



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Counselling: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: H8WN 35

Superclass: PM

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enhance knowledge and understanding of the research process in counselling and how research underpins practice. Learners are required to evaluate and critically analyse counselling research whilst demonstrating an awareness of the purpose and importance of design choice and ethical considerations.

Outcomes

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

- 1 Analyse the purpose of research in counselling practice.
- 2 Evaluate qualitative and quantitative methodologies in counselling research.
- 3 Critically analyse data produced by published, relevant research.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 8: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

Recommended entry to the Unit

Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. Learners should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would be beneficial.

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skills	None
Core Skill component	Critical Thinking at SCQF Level 6

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.

This Unit forms part of the HND in Counselling and can be used as a free-standing Unit for a number of purposes including continuing professional development.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

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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.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Analyse the purpose of research in counselling practice.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Rationale behind use of research in counselling
- ◆ Purpose of research in developing counselling practice
- ◆ Impact on practice
- ◆ Systematic review
- ◆ Formulation of hypothesis

Outcome 2

Evaluate qualitative and quantitative methodologies in counselling research.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Qualitative methodologies
- ◆ Quantitative methodologies
- ◆ Mixed methods
- ◆ Strengths and weaknesses of Qualitative and Quantitative methodologies

Outcome 3

Critically analyse data produced by published, relevant research.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Analytical Models
- ◆ Impact on the knowledge base of practice
- ◆ Influences on practice
- ◆ Ethical considerations in research design
- ◆ Research methods
- ◆ Methodology
- ◆ Impact of Bias

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes by showing that they can:

Outcome 1

- ◆ explain the purpose of research in developing/furthering counselling practice.
- ◆ analyse the impact of research on counselling practice.
- ◆ describe the commonly used research processes utilised in counselling practice.
- ◆ describe the process of systematic review.
- ◆ explain the ways in which Input and Output-based Hypotheses can be used in counselling practice.

Outcome 2

- ◆ explain the key features of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
- ◆ explain how qualitative methodologies can be used effectively in Counselling Practice.
- ◆ explain how quantitative methodologies can be used effectively.
- ◆ evaluate relevance of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in counselling research.

Outcome 3

- ◆ apply data handling techniques and interpret key information.
- ◆ evaluate the contribution of the findings (based on an appropriate model of analysis) to the professional knowledge base.
- ◆ critically analyse the influence of the chosen research on widespread practice.
- ◆ evaluate the impact of ethical considerations on research design.
- ◆ analyse a variety of research methods.
- ◆ evaluate the choice of methodology.
- ◆ explain the concept of Bias and assess its impact on findings.

This Unit is assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Outcomes. This could take the form of a report which should cover the Evidence Requirements of all Outcomes.



Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Counselling: Research Skills (SCQF level 8)

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 specialist Unit is designed to allow learners to build up a knowledge and understanding of research underpinning counselling practice. In order to achieve the Outcomes as stated, this Unit requires that the learner will take notes in lectures and discussions, compile given assessment, read relevant periodicals, professional journals and research papers as advised, watch relevant videos and take part in and contribute to group discussions and exercises. Learners will also develop their analytical and evaluation skills as they critically analyse a piece of published research relevant to counselling practice.

Outcome 1 introduces and outlines the purpose behind conducting counselling research and the effect on practice.

- ◆ What is meant by research; research skills, evidence based practice, research questions?
- ◆ Value of research in the development of counselling practice
- ◆ Use of input based hypotheses; researching theories and methods of counselling
- ◆ Use of Outcome based hypotheses; researching what works, measuring Outcomes

Outcome 2 introduces qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In this Outcome the following should be covered:

- ◆ Qualitative studies; interviews, questionnaires, surveys, narrative case studies, participant observation, documentary research, cooperative inquiry groups, personal experience methodologies
- ◆ Interpreting findings; grounded theory, computer analysis
- ◆ Data collection
- ◆ Measurements, eg rating scales, inferential statistics, Standard deviation
- ◆ Heuristic studies
- ◆ Evaluation of each in respect of impacting upon counselling knowledge

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 3 is designed to allow learners to relate theory into practice. A variety of published research should be available with the learner making the choice regarding which to work with. The following should be covered:

- ◆ Access to a range of relevant, current, published research. A selection of examples of suitable journals is included below.
- ◆ What is the role of ethics within counselling research?
- ◆ The contribution the findings had on professional knowledge base should be evaluated
- ◆ The influence that chosen research has had (or is having) on widespread practice should be critically analysed
- ◆ Consideration of a variety of research methods
- ◆ Discussion on the reasoning behind the choice of appropriate methodology
- ◆ Assessment of the potential bias each has upon findings

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

It is recommended that the Outcomes be delivered in the order presented. A learner-centred, participative and practical approach is recommended. This Unit requires teaching of research methods by the lecturer and access to current published counselling research. This should allow the Unit to be delivered in such a way that enables learners to appreciate the relevance of the Unit to research in counselling.

Recommended texts may include:

Cooper, M. (2008) *Essential Research Findings*, London: Sage Publications
Dallos, R. And Vetere, A. (2005) *Researching Psychotherapy and Counselling*, Berkshire: Open University Press
McLeod, J. (2003) *Doing Counselling Research*, London: Sage Publications

Recommended journals may include:

Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, Publisher: Routledge
European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling, Publisher: Routledge
Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy
Psychodynamic Practice, Publisher: Routledge

Recommended websites

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Research www.bacp.co.uk/research

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

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.

This Unit may be assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Outcomes. This could take the form of a report in the form of a critical analysis and evaluation of a published research paper which should cover the Evidence Requirements of all Outcomes.

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

This Unit has the Problem Solving component of Critical Thinking 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 6.

There may be opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills of *Communication*, *Working with Others* and *Numeracy*, *Problem Solving* and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* during the assessment of this Unit.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skill component of Critical Thinking at SCQF Level 6 embedded.	26/05/15

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General information for learners

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This Unit is designed to enhance your knowledge and understanding of the research process in counselling and the effect research has on practice. You will evaluate and critically analyse counselling research and demonstrate an awareness of the purpose and importance of research design choice. There are three Outcomes in this Unit.

- 1 Analyse the purpose of research in counselling practice.
- 2 Evaluate qualitative and quantitative methodologies in counselling research.
- 3 Critically analyse data produced by published, relevant research.

Outcome 1 covers the purpose and impact of counselling research on practice.

For Outcome 2 you will explain the key features and evaluate the relevance of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in counselling research.

Outcome 3 is designed to allow you to relate theory into practice by examining and critically evaluating published research material.

You will be asked to complete a report covering the Evidence Requirements for the three Outcomes.

There may be opportunities for you to develop the Core Skills of *Communication, Working with Others, Problem Solving* and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* during the assessment of this Unit.