



Group Award Specification for:

**Professional Development Award in Telephone and
Online Counselling at SCQF level 8**

Group Award Code: GT9L 48

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to:

- ◆ Assist centres to implement, deliver and manage the qualification.
- ◆ Provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification.
- ◆ Inform course managers teaching staff, assessors, learners, employers and higher education institutes (HEIs) of the aims and purpose of the qualification.
- ◆ Provide details of the range of learners the qualification is suitable for and progression opportunities.

Background

Due to the restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic there was an immediate need for counselling practitioners within all sectors of the profession to conduct counselling sessions online or via the telephone.

As a mitigating measure in terms of ensuring competence in these additional skills the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Open University (OU) developed a training course that would allow counsellors to continue to practice as safely as possible.

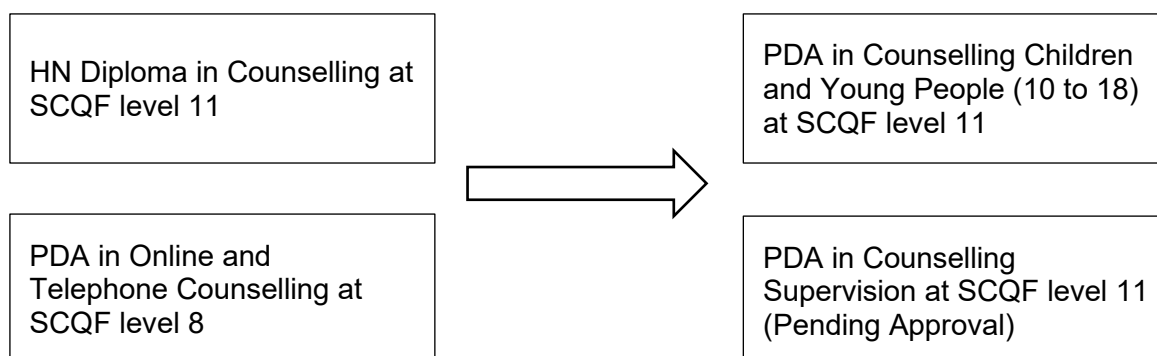
While that short course met the need for the short term, BACP and other professional bodies indicated that it would not be sufficient in the longer term.

All professional practitioners who wish to offer their services via blended formats (online/telephone and in-room) should now seek to complete a robust training course mapped to research-informed competency frameworks.

The SQA HN Units contained in this PDA, Online and Telephone Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards (SCQF level 8) and Online and Telephone Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice (SCQF level 8), were developed specifically to provide counselling trainees in placement and qualified professionals in practice with the training they need.

To ensure they meet the robust requirements of the professional body the units have been fully mapped to the BACP Online and Telephone Therapy (OPT) Competency Framework (2021) and the Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) Training Curriculum (2021).

The following table sets out the jointly awarded SQA and BACP Counselling Qualifications.



2. Qualification structure

This group award is made up of 2 mandatory SQA HN Unit credits. It comprises 16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8 thereby meeting the design principles for a PDA.

2.1 Structure

Mandatory units:

4 code	2 code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6FH	35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	1	8	8
J6FJ	35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	1	8	8

3. Aims of the qualification

The principal aim of this qualification is to ensure that counselling practitioners who wish to offer their services via blended formats (online/telephone and in-room) can access a robust training course that has been mapped to research-informed competency frameworks

3.1 General aims of the qualification

Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are aimed at developing the skills of those already in employment. They are principally designed for those already in a career or vocation who wish to extend or broaden their skills base.

PDAs aim to support learners to:

1. Develop transferable skills, including Core Skills.
2. Demonstrate interpersonal skills and the ability to work with others.
3. Develop personal effectiveness.
4. Develop critical thinking and skills.
5. Progress within the SCQF framework and where appropriate into further or higher education.
6. Provide opportunities for career progression.

3.2 Specific aims of the qualification

The PDA in Online and Telephone Counselling aims to develop learners' knowledge and skills in the following:

1. The nature, purpose and scope of blended therapy.
2. Ethical, professional and legal factors relevant to safe and competent practice.
3. Facilitation of OPT training sessions in different client-centred environments.
4. Demonstration of readiness to practice with clients.
5. Participation in supervised practice utilising learned online and telephone competences.
6. Ongoing evaluation of own learning and professional development.

4. Recommended entry to the qualification

The following information on prior knowledge, skills, experience, or qualifications that provide suitable preparation for this qualification has been provided as guidance.

This PDA is suitable for registered counselling practitioners who wish to work towards a nationally recognised qualification that will enable them to work remotely with adult clients utilising online video conferencing or by telephone.

The units are also appropriate for learners currently undertaking adult focused core counselling or psychotherapy training who wish to learn more about working in a remote counselling context with adult clients.

Entry is at the discretion of the centre; however, learners *must* have successfully completed or be working towards a core counselling qualification at SCQF level 8 or above, for example the HN Diploma in Counselling at SCQF level 8.

4.1 Core Skills entry profile

The Core Skill entry profile provides a summary of the associated assessment activities that exemplify why a particular level has been recommended for this qualification. The information would be used to identify if additional learning support needs to be put in place for learners whose Core Skills profile is below the recommended entry level or whether learners should be encouraged to do an alternative level or learning programme.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities
Communication	6	Higher level communication skills are an intrinsic part of the qualification.
Numeracy	6	Planning/scheduling/contracting/monitoring timescales in relation to client work and course submission.
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	6	Use of video conferencing and telephone apps in different client-centred environments.
Problem Solving	6	Client work, signposting and resolving issues.
Working with Others	6	Peer group-work, presentations and self-evaluation activities. Working to ensure effective counselling supervision.

5. Additional benefits of the qualification in meeting employer needs

This qualification was designed to meet a specific purpose and what follows are details on how that purpose has been met through mapping of the units to the aims of the qualification. Through meeting the aims, additional value has been achieved by linking the unit standards with those defined in national occupational standards and/or trade/professional body requirements. In addition, significant opportunities exist for learners to develop the more generic skill, known as Core Skills through doing this qualification.

5.1 Mapping of qualification aims to units

General aims:

Code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X

Specific aims:

Code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	X	X	X	X		X
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	X	X	X		X	X

5.2 Mapping of professional body standards

The units contained within this PDA have been fully mapped to the BACP Online and Telephone Therapy (OPT) Competency Framework (2021) and the Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) Training Curriculum (2021).

The BACP Approved Qualification criteria mapping document for practitioner training and Online & Phone Therapy (OPT) ensures that the units not only meet the requirements of the OPT framework and curriculum but are congruent with the requirements set out in the professional qualification, the HN Diploma in Counselling.

Core qualification requirements	OPT additional requirements
Offer an in-depth course offering professional practitioner training. There must be a minimum of 400 hours of direct teaching or instruction time.	A maximum of 30% of the total teaching contact time can be delivered online. Only synchronous, 'live' online teaching can be counted towards the minimum 400 hours of direct teaching or instruction time.
Include a minimum of 100 hours of supervised practice exclusive of missed sessions.	The majority of the overall supervised practice hours must be conducted face-to-face with clients. The remainder can be a combination of online-video and phone, or online-video only.
Ensure that all course staff must be appropriately qualified and demonstrate competence between them to cover all elements of the course.	<p>Course staff must have knowledge and experience in working with clients online and over the phone and be competent in delivering experiential learning online.</p> <p>Course providers may bring in specific expertise to teach elements of the OPT training where there are gaps in knowledge within the teaching team. Centres are responsible for assessing students' competence for OPT working throughout the course.</p>
Ensure that all training staff for the course are familiar with and agree to work within the current BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (Ethical Framework).	This must include familiarity with the application of the Ethical Framework in remote working, for example online 'netiquette', appropriate social networking behaviours and managing own digital footprint.

Core qualification requirements	OPT additional requirements
Have a qualification specification, learning outcomes and assessment criteria that include the requirements for a clear rationale and philosophy that underpins the whole programme which are relevant for face-to-face and OPT working and by which students can account for their practice.	Centres must provide evidence that students are assessed against clear and specific criteria as being competent to practice with real clients both face-to-face and remotely. (Note for assessment of OPT competence, centres should refer to the core learning outcomes in OPT training curriculum).
Have lecturer and student guidance documents	including for data protection, placements and for teaching remotely.
	<p>Ensure that centres have a policy for online teaching that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Student attendance (for example fully present with cameras on). ◆ Student 'netiquette' (for example not engaging in 'private' text-based communication with other group members during taught sessions, mics on mute when not speaking, etcetera.)
Have a selection process that ensures successful applicants have or have the potential to have:	Adequate private space and IT equipment to take part in online taught sessions and/or carry out remote placement hours if applicable.
Encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and monitor and evaluate their progress and development by providing opportunities for analysis, reflection, and feedback on how the overall counselling process develops over time	in both face-to-face (in-room) and remote practice.
Demonstrate an assessment process which includes regular, ongoing constructive feedback through which students are helped to identify and build upon their strengths and which takes a developmental approach to their difficulties.	Students must be fully apprised of the assessment requirements and be aware of the requirements for face-to-face (in-room) and remote placement hours at the start of the qualification.
Ensure students demonstrate coherent use of skills and interventions consistent with their theoretical model	and their adaptation for working remotely and face-to-face (in-room).

Core qualification requirements	OPT additional requirements
	The centre must demonstrate that students are taught in all elements included within Option 1: Core OPT training within the OPT curriculum.
Ensure students are able to work within professional, legal, and ethical frameworks.	This must include the application of the Ethical Framework in remote working, for example online 'netiquette', appropriate social networking behaviours and managing own digital footprint.
Ensure students make risk assessments regarding client's and others' safety, and comply with safeguarding guidance, appropriate to the practice setting	and mode of delivery (for example face-to-face (in-room), online, phone).
Ensure session arrangements and physical/remote settings are safe, secure, and appropriate.	Recognise the differences/impact on the relationship of remote working.
Ensure students have regular and sufficient contracted clinical supervision in line with the requirements of the Ethical Framework. A mix of individual and group supervision is strongly recommended.	Where students are undertaking remote placement hours, the supervisor should be experienced and competent in OPT. The mode of supervision must be the same as the client work, therefore, a mix of face-to-face and OPT supervision is required.

Core qualification requirements	OPT additional requirements
<p>Ensure that students complete their supervised client work safely and ethically by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assessing students individually for their readiness to work with clients. ◆ Ensuring students' practice is congruent with the theoretical model. ◆ Ensuring students tell their clients that they are a counsellor in training and not yet qualified. ◆ Ensuring students record client work in a professional log which acts as evidence of competence to practice. (Client confidentiality must be maintained in the log). ◆ Facilitating a Supervised Placement Agreement between centre, placement, supervisor, and student. ◆ Ensuring placements are assessed as suitable and monitored. ◆ Ensure that the majority of the supervised placement hours are carried out face-to-face (in-room). 	<p>This must include an assessment of readiness to begin work with clients both face-to-face (in-room) and remotely.</p> <p>Ensuring that clients are assessed for their suitability to work with trainees and for their suitability to work remotely.</p> <p>Due to the particular legislative, insurance and safeguarding considerations for international practice students should only work with UK based clients</p> <p>Ensure that on adult focused courses, OPT placement hours can only be carried out with adults, not with children and young people (under 16 years old).</p> <p>The remainder can be a combination of online-video and phone <i>or</i> online-video only. Text-based, asynchronous online practice is not allowed.</p> <p>Ensure that an explicit written agreement/contract exists between the students, the placement provider and the course provider which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Where OPT sessions will be conducted with a clear policy for homeworking if relevant. ◆ How students can debrief after OPT sessions and/or where to take concerns about their remote client work. ◆ The placement procedure for when the technology fails during an OPT client session. <p>Information about additional support services and onward referral pathways that students can share with OPT clients when required.</p>

5.3 Mapping of Core Skills development opportunities across the qualification

Communication

Unit code	Unit title	Written (Reading)	Written (Writing)	Oral
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit

Numeracy

Unit code	Unit title	Using Number	Using Graphical Information
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Not applicable	Developed within the unit
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Unit code	Unit title	Accessing Information	Providing/Creating Information
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit

Problem Solving

Unit code	Unit title	Critical Thinking	Planning and Organising	Reviewing and Evaluating
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Embedded within the unit	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Embedded within the unit	Developed within the unit	Developed within the unit

Working with Others

Unit code	Unit title	Working Co-operatively with Others	Reviewing Co-operative Contribution
J6FH 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Embedded within the unit	Embedded within the unit
J6FJ 35	Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Embedded within the unit	Embedded within the unit

5.4 Assessment strategy for the qualification

The PDA requires candidates to complete a readiness for practice assessment. While this assessment is valid for counselling trainees, registered counselling professionals may have already demonstrated that they are competent to work with clients in a therapeutic relationship. Centres may evidence this by collecting proof of their registered status with BACP or alternative professional counselling body. As membership is renewed on an annual basis, each registered member can access an updated registration certificate and covering letter from their members page via the BACP website/ or alternative professional counselling body.

Refer to individual unit specifications as these set out detailed assessment requirements.

For J6FH 35 there should be regular ongoing assessment of learners' skills practice to evaluate their competence in integrating ethical practice into their way of working in relation to the ethical framework/code of practice to which they are affiliated.

It is recommended that the delivering centre (and where appropriate, the learner) retains the evidence gathered for this unit as it will contribute to the assessment of the unit Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice (SCQF level 8). Evidence for outcomes 1 and 2 could be generated through a summative open book integrated assignment.

Unit	Assessment: Outcome 1	Assessment: Outcome 2	Assessment: Outcome 3	Assessment: Outcome 4
J6FH 35: Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards	Assignment, case study and research.	Assignment, case study and research.	Skills observation and feedback.	Reflective account.

J6FJ 35 is designed to allow the learner to evidence their readiness to practice, then the time and opportunity to achieve 30 hours of remote counselling practice, which must be supervised in line with BACP requirements. This currently stands at a minimum of 1.5 hours per month and is a requirement for access to the BACP professional register. A reflective professional journal must be maintained by the learner throughout placement.

Counselling practitioners of OTP counselling may have accumulated a number of hours of remote counselling practice and may present this as part of their reflect journal as evidence towards the achievement of 30 hours of remote practice.

Unit	Assessment: Outcome 1	Assessment: Outcome 2	Assessment: Outcome 3	Assessment: Outcome 4
J6FJ 35: Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice	Readiness to Practice Interview checklist, Reflective account.	Reflective journal, Supervisor witness statement.	Reflective journal.	Not applicable.

6. Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

The aim of this PDA is to develop learners' knowledge of the ethical and professional standards and possible issues that are pertinent to working remotely using a range of technologies and media platforms.

Learners will develop their abilities in competently adapting their current therapeutic and communication skills to work in a variety of remote adult counselling contexts.

The following topics will be covered throughout the qualification. Please refer to the unit specifications for expanded guidance.

- ◆ OPT and media technology.
- ◆ The scope of OPT working.
- ◆ Ethical and professional practice
- ◆ Confidentiality and data protection.
- ◆ Facilitation of OPT sessions.
- ◆ Risk.
- ◆ Equality, diversity and inclusion and working with difference.
- ◆ Communication and therapeutic skills.
- ◆ Working with psychological processes.
- ◆ Self-care.
- ◆ Supervision.

Centre staff who provide OPT training need to ensure they are working within their competence (See BACP's Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018), Good Practice; Working to professional standards, point 13.)

It is strongly advised that lecturers refer to the BACP Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) competences before embarking on each subject area.

In addition, the teaching team must be counselling practitioners with current or recent experience of providing both face-to-face (in-the-room) counselling and OPT. Lecturers will be experienced and competent with these modes of working. They must also be competent in delivering experiential learning online.

Centres may bring in specific expertise to teach different elements of the OPT training where there are gaps in knowledge within the teaching team. Centres are responsible for assessing students' competence for OPT working throughout the course and before beginning OPT practice.

It is expected that this curriculum will include a wide range of teaching styles, which can include synchronistic live online delivery and as much remote practical/experiential skills practice as possible.

The delivery of this curriculum should be underpinned by adult learning theories which use experiential and reflective learning approaches (for example Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984); The Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988); ALACT (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2010).

In the interest of ethical experiential skills practice and reflective training, it is important that the sessions are delivered in a time frame that allows for processing of knowledge and to allow the experience of practice to complement the learning. However, course timings can be adapted to suit the training provider.

Although this curriculum follows humanistic/relational principles there should be an emphasis throughout the delivery of this training on applying or adapting participants' own therapeutic approaches. There is no intention within the training to favour any theoretical perspective.

Course participants must ensure a minimum of 80% attendance; 100% of the subject areas and course assessments must be successfully completed. Therefore, any sessions missed must be completed by the learner accordingly. Delivering centres will facilitate learners to complete all required sessions.

6.1 Sequencing/integration of units

The units must be delivered in the order presented. Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards provides the essential knowledge and underpinning competencies that students require to complete their Readiness to Practice assessment and progress on to working with clients in the unit Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice.

Whilst flexible in terms of structural delivery, there is no flexibility in terms of evidencing the outcomes as these are mapped onto and underpinned by BACP's evidenced informed Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) competency framework.

When the PDA units are delivered as part of the Higher National Diploma in Counselling there is scope to integrate unit content with other relevant and appropriate HN Counselling Units, for example teaching can be integrated within mandatory units Counselling: Values and Principles for Practice, Counselling: Professional Standards, and Counselling: Supervised Practice. Clear records of delivery and assessment for the integrated units must be developed for quality assurance purposes.

6.2 Recognition of prior learning

SQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

In some instances, a full group award may be achieved through the recognition of prior learning. However, it is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full group award.

The recognition of prior learning may **not** be used as a method of assessing in the following types of units and assessments:

- ◆ HN Graded Units.
- ◆ Course and/or external assessments.
- ◆ Other integrative assessment units (which may or not be graded).
- ◆ Certain types of assessment instruments where the standard may be compromised by not using the same assessment method outlined in the unit.
- ◆ Where there is an existing requirement for a licence to practice.
- ◆ Where there are specific health and safety requirements.
- ◆ Where there are regulatory, professional or other statutory requirements.
- ◆ Where otherwise specified in an assessment strategy.

More information and guidance on the *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) may be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk.

The following sub-sections outline how existing SQA units may contribute to this group award. Additionally, they also outline how this group award may be recognised for professional and articulation purposes.

6.3 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.

6.4 Support materials

There are currently no ASPs for these units.

A pro forma checklist for use in a Readiness to Practice assessment is available to download from the Counselling HND page of the SQA website.

A pro forma Placement Contract is also available to download from the SQA Counselling HND webpage.

6.5 Resource requirements

Centre staff who provide OPT need to ensure they are working within their competence (See BACP's Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018), Good Practice; Working to professional standards, point 13.)

It is strongly advised that lecturers refer to the BACP Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) competences before embarking on each subject area.

In addition, the teaching team will be counselling practitioners with current or recent experience of providing both face-to-face (in-the-room) counselling and OPT. Lecturers will be experienced and competent with these modes of working. They must also be competent in delivering experiential learning online.

Centres may bring in specific expertise to teach different elements of the OPT training where there are gaps in knowledge within the teaching team. Centres are responsible for assessing students' competence for OPT working throughout the course and before beginning OPT practice.

The centre must have OPT appropriate data protection policies and procedures and students will need a private space to attend online training sessions.

For online teaching delivery:

- ◆ The centre must have the appropriate technology, software, and IT support for online teaching delivery to take place without unnecessary interruption.
- ◆ There must be adequate data security in place.

The centre must have a policy for online teaching that includes:

- ◆ Learner attendance (for example fully present with camera on, mute/unmute microphones, etcetera).
- ◆ Learner 'netiquette' (for example not engaging in private text-based communication with peers during taught sessions, microphone on mute, etcetera).
- ◆ The centre must have a procedure in place for learners to extend the training period to complete the required practice hours:
 - The centre must indicate clearly under what circumstances an extension is permitted and,
 - over what time period this is allowed and,
 - how learners are being supported during that period.
- ◆ The centre will have clear written and published procedures for practice placements.
- ◆ The centre must demonstrate how it approves its placement providers as appropriate for the course.
- ◆ There must be an explicit written agreement/contract between learners, the placement provider, and the centre, which is available to all. This must include:
 - A description of the course including its rationale and philosophy, procedures and resources and the requirements of learners for client work and assessment, for example supervisor reports, electronic media recording.
 - A confirmation from the placement provider that its aims, orientation, and philosophy are congruent with that of the course.

Details of where accountability lies for:

- The client work.
 - Reporting relationships.
 - supervision arrangements.
 - Limits of confidentiality.
 - Complaint's procedures.
 - Health and safety issues.
- ◆ A contract between the centre and placement provider that details the requirements for reports on learners, reciprocal feedback, meetings, etcetera.
 - ◆ Details of the placement providers' professional practice such as the initial assessment of clients, methods of referral to students, note taking/record keeping requirements.
 - ◆ Details of the type and range of client work undertaken by the placement provider, the kinds of client work contracts offered and any limits upon these in relation to learner experience or other factors.
 - ◆ Details of how clients are assessed for suitability to work with trainees.

7. General information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The unit specifications making up this group award have been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners will 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.

Internal and external verification

All assessments used within these qualifications 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* (www.sqa.org.uk/GuideToAssessment).

8. Glossary of terms

Embedded Core Skills is where the assessment evidence for the unit also includes full evidence for complete Core Skill or Core Skill components. A learner successfully completing the unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill. (This depends on the unit having been successfully audited and validated for Core Skills certification.)

Finish date: The end of a group award's lapsing period is known as the finish date. After the finish date, the group award will no longer be live and the following applies:

- ◆ candidates may not be entered for the group award.
- ◆ the group award will continue to exist only as an archive record on the Awards Processing System (APS).

Lapsing date: When a group award is entered into its lapsing period, the following will apply:

- ◆ the group award will be deleted from the relevant catalogue.
- ◆ the group award specification will remain until the qualification reaches its finish date at which point it will be removed from SQA's website and archived.
- ◆ no new centres may be approved to offer the group award.
- ◆ centres should only enter candidates whom they expect to complete the group award during the defined lapsing period.

SQA credit value: The credit value allocated to a unit gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to an SQA group award. An SQA credit value of 1 given to an SQA unit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment.

SCQF: The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) provides the national common framework for describing all relevant programmes of learning and qualifications in Scotland. SCQF terminology is used 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: SCQF credit points provide a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that is required to complete a qualification at a given level of the Framework. One National Unit credit is equivalent to 6 SCQF credit points. One National Unit credit at Advanced Higher and one Higher National Unit credit (irrespective of level) is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels: The level a qualification is assigned within the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HNCs and HNDs are available at SCQF levels 7 and 8 respectively. Higher National Units will normally be at levels 6–9 and graded units will be at level 7 and 8. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2–6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

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

Signposted Core Skills: Refers to opportunities to develop Core Skills arise in learning and teaching but are not automatically certificated.

History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below. Centres are advised to check SQA's APS Navigator to confirm they are using the up-to-date qualification structure.

NOTE: Where a unit is revised by another unit:

- ◆ No new centres may be approved to offer the unit which has been revised.
- ◆ Centres should only enter candidates for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

Version number	Description	Date
02	Clarity added to section 5.4 'Assessment strategy for the qualification' for evidence required for registered counselling professionals.	13/5/34

Acknowledgement

SQA would like to acknowledge the valuable input from the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) in the development of this qualification.

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9. General information for learners

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

Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are usually designed for those already in a career or vocation who wish to extend, broaden or enhance their skills. However, sometimes they are designed for those wishing to enter employment and so can be delivered in a variety of settings. PDAs assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills. They may also be embedded within another qualification such as an HNC/HND.

The PDA in Online and Telephone Counselling at SCQF level 8 is jointly awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

This PDA is suitable for registered counselling practitioners who wish to achieve a nationally recognised qualification that will enable them to confidently work with adult clients utilising online video conferencing or the telephone.

The two units are also appropriate for learners currently undertaking adult focused core counselling or psychotherapy training (for example the HN Diploma in Counselling), who wish to learn about working remotely with adult clients.

The content of the units is fully mapped to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018) and the BACP's Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) competency framework (2021) and BACP Online and Phone Therapy (OPT) training curriculum (2021).

Entry to this unit is always at the discretion of the delivering centre who will provide further information on entry requirements to prospective learners upon request.

Course participants must ensure a minimum of 80% attendance and all outcomes must be completed.

There are two units in the PDA. The first is Telephone and Online Counselling: Ethics and Professional Standards. This unit is designed to develop your knowledge of the ethics and professional standards that underpin the essential skills, principles and competences that are required to begin working remotely with adult clients. It must be completed prior to undertaking the second unit Telephone and Online Counselling: Safe and Competent Practice.

This practice based unit is designed to enable you to link the competencies taught in the first unit with your practice in a supervised placement.

Completion of this unit will ensure that you complete a mandatory 30 hours of supervised remote counselling with a minimum of 1.5 hours of clinical supervision per month in accordance with BACP Ethical Framework requirements.