



**Arrangements for:
HNC in Counselling**

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1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the revised Group Award in Counselling, which was validated in December 2006. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

2 Rationale for the revision of the Group Award

The HNC in Counselling is a revision of earlier versions and will replace those with the same title to reflect the changing needs of the counselling sector. The factors influencing the validation were:

- ◆ the need to update the content and structure of the award in light of current ways of working
- ◆ SQA's revision of all HNCs to meet the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
- ◆ the need to ensure that all SQA qualifications continue to meet the needs of stakeholders, including candidates, employers and centres
- ◆ the growing importance of Core Skills in all SQA Group Awards at National level

The award is designed to appeal not only to those whose primary role would be in a Counselling context or setting, but also to the wider Advice, Guidance, Health and Social Care sectors in that it could be accessed by those who required skills and competencies drawn from the counselling area eg community work, criminal justice, education, health services, voluntary organisations, social work and youth services.

Summary of changes

Under the new design principles, HNC Group Award qualifications will remain with 12 credits. All units included in the framework have been assigned a level within the SCQF. These Units have been rewritten in accordance with the revised Higher National Unit (HNU) specification. New optional Units imported from other Group Award areas have been written in the new format.

The revised award has been designed to meet training requirements for COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) or BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) accreditation and has recognised the importance of establishing a nationally recognised vocational qualification which takes account of national occupational standards. The qualification incorporates the knowledge, understanding and skills required for progression into employment or further study. It assigns a central role to the value base essential to professional practice. It recognises and responds to change in the provision of Counselling and provides a flexible framework to meet the changing needs of employment in the sector. The inclusion of an optional work experience Unit should enhance employability and offer colleges the option to meet the most recent BACP Student Membership criteria. It seeks to respond to accommodate and reflect changes in the provision of Counselling including the range and diversity of services and settings, the importance of contractual relationships and regulatory frameworks, and also the business and quality aspects of counselling.

Opportunities for Core Skills Development

The Core Skills recognised by SQA are at levels Access 2 to Higher in:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Working with Others
- ◆ Problem Solving
- ◆ Information Technology
- ◆ Numeracy

The Core Skills are not formally assessed in the HNC Counselling but there are opportunities to develop relevant elements of Core Skills in the context of the mandatory and optional Units.

Relationship to National Occupational Standards

The National Occupational Standards for Counselling and the associated SVQs were undergoing a process of revision during the review of the HNC. As a result, it was decided that it would not be appropriate to map the HN Units to the existing standards on the basis that these would become obsolete during or shortly after validation. Due cognizance has been taken of the emerging NOS as developed by the Standards Setting Body, ENTO, and the mandatory Units of the HNC have been signposted against the NOS.

3 Aims of the Group Award

All HNCs have broad aims that allow candidates to:

- ◆ develop transferable skills, including Core Skills
- ◆ develop personal effectiveness
- ◆ develop critical thinking skills
- ◆ progress within the SCQF framework and into Higher Education
- ◆ provide opportunities for career progression

3.1 General aims of the Group Award

The course is designed to enable candidates:

- 1 To provide an opportunity to gain a nationally-certificated qualification and advanced competencies to meet the needs of their clients.
- 2 To provide an opportunity for those who wish to undertake education and training to achieve recognised competencies to increase their employment opportunities.
- 3 To provide specific learning experiences to achieve competencies and to develop a supportive attitude to staff and clients.
- 4 To develop professional awareness
- 5 To enhance career development for the candidate.
- 6 To provide progression opportunities from relevant non advanced and advanced training courses.
- 7 To develop awareness, sensitivity and empathy to work with a wide range of clients.

3.2 Specific aims of the Group Award

The course is designed to enable candidates to:

- ◆ continue to provide an award for candidates working in the sector who wish to build on existing knowledge and/or experience
- ◆ enhance candidates' current effectiveness as counsellors
- ◆ encourage best practice
- ◆ understand the main theoretical concepts and approaches to counselling and develop a working knowledge of counselling ethics and boundaries
- ◆ explain and demonstrate the practice of skills using a relation-centered model of counselling
- ◆ demonstrate interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others
- ◆ explain and demonstrate personal learning and development within the course of the programme
- ◆ provide candidates with specific knowledge and skills in a number of specialist areas

3.3 Target groups

The HNC is aimed at those working in or seeking to work in a variety of counselling contexts. It may also be attractive to workers in the wider care, advice or guidance settings where counselling skills are becoming increasingly important. It is intended to provide training contextualised to the counselling environment within the public, voluntary and independent/private sectors.

The HNC is therefore aimed at the following key groups:

- ◆ existing holders of certificates in Counselling Skills or appropriate National Units plus significant voluntary/paid work experience
- ◆ holders of other relevant related qualifications (such as HNCs in Social Care, Health Care, Diploma in Social Work, Degree/Diploma in Nursing etc) who wish to develop their counselling skills in order to enhance their practice.
- ◆ holders of, or those working towards, the SVQ in Counselling at level 3 who wish to use the HNC to gain relevant underpinning knowledge and understanding
- ◆ existing staff and managers in Care settings dealing with clients with, for example, substance misuse problems, eating disorders, relationship problems

3.4 Employment opportunities

The HNC in Counselling is a stand alone award under the SQA framework of awards for equipping candidates with counselling knowledge and skills to access employment opportunities within the NHS or as employment advisors, voluntary sector counsellors, substance misuse support, alcohol misuse agencies and in schools, colleges and universities to help candidates with personal, social and academic problems.

4 Access to Group Award

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- ◆ holders of, or those working towards, the SVQ in Counselling at level 3 who wish to use the HNC to gain relevant underpinning knowledge and understanding
- ◆ existing staff and managers in Care settings dealing with clients with, for example, substance misuse problems, eating disorders, relationship problems

Selection procedures should be free from discriminatory practice and should promote equality of opportunity.

5 Group Award structure

The HNC in Counselling has a mandatory/optional structure and comprises Higher National Units to a credit value of 12. There are 7 mandatory credits and 5 optional credits.

Total credit value of award 12 credits, 96 SCQF credit points, of which a minimum of 6 Unit credits, ie 48 credit points, must be achieved at SCQF level 7. This award carries a minimum of 56 credit points at SCQF level 7 in its mandatory section.

5.1 Framework

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 1 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model	F1ER 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills Stage 2 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model	F1ES 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 3 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model	F1ET 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Humanistic Counselling Theory 1	F1EL 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Behavioural and Cognitive Counselling Theory	F1EE 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Graded Unit 1	F1M4 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Contemporary Behavioural and Cognitive Theory	F1EF 35	8	8	1
Counselling: Contemporary Humanistic Counselling Theory	F1EG 35	8	8	1
Counselling: Contemporary Psychodynamic Counselling Theory	F1EH 35	8	8	1
Counselling: Understanding Addictive Behaviours	F1EV 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Working with Addictive Behaviours	F1EW 35	8	8	1
Counselling: Working with Substance Misuse	F1EX 35	8	8	1
Counselling: Loss, Grief and Bereavement in a Counselling Context	F1EM 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Group Counselling Skills	F1EK 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Counselling Supervision	F1EJ 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Personal Development in a Counselling Skills Setting	F1EN 34	8	7	2
Developing Skills for Personal Effectiveness	DF4E 34	8	7	1
Counselling: Self Evaluation for Counsellors	H0C4 35	8	7	1

5.2 Mapping information

Opportunities to Develop Core Skills

Unit Title	Core Skills at Higher				
	Communication	Numeracy	Working with Others	Problem Solving	IT
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 1 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model					
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 2 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model					
Counselling: Relationship-Centred Counselling Skills: Stage 3 of the Three-Stage Integrative Model					
Counselling: Psychodynamic Counselling Theory					
Counselling: Humanistic Counselling Theory					
Counselling: Behavioural and Cognitive Counselling Theory					
Counselling: Personal Development in a Counselling Skills Setting					
Counselling Supervision					
Counselling: Contemporary Psychodynamic Counselling Theory					
Counselling: Contemporary Humanistic Counselling Theory					
Counselling: Contemporary Behavioural and Cognitive Theory					
Counselling: Loss, Grief and Bereavement in a Counselling Context					
Counselling: Group Counselling Skills					
Counselling: Working with Substance Misuse					
Counselling: Working with Addictive Behaviours					
Counselling: Understanding Addictive Behaviours					
Developing Skills for Personal Effectiveness*					
Counselling Graded Unit					

* The Core Skill of Problem Solving at Higher is embedded in this Unit

5.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

The National Occupational Standards upon which SVQs are based are currently under revision by ENTO, the Standards Setting Body. Progression to SVQs in Counselling at levels 3 or 4 is possible and the HNC will provide relevant underpinning knowledge for this. The HNC in Counselling has been designed to meet training requirements for COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) or BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) accreditation.

6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

There is a requirement that candidates undertake the relation-centred model Units in sequence, ie Stage 1, 2 and 3. Similarly the mandatory counselling theory Units should be completed before or in conjunction with the contemporary theory Units. The Graded Unit is best completed subsequent to the mandatory Units. There is no fixed mode of delivery for the HNC. The following is for guidance only:

Centres may choose to deliver the award in a variety of ways to best meet local need and demand from candidates and employers. This could include:

- ◆ full-time
- ◆ part-time/day release
- ◆ block release arrangements

Given the experiential and participatory nature of the award it is not well suited to delivery via Open Learning. Much of the award is best delivered in the context of group activities. While some aspects of the award could be delivered by Open or Distance learning careful consideration would have to be paid to ensuring the candidate is fully supported and to ensuring the validity of any evidence generated.

7 General information for centres

Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used within this/these Group Award(s) should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education* (www.sqa.org.uk).

8 General information for candidates

This course has been designed to meet the generic range of skills required of candidates beginning their development as counselling practitioners. The course is relevant to those already working in a counselling context or in a care advice or guidance context. It may also provide opportunities to acquire research skills and to build a portfolio to work towards professional accreditation as a counsellor.

The component Units of the award will also be of a more general interest to candidates for whom counseling is not the main focus of their daily work but who wish to gain generic counselling skills to use the course of their work.

9 Glossary of terms

SCQF: This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk

SCQF credit points: One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

SCQF levels: The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

Subject Unit: Subject Units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Graded Unit: Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

Dedicated Core Skill Unit: This is a Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills, eg HN Units in Information Technology or Communications.

Embedded Core Skills: This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

Signposted Core Skills: This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

Qualification Design Team: The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/D from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

Consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA.