

Next Gen: HN unit specification

Aromatherapy (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J7DQ 47

SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: August 2026

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit helps learners to develop their knowledge, skills and practical experience to use essential oils, carrier oils and appropriate application methods for individual client's health concerns and conditions.

Learners research essential oils and carrier oils, to understand:

- their origins and geographical sources
- historical and traditional uses
- extraction methods
- chemical constituents
- energetic properties
- therapeutic effects
- indications and contra-indications
- pharmacology
- how they act on the body (pharmacodynamics)
- how the body absorbs, metabolises and eliminates them (pharmacokinetics)

Learners apply this knowledge through effective communication and consultation, using appropriate treatment techniques to identify individual client's needs. They plan, devise and deliver bespoke treatments, selecting suitable oils and application methods through analytical and creative thinking. Learners monitor client progress and evaluate treatment outcomes over time.

Practical learning focuses on producing tailored treatment blends and natural products using essential oils in carrier oils, creams, lotions, gels and balms for an individual client's condition. Learners also demonstrate their use to the client for home care purposes. Treatment applications include full body massage (back, neck, shoulders, legs, arms, abdomen, chest, face and scalp), warm and cold compresses, dry and steam inhalations and topical preparations.

Throughout the unit, learners develop an understanding of professional, legal and safety requirements. This includes current government requirements for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

(COSHH), risk assessment for essential oils, and labelling regulations in relation to products dispensed.

The unit is suitable for learners studying complementary therapies, holistic therapies or integrative healthcare. It is primarily intended for learners who want to take up a career or study further in complementary, holistic, or integrated healthcare practice, but it is also suitable for those who wish to expand their existing knowledge and skills in wellness, spa or beauty therapies.

This unit is mandatory in HNC Complementary Health at SCQF level 7, or you can deliver it as a stand-alone unit.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have, or are working to complete, one or more of the following units, or equivalent:

- Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (SCQF level 7)
- Signature Body Massage Treatments (SCQF level 7)
- The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health (SCQF level 7)
- Research Skills (SCQF level 7)

On completion of the unit, learners may progress to additional advanced studies in aromatherapy or pursue a career in the complementary or holistic therapy industry.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. research and describe the use and application of essential oils, carrier oils and topical base products used in aromatherapy
2. research and describe current practices in aromatherapy
3. plan and prepare for aromatherapy treatments
4. perform aromatherapy treatments
5. evaluate the effectiveness of aromatherapy treatments

Evidence requirements

Research and describe the use and application of essential oils, carrier oils and topical base products used in aromatherapy (outcome 1)

Learners research and present their findings as an open book report.

For essential oils, learners must:

- create a research profile on the following 20 essential oils:
 - *Boswellia carteri*, *Cananga odorata*, *Chamaemelum nobile*, *Citrus aurantium flos*, *Citrus bergamia*, *Cupressus sempervirens*, *Cymbopogon citratus*, *Eucalyptus globulus*, *Jasminum officinale*, *Juniperus communis*, *Lavandula angustifolia*, *Melissa officinalis*, *Ocimum basilicum*, *Origanum majorana*, *Pelargonium graveolens*, *Piper nigrum*, *Rosa damascena*, *Salvia rosmarinus*, *Salvia sclarea*, *Santalum album*.
- identify for each essential oil profile:
 - common name and botanical name (genus, species)
 - botanical family
 - plant part or parts used for oils extraction

- origin (where plant is native to) and geographical locations (where plant is grown for oil production)
- historical and traditional uses
- extraction methods
- chemical constituents
- volatility note (top, middle or base)
- energetics
- general therapeutic properties and effects
- indications for use
- contra-indications for oil use

Learners must describe:

- the basic chemistry of essential oils
- effects of essential oils on the body, including the absorption, metabolic and excretory pathways
- topical products used in aromatherapy
- the basic chemical constituents in essential oils
 - esters
 - ketones
 - alcohols
 - phenols
 - terpenes
 - aldehydes
- the pharmacology of essential oils:
 - how essential oils enter the body
 - pharmacodynamic effects of the essential oil on the body
 - pharmacokinetic effects of the body on the essential oil
- the safe use of essential oils, including:
 - dose
 - percentage of blend to carrier

- frequency of treatment
- method of use
- individual client characteristics
- chemical constituents

For carrier oils, learners must:

- create a research profile on the following seven carrier oils:
 - *Calendula officinalis*, *Oenothera biennis*, *Persea gratissima*, *Prunus armeniaca*, *Simmondsia chinensis*, *Triticum vulgare*, *Vitis vinifera*
- identify for each carrier oil profile:
 - common name and botanical name (genus species)
 - botanical family
 - plant part used for oils extraction
 - origin (where plant is native to) and geographical locations (where plant is grown for oil production)
 - historical or traditional use
 - extraction methods
 - constituents
 - energetic therapeutic properties and effects
 - indications for use
 - contra-indications for use

Learners must describe:

- the benefits of the use of carrier oils in aromatherapy for topical applications
- the composition and benefits of products used in aromatherapy treatments, including:
 - creams
 - lotions
 - gels
 - balms

Research and describe current practices in aromatherapy (outcome 2)

Learners research and present their findings as an open-book report. Learners must research:

- methods of treatment application, including massage, inhalations, compresses, topical applications
- massage techniques for aromatherapy, including:
 - effleurage
 - petrissage
 - pressure points
 - sinus drainage
 - lymphatic drainage
- physical, physiological, and psychological benefits and effects of aromatherapy treatments, including massage, inhalation and compresses on the systems of the body
- the following conditions that may prohibit treatment, and give reasons why:
 - contagious skin diseases
 - dysfunction of the nervous system
 - recent scar tissue
 - undiagnosed lumps and swellings
 - uncontrolled diabetes
 - epilepsy
 - uncontrolled high or low blood pressure
 - pregnancy up to 12 weeks
- the following conditions that restrict treatment, and suggest necessary adaptations:
 - undergoing medical treatment
 - diabetes
 - epilepsy

- high blood pressure
 - low blood pressure
 - history of thrombosis or embolism
 - during cancer treatment
 - pregnancy after 12 weeks
 - medication
 - piercings
 - cuts and abrasions
- contra-actions and reactions, during and after aromatherapy treatment, including allergic reaction, sensitisation, irritation, toxicity and phototoxic reactions, erythema, hyperaemia
 - allergy testing for adverse reactions (skin or patch testing)
 - management and support of common health concerns and conditions, such as stress-related symptoms, menopause symptoms, minor non-contagious skin conditions, muscle and joint pain, muscle strains
 - holistic treatment planning procedure for individual client needs
 - the importance of gaining consent to meet government legislation and professional guidelines
 - professional communication protocols for the liaison with healthcare practitioners
 - lifestyle advice
 - labelling regulation requirements
 - current health and safety regulations, including essential and carrier oil safety data such as COSHH risk assessment and GDPR requirements

Learners who are in the process of completing the SCQF level 7 units The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health, Reflexology, Signature Body Massage Treatments, Traditional Head Massage or equivalent, may be able to cross reference relevant evidence that meet the criteria for outcome 2 of this unit. Learners carrying out this unit as a stand-alone unit must complete all assessments relating to this outcome.

Plan and prepare for aromatherapy treatments (outcome 3)

Learners must demonstrate:

- treatment room preparation
- physical, psychological and emotional preparation for the therapist
- preparing the client, following legislation and standards
- appropriate communication skills
- consultation techniques and case history taking
- gaining consent
- client confidentiality procedures that comply with GDPR requirements
- appropriate liaison with healthcare practitioners where required
- treatment planning

Perform aromatherapy treatments (outcome 4)

Learners must show that they can:

- select appropriate essential and carrier oils and use blending techniques
- perform practical applications, including:
 - massage techniques
 - compress methods
 - inhalation methods
 - topical application of bespoke blended creams, lotions, oil blends
- make adaptations to treatment plan where required
- make relevant observations during treatment
- carry out post-treatment client care
- advise client appropriately on:
 - contra-actions to treatment
 - aftercare advice
 - bespoke home care advice and recommendations
- carry out the treatment within a commercially viable time

Evaluate the effectiveness of aromatherapy treatments (outcome 5)

Learners demonstrate evaluation methods by:

- effectively gathering and using client, mentor and/or assessor's feedback
- use of ongoing, reflective evaluation skills techniques
- use of evaluation to make recommendations that support and promote client wellbeing
- use of evaluation to support continuing, professional practice needs where appropriate

Outcomes 3, 4 and 5

All treatments must be observed and carried out in the assessment environment.

You must complete an assessor observation checklist to record learners' performance, that is supported by completed treatment log entries and professional discussion notes.

The rationale for the treatment plan, including the choice of oils and application method, should be evident in the learner's treatment log, and can be supported by professional discussion.

You must assess two case studies where learners perform a minimum of three aromatherapy massage techniques for each client. Each client should present with different treatment aims, for example for help with the management of stress-related symptoms, menopause symptoms, minor non-contagious skin conditions, muscle and joint pain, or muscle strains.

Learners should demonstrate all aspects of aromatherapy massage in the case studies, to include back, shoulders, neck, back of legs, front of legs, abdomen, arms, chest, face, ears and scalp, using aromatherapy massage techniques to comply with your centre's instruction and the client's individual requirements.

Learners should demonstrate the use of a compress and inhalation in addition to the massage treatment, if appropriate to the case study client. You can observe their use

of a compress and inhalation on an alternative occasion for assessment, or on additional clients if necessary.

On at least two occasions, you should observe the learner dispensing and/or using appropriately prepared topical products, such as creams, lotions, gels and balms relating to the client's treatment plan. Learners should blend products with appropriate essential and/or carrier oils and for the client's specific requirements.

Where learners give preparations to the client for home care use, learners should prepare, package and label products and advise the client on the appropriate use, application method and frequency of use. They should include instruction on the action to take in the case of adverse reactions, to meet legislative and the centre's standards.

You must authenticate that assessment evidence is the learner's own work.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • methods of researching, reporting and presenting • the principles of botanical nomenclature • methods used in plant cultivation and oil extraction methods to produce essential oils and carrier oils • the basic chemistry of essential oils • the basic pharmacology of essential oils • energetic principles of essential oils and carrier oils, relating to therapeutic actions • the therapeutic and physical properties of essential oils used in aromatherapy practices • the therapeutic and physical properties of carrier oils used in aromatherapy practices • common ingredients that make up topical products used in aromatherapy, including creams, lotions, gels and balms	Outcome 1 Learners can: • access professional and accurate data sources to gain and present relevant information • apply appropriate use of botanical nomenclature to identify plant families, genus and species in relation to essential and carrier oils • identify the physical properties of essential oils and carrier oils • explain the relationship between the chemical constituents and pharmacology of essential oils that influence the therapeutic properties and effects on the body • explain the relationship between the chemical constituents and pharmacology of essential oils and their biological actions on the body • summarise the energetic principles of essential oils and the physical, psychological and emotional effects on the body • explain the therapeutic properties of topical products used in aromatherapy, including creams, lotions, gels and balms

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • the appropriate use of aromatherapy products in treatments • application methods in aromatherapy treatments, including massage techniques, compresses and inhalations • the use and limitations of essential oils, carrier oils and aromatherapy practices in the management and support of common health concerns • the physiological and psychological benefits and effects of application techniques used in aromatherapy treatments • restrictions for aromatherapy treatment and applications • the requirements and importance of consent to treatment • how and when to liaise appropriately with healthcare practitioners • effective treatment planning techniques • contra-actions relating to aromatherapy treatments and applications • government legislation relating to aromatherapy treatment practices and product management • the importance of appropriate, bespoke aftercare and home care advice • lifestyle choices that help to maintain health and wellbeing, including healthy eating and nutrition, movement and exercise, and stress-management techniques	Outcome 2 Learners can: • identify appropriate use of essential oils, carrier oils and products used in aromatherapy to aid in the management of common health concerns and conditions, within the remit of the unit

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 (continued) Learners should understand: • how to carry out appropriate application methods used in aromatherapy, including: ○ massage techniques ○ compress methods ○ inhalation methods ○ topical application of bespoke blended creams, lotions, oil blends • when and why adaptations to treatment may be required	
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • the requirements of professional treatment room preparation • the importance and requirements of professional therapist self-preparation • the importance of client preparation and client care throughout • effective communication skills • effective consultation techniques • the importance of adhering to commercially viable treatment times	Outcome 3 Learners can: • prepare the treatment room in a professional and welcoming manner, to ensure the comfort and safety of the client and the therapist • prepare themselves professionally to carry out the treatment, including physical, psychological and emotional readiness • prepare the client for treatment, including: ○ assessing client's requirements in relation to aims, expectations, comfort ○ explaining the treatment process ○ explaining the potential benefits, effects and limitations of the treatment • engage effectively to gain relevant information in a friendly, professional manner • effectively gain and record information to create a bespoke treatment plan for the client

Knowledge	Skills
	Outcome 3 (continued) Learners can: • explain to the client the requirement for recording relevant information under GDPR guidelines and obtain consent to proceed with the treatment plan • carry out the treatment within a commercially viable time, as agreed by the centre
Outcome 4 Learners should understand: • how to select, blend and prepare essential oils, carrier oils, creams, lotions, gels and balms for practical application • the importance of observations during treatment • the importance of post-treatment client care • relevant advice for client: ○ contra-actions to treatment ○ aftercare advice ○ bespoke home care advice and recommendations	Outcome 4 Learners can: • select appropriate essential oils and carrier oils in suitable quantities to create bespoke blends for their client's requirements • use appropriate application methods to meet the client's requirements, including effective massage techniques, compresses and inhalations • identify relevant observations and record the findings

Knowledge	Skills
	Outcome 4 (continued) Learners can: • make effective decisions regarding adaptations or omissions of treatment methods to suit the client's case history • identify concerns or symptoms that require medical referral • translate government legislation to demonstrate safe hygienic practices in the workplace • maintain professional discretion and confidentiality concerning client records • identify and communicate bespoke post-treatment client care, including advice on: ○ possible contra-actions to treatment and how to minimise the risk ○ aftercare and self-care ○ home care and recommendations ○ meeting the agreed aims ○ maintaining the benefits of the treatment

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 5 Learners should understand: • evaluation methods • how to effectively gather and use client feedback • the importance of ongoing reflective practice and evaluation skills • how to use evaluation to make recommendations that support and promote client wellbeing • use of evaluation to make recommendations that will support additional professional development	Outcome 5 Learners can: • interpret client feedback, and give advice and support that is constructive and relevant to the client • record clearly and accurately client details relating to the effectiveness of advanced aromatherapy treatments • adhere to current relevant legislation throughout • use client's feedback to assess the effectiveness of the treatment • use assessor or mentor feedback to identify strengths and areas that require development

Meta-skills

You must give learners opportunities to develop their meta-skills throughout this unit. We have suggested how to incorporate the most relevant ones into the unit content, but you may find other opportunities.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
 - concentrating on what the client says throughout the consultation period to identify the client's needs, and what is most relevant to the treatment plan
 - maintaining the focus on the treatment aims throughout
- integrity:
 - maintaining a professional approach by acting on ethics, morals and values, including timekeeping, reliability, discipline and trustworthiness throughout, when working with clients and with peers
- adapting:
 - responding to new information by evaluating observations or receiving client, peer, or mentor feedback
 - making responsible decisions to alter a course of action, for example by reviewing a treatment plan to account for a change in circumstances
- initiative:
 - using independent decision-making skills
 - having self-belief and self-motivation, to enable responsible judgements throughout
 - using information gained from clients to produce a bespoke treatment plan including essential oil, carrier oil blends, and relevant massage and application methods

- giving bespoke aftercare and home care advice with relevant adaptations throughout a series of treatments, where appropriate

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
 - receiving, understanding and responding to information from mentors, peers and clients
 - listening to clients
 - noting body language and words used throughout the treatment process
 - using appropriate language and intonation
- feeling:
 - showing empathy, compassion and understanding when working with clients
- collaborating:
 - building relationships with clients and peers while working towards an agreed goal
- leading:
 - influencing through inspiring motivation for new health and wellbeing regimens while working with clients and others

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
 - researching and sourcing information from searches, tutorials and asking questions
- creativity:
 - co-creating bespoke blends and products, and adapting treatments in alignment with the client's expressed needs and overall wellbeing
- sense-making:
 - applying holistic thinking when dealing with several factors that may influence a bespoke treatment plan for clients
 - evaluating data or information, including what oils, products and techniques are best suited to blend together to help clients manage their health concerns
- critical thinking:
 - being able to deconstruct complex and variable data to apply treatments effectively, for example the ways in which essential oils can affect the body
 - thinking logically to analyse and identify the relevant effects that can then be best used in individual circumstances

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners demonstrate numeracy skills by:

- calculating and measuring the correct amount of essential oil or oils to carrier from a percentage blend, to achieve suitable blends and products for an individual client

Communication

Learners demonstrate communication skills by:

- effectively communicating with peers and mentors to share ideas and concepts relating to their coursework
- using effective communication skills to gain information to interpret the client's requirements
- explaining products, application and techniques chosen, so that the client can understand the importance of the treatment plan, aftercare and home care advice

Digital

Learners demonstrate digital skills by:

- using paperless, electronic records for sustainability and security of sensitive data relating to research projects and client records

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you should encourage learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

This includes:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

Learners should be aware of the importance of sustainability and waste management and the impact this can have on the environment. They should also consider the effect of the use of certain essential oils extracted from wild harvested plants that may be endangered species.

Delivery of unit

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Complementary Health. You can deliver this as a stand-alone unit or partially integrate it with elements of The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health and Signature Body Massage.

The notional time for delivery of this 2-credit unit is 80 hours. The amount of time allocated to each outcome is at the centre's discretion. The following distribution of time are approximations only.

Outcome 1 — Research and describe the use and application of essential oils, carrier oils and topical base products used in aromatherapy (10 hours)

For tutorial delivery and activities and introducing the research inclusions, you should encourage learners to research, prepare and present the evidence for assessment in their own time.

Outcome 2 — Research and describe current practices in aromatherapy (12 hours)

For tutorial delivery and activities and introducing research inclusions, you should encourage learners to research, prepare and present the evidence for assessment in their own time.

Outcome 3 — Plan and prepare for aromatherapy treatments (20 hours)

You can deliver this outcome concurrently with outcome 4 to cover tutorials, practical demonstrations and learner practice relating to planning and preparing for aromatherapy treatments

Outcome 4 — Perform aromatherapy treatments (20 hours)

You can deliver this outcome concurrently with outcome 3 to cover tutorials, practical demonstrations and learner practice relating to performing aromatherapy treatments.

Outcome 5 — Evaluate the effectiveness of aromatherapy treatments (10 hours)

This covers tutorials, discussions and learner practice relating to evaluating the effectiveness of aromatherapy treatments.

This leaves 8 hours for remediation and contingency.

Professional recognition

Learners who successfully complete this unit may gain membership of the following professional bodies:

- The Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT) — at the time of writing, this unit meets the minimum standards of training, according to the qualification standards list displayed on the [FHT official website](#))
- The Aromatherapy Council
- Associated bodies:
 - The Complementary Therapists Association (CThA)
 - The College of Medicine and Integrated Healthcare
 - The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC)

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit helps learners gain knowledge of aromatherapy practices and develop skills in using essential oils, carrier oils and related products to create bespoke treatment plans that meet the health and wellbeing requirements of their clients.

Learners carry out practical activities in a realistic working environment or real workplace. This involves working with customers, working with others in a team and developing good working practices.

Learners research 20 essential oils and 7 carrier oils and carrier products, and understand the relevance of the use and properties of each. They develop their practical skills by consulting with clients and devising treatment plans that meet treatment objectives, then prepare for and perform the aromatherapy treatment, adapting techniques to suit the treatment objectives. Application methods include massage, compresses and inhalations. Practical application includes the use of blended oils in an appropriate medium. Learners evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment, provide recommendations for future treatment adaptations and give appropriate individual lifestyle advice that enhances the effectiveness of the treatment given.

Learners must demonstrate knowledge of and adherence to relevant health and safety procedures, ensure their appearance reflects organisational and industry standards, and demonstrate effective communication and consultation skills throughout.

Centres may establish links with industry representatives to support delivery through demonstrations of contemporary aromatherapy practice. This supports learner engagement and industry awareness.

Resources

The occupational expertise of those involved in the assessment and quality assurance processes is key to ensure valid, fair and reliable assessment. The assessor and internal verifier must be occupationally competent.

They must:

- hold an appropriate professional and/or technical qualification (for example Higher National Diploma (HND) Complementary Therapies, or HND Complementary Health), that demonstrates an in-depth technical knowledge of the unit, and the standard of competencies required
- hold an appropriate teaching qualification, or be working towards one
- be able to interpret current working practices, technologies and products in the complementary therapy industry and be committed to upholding the integrity of the unit
- demonstrate competence in assessment and/or internal verification of the subject
- have access to, and engage with, continuous professional development activities, to keep up-to-date with developments and any issues relevant to the unit

Learners must have access to:

- a realistic clinic practice environment, suitable for carrying out complementary therapy treatments and dispensing of oils and products that reflect current industry practice, including toilet and water facilities
- practical examples of real-life industry applications of aromatherapy treatments, to provide context
- formative and summative assignments and quizzes: to track progress and understanding
- budget: sufficient funding for appropriate materials and tools
- a comprehensive library and digital resources for research and report writing activities
- e-Learning platforms for virtual classes or supplementary learning
- course materials: learner handouts, textbooks, articles, and other reading and/or reference materials (for example Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard)

- software applications to support the development of e-portfolio and other digital artefacts, and communication tools, including those required by neurodiverse client groups
- access to a minimum of 20 essential oils, 7 carrier oils, and base mediums such as creams, lotions, gels and balms
- access to materials for measuring, blending, mixing and dispensing essential oils with carrier oils, creams, lotions, gels and balms

Your centre must have appropriate checks in place to ensure health and safety, and correct insurance in place for learners.

Approaches to delivery

You should introduce learners to the unit in week one, so that learners understand the knowledge, skills and evidence for assessment in the unit.

You should encourage a learner-centred participative and practical approach. Each part of learning and teaching should incorporate theory and practice to facilitate learning, and so that learners understand the relevance of the knowledge more easily as they experience the practical application.

You should embed formative assessment throughout delivery, to support skill development and readiness for summative assessment.

You must give learners regular feedback on their progress, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Mentors should oversee learners' practical performances and provide feedback to enable them to evaluate and adapt their performance where required.

Any practical activity used to generate evidence should reflect the knowledge and skills identified in the evidence requirements for each outcome.

Tutorials should cover theoretical aspects of the unit and support research activity to develop depth and breadth of learning.

You should provide practical demonstrations followed by supported role-play, initially with peers, to allow learners to practise safely and gain confidence before progressing to a working environment.

Your delivery should include a range of approaches, such as:

- tutorials supported by handouts
- research
- demonstration
- group work and discussion
- practical activities
- visiting speakers
- reflection and evaluation

We have provided the key learning areas that you should focus on in your delivery.

Effects of aromatherapy on the body and mind

Learners develop knowledge of the physical, physiological, psychological and emotional effects of aromatherapy applications. They understand how therapeutic properties can influence an individual's overall wellbeing and support homeostasis.

Pharmacology and pharmacokinetics of essential oils

Learners study the basic pharmacology of essential oils, including:

- how essential oils enter the body through the skin and respiratory system
- absorption into the circulatory system, olfactory pathway and endocrine systems
- the pharmacokinetic effects of the body on essential oils
- metabolic and excretory pathways

Chemical composition and structure of essential oils

Learners gain knowledge of:

- the basic chemical constituents of essential oils, including esters, ketones, alcohols, phenols, terpenes and aldehydes
- basic chemical structures and their specific actions, for example:
 - citral within aldehydes
 - linalool within monoterpenol alcohols
 - 1,8-cineol within oxides

Physical properties of essential oils

Learners understand that essential oils:

- are volatile substances that evaporate more rapidly as temperature increases
- are soluble in spiritous, oily or fatty substances
- are non-lubricating
- react to heat and light

Oil extraction methods

Learners study the following extraction methods:

- steam distillation
- water distillation
- carbon dioxide (CO₂) extraction
- solvent extraction
- maceration and infusion
- expression or cold press extraction
- enfleurage

Plant parts used for oil extraction

Learners understand that essential oils extracted from the same plant share the same botanical name, but oils derived from different plant parts may have different chemical compositions and therefore different effects.

For example:

- Citrus aurantium flos refers to oil extracted from the flowers of the orange tree and is commonly known as neroli or orange blossom
- Citrus aurantium fol. (foliage) refers to oil extracted from the leaves and petioles, commonly known as petitgrain

Energetics and therapeutic action

Learners explore energetics, which refers to subtle vibrational interactions that support homeostasis. Essential oils exert energetic effects that complement biochemical actions and align with therapeutic properties. Examples include:

- oils with warming energy, often linked to rubefacient properties, which produce local erythema, increase microcirculation and restore healthy temperature balance
- Frankincense, which supports meditation by calming the mind and regulating breath
- Rosemary, whose cephalic stimulation and cognitive enhancement align with its traditionally recognised mental clearing and clarifying energetic qualities

Therapeutic properties, indications and contraindications

Learners understand that:

- therapeutic properties and effects arise from an oil's chemical constituent ratio, actions and energetics
- practitioners use properties to select oils that influence physiological, psychological and emotional characteristics
- indications for use describe when an oil is suitable for a client's needs

- contra-indications for use describe when an oil should be avoided due to incompatible actions, energetics or chemical constituents

Essential oils and carrier oils

Learners study the following essential oils:

- *Boswellia carteri*
- *Cananga odorata*
- *Chamaemelum nobile*
- *Citrus aurantium flos*
- *Citrus bergamia*
- *Cupressus sempervirens*
- *Cymbopogon citratus*
- *Eucalyptus globulus*
- *Jasminum officinale*
- *Juniperus communis*
- *Lavandula angustifolia*
- *Melissa officinalis*
- *Ocimum basilicum*
- *Origanum majorana*
- *Pelargonium graveolens*
- *Piper nigrum*
- *Rosa damascena*
- *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- *Salvia sclarea*
- *Santalum album*

Learners study the following carrier oils:

- *Calendula officinalis*
- *Oenothera biennis*
- *Persea gratissima*
- *Prunus armeniaca*
- *Simmondsia chinensis*

- Triticum vulgare
- Vitis vinifera

For each essential and carrier oil, learners must include:

- common name
- botanical name (genus and species)
- botanical family
- plant part or parts used for extraction
- origin (native location)
- geographical locations of cultivation
- historical and traditional use
- extraction method
- chemical constituents
- volatility note (top, middle or base)
- energetics
- general therapeutic properties and effects
- indications for use
- contra-indications for use

Safety, legislation and professional practice

Learners understand:

- the safe use of essential oils, carrier oils, products and application methods
- essential oil safety, including sensitisation, irritation and toxicity
- carrier mediums for blending and topical application
- aromatherapy products, such as creams, lotions, gels and balms, including the use of pre-made bases or centre-produced products

Learners study:

- current legislation relating to the storage and labelling of oils
- government legislation for safe and secure working practices
- legislation relating to GDPR and the completion and storage of client records
- relevant current health and safety legislation

You should support learners to:

- communicate professionally with clients
- carry out effective consultations
- develop appropriate treatment plans
- select and use suitable essential oils, carrier oils and product mediums
- adapt application techniques to meet individual client needs
- provide appropriate lifestyle and aftercare advice

Teach learners how to:

- select and blend essential oils to meet individual client needs
- apply correct dilution ratios
- consider oil notes, compatibility, synergy and safety
- select appropriate carrier oils and alternative carrier mediums, including creams, lotions, gels and balms

Learners should understand the constituents in alternative carrier mediums such as creams, lotions, gels and balm, to support appropriate selection.

You should encourage learners to compile 'recipe cards' for common uses as they carry out their research for use in practical sessions. For example, a recipe card for stress, showing:

- options for blending
- contra-indications for oil use, if applicable
- synergistic blends
- blends that work well together

Learners must understand the limits of aromatherapy practice and recognise professional and ethical boundaries. They must not diagnose conditions or suggest cures.

You should integrate relevant current legislation knowledge in a realistic context, to help learners understand how legislation affects everyday practice in the clinic environment. You must support learners to understand their responsibilities and to identify risks within their working practices and environment. Learners should

develop working practices that meet organisational and current health and safety policies. This also enhances their employability skills profile.

Contra-indications, restrictions and reactions

Learners identify conditions that prohibit treatment, including:

- contagious skin diseases
- dysfunction of the nervous system
- recent scar tissue
- undiagnosed lumps and swellings
- uncontrolled diabetes
- uncontrolled high or low blood pressure
- uncontrolled epilepsy
- pregnancy prior to 12 weeks gestation

They also identify special care conditions that restrict treatment and require adaptation, including:

- undergoing medical treatment
- diabetes
- epilepsy
- high or low blood pressure
- history of thrombosis or embolism
- medication
- pregnancy after 12 weeks
- piercings
- cuts and abrasions
- cancer treatment

Contra-actions and reactions

Learners recognise possible contra-actions and reactions, including:

- allergy

- sensitivity
- rash
- erythema
- hyperaemia
- headache
- nausea
- irritation

Consultation, treatment planning and delivery

Learners follow organisational and industry professional standards relating to:

- personal preparation
- treatment environment preparation and presentation
- learner or therapist self-preparation, including psychological and emotional readiness

Learners develop skills in:

- comprehensive consultation techniques
- selecting and blending essential oils to suit client needs
- treatment planning based on consultation notes, client requirements, product selection, blends and application methods
- methods of recording client data

Learners understand:

- client preparation and positioning
- application methods and techniques
- client comfort and safety
- meeting industry requirements for timing, sequence and duration
- the importance of continuity and rhythm in massage techniques

Massage techniques and treatment areas

Learners apply massage techniques, including:

- effleurage
- petrissage
- lymphatic drainage
- sinus drainage
- pressure point

They understand the benefits of each technique and apply treatments to the full body, including:

- legs and feet
- back
- neck and shoulders
- abdomen
- arms and hands
- chest and shoulders
- face
- scalp and ears

Learners adapt techniques to suit different treatment objectives.

Aftercare and evaluation

Learners:

- provide appropriate aftercare and lifestyle advice
- identify lifestyle factors that may improve treatment effectiveness
- use methods to evaluate the effectiveness of aromatherapy massage treatments

Approaches to assessment

There are opportunities for cross-delivery and holistic assessment with other mandatory units in the HNC Complementary Health framework, including:

- Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (SCQF level 7)
- Signature Body Massage Treatments — outcome 4 (SCQF level 7)
- The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health— outcome 4 (SCQF level 7)

Centres may generate evidence using a variety of assessment methods. The methods outlined below are suggestions only. Alternative approaches may be more appropriate depending on learner needs. Using a range of assessment methods supports the development of transferable skills relevant to employment, further education, or higher education.

Outcomes 1 and 2: open-book research assessment

Learners must complete research reports for outcomes 1 and 2 under open-book conditions. Centres may allow submission over several weeks or as a single piece of work.

You can decide the format of the open-book research, but you must retain appropriate evidence to meet Qualifications Scotland qualification verification requirements. Centres must also verify the authenticity of learner work. This may include the use of plagiarism detection software and AI-detection tools, to ensure submissions are the learner's own work.

You can assess essential oil and carrier oil profiles as a single assessment or as separate sections, in line with your centre's delivery plan.

Learners must include in their research:

- an explanation of the pharmacology of essential oils, including how oils enter the body through the skin and respiratory system, circulate within the body, and interact with the olfactory and endocrine systems
- a summary of the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of essential oils, explaining their effects on the body and outlining metabolic and excretory pathways

Outcomes 3 to 5: practical performance evidence

You should gather performance evidence for outcomes 3 to 5 concurrently over a realistic timeframe. This approach allows learners to develop effective and professional working practices.

Learners must prepare for and carry out full-body aromatherapy massage treatments on a minimum of two case study clients. Each client must receive at least three treatments. For each treatment, learners must select and blend essential oils in a suitable carrier oil to meet the client's needs and treatment aims.

Learners must demonstrate appropriate aromatherapy massage techniques across a minimum of three treatments per client. Case studies must evidence treatment of the following areas, where appropriate to the client's needs:

- back, shoulders, and neck
- back and front of legs
- abdomen
- arms and chest
- face, ears, and scalp

Learners must comply with centre instructions and adapt techniques to meet individual client requirements.

Practical performance must demonstrate all treatment objectives and required techniques, including:

- aromatherapy massage techniques

- blending essential oils with carrier oils and base products
- use of compresses and inhalations
- management of minor health care conditions, as outlined in the evidence requirements

Learners must select and apply techniques appropriately based on the case study client's needs.

If learners do not demonstrate all required techniques within the case studies, you can observe outstanding techniques during an alternative assessment opportunity or with additional clients, using a single treatment if necessary.

All treatments must take place in the assessment environment and be directly observed.

Learners may prepare and use appropriately labelled topical products as part of the client's treatment plan. When learners provide preparations for client home care use, assessors must observe the learner advising the client on:

- correct use and application methods
- frequency of use
- actions to take in the event of adverse reactions

Client consultations, consultation records, individual treatment plans, oil selection, massage adaptations, treatment evaluations, and lifestyle advice must demonstrate the learner's ability to apply knowledge in practice.

Learners must complete all practical treatments within a commercially acceptable timeframe. Formative assessment opportunities may include self-assessment and peer assessment, leading to summative assessment. Summative assessments should take place in a realistic clinic environment with clients external to the class peer group.

Learners should complete treatment evaluations for outcome 5 as close to the treatment completion time as possible. Where feedback collection causes a delay, learners should record their immediate reflections on treatment stages promptly after the session.

Assessment quality assurance and evidence recording

You must record practical performance evidence using observation checklists, learner-completed treatment logs, and professional discussions. Learners must complete a treatment log that clearly justifies the treatment plan and includes their oil selection and application methods.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Information for learners

Aromatherapy

(SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- what the unit is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the unit
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit helps you develop your knowledge, skills and practical experience in using essential oils, carrier oils and appropriate application methods to address individual client's health concerns and conditions.

You research essential oils and carrier oils, and learn about:

- their origins
- where they are grown and produced
- historical and traditional uses
- extraction methods
- chemical constituents
- energetic properties and effects
- indications for use
- contra-indications
- safety considerations

You also research current government safety requirements, including Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) risk assessments related to essential oils, as well as labelling regulations for dispensed products.

As part of the unit, you develop an understanding of essential oil pharmacology. This includes how essential oils enter, are metabolised by, and are eliminated from the body. You'll learn about:

- pharmacodynamics (how essential oils affect the body)
- pharmacokinetics (how the body metabolises essential oils)

You begin by working with peers and then progress to treating real clients in a clinical therapy environment. This allows you to develop practical skills in blending and applying essential oils and carrier oils to create safe, appropriate and bespoke treatment blends tailored for individual client's requirements.

You also create bespoke natural products, such as essential oils in carrier oils, creams, lotions, gels and balms for an individual client's condition. You demonstrate to the client how to use these products safely at home, to support ongoing care.

You plan, deliver and evaluate your sessions for each client's health and wellbeing needs. Treatment applications include full body massage (including back, neck, shoulders, legs, arms, abdomen, chest, face, ears and scalp), warm and cold compresses, dry and steam inhalations and topical preparations.

You work with your clients over a minimum of three sessions, monitoring their progress, evaluating treatment effectiveness, and advising on lifestyle and treatment plan adaptations, where appropriate.

You demonstrate appropriate communication and consultation techniques when you plan treatments and assess client's individual requirements. You use analytical and creative thinking skills to select appropriate therapeutic application techniques, devise and deliver a course of bespoke treatments, and monitor progress outcomes over time.

There are a range of assessments in the unit, including:

- practical observations
- research and project presentations
- learner portfolio or e-portfolio building in the form of reports and treatment logs
- case study analysis and evaluation

- self-reflective evaluations
- professional discussions

Entry to the unit is at the centre's discretion, however, we recommend that you have completed, or are working to complete, one or more of the following units, or equivalent:

- Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (SCQF level 7)
- Signature Body Massage Treatments (SCQF level 7)
- The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health (SCQF level 7)
- Research Skills (SCQF level 7)

The unit is suitable for those studying complementary therapies, holistic therapies or integrative healthcare. It is primarily intended for learners who want to take up a career or study further in complementary, holistic, or integrated healthcare practice, but is also suitable for those who wish to expand their existing knowledge and skills in wellness, spa or beauty therapies.

When you finish this unit, you may progress to additional advanced studies in aromatherapy or pursue a career in the complementary or holistic therapy industry.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the complementary and holistic therapies sector.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help you adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
 - concentrating on what the client says throughout the consultation period to identify the client's needs, and what is most relevant to the treatment plan
 - maintaining the focus on the treatment aims throughout
- integrity:
 - maintaining a professional approach by acting on ethics, morals and values, including timekeeping, reliability, discipline and trustworthiness throughout, when working with clients and with peers
- adapting:
 - responding to new information by evaluating observations or receiving client, peer, or mentor feedback
 - making responsible decisions to alter a course of action, for example by reviewing a treatment plan to account for a change in circumstances
- initiative:
 - using independent decision-making skills
 - having self-belief and self-motivation, to enable responsible judgements throughout
 - using information gained from clients to produce a bespoke treatment plan including essential oil and carrier oil blends, and choose relevant massage and application methods
 - giving bespoke aftercare and home care advice with relevant adaptations throughout a series of treatments, where appropriate

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
 - receiving, understanding and responding to information from mentors, peers and clients
 - listening to clients
 - noting body language and words used throughout the treatment process
 - using appropriate language and intonation
- feeling:
 - showing empathy, compassion and understanding when working with clients
- collaborating:
 - collaborating with clients and peers to build relationships while working towards an agreed goal
- leading:
 - influencing through inspiring motivation for new health and wellbeing regimens while working with clients and others

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
 - researching and sourcing information from searches, tutorials and asking questions

- creativity:
 - co-creating bespoke blends and products, and adapting treatments in alignment with the client's expressed needs and overall wellbeing
- sense-making:
 - applying holistic thinking when dealing with several factors that may influence a bespoke treatment plan for a client
 - evaluating data or information including what oils, products and techniques are best suited to blend together to help clients manage their health concerns
- critical thinking:
 - being able to deconstruct complex and variable data to apply treatments effectively, for example the ways in which essential oils can affect the body
 - thinking logically to analyse and identify the relevant effects that can then be best used in individual circumstances

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you develop skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

You learn about social, economic and environmental sustainability principles and how they relate to the complementary and holistic therapies sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

You are aware of the importance of sustainability and waste management and the impact this can have on the environment. You also consider the effect of the use of certain essential oils extracted from wild harvested plants that may be endangered species.

Administrative information

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Superclass: HL

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.

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