

# Higher National Graded Unit Specification



## General Information for Centres

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HNC Counselling. Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with this validated specification. Centres wishing to use another type of Graded Unit or assessment instrument are required to submit proposals detailing the justification for change for validation.

**Graded Unit Title:** Counselling: Graded Unit 1

**Graded Unit Code:** F1M4 34

**Type of Graded Unit:** Project

**Assessment Instrument:** Case Study

**Credit points and level:** 1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from National 1 to Doctorates.*

**Purpose:** This Group Award Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the HNC Counselling:

- ◆ to enable candidates to understand the main theoretical concepts and approaches to counselling
- ◆ to enable candidates to explain and demonstrate the practice of skills using a relation centred model of counselling
- ◆ to enable candidates to demonstrate interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others
- ◆ to enable candidates to reflect on and evaluate the counselling theories and skills, drawing on skills practice and personal learning to achieve candidate's personal *integration*
- ◆ to enable candidates to achieve a working knowledge of counselling skills

The unit is underpinned by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling.

## General Information for Centres (cont)

**Recommended Prior Knowledge and Skills:** It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing the following Units relating to the above specific aims prior to undertaking this Group Award Graded Unit:

- ◆ *Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 1 of the Three Stage Integrative Model* — F1ER 34
- ◆ *Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 2 of the Three Stage Integrative Model* — F1ES 34
- ◆ *Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 3 of the Three Stage Integrative Model* — F1ET 34
- ◆ *Counselling: Humanistic Counselling Theory* — F1EL 34
- ◆ *Counselling: Psychodynamic Counselling Theory* — F1EP 34
- ◆ *Counselling: Behavioural and Cognitive Counselling Theory* — F1EE 34

**Core Skills:** There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or a Core Skill component as part of this Graded Unit. However, there may be opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Problem Solving*, *Working with Others* and *Communication* at SCQF level 6.

**Assessment:** This Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of a Project in the form of a case study which should be based upon a realistic Counselling experience. The developed Practical Case Study should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates the application of knowledge and understanding to a situation that involves a Counselling environment. During delivery for this unit, there will be regular opportunity for practice observation, feedback, discussion and review.

The case study should show evidence that the candidate is able to integrate knowledge and skills. The case study samples across the following Outcomes from the mandatory units:

Unit Title	Outcomes
◆ Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 1 of the Three Stage Integrative Model	1 Explain the concept of counselling. 2 Describe the three-stage counselling model.
◆ Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 2 of the Three Stage Integrative Model	1 Explain the Skills within Stage 2 of the Counselling Process.
◆ Counselling: Relationship-Centred ◆ Counselling Skills: Stage 3 of the Three Stage Integrative Model	1 Explain the Stage 3 skills within the counselling process.
◆ Counselling: Humanistic Counselling Theory	2 Explain the main theoretical concepts of humanistic approaches to counselling. 3 Evaluate personal learning in relation to the humanistic tradition of counselling.
◆ Counselling: Psychodynamic Counselling Theory	2 Explain the main theoretical concepts of psychodynamic approaches to counselling.

## General Information for Centres (cont)

	3 Evaluate personal learning in relation to the psychodynamic tradition of counselling.
◆ Counselling: Behavioural and Cognitive Counselling Theory	2 Explain the main theoretical concepts of behavioural and cognitive approaches to counselling. 3 Evaluate personal learning in relation to the behavioural and cognitive tradition of counselling.

The above units are mandatory for the HNC Group Award and the case study must also cover information from a minimum of two other units. These may be chosen from a combination of mandatory and optional units, which must form part of the programme of study for a candidate undertaking HNC Counselling.

Unit Number	Unit Title
F1EG 35	Counselling: Contemporary Humanistic Counselling Theory
F1EH 35	Counselling: Contemporary Psychodynamic Counselling Theory
F1EF 35	Counselling: Contemporary Behavioural and Cognitive Theory
F1EV 34	Counselling: Understanding Addictive Behaviours
F1EW 35	Counselling: Working with Addictive Behaviours
F1EX 35	Counselling: Working with Substance Misuse
F1EM 34	Counselling: Loss, Grief and Bereavement in a Counselling Context
F1EK 34	Counselling: Group Counselling Skills
F1EJ 35	Counselling: Counselling Supervision
F1EN 34	Counselling: Personal Development in a Counselling Skills Setting

### Project Brief: Case Study

This assignment relates to a fictitious scenario which the centre will devise. The candidate will consider different counselling theories and plan a model of counselling support appropriate to the chosen scenario. The outlined scenario should consist of a description of a set of circumstances based on a combination of issue and client from the following table:

Issue	Client
Work related stress	17 year old single parent female
Domestic violence	66 year old widower
Substance misuse	27 year old single male

## General Information for Centres (cont)

Bereavement	21 year old student female
Relationship problems	50 year old male
Eating disorder	47 year old executive female
Diagnosis of serious illness	30 year old mother of two

Alternatively the centre may wish to develop a suitable case study scenario.

### Stage 1: Planning

Explore the issue(s) in the case study and how this might affect the chosen client. Briefly explain how each of the three theories of counselling: humanistic, psychodynamic and behavioural and cognitive could be applied to the scenario with reference to:

- ◆ understanding and knowledge of theories and structure
- ◆ knowledge and experience
- ◆ counselling ethics
- ◆ boundary issues

### Stage 2: Developing

Select **one** theory and develop a model of counselling support for the scenario you have chosen with reference to:

- ◆ experience as a counsellor/client
- ◆ participation in and processing of experiential learning opportunities
- ◆ diversity and inclusion

### Stage 3: Evaluating

Evaluate and review the activity with reference to:

- ◆ relevant theory and model
- ◆ reflection on own learning
- ◆ reflection on holistic nature of the programme/learning experience

## Administrative Information

**Graded Unit Code:** F1M4 34

**Graded Unit Title:** Counselling: Graded Unit 1

**Original date of publication:** August 2006

**Version:** 04 (July 2018)

### History of Changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Changes to minimum Evidence Requirements and apportioning of marks, pages 8–12	20/02/09
03	General guidance added, P1- BACP, P2-Assessment, P6-Conditions of Assessment	10/03/17
04	Update of Conditions of Assessment	18/07/18

**Source:** SQA

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2006, 2009, 2017, 2018

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Higher National qualifications.

Additional copies of this Graded Unit specification if sourced by the Scottish Qualifications Authority can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre for further details, telephone 0345 279 1000.

## **Higher National Graded Unit Specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates**

### **Graded Unit Title: Counselling: Graded Unit 1**

#### **Conditions of Assessment**

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the case study. However, the instructions for the assessment task should be distributed to allow the candidate sufficient time to assimilate the details and carry out the assessment task. During the time between the distribution of the assessment task instructions and the completion date, assessors may answer questions, provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance.

Reasonable assistance is the term used by SQA to describe the difference between providing candidates with some direction to generate the required evidence for assessment and providing too much support which would compromise the integrity of the assessment. Reasonable assistance is part of all learning and teaching processes.

In relation to the assessment of Higher National Project-based Graded Units, assessors may provide advice, clarification, and guidance during the time between the distribution of the project instructions and the completion date, ie at each stage of the project.

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify candidate responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, such instances must be formally noted by the assessor, either in writing or recording, and be made available to the internal and external verifier.

In relation to Higher National Project-based Graded Units, candidates must be given the opportunity for remediation at each stage of the project.

The evidence for a Higher National Project-based Graded Unit is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, each of which has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. This means that any re-assessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage. The overall grade is derived from the total number of marks across all sections, and should reflect the ability of the candidate to work autonomously and the amount of support required. In relation to Higher National Project-based Graded Units, candidates who have failed any stage of the project and have been unable to provide the necessary evidence through remediation must be given the opportunity for re-assessment of that stage.

Any candidate who has failed their graded unit or wishes to upgrade their award must be given a re-assessment opportunity, or in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. In the case of project-based graded units, this must be done using a substantially different project.

The final grading given must reflect the quality of the candidate's evidence at the time of the completion of the graded unit. Candidates must be awarded the highest grade achieved — whether through first submission or through any re-assessment, remediation, and/or reasonable assistance provided.

## **Higher National Graded Unit Specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)**

**Graded Unit Title:** Counselling: Graded Unit 1

### **Instructions for designing the assessment task**

The assessment task is a project. The project undertaken by the candidate must be a complex task which involves:

- ◆ variables which are complex or unfamiliar
- ◆ relationships which need to be clarified
- ◆ a context which may be familiar or unfamiliar to the candidate

The assessment task must require the candidate to:

- ◆ analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
- ◆ plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
- ◆ reflect on what has been done and draw conclusions for the future
- ◆ produce evidence of meeting the aims which this Graded Unit has been designed to cover

## Guidance on grading candidates

Candidates who meet the minimum Evidence Requirements will have their achievement graded as C — competent, or A — highly competent or B somewhere between A and C. The grade related criteria to be used to judge candidate performance for this Graded Unit is specified in the following table.

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ produces evidence for the three essential stages of the Practical Assignment which is of a high quality and clearly inter-related is</li><li>◆ highly focused and demonstrates an insightful interpretation and a balanced, integrative approach is tightly structured,</li><li>◆ relevant to the content of the units and displays a high level of subject/occupational expertise effectively</li><li>◆ applies integrated and consolidated knowledge, understanding and skills from the course units to complex situations</li></ul>	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ produces adequate, fairly well integrated documentation for the three essential stages of the Practical Assignment demonstrates an</li><li>◆ acceptable interpretation from a balanced integrative approach is reasonably well</li><li>◆ structured and displays an adequate level of subject/occupational expertise applies integrated and consolidated knowledge</li><li>◆ understanding and skills with some lack of continuity and consistency</li></ul>

The project will be marked out of 100. Assessors will mark each stage of the project, taking into account the criteria outlined. The marks will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the candidate for this Graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries.

A = 70% — 100%

B = 60% — 69%

C = 50% — 59%

**Note:** the candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified below for each stage of the project in order to achieve the Graded Unit.

### Evidence Requirements

The project consists of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating. The following table specifies the minimum evidence required to pass each stage.

**Note:** The candidate must achieve **all of the minimum evidence** specified below for each stage of the project in order to pass the Graded Unit.



## Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
<p>Stage 1 — Planning 35% of total marks</p>	<p>Produce a written plan which includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Analysis of the issue(s) in the case study and the key factors influencing the client.</li> <li>2 Identification of the two additional units from which knowledge and skills will be applied.</li> <li>3 An explanation of the theories which could be applied.</li> <li>4 Timescales for carrying out of the activity.</li> <li>5 Identification and exploration of the ethical issues involved.</li> <li>6 Identification and exploration of the relevant boundary issues.</li> <li>7 Identification of and reasons for selection of theories.</li> </ol> <p>The report should be between 750 and 1,000 words.</p> <p><b>Additional guidance on grading</b></p> <p>This stage is worth <b>35 marks</b> which should be allocated as set out below.</p> <p>The candidate <b><u>must</u></b> achieve all of the minimum evidence specified below to pass the planning stage. The planning stage is assessed by a short planning document and by individual interview with the tutor during which the candidate will be expected to explain the written material she/he has submitted. The tutor's role is as a facilitator and so to gain high marks the candidate must demonstrate a high degree of autonomy in planning activities.</p> <p>Up to <b><u>6 marks</u></b> for an analysis of the case study and the identification of the key issues. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the clarity and comprehensibility of the analysis of the case study</li> <li>◆ identification of key issues within the case study</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b><u>9 marks</u></b> for the explanation of the theories being applied. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the clarity and accuracy of the explanation of the theories</li> <li>◆ the appropriateness of the theories to the case study</li> <li>◆ justification for the two additional units from which knowledge and skills will be applied</li> </ul>

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
	<p>Up to <b>6 marks</b> for timescales for completion of the activity. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the inclusion of a final completion date and significant milestones to reaching this date (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ the incorporation of likely contingencies and the validity of the justification for them (4 marks)</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>6 marks</b> for analysis of the ethical issues. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ definition of ethical principles in counselling (1 mark)</li> <li>◆ characteristics of ethical issues (1 mark)</li> <li>◆ identification of potential ethical issues from the information given in the case study (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ identification of personal ethics and how they relate to the case study (2 marks)</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>6 marks</b> for analysis of the boundary issues. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ definition of boundary issues (1 mark)</li> <li>◆ characteristics of boundary issues (1 mark)</li> <li>◆ identification of potential boundary issues from the information given in the case study (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ identification of personal boundaries and how they relate to the case study (2 marks)</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>2 marks</b> can be allocated for structure and referencing throughout the plan.</p> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p> <p><i>This can be demonstrated by submitting evidence relating to all six aspects of the Planning stage and achieving a mark of at least 18/35.</i></p>

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 2 — Developing 15% of total marks	<p>A checklist completed from Observation of the practical session for which there should be records.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 A detailed model of counselling support for the client.</li> <li>2 Based on the plan which should be completed prior to the activity taking place.</li> <li>3 Applied disciplines, theories and/or perspectives to the model of counselling support.</li> </ol> <p>The candidate should undertake a practical session of counselling based on a role-play scenario, which should be observed and may be recorded. The practical session could be recorded using an appropriate medium and should be supported by an observation checklist. The session should last a minimum of 20 minutes.</p> <p>This stage is worth <b>15 marks</b>. The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified below to pass the developing stage. The tutor's role is as a facilitator and so to gain high marks the candidate must demonstrate a high degree of autonomy in developing the model of counselling support.</p> <p>Up to <b>5 marks</b> for the model of counselling support. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the choice of model used for practice and its appropriateness to the case study scenario</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>5 marks</b> for showing that the model had been developed in accordance with the plan. Marks should be allocated on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ adherence to the original plan and use of contingencies</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>5 marks</b> for the application of disciplines, theories and perspectives to the model of counselling support.</p> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p> <p><i>This can be demonstrated by submitting evidence relating to all three aspects of the Developing stage and achieving a mark of at least 7/15.</i></p>

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 3 — Evaluating 50% of total marks	<p>Produce a report which includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 A brief outline of the case study and the points identified for consideration.</li> <li>2 Review of the action plan, with reference to any modifications made during the course of the project.</li> <li>3 Critical self evaluation of the model of counselling support.</li> <li>4 Identification of skills gained and integration of learning.</li> </ol> <p>The report should be 1,000–1,500 words in length.</p> <p>This stage is worth <b>50 marks</b>. The candidate must achieve the minimum criteria specified below to pass the evaluating stage. The evaluating stage is assessed by a written evaluation. The tutor's role is as a facilitator and so candidates should demonstrate a high degree of autonomy in evaluating the model of support. The marks for this stage should be allocated in the following way.</p> <p>Up to <b>5 marks</b> for a summary of the case study and the points identified for consideration.</p> <p>Up to <b>10 marks</b> for an assessment of the planning and implementation of the project in terms of which aspects went well and which aspects did not go quite as well and why. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ making reference to several aspects of the planning and implementation stage</li> <li>◆ clear identification of aspects that went well</li> <li>◆ clear identification of aspects that did not go as well as expected</li> <li>◆ the strength and validity of reasons given to support points made</li> </ul> <p>Up to <b>25 marks</b> for critical self evaluation. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ ability to reflect on self-experiences, and values in a critical and accurate way, including prejudices and biases (10 marks)</li> <li>◆ ability to use theoretical insights from the counselling field to develop a greater understanding of self and relationships (10 marks)</li> <li>◆ awareness of dynamics within the counselling relationship (5 marks)</li> </ul>

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
	<p>Up to <b>10 marks</b> for identification of skills gained and integration of learning. Marks should be awarded on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ identification of new or enhanced knowledge (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ the way in which the project integrated knowledge from the component units of the HNC Counselling (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ understanding of the therapeutic process (2 marks)</li> <li>◆ awareness of own limitations (4 marks)</li> </ul> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Evaluating stage.</i></p> <p><i>This can be demonstrated by submitting evidence relating to all four aspects of the evaluating stage and achieving a mark of at least 25/50.</i></p>

## Support Notes

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

As this Unit is student-initiated and driven, it requires only guidance and direction on the part of the lecturer. Primarily, the role of the lecturer is that of mentor. The expectation is that the candidate works independently, demonstrating a thorough understanding of each stage of the Unit, ie, planning, developing and evaluating. Problem solving skills and evaluative skills should be evident. Submission and presentation completion date has to be established and adhered to. A candidate should work independently throughout a project-based Graded Unit assessment. The role of the assessor is to provide reasonable assistance eg to provide clarification and guidance in a way which ensures that it is still the work of the candidate which will be assessed.

The setting of deadlines in project-based Graded Units is imposed to ensure fairness so that all candidates are given the same time to complete either the entire project or phases within the project. However, colleges should take into consideration any personal circumstances in line with their centre's own policy and SQA's guidance on special assessment arrangements. If however, no personal circumstances pertain, the candidate's work should be submitted and marked by the due deadline

Candidates should be encouraged to draw upon their learning and assignments for the mandatory units.

## Equality and inclusion

This graded unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Equality and inclusion*, which is available on SQA's website: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

## General Information for Candidates

This Unit has been designed to allow you integrate your learning across a range of units in the HNC Counselling. You should be able to draw upon your learning and assignments for the mandatory units and the option units you have chosen from table two. You will have the opportunity to discuss and agree on the case study with the tutor prior to the project being undertaken.

On completion of this Unit, you will be able to demonstrate that you have achieved the following principal aims of the HNC Counselling:

- ◆ to enable candidates to understand the main theoretical concepts and approaches to counselling
- ◆ to enable candidates to explain and demonstrate the practice of skills using a relation centred model of counselling
- ◆ to enable candidates to demonstrate interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others
- ◆ to enable candidates to reflect on and evaluate the counselling theories and skills, drawing on skills practice and personal learning to achieve candidate's personal integration ◆ to enable candidates to achieve a working knowledge of counselling skills