



August 2021

# Subject guidance for internally assessed qualifications in 2021-22

Please read this document in conjunction with guidance for the assessment of internally assessed qualifications issued to centres in August 2021.

<b>Group Award title:</b>	HND in Counselling
<b>Group Award code:</b>	GM4H 16

## Introduction

This subject-specific guidance has been produced to assist centres to continue delivery of the HN Diploma in Counselling and to find ways to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. Due to current restrictions on workplaces and movement of people, we recognise the need for flexible approaches to direct client work and the assessment of learners.

It focuses on supporting achievement of the HND in Counselling while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

## 1 Context and issues — updated

The HND Counselling is jointly certificated by SQA and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). BACP has also published guidance on its website, which you will find useful. Further information on updated BACP guidance can be found in section 3.

We are very grateful for the contributions and cooperation of our college colleagues during this time which has helped us to identify the challenges being faced by centres and trainee counsellors. It is clear that centres delivering the Diploma face similar issues on how and what can be delivered to new and existing students.

General issues identified:

- ◆ methods of remote teaching and tutor competence/confidence to do so
- ◆ course and assessment planning and timetabling — with particular consideration given to delivering units involving placement/client work
- ◆ access to college facilities
- ◆ health and safety requirements — both general (ie college-wide) and specific to the qualification
- ◆ compliance with government guidelines

The general guidance issued by SQA in August 2021 covers much of the above.

Specific issues:

- ◆ logistics of remote teaching
- ◆ availability of appropriate placements and therefore opportunities for learners to complete the required mandatory number of practice hours
- ◆ access to clinical supervision
- ◆ ensuring student basic competence in online and/or telephone counselling

The most challenging issue continues to be access to direct counselling work with clients. Currently, face-to-face, in-room counselling with a client is severely restricted. Alternative approaches include the following:

- ◆ telephone counselling
- ◆ online counselling

SQA is developing new units to cover the specific skills required for these models. These units will be aligned to BACP competences which are currently under review.

In addition, BACP has published guidance on the delivery of both teaching and direct counselling using telephone and online technology. (See section 3.)

This guidance can be found on the BACP website and on SQA's HND Counselling webpage.

## **2 Guidance on delivery — updated**

We recognise that the learning environment and social landscape remains very challenging with more remote and blended learning approaches and significantly less opportunity for face-to-face delivery and assessment. Learners should, wherever possible, continue to engage in learning, teaching, and gathering evidence. In some circumstances, learners may be able to continue to practice within safe work settings and have opportunities to gather evidence for assessment. However, we appreciate that many will not have access to work with clients at this time.

This has a direct impact on the HND Counselling as client work is at the heart of counselling training.

Centres should consider alternative models of delivery, which may include:

- ◆ Remote delivery for lectures, triad work and one-to-one teaching. There are several platforms and applications available to facilitate this, many already in use. While classroom-based delivery is the traditional option, we acknowledge that this is extremely difficult at this time and centres have to rely on remote teaching for a significant percentage of teaching time.  
BACP have provided a Train the Trainer online resource to support lecturers who may not yet feel fully confident with these delivery modes.
- ◆ The delivery of theory, underpinning knowledge and understanding and self-directed learning (eg research and report writing) elements within units should continue to be possible.
- ◆ Group (triad) work and individual assessment may be possible using online applications and/or professional discussions.  
These are examples and other methods may also be appropriate. Please contact us to discuss if applicable.
- ◆ Deferring face-to-face in-room counselling practice with clients until later in the session, when restrictions on access to workplaces and placements may be eased.
- ◆ Exploring options to allow extensions to the courses, perhaps into the next session if required.

**Completion of Unit HL9K 35, Counselling: Supervised Practice, mandatory hours working directly with clients and access to the Certificate of Proficiency (Unit HN75 35) — updated**

To achieve the Diploma and be eligible for registration with BACP, all learners must complete 100 hours of appropriately supervised counselling practice with clients. These hours are embedded in the Supervised Practice Unit.

70 practice hours from the 100 are required for access to the Certificate of Proficiency Assessment (HN75 35).

The remaining 30 hours practice and therefore the unit may be completed after the CoP is completed successfully.

**Please note:** the overall mandatory requirement for 100 practice hours to complete the qualification remains unchanged.

The following methods may be used for counselling clients where in-room therapy is not possible:

- ◆ telephone counselling with clients: this model of counselling practice requires additional training in specific skills (such as working with silence).
- ◆ Use of online counselling: ie 'face-to-face' using an appropriate application.

These require specific skills that the new unit(s) will cover.

Please refer to the BACP published guidance for advice on the basic competences required to use these methods.

While both SQA and BACP accept that this may be a key source of working with clients for the remainder of the 2021–22 session, it is not a permanent substitute for in-room, face-to-face client contact, which remains the focus of the Diploma.

### **Delivery of underpinning theory, knowledge and understanding**

The following units must be completed prior to any placement/practice with clients. As these are theoretical in nature, it is possible to continue delivery via remote/blended teaching.

- ◆ Counselling: Supervised Practice H9LK 35 (Outcomes 1–3)
- ◆ Counselling: Professional Standards HL9J 35 (Outcomes 1–3)
- ◆ Counselling: Psychopathology for Counsellors HL9P 35
- ◆ Counselling: Values and Principles of Practice HL9R 35

Please refer to the SQA document *Supporting the delivery and assessment of HNVQ units* for generic advice on combining assessment and maximising assessment opportunities.

For example, within the HND, delivery and assessment of the practical components of the following units may be combined:

- ◆ Counselling: Professional Standards HL9J 35 (Outcome 4)
- ◆ Counselling: Supervised Practice H9LK 35 (Outcomes 4 and 5)

Centres are encouraged to investigate opportunities for combined assessment within this qualification and utilise the free Prior Verification of Assessment Instruments service.

### **Clinical supervision — updated**

This is an essential feature of all counselling practice and applies to trainee counsellors as well as qualified counsellors. A minimum of 1.5 hours per month is required in line with BACP ethical framework requirements.

This may be conducted by any appropriate and valid method.

### **3 BACP additional guidance — updated**

SQA's awarding partner, the BACP, continues to offer additional support and guidance on the safe delivery and assessment of the HND during the current restrictions. SQA fully endorses this guidance to maintain professional standards during training.

The support and guidance provided covers online delivery of the course, student placements (including the use of telephone and online working as interim arrangements) and any related insurance or legislative issues.

Full details can be found on the BACP website. SQA strongly recommends that centres and counselling students regularly refer to the BACP website for current and future updates.

SQA will continue to publish updated subject specific guidance as it becomes available on the HND Counselling webpage.

If you have any questions, please contact [qualification.development@sqa.org.uk](mailto:qualification.development@sqa.org.uk).