

NextGen: HN unit specification

Reflexology (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JW98 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.

Published: June 2026 (version 1.0)

Copyright © Qualifications Scotland 2026

Contents

Unit purpose	1
Unit outcomes	3
Knowledge and skills	9
Meta-skills	13
Literacies	16
Learning for Sustainability	17
Delivery of unit	18
Professional recognition	19
Additional guidance	20
Equality and inclusion	33
Information for learners	34
Administrative information.....	39

Unit purpose

This unit gives learners the knowledge, skills and practical experience they need to plan, deliver and evaluate bespoke reflexology treatments that meet an individual client's health requirements, concerns and conditions.

Learners research the origin, theory, historical development and philosophical roots of reflexology and examine how these inform current, safe and effective client-centred practice in integrated healthcare. They research different reflexology approaches, including traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the Ingham method and zone therapy. They also learn about concepts and energetic values, including meridian theory, Qi flow and yin and yang balance.

Learners recognise common signs of physical, psychological and emotional imbalances and energetic interpretations.

They also develop effective and professional communication skills and apply them during client consultations to assess the client's requirements, demonstrating professional competence and preparing for an appropriate treatment environment.

Learners research current government requirements for reflexology treatment to adequately prepare a treatment environment that meets centre and current health and safety requirements.

They also learn about the reflex points of the feet and hands, and research indications and contra-indications, to support safe and effective treatment.

Learners research the possible effects of reflexology on the body systems and use their knowledge and skills to create suitable treatment plans to meet their client's requirements. They perform reflexology treatments on the feet, accurately locating reflex points and applying recognised techniques with appropriate pressure, rhythm and movement. During treatments, learners observe, recognise and record their findings, such as potential imbalances.

Learners complete a minimum of **four treatments** for **two case-study clients**, demonstrating a variety of reflexology massage techniques. They evaluate the

effectiveness of these treatments by monitoring outcomes individually and progressively over time. They reflect on practice and treatment outcomes, and consider client and peer feedback to adapt treatment plans accordingly.

This unit is part of HNC Complementary Health and is primarily intended for learners who wish to pursue a career in complementary, holistic or integrative healthcare practice. It is also suitable for those who wish to expand their existing knowledge and skills in wellness, spa or beauty therapies. The unit can also be studied on a stand-alone basis.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. Before they start the unit, we recommend learners have completed, or are working towards, one or more of the following:

- 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)

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. research the origin, theory, history and philosophy of reflexology
2. plan and prepare reflexology treatments
3. perform reflexology treatments
4. evaluate the effectiveness of the reflexology treatments

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide written evidence showing that they understand the history of reflexology, along with its key principles and approaches. They must also research and describe absolute and relative contra-indications, any adaptations that may be needed, and possible contra-actions. This should be completed as an openbook written report. The information can be presented in one combined report or in separate pieces of work. Evidence relating to contra-indications may be shared with other units in the qualification. If the unit is taken on its own, all written evidence must be submitted.

For outcomes 2, 3 and 4, you must record the learner's performance using an observation checklist. This must be supported by the learner's completed treatment log entries. These documents, along with any professional discussion notes, must be kept by the centre.

Research the origin, history, theory and philosophy of reflexology (outcome 1)

Learners must describe:

- the origin of reflexology
- the historical development of reflexology to modern day practice (Ingham method, zone therapy, traditional applications)
- core principles and philosophy of TCM to maintain health

- energetic values in reflexology, including meridian theory, Qi Flow, and yin and yang theory
- common imbalances and what they could suggest in a physical, psychological and emotional capacity
- how to correctly identify and locate reflex points on feet and hands
- potential effects of reflexology on the body systems

Learners provide evidence in open-book conditions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of:

- general contra-indications:
 - contagious skin diseases
 - dysfunction of the nervous system
 - recent scar tissue
 - undiagnosed lumps and swellings
 - uncontrolled diabetes
 - uncontrolled epilepsy
 - uncontrolled high or low blood pressure
 - pregnancy during first trimester
 - dysfunction of the musculoskeletal system
- specific contra-indications:
 - thrombosis
 - phlebitis
 - increased temperature
 - trauma or infection of the foot
 - shingles
 - sepsis
- relative contra-indications:
 - undergoing medical treatment, including medication
 - diabetes (types 1 and 2)
 - epilepsy

- high blood pressure
- low blood pressure
- pregnancy after 12 weeks
- cuts and abrasions
- during cancer treatment
- metal or electronic implants
- autoimmune disorder
- immediate, short-term and long-term effects of contra-actions and reactions, such as:
 - allergy
 - sensitivity
 - skin irritation
 - rash erythema
 - hyperaemia
 - headache
 - nausea
 - increased urination
 - increased bowel movement
 - fatigue
 - energy boost
 - coughing
 - sneezing
 - emotional release

Plan and prepare reflexology treatments (outcome 2)

You must observe learners demonstrating:

- their ability to conduct professional client consultations by:
 - using effective consultation techniques
 - using appropriate communication skills

- using confidentiality procedures that comply with general data protection regulation (GDPR) requirements
- adhering to control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) requirements
- taking the case history of clients
- gaining client consent
- adequate preparation of the treatment environment to meet centre and current health and safety requirements
- self-preparation
- client preparation
- appropriate liaison with healthcare practitioners, where required
- holistic and energetic frameworks to assess client needs for treatment planning
- the ability to identify potential imbalances within a reflexology treatment

Perform reflexology treatments (outcome 3)

Learners must show they can:

- provide relevant methods of supporting the client throughout treatment
- maintain a safe, professional and comfortable treatment environment
- analyse the foot, considering racial diversity, in terms of:
 - skin texture
 - temperature
 - colour
 - smell
 - tone
 - moisture content
 - mobility
 - abnormalities
 - condition of nails
- perform reflexology treatments using a range of recognised techniques, including:
 - thumb and finger walking
 - effleurage

- petrissage
- mobilisation techniques
- hooking
- pointing
- gliding
- apply appropriate pressure, rhythm and movement
- identify correct location of reflex points relating to the body structures
- make relevant observations during treatment
- make adaptations to the treatment plan, if required
- carry out post treatment client care
- advise clients appropriately on:
 - contra-actions to treatment
 - aftercare advice
 - bespoke home care advice and recommendations
- carry out the treatment within a commercially viable time

Learners should provide a rationale for the treatment plan, including the choice of massage medium and techniques, in the treatment log. This can also be supported by professional discussion.

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

Learners must perform appropriate reflexology massage techniques for **a minimum of four reflexology treatments** on **two separate case-study clients**. Each client should present a different treatment aim.

Evaluate the effectiveness of reflexology treatments (outcome 4)

Learners must:

- effectively gather and use client, mentor and/or assessor feedback to monitor client progress and adapt the treatment plan accordingly
- apply ongoing, reflective evaluation techniques to reflect on own practice and treatment outcomes

- make recommendations that support and promote client wellbeing
- provide continuing, professional practice
- critically evaluate treatment effectiveness

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 1 Learners should understand: • methods of researching, reporting and presenting • the origin of reflexology • the historical development of reflexology to modern-day practice, including: ○ the Ingham method ○ zone therapy ○ traditional applications • the theory behind reflexology practice • core principles and philosophy of TCM • the body systems • the benefits of reflexology in integrated healthcare • energetic principles of treatment • common imbalances and what they could suggest in a physical, psychological and emotional capacity • how absolute and relative contra-indications and contra-actions in reflexology treatments can affect treatment outcomes, treatment planning and treatment evaluation	Outcome 1 Learners can: • access professional and accurate data sources to research and present relevant information • summarise the energetic principles of reflexology and the physical, psychological and emotional effects on the body • research and present information regarding absolute and relative contra-indications and contra-actions to reflexology treatments

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 2 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 • COSHH requirements	Outcome 2 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 the client's aims, expectations and comfort ○ explaining the treatment process ○ explaining the potential benefits, effects and limitations of the treatment ○ gaining relevant information adhering to GDPR guidelines, in a friendly, professional manner ○ obtaining consent from the client to proceed with the treatment plan ○ identifying potential imbalances in a reflexology treatment ○ recording information to create a bespoke treatment plan for the client • carry out the treatment within a commercially viable time, as agreed by the centre

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 3 Learners should understand: • how to identify and apply appropriate reflexology techniques in treatment • the importance of observations during treatment • the importance of post-treatment client care • relevant advice on client care • the importance of acknowledging the presence of absolute and relative contra-indications • aftercare advice • bespoke homecare advice and recommendations • treatment effects on the body systems	Outcome 3 Learners can: • identify the location of all reflex points on the foot • apply appropriate reflexology techniques, to create bespoke treatment plans for client's requirements • identify relevant observations and record the findings • 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 • adhere to government legislation to demonstrate safe hygienic practices in the workplace • maintain professional discretion and confidentiality concerning client records • select and communicate bespoke post-treatment client care, including advice on: ○ possible contra-actions to treatment and how to minimise the risk ○ aftercare advice and self-care ○ homecare advice and recommendations designed to meet the agreed aims and maintain the benefits of the treatment

Knowledge	Skills
Outcome 4 Learners should understand: • evaluation methods • the importance of ongoing reflective practice and evaluation skills, to: ○ make recommendations that support and promote client wellbeing ○ make recommendations that support additional professional development	Outcome 4 Learners can: • interpret client feedback and give the client constructive and relevant advice and support • record clearly and accurately client details about the effectiveness of reflexology treatments • adhere to current relevant legislation throughout • use client's feedback to assess the effectiveness of the treatment • use assessor and/or mentor's 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:
 - actively listening to the client throughout the consultation
 - identifying the client's needs and any potential imbalances that may occur during the reflexology treatment
 - prioritising what is most relevant to the treatment plan
 - maintaining focus on treatment aims throughout
- integrity
 - maintaining a professional approach
 - acting on ethics, morals and values, including time keeping, reliability, discipline and trustworthiness
- adapting:
 - responding to new information when evaluating observations or receiving client, peer and/or mentor feedback
 - making responsible decisions to alter a course of action
 - reviewing a treatment plan to account for a change in circumstances, where appropriate
- initiative:
 - using independent decision-making skills
 - having self-belief and self-motivation skills to enable responsible judgements

- using information gained from clients to produce a bespoke treatment plan within a responsible time frame
- considering sequence and duration of treatment, choice of relevant support methods required during treatment, application of reflexology techniques and precise location of reflex points
- 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 the words used throughout the treatment process
 - using appropriate language and intonation
- feeling:
 - showing empathy, compassion and understanding when working with clients
- collaborating:
 - working 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:
 - using findings creatively to plan and adapt treatment plans after listening and responding to client's communicated requirements
 - interpreting the possible meaning of recorded imbalances during treatment
- sense-making:
 - applying holistic thinking when dealing with several factors that may influence a particular approach when producing bespoke treatment plans for clients
 - evaluating data and/or information to decide what techniques are best suited to help clients manage their health concerns and/or wellbeing
- critical thinking:
 - deconstructing complex and variable data
 - identifying physical, psychological and emotional imbalances to decide what approaches to take to reinstate balance
 - analysing and identifying the relevant effects in individual circumstances

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- considering the timing and duration of treatments

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- effectively communicating with peers and mentors to share ideas and concepts relating to coursework
- using effective communication skills to gain information to interpret client's requirements
- explaining the reasons for chosen applications and techniques, to ensure the client understands the importance of the treatment plan, and aftercare and home care advice

Digital

Learners develop digital skills by:

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

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.

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 units.

The notional time for delivery of this 2-credit unit is 80 hours. The amount of time allocated to each outcome is at your centre's discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time (approximations only), including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Research the origin, theory, history and philosophy of reflexology (16 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 — Plan and prepare reflexology treatments (20 hours)

You can deliver this outcome concurrently with outcome 3 to cover tutorials, practical demonstrations and learner practice relating to planning and preparing for reflexology treatments.

Outcome 3 — Perform reflexology treatments (20 hours)

You can deliver this outcome concurrently with outcome 2 to cover tutorial, practical demonstrations and learner practice relating to performing reflexology treatments.

Outcome 4 — Evaluate the effectiveness of the reflexology treatments (16 hours)

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

This leaves 8 hours for remediation and/or contingency.

Professional recognition

Learners who successfully complete this unit may be able to register for the following associations:

- 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 Association of Reflexologists (AoR) and the General Regulatory Council for Complementary Therapies (GRCCT) are two prominent professional bodies in the UK that recognise qualifications in reflexology. While specific recognition of Qualifications Scotland Complementary Therapies (Reflexology) at SCQF level 7 may depend on the curriculum's alignment with their standards, both organisations have frameworks for assessing qualifications.
- Associated bodies:
 - The College of Medicine and Integrated Healthcare
 - The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC)
 - The International Institute of Reflexology (UK)
 - The British Reflexology Association
 - The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent authority promoting transparency, accountability and data protection relevant for GDPR and handling personal data

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

In this unit, learners deepen their knowledge, skills and practical experience to plan, deliver and evaluate bespoke reflexology treatments to meet the needs of individual clients. They explore the origins, theory, historical development and philosophical foundations of reflexology, and how these inform safe, effective, client-centred practice in integrated healthcare.

Learners study key reflexology approaches, including TCM, the Ingham method, and zone therapy, and develop an understanding of core concepts such as meridian theory, Qi flow, and yin and yang. They learn to recognise common physical, psychological, emotional, and energetic imbalances.

We recommend that you give learners an introduction to the unit in week 1, so that they can understand fully what is required of them.

You should encourage learners to research other reflexology approaches, concepts and energetic values to broaden their overall knowledge and understanding of reflexology. This encourages creative thinking during future treatment planning.

Teaching hand reflexology is not mandatory, but we encourage you to teach and demonstrate it as an alternative to foot reflexology, when health and safety requirements contra-indicate treatment of the feet. We'd also encourage you to include relevant hand reflex points when learners give home care advice to clients to support the treatment outcome. For example, learners can use the hands as an alternative in situations where the client is an amputee or has bruising and/or abrasions in the treatment area on the foot or feet. This benefits learners who wish to advance in further studies.

You should give learners a reflexology foot chart to refer to throughout the unit.

Learners should cover all techniques and reflex points of the foot map as a full routine treatment. They should plan and prepare their process to build confidence in knowledge, maintain flow of progression, and comply with the evidence requirements, centre's instruction and the client's individual requirements.

Learners should analyse the client's feet and record relevant findings throughout treatment, considering racial and cultural diversity. Findings should relate to the initial condition of feet, any changes to condition during and after treatment, and any potential imbalances indicated.

Conditions that learners should be aware of when analysing clients' feet include (but are not limited to):

- tenderness in a reflex point
- changes in skin colouration, such as light or dark patches, redness, paleness, birthmarks or freckles, blemishes
- temperature of skin
- textural changes in the skin, such as hard or dry areas, crystallisation, lumps or cracks

Learners should study each body system in relation to the location of the structures, including organs and glands in the body and on the foot. The benefits of reflexology can be considered system by system, including:

- circulatory
- respiratory
- genitourinary
- nervous
- endocrine
- digestive
- skeletal
- muscular
- accessory organs

You should take a learner-centred, participative and practical approach throughout, so that learners can understand the relevance of the knowledge more easily as they

experience the practical application. You must give learners feedback on their progress throughout, where you should highlight aspects where learners did well and areas that should be improved.

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.

In your tutorials, you should cover theoretical aspects, and encourage research to enhance and give breadth and depth to learning.

Giving practical demonstrations that are followed by supported role-play initially with peers gives learners practice and confidence before they progress to the working environment. Formative work throughout enhances performance.

You should help learners to:

- demonstrate professional communication with clients
- ensure effective communication during consultation
- develop appropriate treatment plans
- select and use appropriate products and techniques, considering notes and compatibility
- adapt techniques to meet individual client needs
- recognise the importance of giving relevant lifestyle advice

Learners must understand the limits of techniques, applications and product mediums, and recognise the ethical boundaries of practice. They must not attempt to diagnose ailments or suggest cures.

There are opportunities for cross delivery and holistic assessment across other mandatory units in the HNC Complementary Health framework.

You should integrate relevant current legislation in a realistic context, to make learners aware of how legislation affects everyday practice in the clinic environment.

Learners research current government requirements relevant in current reflexology practice. These should include GDPR and risk assessments of equipment and facilities. COSHH applies to any products used during treatment that contain essential oils, preservatives, fragrances, allergens or irritants such as oils, waxes, creams, lotions, cleaning products and hygiene sprays.

You must develop learners' understanding of their responsibilities regarding relevant legislation, so they can check their own working practices and working areas for any risks to themselves or others. Encourage learners to develop good working practices that meet organisational and current government health and safety policies and procedures. This enhances their employability skills profile.

You can integrate aspects of these activities with other units, including:

- 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 Therapies (SCQF level 7)

Your centre should establish links with industry representatives, who may be willing to offer visits from a member of staff to demonstrate contemporary reflexology methods. This enhances the learner experience.

Learners must carry out practical activities in a realistic working environment or real workplace. They work with customers and others in the team to develop good working practice. You should therefore incorporate a variety of approaches to learning and teaching, including:

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

This enables learners to generate the evidence required.

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 that demonstrates an in-depth technical knowledge of the unit, and the standard of competencies required, for example Higher National Diploma (HND) in Complementary Therapies, HND Complementary Health or equivalent
- hold an appropriate teaching qualification, or be working towards one
- be able to interpret current working practices, technologies and products in the beauty 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

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

Your centre must have access to a clinic environment to allow for teaching and assessing.

Learners must have access to:

- a realistic clinic practice environment, suitable for carrying out complementary therapy treatments that reflect current industry practice, including toilet and water facilities
- hygiene spray
- cotton pads
- product applicators and a variety of product mediums, such as waxes, lotions, talc and balms

- supports, such as bolsters, towels and pillows
- practical examples of real-life industry applications of reflexology 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 reference materials (for example Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard)
- software applications to support the development of e-portfolios and other digital artefacts and communication tools, including those required by neurodiverse client groups
- access to materials to record consultations, notes and findings during treatments
- massage products and mediums, such as creams, lotions, balms, waxes, talc and cleaning sprays

Approaches to delivery

Energetic values and principles of reflexology

Teach learners about:

- energetic values in reflexology, describing its influence on energy flow, balance, and overall vitality
- how reflexology works through subtle vibrational interactions that support the body's natural homeostasis
- the energetic principles that relate to how sequences and techniques influence the body and complement biochemical effects
- how these principles recognise individual constitutional differences and align with traditional healing systems, such as Ayurveda and TCM

Signs of imbalance and energetic interpretations

Teach learners about:

Signs of physical imbalance

- pain, tenderness or sensitivity in a reflex point
- hard skin, callouses and corns
- swelling or puffiness
- changes in skin colour: paleness, redness
- temperature differences: hot and cold areas
- crystals or gritty deposits under the skin
- tight or stiff muscles and joints

Energetic interpretation of physical imbalance

- pain or sensitivity: blocked or congested energy in the related organ or system
- cold areas: deficient or stagnant energy and poor circulation
- hot areas: inflammation or overactivity
- crystals: accumulated toxins or metabolic waste
- altered skin texture: long-term imbalance or chronic organ issues

Signs of emotional imbalance

- mood swings
- anxiety
- sadness
- irritability
- emotional release during session: crying, laughter, sighs
- sensitive reflexes in areas tied to the nervous system: solar plexus, diaphragm
- tension or holding patterns in feet or hands

Energetic interpretation of emotional imbalance

- solar plexus area tenderness: difficulty processing emotions, suppressed feelings
- heart or lung reflexes: grief, emotional trauma, difficulty expressing love
- liver reflex sensitivity: anger, frustration, emotional repression
- kidney and adrenal reflexes: fear, anxiety, chronic stress

Signs of psychological imbalance

- restlessness or inability to relax during treatment
- uneven energy flow or lack of grounding
- trouble with sleep or concentration (as reported by client)
- overstimulation or numbness in reflex areas related to the brain or head

Energetic interpretation of psychological imbalance

- brain reflexes: mental overactivity, stress, confusion
- spine reflexes: mental and/or emotional burdens or misalignment in beliefs
- pituitary and/or pineal gland reflexes: imbalance in hormonal or circadian rhythms affecting mood and cognition

Contra-indications and treatment considerations

Teach learners about:

- absolute contra-indications: circumstances in which an approach would be avoided due to a client's condition or health concern
- relative contra-indications: concerns that may be treated with caution, or by adapting the treatment to avoid unwanted consequences for the client or therapist. The decision to avoid treatment is based on taking incompatible actions and energetic or therapeutic properties into account
- contra-indications: conditions that may prohibit treatment, and why
- special care conditions that restrict treatment and require tailored approaches that accommodate the unique needs of the client, especially when they have specific health conditions or limitations

- possible contra-actions and reactions to treatments and why contra-action refers to a reaction that occurs during or after a therapeutic treatment that is inclusive of both positive and adverse effects

Reflexology background and development

Teach learners:

- the origins of reflexology, referring to where it began, including its native and geographical locations
- the philosophical roots and historical development of reflexology to modern-day practice
- how to compare traditional reflexology with contemporary research to support evidence-based practice

Products and materials

Teach learners:

- how to select the best products to suit client needs from a range of products, including:
 - creams
 - lotions
 - gels
 - balms
 - waxes
 - talc
 - hygiene sprays
 - sanitisers and disinfectants
 - pre-made base products
- how to comply with legislation relating to safe storage of products, where applicable
- GDPR requirements when completing and storing client records

Professional practice and standards

Teach learners:

- how to comply with organisational and industry professional standards, including:
 - personal preparation, including psychological and emotional readiness to carry out the treatment
 - preparing and presenting the treatment environment
 - meeting industry requirements for timing, sequence and duration of treatments
 - following current health and safety legislation

Client care and treatment planning

Teach learners:

- how to use comprehensive consultation techniques
- how to plan treatment based on consultation notes, client requirements, choice of products, technique and application
- preparing and positioning clients to ensure client comfort and safety
- how to record and maintain accurate client data

Reflexology techniques and application

Teach learners:

- the benefits of applying specific reflexology techniques:
 - combining techniques to address structural, muscular, nervous, and energetic layers of tension and imbalances
 - which techniques are best for certain requirements, for example accessing deeper reflex points, covering larger or smaller areas, relaxing muscles and joints, boosting lymph circulation
- how to adapt the technique and application to suit different treatment objectives
- the importance of continuity, pressure and rhythm in massage techniques

Aftercare and evaluation

Teach learners:

- how to give appropriate aftercare
- how to give lifestyle advice that may improve the effectiveness of the treatment
- methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the reflexology massage treatment

Approaches to assessment

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

You can cross-reference contra-indications and conditions that restrict treatment in outcome 1, if learners have successfully completed the following:

- Signature Body Massage Treatments outcome 4
- Principles and Practices of Complementary Therapies outcome 4

You can also combine the open-book research assignment in outcome 1 to integrate outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in the evidence requirements in Research Skills.

Outcome 1

Learners should carry out their research reports in open-book conditions, which can be submitted over a period of weeks or as a single piece of work. The format that the open-book research is presented in is at your centre's discretion, however you should retain evidence to meet Qualifications Scotland requirements for qualification verification purposes. Centres should implement robust measures to verify the authenticity of learners' work, for example by using advanced plagiarism detection tools and AI-powered checkers.

Learners should research:

- the origin, theory, historical development and philosophical roots of reflexology, and how these form current, safe and effective client-centred practice in integrated healthcare
- different reflexology approaches, including TCM, the Ingham method and zone therapy
- the practice concepts and energetic values involved
- common signs of physical, emotional and psychological imbalances and energetic interpretations
- relevant body systems, to understand the effects of the treatment and absolute, relative and specific contra-indications, special care, and contra-actions
- the correct location of reflex points on a foot map

Outcomes 2 to 4

Performance evidence for outcomes 2 to 4 should be gathered concurrently over a realistic timeframe, to give learners the opportunity to develop good working practices.

Learners must prepare for and demonstrate full reflexology treatments covering all reflex points and techniques by evidence requirement.

Each client should present with different treatment aims, for example to help with issues such as:

- the management of stress-related symptoms
- sleep improvement
- minor digestive issues
- detoxification
- improved blood circulation

Learners must use appropriate reflexology techniques with the minimum of four treatments for each of the two clients. They should demonstrate a variety of reflexology massage techniques in the case studies, including:

- thumb and finger walking
- effleurage

- petrissage
- mobilisation techniques
- hooking
- pointing
- gliding

These techniques should comply with the centre's instruction and the client's individual requirements.

You can observe any techniques not demonstrated in the case studies on an alternative occasion for assessment, or on additional clients, if necessary, as a single treatment.

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

Practical performances must be carried out in a commercially acceptable time. There are opportunities for formative assessment in the outcomes, including self and peer formative assessment, leading to a summative assessment that should be carried out in a realistic clinic environment on a client external to the class peer group.

Learners should evaluate their treatments as evidence for outcome 4 as close to the completed treatment time as possible. They may have to collate and review feedback and therefore may have a time lapse between the completion of the treatment and completing the evaluation. Encourage learners to complete notes of any information they have, such as their own evaluation of the treatment stages, immediately after the treatment.

Prior verification of centre-devised assessments helps to ensure that the national standard is being met.

You should record evidence of practical performance using an assessor observation checklist, alongside completed treatment log entries and professional discussion. Learners should make clear what their rationale is for the treatment plan, including the choice of techniques in the treatment log.

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

Reflexology

(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

In this unit, you develop your knowledge, skills and practical experience to plan, perform and evaluate bespoke reflexology treatments for individual client's health requirements, concerns and conditions.

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

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
- Signature Body Massage Treatments
- The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health
- Research Skills

On completion of the unit, you can:

- apply reflexology treatments safely and appropriately, in line with professional, ethical, and health and safety requirements
- use effective communication and consultation techniques to assess two clients' individual requirements over a course of four treatments each
- analyse client information and use creative and critical thinking to design, deliver, evaluate and adapt reflexology treatment plans
- research the origin, theory, historical development and philosophical roots of reflexology, and explain how these inform current, safe and effective client-centred practice in integrated healthcare
- research different reflexology approaches, including traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the Ingham method and zone therapy
- explain concepts and energetic values involved, including meridian theory, Qi flow and yin and yang balance
- recognise common signs of physical, psychological and emotional imbalances and energetic interpretations
- identify indications and contra-indications to ensure safe and effective application of treatment
- prepare yourself professionally and set up the treatment environment appropriately for reflexology
- research and comply with current government requirements for reflexology treatment, to maintain health and safety standards
- locate and identify reflex points of the feet
- explain possible effects of reflexology on the body systems and use this knowledge to create treatment plans that meet individual client requirements
- perform reflexology treatment on the feet by using correct location of reflex points, and applying recognised techniques with appropriate pressure, rhythm and movement
- observe and record treatment findings, including signs of imbalance
- interpret what imbalances could suggest in a physical, psychological and emotional capacity, including the possible energetic meaning and effective approaches you would take to reinstate balance
- work with peers and progress to real clients in a clinical therapy environment

- plan, deliver and evaluate your sessions for a client, based on their individual health and wellbeing needs over a minimum of four sessions
- monitor the client's progress, evaluate the effectiveness of the treatments and advise on lifestyle and treatment plan adaptations

There is a range of assessments, 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

Meta-skills

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

- **Focusing:** on what the client says throughout the consultation period, to identify the client's needs, any potential imbalances that may occur during the reflexology treatment, and what is most relevant to the treatment plan. Maintaining focus on the treatment aims throughout.
- **Integrity:** maintaining a professional approach by acting on ethics, morals and values, including time-keeping, reliability, discipline and trustworthiness throughout, when working with clients and peers.
- **Adapting:** responding to new information in the form of evaluating observations or receiving client, peer or mentor feedback and making responsible decisions to alter a course of action. This could mean reviewing a treatment plan to account

for a change in circumstances, including interpreting the possible meaning of recorded imbalances during treatment and the ability to adapt a treatment plan based on these if required.

- Initiative: independent decision-making skills, self-belief and self-motivation skills that enable responsible judgements throughout tasks. Using information gained from clients to produce a bespoke treatment plan in a responsible timeframe, considering:
 - sequence and duration of treatment
 - choice of relevant support methods required during treatment
 - application of reflexology techniques
 - precise location of reflex points
 - bespoke aftercare and home care advice, with relevant adaptations

Social intelligence

- Communicating: receiving, understanding and responding to information from mentors, peers and clients. Listening to clients, noting body language and the words used throughout the treatment process, and 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

- Curiosity: researching and sourcing information from searches, tutorials and asking questions.
- Creativity: creating bespoke treatment plans and adaptations after listening and responding to client's communicated requirements.

- Sense-making: applying holistic thinking when dealing with factors that may influence a particular approach when coming up with bespoke treatment plans for clients. Evaluating data or information, including what techniques are best suited to help clients manage their health concerns and/or wellbeing.
- Critical thinking: deconstructing complex and variable data, for example identifying physical, psychological and emotional imbalances and what approaches should be taken to reinstate balance. Logical thinking, 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 therapy sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

You understand the importance of sustainability and waste management and the impact this can have on the environment.

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.

The information in this unit specification may be reproduced in support of Qualifications Scotland qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, Qualifications Scotland must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@qualifications.gov.scot.