

NextGen: HN unit specification

The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JLBH 47

SCQF level: 7 (24 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 prepare for working in a complementary, holistic, or integrated healthcare environment.

Throughout the unit, learners develop research skills, report writing skills, evaluation and presentation skills, and meta-skills.

They find out about:

- the history of healthcare and health maintenance
- the varying perspectives of health and wellbeing, illness and disease, through tutorials, investigation, research and experience
- the legal and professional requirements of holistic, complementary, integrated and mainstream healthcare approaches to maintaining health
- how to understand clients' common health conditions and concerns
- how these can be managed through mainstream healthcare and complementary protocols
- the key components of clients' health concerns, to formulate, prepare, and administer bespoke treatments
- how to provide personalised aftercare, homecare and lifestyle recommendations for conditions that can be:
 - appropriately managed through complementary therapies
 - managed alongside mainstream healthcare provision (for which clients can be referred for medical review)
- absolute and relative contra-indications
- potential contra and adverse reactions
- physical and psychological effects of treatments
- how to recognise when treatments should be adapted or omitted

Learners also practice skills in communication, analysis and evaluation. These skills are essential when engaging with clients. They help learners to carry out effective

consultations and devise treatment plans that align with clients' objectives, while adhering to established treatment protocols, product knowledge guidelines, and current health and safety regulations.

Learners also understand the importance of government legislation and clinic codes of practice relating to health, safety and wellbeing. They develop safe working practices to ensure the safety of themselves, members of their working group and clients. These include:

- creating and maintaining a safe working environment for the therapist, client and others
- practitioner coping skills
- effective communication skills
- treatment planning
- clinical practice skills
- evaluation skills

This unit incorporates a workplace element designed to consolidate and reinforce the practical knowledge and skills acquired by learners. The practical application component prepares learners for professional practice in a complementary or holistic therapy clinic. The work placement opportunity enables learners to demonstrate their competencies in a live clinical environment.

Learners are assessed primarily through open-book research, analysis and evaluation of the data and presentation of their findings. You assess practical skills by observing them applying their knowledge in practical consultations, communications and treatment planning.

Entry to this unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners are working to complete HNC Complementary Health, or equivalent. This is a mandatory unit in HNC Complementary Health. Learners can also study this unit on a stand-alone basis. This unit is also suitable for learners with no prior experience in performing complementary therapy treatments.

Learners who complete the unit can progress to further studies, such as Higher National Diploma (HND) Complementary Therapies or degree programmes in

integrative health or specialist complementary and holistic healthcare modalities. They may successfully set up or work in a holistic, complementary and integrated healthcare clinic practice.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. research and define perspectives of health and wellbeing
2. research and explain the principles in professional practice codes of conduct
3. investigate the effects of lifestyle and environmental factors on health, to develop client aftercare and bespoke homecare advice
4. research common health conditions and concerns
5. create a safe working environment
6. develop and maintain professional resilience
7. develop effective communication and consultation skills
8. develop effective treatment planning skills
9. research and participate in clinic placement activities
10. develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context

Evidence requirements

Learners should produce product and performance evidence to reflect industry standard at SCQF level 7.

Learners should use cohesive language and correct grammar and punctuation as required of SCQF level 7 standard. Learners should include a range of academic references from a range of sources to support their writing.

Research and define perspectives of health and wellbeing (outcome 1)

Learners create an open-book report to meet the following requirements:

- provide a brief history of the development of disease prevention, treatment and social care. Include:
 - the history of healthcare development in the UK, including the formation of the National Health Service (NHS), to the present-day medical model

- an outline of the history of complementary and alternative healthcare practices to present day
- the introduction of integrated healthcare practice
- define and explain the concept of health and wellbeing.
- investigate and explain the definition of health and wellbeing from the perspective of:
 - the mainstream medical approach
 - complementary and holistic healthcare
 - a member of society with no professional healthcare background
- an outline of the major current national trends for health promotion, to:
 - explain the link between government health department legislation and national trends for health promotion
 - give an example of a government health promotion campaign, and explain how it has contributed to changing perspectives of health and healthcare

Research and explain the principles in professional practice codes of conduct (outcome 2)

Learners create an open-book report to meet the following requirements:

- explain the ethical principles relating to complementary, alternative and integrated healthcare practices.
- define morals, ethics and values as they relate to:
 - clinical practice, including the principles of utility, autonomy, universality, equality and diversity
 - the therapist in practice, in terms of respect, honesty, confidentiality, accountability, responsibility and consent
 - therapeutic community, relating to professional networking, governing bodies and upholding professional standards
- investigate codes of conduct governing professional practice, including:

- codes of practice
- regulatory bodies
- evaluate the need for continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain competent standards of practice, including:
 - personal effectiveness in practice
 - personal limitations and development needs
 - changes in practice and regulatory environment

Investigate the effects of lifestyle and environmental factors on health to develop client aftercare and bespoke homecare advice (outcome 3)

Learners create an open-book report to meet the following requirements:

- research the factors and influences that affect health in relation to:
 - diet and nutrition
 - sedentary lifestyle, movement and exercise
 - stress and stress management
 - external and environmental factors
- on two occasions, give effective and bespoke lifestyle and homecare recommendations to enhance treatment benefits, including:
 - nutrition information
 - information on movement and/or exercise
 - information relating to stress management

Learners who have completed or are in the process of completing Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Signature Body Massage Treatments or Traditional Head Massage can cross reference the practical evidence for outcome 7 of this unit. Learners carrying out the unit as a stand-alone unit must complete all practical assessments relating to this outcome.

Research common health conditions and concerns (outcome 4)

In open-book conditions, learners create a comparative research project for a minimum of five common health conditions and concerns. They investigate common treatment management protocols from a holistic or complementary healthcare perspective and from a mainstream healthcare perspective. Their project must include:

- conditions that holistic or complementary therapists may commonly encounter.

Examples of conditions include:

- stress-related conditions
- menopause symptoms
- minor non-contagious skin conditions
- muscle and joint pain
- muscle strains

For each condition listed, learners must include:

- holistic or complementary therapy treatment protocols
- mainstream healthcare treatment protocols
- how to recognise when the conditions are unsuitable for complementary and holistic health
- when the client should seek advice from other sources

Create a safe working environment (outcome 5)

Learners investigate and create an open-book report outlining the following:

- current legislation that relates to the creation of a safe complementary and holistic health working environment
- creating safe working practices by:
 - carrying out risk assessments
 - dealing with differing client needs
- evaluating safe working practices by completing a clinical audit

Develop and maintain professional resilience (outcome 6)

Learners develop a portfolio that:

- defines and explains the importance of the following, in relation to building personal and professional resilience:
 - self-care, wellbeing and stress management
 - time management
 - self-assessment, such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), critical skills or similar
 - clinical audit techniques

Develop effective communication and consultation skills (outcome 7)

Learners explain the importance of effective communication and consultation skills and, on two occasions, practically demonstrate how to:

- create a comfortable environment
- develop active listening skills
- acknowledge verbal cues
- use observation skills to elicit non-verbal communication
- recognise emotional expression
- speak appropriately, using language that the client will understand
- use consultation techniques in an empathic and supportive manner
- ask relevant questions to ascertain client's concerns and requirements
- ensure information gathered is full and accurate
- take clear, relevant and concise notes
- review and collate information to enable a relevant treatment plan
- evaluate the information using strategies that are:
 - appropriate to the symptom picture
 - appropriate to the client's requirements and learner's aims
 - consistent with principles and practice of complementary therapies

- encourage clients to provide further information and/or agree how to obtain such information, if necessary
- ensure compliance with client consent to treatment
- ensure compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- meet workplace requirements for consultation practices

Learners who have completed or are in the process of completing Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Signature Body Massage Treatments or Traditional Head Massage (all at SCQF level 7) can cross-reference the practical evidence for this outcome.

Learners carrying out the unit as a stand-alone unit must complete all practical assessments relating to this outcome.

Develop effective treatment planning skills (outcome 8)

Learners explain the importance of effective treatment planning skills and, on two occasions, practically demonstrate the following:

- evaluating information gained from the consultation to identify the client's needs and circumstances
- using appropriate treatments and methods to meet individual client's needs
- identifying any restrictions, or adaptations required, to advise on treatment choice and realistic expectations
- advising and encouraging homecare involvement that may be required to maintain the client's health and wellbeing

Learners who have completed or are in the process of completing Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Signature Body Massage Treatments or Traditional Head Massage (all at SCQF level 7) can cross-reference the practical evidence for this outcome.

Learners carrying out the unit as a stand-alone unit must complete all practical assessments relating to this outcome.

Research and participate in clinic placement activities (outcome 9)

Learners should create a portfolio of evidence to meet the following criteria.

Learners must successfully:

- investigate types of complementary or holistic health, or integrative health work environments
- choose a workplace in complementary or holistic health, or integrative health work environments
- communicate with healthcare practitioners to secure a workplace placement
- secure consent from a potential workplace supervisor to carry out a work placement
- participate and assist in complementary or holistic health, or integrative health in a clinic setting
- evaluate the work placement experience
- prepare and present evidence of the activities above

Skills include curriculum vitae (CV) writing and completing applications for work placement. Learners must retain all evidence in their portfolio of evidence.

The work placement should be in an appropriate complementary or holistic health, or integrative health work environment. In their portfolios, learners should include research on suitable workplaces, communications with prospective workplace practitioner supervisors, logs containing details of activities, times and their evaluation of the experience.

Learners should participate in work placement activities for a minimum of 10 hours.

Develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context (outcome 10)

Learners must produce evidence to show they can:

- self-assess their meta-skills baseline
- create a plan to develop their own meta-skills
- carry out activities to develop and demonstrate their meta-skills
- use reflective practice to monitor and assess the meta-skills they have improved and developed

For more information about meta-skills, see the educator guide, [Skills 4.0: A skills model to drive Scotland's future](#) and [our meta-skills web page](#).

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • methods of researching, reporting and presenting • the history of healthcare development in the UK, including the formation of the NHS to the present-day medical model. • what defines complementary or holistic health, alternative and integrated healthcare practices • models for integrated healthcare provision, including their key values and practices • definitions of health and wellbeing from various points of view, including from: ○ mainstream medicine professionals ○ complementary or holistic health, alternative and integrated healthcare professionals ○ individuals with no professional healthcare background • the major current national trends for health promotion, how they relate to current research in health and wellbeing and the government department of health policies	Outcome 1 Learners can: • access professional and accurate data sources to gain and present relevant information • present a report outlining the history of healthcare in the UK, including the development of the NHS up to its present-day structure • identify and define complementary or holistic health, alternative and integrated healthcare practices • investigate the concepts behind the need for integrative practice in healthcare and identify established centres that operate integrative healthcare practices • define the concepts of what health and wellbeing means from various perspectives and backgrounds, including from: ○ mainstream medicine professionals ○ complementary or holistic health, alternative, integrated healthcare professionals ○ individuals with no professional healthcare background • explain the link between current national trends for health promotion and the policies of the government's department of health • give examples of current health trends and the development of health promotion and how this can affect the perspectives of health in the general population

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 Learners should understand: • morals, ethics and values relating to complementary and integrated healthcare codes of practice • the importance of upholding professional standards • the roles of governing bodies in healthcare practices, including statutory regulation and voluntary regulation	Outcome 2 Learners can: • define morals, ethics and values and outline how they relate to the reputation of the therapist, their practice's reputation and the healthcare profession • investigate and summarise the role of governing and regulatory bodies in overseeing professional practice, including the requirements of the code of practice • evaluate the need for continuing professional development in healthcare practices • consider personal effectiveness as a therapist in practice, potential changes in practice requirements, and personal limitations in carrying out professional development
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • the importance of giving clients bespoke aftercare and homecare recommendations • the factors that may influence the client's health and enhance treatment outcomes, including: ○ diet and nutrition ○ sedentary lifestyle, movement and exercise ○ stress and stress management ○ external and environmental factors • how to identify lifestyle factors that may influence individual client treatment outcomes • how to communicate lifestyle adaptations and recommendations to clients	Outcome 3 Learners can: • identify a client's individual requirements for post-treatment care and the opportunities that exist to extend the benefits of the treatment • identify relevant lifestyle adaptations and communicate appropriate, bespoke recommendations to clients that will enhance and prolong the treatment aims

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 4 Learners should understand: • common health conditions and concerns and how they affect their clients • the limitations of complementary or holistic health treatments in the management of health conditions • the benefits and effects of complementary or holistic treatments and their appropriate use in the management of health conditions • the importance of recognising conditions that prohibit or are unsuitable for holistic or complementary therapies • the importance of recognising conditions that restrict or require treatment adaptations for holistic or complementary therapies • the appropriate action to take on recognition of conditions that are unsuitable for holistic or complementary therapies, • holistic or complementary treatment protocols for common conditions • mainstream treatment protocols for common conditions	Outcome 4 Learners can: • identify the effects of common health concerns and conditions • identify the benefits and effects of holistic or complementary therapies for the management of health concerns and conditions • identify the limitations of complementary or holistic treatments in the management of health conditions • identify conditions that prohibit or are incompatible with holistic or complementary therapies and take the appropriate course of action when communicating with clients • identify conditions that restrict or require treatment adaptations for holistic or complementary therapies and take the appropriate action • identify appropriate complementary or holistic health treatment protocols for health concerns and conditions such as: ○ stress-related conditions ○ menopause symptoms ○ minor non-contagious skin conditions ○ muscle and joint pain ○ muscle strains

Knowledge	Skills
	Outcome 4 (continued) Learners can: • identify appropriate mainstream treatment protocols for common health conditions such as: ○ stress related conditions ○ menopause symptoms ○ minor non-contagious skin conditions ○ muscle and joint pain ○ muscle strains
Outcome 5 Learners should understand: • current UK legislation relating to safe working environments, and how they affect the complementary and holistic health, and integrated therapy practices and protocols • the importance of recognising, preparing for and adapting work practices to ensure the comfort and safety of clients with diverse needs • the importance of conducting a risk assessment and keeping it up-to-date	Outcome 5 Learners can: • follow legislative requirements and recommendations to create a safe, comfortable working environment • evaluate their working practices and protocols regularly to make adaptations when required

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 6 Learners should understand: • the importance of maintaining self-care and building resilience for practitioners in holistic and complementary therapies • how to deal with challenging situations in the workplace • the importance of creating professional boundaries • the importance of developing effective time-management skills • how to carry out and use evaluation techniques effectively	Outcome 6 Learners can: • recognise and integrate self-care and resilience building strategies into their daily routines • adapt working practices that ensure their own emotional, physical and energy balance • use effective critical skills when dealing with challenging situations, such as active listening and empathic, solution-focused communication • use effective communication skills when conveying important information to clients and others • recognise when to apply professional boundaries and do so in a calm, approachable, assertive manner • use effective time management skills to maintain a well-balanced schedule throughout the working day

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 7 Learners should understand: • the importance of creating a comfortable, welcoming environment for clients and therapists, to enable effective client-therapist communication and consultation skills • the use of effective verbal and non-verbal communication and consultation skills to gain relevant information from clients • how to gather and organise relevant information gained throughout the consultation process to develop a bespoke treatment plan for a client • the importance of gaining client consent to treatment • the importance of compliance with GDPR • workplace requirements in relation to consultation procedures	Outcome 7 Learners can: • prepare themselves, their work environment and the client, to carry out an effective consultation • use effective communication, information recording and organising skills to gather relevant information from the client to allow them to produce bespoke treatment aims • comply with government regulations and workplace requirements

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 8 Learners should understand: • how to evaluate the information gathered to create an effective treatment plan suited to each client's individual requirements • the importance of choosing appropriate treatment modality, techniques and products to meet the client's individual requirements, accounting for any restrictions to treatment and including appropriate adaptations • how to recognise appropriate treatments and treatment methods that may be available to meet a client's requirements • the importance of understanding the ethos of holistically treating the person who has a health concern, disorder or imbalance, and not treating the disorder alone when creating bespoke treatment plans	Outcome 8 Learners can: • evaluate the information gathered to create an effective treatment plan designed to meet each client's individual requirements • consider the identified treatment aims and requirements to create a homecare plan that extends and supports the benefits of the treatment plan • communicate effectively to explain the relevance of the homecare plan and advise and encourage the client's active participation

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 9 Learners should understand: • how to identify personal strengths and highlight skills that need to be developed • the requirements for applying for and securing a workplace position, including: ○ creating and maintaining an up-to-date CV ○ investigating complementary, holistic or integrative workplaces ○ creating a shortlist of suitable complementary or holistic or integrative workplaces ○ how to communicate professionally with healthcare practitioners to secure a placement • how to build on knowledge acquired through practical, communication and self-awareness skills to develop effective interview techniques ○ evaluative skills and how to apply them to effectively highlight the valuable insights learned from the workplace experience	Outcome 9 Learners can: • use self-evaluation tools to highlight personal and professional strengths, and opportunities for growth • develop a strategy for securing a work placement within an appropriate holistic or complementary therapy or integrative health establishment • create a professional CV to send to prospective employers • identify suitable work placement establishments and relevant contacts for communication • secure a work placement in a suitable establishment that meets the requirements of the work placement brief • participate and assist complementary or holistic therapy or integrative health in a clinic setting • record workplace activities and relevant information

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 10 Learners should understand: - the meta-skills categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation, and associated meta-skills, as described in Skills 4.0 - the importance of developing meta-skills, including employability, adaptability and effectiveness - what meta-skills are most relevant to their vocational or academic context - how to develop meta-skills, including these approaches: - self-awareness: analysing preferences, strengths and development needs, meta-skills self-assessment - goal setting and action planning - reflective practice: principles, tools and approaches for effective reflective practice	Outcome 10 Learners can: - create a plan to develop their meta-skills - carry out, review and adapt their meta-skills development plan - assess their meta-skills 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 relevant information from research gathered from a variety of sources. For example, focusing on relevant and specific information relating to client needs when researching to develop bespoke treatment plans
- integrity:
 - maintaining a professional approach when dealing with clients
 - understanding and applying ethical behaviours in practice
 - being aware of and acting on values and principles
 - maintaining good timekeeping
 - being reliable
 - showing discipline
 - demonstrating trustworthiness when working with clients
 - carrying out a self-assessment of meta-skills
- adapting:
 - decision-making when responding to new information or changes while working with clients
 - reviewing treatment plans based on evaluations and client feedback
 - adapting sessions based on feedback
 - educating clients on components of a healthy lifestyle

- initiative:
 - using independent decision-making skills
 - using self-belief and self-motivation skills to enable responsible judgements throughout the tasks
 - applying learned knowledge and skills from tutorials, experience and research in relevant situations

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - listening to clients, mentors, assessors and peers
 - noting body language and words used and responding using appropriate language and intonation
- feeling:
 - having a sense of responsibility, sustainability, and empathy
 - showing compassion when working with clients
- collaborating:
 - collaborating with clients and peers or with other professionals to build relationships while working towards an agreed goal
- leading:
 - presenting ideas or concepts to other individuals or groups. For example, explaining and demonstrating aspects of a treatment plan to a client

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - sourcing information
 - researching
 - noticing significant information
 - asking questions
 - recognising problems and finding solutions
 - evaluating sessions
 - looking for ways to assess own meta-skills development
- creativity:
 - devising interesting and informative ways to present ideas or solutions to a given task. For example, creating reports or projects that are enjoyable to read as well as informative and relevant, or adapting homecare activities to best suit a client's lifestyle and personality
- sense-making:
 - applying holistic thinking when dealing with several factors that may influence a task. For example, organising, evaluating and editing information for reports or project presentations, or deciding on the relevant factors for bespoke treatment planning
- critical thinking:
 - deconstructing and applying effectively complex and variable data
 - analysing and identifying the relevant effects of treatments that can then be best used in individual circumstances. For example, distinguishing professional sources of information from lay person's opinion
 - choosing the best course of action regarding the client's treatment plan among a variety of alternatives

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- using calculations in time management for devising work schedules, keeping them on track at various points until completion dates
- managing time schedules for client appointments and meeting the centre's requirements allocated for treatments
- calculating the time required for each element of the treatment plan

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- sharing ideas and concepts with peers, mentors and assessors
- gaining information from other healthcare practitioners regarding prospective work placements. They may also be involved in communications with other healthcare providers regarding a client's fitness for holistic complementary therapy treatments
- explaining details relating to products, application and techniques chosen, so that the client can understand the importance of the treatment plan, aftercare and homecare advice

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by

- sustainably using paperless, electronic records to keep secure 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

You should make learners 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 practices and procedures that allow for minimum environmental negative impact, such as recyclable materials in practical classes. You should encourage learners to use products that have sustainably-sourced ingredients and manufacturing processes. Learners could use paperless presentations and assignments, and electronically record and secure professional discussion notes and client consultation records.

Delivery of unit

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Complementary Health. It is designed for integrative delivery to support and reinforce other units delivered in the qualification.

The notional time for delivery of this 3-credit unit is 120 hours. The amount of time allocated to each outcome is at your centre's discretion.

The following distribution of delivery times are approximations only. You should encourage learners to research, prepare and present the evidence for assessment in their own time.

The delivery order of the outcomes is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that you deliver some of the outcomes in this unit, or in other units, concurrently.

There are opportunities to integrate learning and assessment for outcomes 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 of this unit with other units in HNC Complementary Therapies.

Outcome 1: Research and define perspectives of health and wellbeing (8 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 2: Research and explain the principles in professional practice codes of conduct (8 hours)

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

Outcome 3: Investigate the effects of lifestyle and environmental factors on health, to develop client aftercare and bespoke homecare advice (10 hours)

For tutorial delivery, and introducing assessment tasks. You can integrate learning and assessment of this outcome with outcomes in the mandatory units:

Aromatherapy, Reflexology and Signature Body Massage Treatments, and optional units: Holistic Facial Techniques, Traditional Head Massage.

Outcome 4: Research common health conditions and concerns (20 hours)

For tutorial delivery and activities and introducing the research task, you should encourage learners to research, prepare and present the evidence for assessment in their own time. They should include information from outcome 3 and outcome 8, along with the effects and benefits of the practical treatments studied in this qualification, to reinforce the importance of critical thinking in holistic approaches in healthcare.

Outcome 5: Create a safe working environment (10 hours)

For tutorial delivery and activities and introducing the research and practical tasks. You can integrate learning and assessment with other practical-based treatments delivered with this qualification.

Outcome 6: Develop and maintain professional resilience (14 hours)

For tutorial delivery, activities and introducing the research and practical tasks. You should encourage learners to complete most of their research and tasks in their own time, although it may be useful for them to have access to 1 to 1 meetings with you and/or workplace supervisors.

Outcome 7: Develop effective communication and consultation skills (16 hours)

For tutorial delivery, activities and introducing the research and tasks. You can integrate learning and assessment of with other practical based treatments in the qualification.

Outcome 8: Develop effective treatment planning skills (12 hours)

For tutorial delivery, activities and introducing the research and tasks. You can integrate learning and assessment of with other practical based treatments in the qualification.

Outcome 9: Research and participate in clinic placement activities (12 hours)

For tutorial delivery and in class-based activities. The work placement activity is a minimum of 10 hours, which learners can do at a time negotiated between themselves, you and their workplace supervisor.

Outcome 10: Develop meta-skills in a vocational or academic context (10 hours)

You should introduce learners to meta skills at the beginning of their course, ideally during your induction and along with their course activities. You can give examples of how meta-skills may be gathered, recorded and presented.

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

In the unit, learners develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complementary therapies industry, including the principles and practices that support a professional, ethical and compassionate approach.

Learners integrate the knowledge from this unit with the learning and assessment of client-facing units that require practical skills. By building a strong understanding of current medical and holistic principles and practices, learners can identify the strengths and limitations of each modality in managing client health concerns, and develop realistic expectations of client outcomes.

They have a greater understanding of:

- research practices, evaluation of relevant data and a variety of presentation skills
- the history of healthcare and wellbeing, including the formation and role of the NHS
- the perspectives of health and wellbeing from a variety of viewpoints
- the professional practice codes of conduct principles
- the effects of lifestyle choices in relation to individuals' health and wellbeing
- how to tailor lifestyle advice and develop bespoke aftercare and homecare advice
- basic management of common health conditions and concerns in complementary holistic health, integrative and mainstream healthcare modalities
- how to create a safe working environment for clients, peers and themselves
- developing and maintaining professional resilience for working in a healthcare practice
- the importance of developing empathic and effective communication and consultation skills
- how to prepare clients for treatments by explaining the treatment process and making sure that they fully understand treatment aims and realistic outcomes

- how to evaluate information gained from communications with clients to devise empathic and effective bespoke treatment plans
- the skills involved in finding a work placement that will provide the best working environment, that is suited to the learners personal and professional goals
- the opportunities for the development of meta-skills in a vocational or academic context

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 HND Complementary and Holistic 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 and holistic health, or integrative health industries 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:

- products, equipment and tools: that must reflect current industry practice. All chosen products and equipment should be of a professional quality, reflecting the expectations of industry standards
- practical examples: real-life industry applications of complementary therapy treatments to provide context
- clinic setup: plinths, laundry, heated beds and/or blankets, candles, disposable towels, music, lighting and general ambiance

- digital tools: laptops, iPads and computers
- e-learning platforms: for virtual classes or supplementary learning (for example Microsoft teams, Moodle, Blackboard)
- presentation platforms and tools for visual learning aids
- course materials: learner handouts, textbooks, articles, and other reading and reference materials
- multimedia content: videos, podcasts, or online tutorials
- formative and summative assignments and quizzes: to track progress and understanding
- budget: sufficient funding for appropriate materials and tools
- facilities: access to a realistic working environment that should reflect current industry practice, including toilet and water facilities
- library access: for research and study

Approaches to delivery

You should clearly outline the content, learning approach and assessment criteria in week one of delivery.

You should make sure that you give learners sufficient theoretical knowledge to ensure competence and confidence to work in a clinic setting.

Initially, you should take a tutor-led approach, to guide learners' focus. You can do this through:

- discussions
- historical documentaries
- textbooks
- publications
- historical database records

Then, learners should carry out their own research, which you can direct and support them with. You should encourage learners to be creative in presenting their findings in a format that they feel that they can best illustrate their information.

You should encourage learners to develop and show skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) when they are recording and storing their outline information for reports. You should also encourage learners to produce first drafts of research. You should be involved at all stages of writing, and support learners to develop their skills in evaluating and collecting material.

You should monitor learners' progress and give them feedback that highlights areas where they did well, and areas they need to improve on.

Throughout delivery, you should incorporate a variety of approaches to learning and teaching, including:

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

This enables learners to generate the evidence required.

You should try to integrate relevant knowledge and skills in a realistic context. You should ensure learners know how complementary therapy principles and practices affect everyday procedures in the clinic environment.

You should encourage learners to develop good working practices that meet organisational, and current occupational and national, health and safety policies and procedures, to enhance their employability skills profile and to develop meta-skills.

Outcome 1

Learners research the history of healthcare prior to the development of the NHS, including approaches to healthcare, disease prevention, treatment and social care. They should include information on the formation of the NHS, including the

significant individuals involved. They should include a summary of the evolution, from the beginnings of the NHS to the medical model that exists in the present day.

In their presentations, learners should outline of the history of complementary and alternative healthcare practices, their role today, and the shift towards integrated healthcare practice.

Learners investigate a variety of definitions of health from various points of view, including from:

- mainstream medicine professionals
- complementary, holistic, alternative, integrated healthcare professionals
- individuals with no professional healthcare background

We recognise this to be a generalised overview of a section of society and that there are varying perspectives within each category.

Learners also research various dimensions of health, including the relative value placed on each.

Mainstream medical practice increasingly adopts holistic approaches, and access to online health information continues to shape public perspectives. In-class discussions should include:

- allopathic, reductionist and holistic medical models
- physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual influences on health
- the concepts of health that are linked with people's eco-social, environment and cultural influences
- the illness-wellness health continuum model in relation to perspectives of health
- current national trends for health promotion
- the procedures relating to the government's health education policy
- the stages between the recognition of health concerns that warrant research and solution
- the methods in which the information is distributed to the public
- an example of a health promotion and how it may have contributed to changing perspectives of health and healthcare

Outcome 2

Learners explore the principles of professional practice standards of complementary, alternative and integrated healthcare governing bodies codes of conduct. Learners discover the relevance and application of maintaining professional standards. You should introduce evaluation techniques that help them to examine their personal and professional practice skills, and highlight personal and professional practice development needs.

Introduce learners to current and relevant governing and regulatory bodies for each of the health care sectors. In-class discussions should include:

- the importance of ethics, regulations, morals and values
- the professional standards of practice

Learners then research and present a report to meet the criteria as set out in the evidence requirements.

Outcome 3

Learners develop skills in relation to:

- lifestyle
- diet and nutrition
- movement and exercise
- stress and stress management
- external and environmental factors affecting health

You can integrate learning and assessment across practical therapy units in HNC Complementary and Holistic Health.

Learner analyse client information gained in the consultation process more effectively and develop specific, bespoke after treatment advice, and lifestyle and homecare modifications to enhance treatment benefits.

Tutorials should include:

- basic nutritional requirements, exercise and movement, and stress management activities for diverse population groups
- a focus on promoting health and wellbeing
- addressing the needs of individuals with specific physical, psychological and emotional needs

Outcome 4

The common health conditions and concerns that learners choose to research should include conditions that are typical of those presenting in the complementary therapy clinical setting. If a client presents with health disorders, they should have already been diagnosed and identified as suitable for complementary treatment by their GP or mainstream medical consultant. You must emphasise to learners that they should not attempt to diagnose any health condition.

Learners should investigate and present a comparison of complementary and holistic health, and mainstream healthcare treatment protocols for the health conditions and concerns they have selected, and identify and evaluate similarities and differences in treatment approach.

They should identify conditions that are appropriate for complementary and holistic health therapies, and flag any conditions where caution is required. Their investigation can be integrated for learning and assessment purposes with other units in the HNC that have a practical element.

Learners must check for contra-indications and conditions that require adaptation or specific care prior to any treatment. Absolute and relative contra-indications may vary depending on the treatments carried out and products used. You must initially guide learners to identify occasions where a contra-indication is absolute.

In your discussion about absolute and relative contra-indications, you should include:

- fungal infections
- parasitic infections
- viral infections
- bacterial infections

- allergies
- recent injuries: cuts, abrasions, scars, operations, fractures or bruising
- ongoing medical treatments
- sunburn
- severe skin disorders, for example severe psoriasis and severe eczema
- hypersensitive skin
- dysfunction of the nervous system
- under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- eye infections
- ear infections
- recent aesthetic procedures (microneedling, botox and/or fillers)
- epilepsy (uncontrolled)
- diabetes (uncontrolled)
- high blood pressure (uncontrolled)
- low blood pressure (uncontrolled)
- claustrophobia
- pregnancy

You must make learners aware of the potential reactions associated with complementary therapy treatments and the precautions they should take.

Contra-actions and adverse reactions to complementary therapy treatments may include:

- dizziness, light-headedness, and/or nausea
- skin irritation or sensitivity
- increased urination and/or bowel activity
- muscle soreness and fatigue
- headaches
- general fatigue
- heightened or unexpected emotional release

You can deliver outcome 3 and outcome 4 holistically to help reinforce learners' understanding of lifestyle modification, including nutrition, exercise and stress

reduction as a treatment protocol for the management of certain health concerns and conditions.

Outcome 5

Learners develop an understanding of the importance of creating a safe working environment. You must make learners aware of the current legislation requirements that they are bound by to create a work environment that is safe, hygienic and complies with legal requirements. You should guide them through the steps they need to take to create and uphold safe working practices.

In addition to researching and presenting a summary of the legal and professional requirements, you can observe learners carrying out risk assessments, clinic audits and adapting their work environment when working with clients with differing needs.

Outcome 6

Learners focus on building resilience as they progress to working in a professional environment. They deal with clients requiring emotional and physical support in an empathetic and compassionate manner. You need to teach them how to prepare for their own self-care, wellbeing and stress management to empower them to cope with potentially challenging situations. You should introduce them to the importance of self-reflection and self-evaluation activities, and encourage learners to carry out practical exercises to discover their strengths and skills and highlight areas that could be developed further. You should also explore techniques and skills for their own personal management of challenging and stressful situations and could include activities such as time management and self-assessment, such as clinical audit, critical skills, and a SWOT analysis.

Many of the techniques and skills in this outcome help learners develop effective communication and consultation skills, preparing them for outcome 7.

Outcome 7

Learners gain knowledge and practical skills needed for effective communication and empathic, professional client rapport. They should create a welcoming, professional environment that prioritises client comfort and safety, and supports effective communication during the consultation process. Ensuring that information they gather is accurate and concise allows learners to evaluate and highlight the priorities for the treatment focus, thereby creating a more effective client centred treatment plan for outcome 8.

Outcome 8

Learners build on the knowledge gained from outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 to develop bespoke treatment plans for their clients. They evaluate the information gained from the consultation and their observations, to highlight the main features of a client's presenting condition, and identify their aims for the treatment outcome. They should choose appropriate treatment modalities, suitable products and identify any necessary adaptations that will meet both the client's aims and their own. Learners should observe the client's demeanour, posture, body language and physical presentation, as well as listen to the information they are giving throughout. You should encourage learners to record all relevant information to inform their aftercare advice, bespoke homecare advice, or future treatment adaptations.

Learners who have completed or are in the process of completing Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Signature Body Massage Treatments or Traditional Head Massage can cross-reference the practical evidence for outcome 8 of this unit. Learners carrying out this unit as a stand-alone unit must complete all practical assessments relating to this outcome.

The knowledge and practical skills gained in the activities above prepare learners for work placements, employment and/or clinic practice.

Outcome 9

Learners investigate complementary and holistic health therapy or integrative health work environments as potential workplaces. Their self-reflection and communication skills help them engage with practitioners and employers to secure a suitable work placement. Learners also prepare for work-based tasks, such as CV writing, interview skills, identifying employment modes and any professional development needs, and applying for work placement opportunities.

Outcome 10

Learners develop a plan to build their meta-skills, carry out, review and adapt their meta-skills development plan, and assess their meta-skills development. There are several online tools available to assess meta-skills.

[Skills Development Scotland](#) offers a suite of self-evaluation tools designed to help learners reflect on their meta-skills and identify areas for development.

Meta-skills self-assessment tools help learners conduct a self-assessment of various meta-skills, such as focusing, integrity, adapting, and more.

These tools can help the learner gain a better understanding of their meta-skills and identify areas for improvement.

You can make this outcome interactive and fun.

Approaches to assessment

Evidence can be generated through various types of assessment. The following suggestions are just examples; there may be other methods that are more suitable for specific learners.

For **outcomes 1 and 2** learners complete an open-book research report to meet the evidence requirements as specified.

For **outcomes 3 and 4** there is an open-book assessment where learners research independently to address all specified criteria, demonstrating a depth of knowledge reflective of SCQF level 7. You can assess practical skills developed from the knowledge from these outcomes with other units involving communication, consultation, treatment planning and client advisory skills.

The evidence required for **outcome 5** is developed over time from a series of evaluative activities you introduced at various points throughout the unit and/or course delivery. You should encourage learners to keep a secure portfolio of their completed activities for reflection and as evidence of the completion of this outcome. Learners can integrate certain elements of their reflective evaluation to use in other outcomes or units.

Learners can present evidence for **outcomes 1 to 8** as a single or as separate reports. **Outcome 9** is as a single portfolio of evidence. Assignments may use digital applications or an e-portfolio as appropriate to your centre's delivery and assessment procedures. Evidence can be combined or integrated with other units. Examples for suggested assessment integration is outlined under the section 'Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment' in the HNC Complementary and Holistic Health Educator Guide.

You should record cross-referencing of integrated assessments. Encourage learners to use reliable sources to gather accurate data for evaluation, analysis and presentation. Learners must authenticate the evidence. Examples may be through accurate referencing, witness statements or testimonies, and uploading work through an anti-plagiarism platform.

All project work should contain a declaration of validity that the content is the learners' own work unless cited otherwise. Learners should sign and date their submissions. You should encourage digital submissions through your centre's virtual learning environment (VLE) using anti-plagiarism software.

Learners should use cohesive language and correct grammar and punctuation as required of SCQF level 7 standard. Learners should include a range of academic references from a range of sources to support their writing. Learners should present

their projects in a coherent format. The centre may wish to specify their own format criteria, for example the preferred font text and size.

You should use an assessor checklist to assess the learner's competence for each evidence requirement. This is alongside a client consultation record to ensure that all practical evidence requirements are met and documented, allowing for tracking of learner progress throughout the unit.

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

Principles and Practices of Complementary Health (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 to develop knowledge, skills and practical experience to prepare you for working in a complementary and holistic health, or integrated therapy environment.

You research the history of healthcare, health maintenance and the varying perspectives of health and wellbeing, illness and disease. Additionally, you find out about the legal and professional requirements of complementary and holistic health, integrated and mainstream healthcare approaches to maintaining health.

You learn about common health conditions and concerns and how they are managed within mainstream healthcare and complementary protocols. This includes conditions that may be:

- appropriately managed through complementary therapies
- managed alongside mainstream healthcare provision
- referred for medical review

You analyse client's health concerns to formulate, prepare, and administer bespoke treatments while providing personalised aftercare, homecare and lifestyle recommendations. The unit covers absolute and relative contra-indications, potential

contra and adverse reactions, and the physical and psychological effects of treatments.

You devise treatment plans that align with client's objectives, while adhering to established treatment protocols, product knowledge guidelines, and current health and safety regulations.

The importance and maintenance of safe working practices includes:

- creating and maintaining a safe working environment for the therapist, client and others
- practitioner coping skills
- communication skills
- treatment planning
- clinical practice skills
- evaluation skills

You are primarily assessed through open-book research, analysis and evaluation of the data and presentation of the findings. Practical skills are assessed by observation of the applied knowledge within practical consultation, communication and treatment planning.

You develop skills in researching, report writing, evaluating and presenting.

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

This unit incorporates a workplace element designed to consolidate and reinforce the practical knowledge and skills you acquire through HNC Complementary and Holistic Health. This prepares you for professional practice in complementary or holistic health. The work placement opportunity allows you to demonstrate your competencies in a live clinical environment.

Meta-skills

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

- focusing:
 - concentrating on relevant information from research gathered from a variety of sources. For example, focusing on relevant and specific information relating to client needs when researching to develop bespoke treatment plans
- integrity:
 - maintaining a professional approach when dealing with clients
 - understanding and applying ethical behaviours in practice
 - being aware of and acting on values and principles
 - maintaining good timekeeping
 - being reliable
 - showing discipline
 - demonstrating trustworthiness when working with clients
 - carrying out a self-assessment of meta-skills
- adapting:
 - decision-making when responding to new information or changes while working with clients.
 - reviewing treatment plans based on evaluations and client feedback
 - adapting sessions based on feedback and educating clients on components of a healthy lifestyle
- initiative:
 - using independent decision-making skills
 - using self-belief and self-motivation skills to enable responsible judgements throughout the tasks

- applying learned knowledge and skills from tutorials, experience and research in relevant situations

Social intelligence

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

- communicating:
 - listening to clients, mentors, assessors and peers
 - noting body language and words used and responding using appropriate language and intonation
- feeling:
 - having a sense of responsibility, sustainability, and empathy
 - showing compassion when working with clients
- collaborating:
 - collaborating with clients and peers or with other professionals to build relationships while working towards an agreed goal
- leading:
 - presenting ideas or concepts to other individuals or groups. For example, explaining and demonstrating aspects of a treatment plan to a client

Innovation

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

- curiosity:
 - sourcing information
 - researching

- noticing significant information
- asking questions
- recognising problems and finding solutions
- evaluating sessions
- looking for ways to assess own meta-skills development
- creativity:
 - devising interesting and informative ways to present ideas or solutions to a given task. For example, creating reports or projects that are enjoyable to read as well as informative and relevant, or adapting homecare activities to best suit a client's lifestyle and personality
- sense-making:
 - applying holistic thinking when dealing with several factors that may influence a task. For example, organising, evaluating and editing information for reports or project presentations, or deciding on the relevant factors for bespoke treatment planning
- critical thinking:
 - deconstructing and applying effectively complex and variable data
 - analysing and identifying the relevant effects of treatments that can then be best used in individual circumstances. For example, distinguishing professional sources of information from a lay person's opinion
 - choosing the best course of action regarding the client's treatment plan among a variety of alternatives

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 therapies sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

You should be 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 practices and procedures that allow for minimum environmental negative impact, such as recyclable materials in practical classes. You should use products that use sustainably-sourced ingredients and manufacturing processes. You should also use paperless submissions of your presentations and assignments, recorded professional discussions, and secure electronically client consultation records.

Administrative information

Published: June 2026 (version 1.0)

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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