
- ◆ critical thinking: making logical connections and reasoned judgements through discussion, debate and drawing conclusions based on evidence; reviewing and evaluating written information

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Learners could also develop other meta-skills in the unit, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out. These include:

- ◆ social intelligence: feeling; leading
- ◆ innovation: creativity

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by presenting complex information in written or oral form. It is part of the evidence requirements for the unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. You can give learners opportunities to carry out oral presentations and engage in discussions.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on complex vocational ideas. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a VLE also supports digital skills.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability, as many of the complex counselling issues learners could cover may touch on or directly link to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Delivery of unit

You can deliver this unit as part of an HN Group Award or as a stand-alone unit.

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 40 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment. We expect learners to commit a further 40 hours of self-directed study.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Explain the concept of counselling (4 hours).

Outcome 2 — Describe the three-stage counselling model (10 hours).

Outcome 3 — Demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients (20 hours).

Outcome 4 — Evaluate and reflect on personal learning and development within stage 1 of the counselling model (6 hours).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit allows learners to build knowledge and understanding of relationship-centred counselling. You could integrate it with other counselling units that cover counselling skills and associated theory. The unit is intended for learners who work or plan to work in the counselling field.

You could focus on the Humanistic model.

Explain the concept of counselling (outcome 1)

Introduce and outline the concepts underpinning counselling:

- ◆ helping strategies; the application of helping skills within a variety of caring professions, such as social work, nursing and community care
- ◆ the BACP definition of counselling
- ◆ boundary issues, such as timing, confidentiality, ethics, qualifications, experience and counselling approach
- ◆ the transition of equal opportunities from policy to application within counselling practice and the impact on clients
- ◆ counselling environments and opportunities, covering the different settings in which counselling could take place, for example, by telephone, by email or face-to-face
- ◆ the importance of sound knowledge and theory to underpin development and competence

Describe the three-stage counselling model (outcome 2)

You should introduce the three-stage counselling model, and cover:

- ◆ the core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence
- ◆ the counselling process in terms of the three stages:
 - exploration
 - understanding / insight
 - action
- ◆ the skills of basic empathy, advanced empathy and positive action
- ◆ the appropriate use of reflecting, paraphrasing, summarising, open questions, silence and non-verbal communication in conveying empathic understanding
- ◆ the appropriate use of advanced empathy, challenging and immediacy
- ◆ the appropriate use of SMART criteria (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time-orientated), force-field analysis, and decisional balance techniques and concepts

You should introduce examples of theoretical concepts such as:

- ◆ Humanistic
 - the facilitative climate and its dependence on the three core conditions
- ◆ Psychodynamic
 - the unconscious: the distortion of the unconscious dynamic through transference and countertransference
 - the parallel process within the counsellor that echoes the feelings of the client, for example, blocked or confused
 - projective identification, for example, the counsellor being left 'holding' something that originated in the client
- ◆ Cognitive and behavioural
 - thoughts related to behaviour

Demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients (outcome 3)

This outcome allows learners to put theory into practice. Learners' safety is paramount, so it is important to stress that only simulation or role-play is acceptable. You should cover:

- ◆ a range of clients: reluctant, open, distressed, confused, angry and anxious
- ◆ management of client introduction, contract policies, presenting concern, focus, time management and ending
- ◆ basic empathy skills: reflecting, paraphrasing, summarising, open questioning, responding to silence, focusing and moving a session forward
- ◆ common difficulties: reluctant clients, pacing, client rambling, excessive probing, anxiety over confidentiality, unease with silence, fear of change and shame
- ◆ developing observation skills and reflecting on the relationship between client and counsellor, and the outcome of the counselling session

Evaluate and reflect on personal learning and development within stage 1 of the counselling model (outcome 4)

Learners should demonstrate their personal learning and apply the counselling concepts to their relationships. They can record this in their course journal if they are keeping one. You should explore with them the impact of their counselling studies on their relationships with friends, family and other learners.

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for learners to develop meta-skills. You should also allow time to speak with learners individually to agree the clients or role-play situation to use in their assessments.

You should encourage learners to review and reflect on their current counselling knowledge and skills to identify areas of strength and weakness, to enable them to reflect on their personal learning and development throughout the unit.

We recommend that you approach the outcomes in order, as they follow on from each other. You can, however, introduce outcome 4 early on, so that learners are aware of the need for reflection and can do this throughout the unit. You could also integrate work for outcomes 1 and 2.

You should provide learners with guidance materials containing reference sources that can help them develop relevant counselling skills.

Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where they engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods could include:

- ◆ demonstration
- ◆ tutorial question and answer sessions
- ◆ role-play
- ◆ VLE
- ◆ digital tools and social media
- ◆ film and visual images
- ◆ books and articles
- ◆ group discussions and exercises

You should encourage learners and provide them with opportunities to take an active role in their own learning. You should encourage co-operative working with other learners to gather and exchange information, and in role-plays, to reflect workplace practice. Some activities, such as role-play, should be pre-planned, with learners briefed in advance. For example, you could brief one learner to show a particular emotion or behaviour to allow another learner to demonstrate counselling skills or identify difficulties commonly arising in counselling relationships. In any role-play, you should rotate roles and responsibilities. Encourage and support learners, in a secure environment, to try out different roles and learning techniques, and to challenge their 'comfort zone'. This reflects the realities of the vocational area, where counsellors are expected to be flexible and versatile. This approach to learning and teaching strengthens skills in negotiation and teamwork.

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

Useful key texts

Culley, S. & Bond, T. (2011) *Integrative Counselling Skills in Action*, 3rd ed, London: Sage.

Egan, G. (2018) *The Skilled Helper*, Cengage Learning EMEA.

Hill, C.E. (2014) *Helping Skills: Facilitating Exploration, Insight, and Action*, 4th ed, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

McLeod, J. (2013) *An Introduction to Counselling*, 5th ed, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Approaches to assessment

You should assess learners after the appropriate amount of learning and skills development. If you assess each outcome separately, you should spread assessment across the unit at appropriate points. We recommend that you deliver and assess outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in order. You could assess outcomes 1 and 2 separately or together. You can introduce a reflective journal for outcome 4 early in the unit delivery, to ensure learners engage in reflection throughout the unit, particularly when developing counselling skills for outcome 3.

You can generate evidence using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners. Any methods you use should meet the evidence requirements.

Learners' responses for outcomes 1 and 2 can be written or oral. You could structure these assessments as questions or essays. For oral responses, you could use an individual oral presentation or poster exhibition.

You should assess outcome 3 by simulation or role-play, using an observation checklist. It is important that there is performance evidence for outcome 3.

Learners' responses to outcome 4 must consist of a written or oral reflection of the performance evidence, which you should assess using a reflective account.

For outcomes 1 and 2, you can choose to use a mix of methods across a group, as it may be more suitable for some learners to give a written response and for others to use an oral method. Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials, as assessment for outcomes 1, 2 and 4 is open book, with outcome 3 being assessed using performance evidence in a simulation or role play.

If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners can do oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually or in a group. Each learner must show evidence that meets all evidence requirements, so you should take care to make sure each learner's input does this.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement in selecting appropriate academic sources. You should encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

If learners are creating a blog or website for their assessment, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. You could collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Skilled Helper Model of Counselling: Stage 1 (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit develops your skills in applying stage 1 of the three-stage counselling model. It gives you opportunities for observation of practice, feedback, discussion and review of your counselling skills.

Before you start the unit, you should have good communication skills. You may also benefit from previous study of counselling.

On completing the unit, you are able to:

- 1 explain the concept of counselling
- 2 describe the three-stage counselling model
- 3 demonstrate stage 1 counselling skills with a range of clients
- 4 evaluate and reflect on personal learning and development within stage 1 of the counselling model

You are assessed using a range of methods. For outcomes 1 and 2, the assessments are open book. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. For outcome 3, you are assessed on your performance in the role of a counsellor through role play or simulation. For outcome 4, you reflect on your personal learning development in a personal reflection.

You may be able to study an HND or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of an HNC Group Award.

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for current and future study, and employment.

Administrative information

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Superclass: PS

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.