



AIMQUALIFICATIONS

Handbook
for centre staff



AIM Qualifications

Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills (603/3984/6)

Version 5 - December 2019

“

I felt it was a well-structured and detailed qualification with a good mixture of theory, background and practical work. As well as learning about well-established theories and models, we also spent time looking at more recent research and statistics.

I liked the combination of journals, essays and examinations as it was a good mixture of making sure we were self-aware, carrying out research and revising.

I now feel ready to start thinking about paid employment.

AIM Level 4 counselling learner

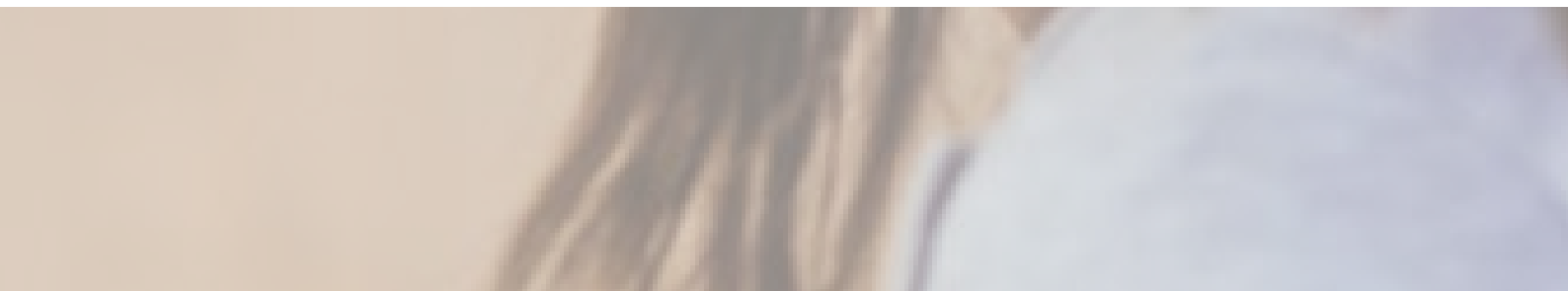
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Document Version History

<i>Version Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
2	25/03/2019	Update to professional discussion guidance: suggested timings reduced (from 20 minute to 10-20 minute as more appropriate for Level 2) and guidance amended to permit group or peer discussions (page 21).
3	20/05/2019	Geographical coverage updated to include Wales and Northern Ireland (page 8)
4	September 2019	Rebrand - 'AIM Awards' changed to 'AIM Qualifications' Qualification family added to qualification details grid (page 8)
5	December 2019	Information on how to access mandatory assignments briefs added (page 28).

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Introduction

Welcome to the AIM Qualifications Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills qualification handbook. This handbook contains everything you need to know about this qualification and is intended for tutors, assessors, internal verifiers and other staff involved with the planning, delivery and assessment.

This is a live document and as such will be updated when required. You will be informed via email when changes are made and it is your responsibility to ensure the most up-to-date version of the Qualification Handbook is in use.

About us

AIM is a national and international Awarding Organisation. We offer a large number of regulated qualifications at different levels and in a wide range of subject areas, Access to Higher Education Diplomas and End Point Assessments.

Our products are flexible enough to be delivered in a range of settings, from small providers to large colleges and in the workplace both nationally and internationally.

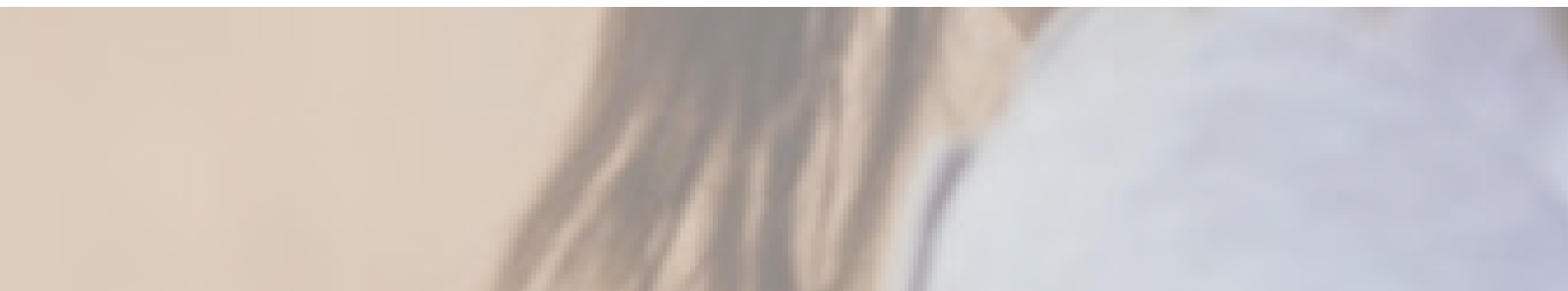
We pride ourselves on offering the best possible customer service, and are always on hand to help if you have any questions. Our organisational structure and business processes enable us to be able to respond quickly to the needs of customers to develop new products that meet their specific needs.

Section one

Qualification overview

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About this qualification

The AIM Qualifications Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills is designed to provide learners with an introduction to basic counselling skills. Learners will develop their knowledge of the counselling profession, looking at the role of professional frameworks/codes of conduct and the core personal qualities that enable competent counsellors.

Learners will also begin to develop their practical skills in developing, maintaining and concluding a basic counselling session, providing them with the skills, knowledge and understanding of practice within the boundaries of an ethical framework.

This qualification is aimed at those who may have little or no experience in the subject and it does not lead directly to an employed role. However, it has been designed as the first step in the ladder for professional development for aspiring and practising counsellors.

The AIM suite of counselling qualifications are available from Level 2 to Level 6 and are available for learners at different stages of their careers in counselling. The suite has been designed taking into account professional counselling bodies' requirements for the accreditation of counsellors and is structured to ensure their requirements in terms of guided learning hours and practicum are covered.

Our qualifications to support a career in counselling are:

- AIM Qualifications Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills
- AIM Qualifications Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills
- AIM Qualifications Level 3 Certificate in Counselling
- AIM Qualifications Level 4 Diploma in Counselling Practice
- AIM Qualifications Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling
- AIM Qualifications Level 6 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling (Informed by Research)

Qualification details

Qualification	
AIM Qualifications Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills	
Qualification Family	Professional
Assessment	Externally set, internally marked and externally verified assessment tasks. See Section 3 for further information
Grading	Pass/Fail
Geographical coverage	England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Operational start date	1st August 2019
Review date	31st July 2024
Sector	1.3 Health and Social Care
Qualification number	603/3984/6
Learning aim reference	60339846
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	30
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	49
Minimum learner age	16
Rules of combination	Learners must achieve two mandatory components to achieve this qualification.

Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

Total Qualification Time (TQT) is the number of notional hours it takes a typical learner to achieve the full qualification and is made up of two elements:

- the minimum number of qualification Guided Learning Hours (GLH) - the number of tutor-led contact hours
- the number of hours spent on preparation, studying and the assessment that is non-guided

For example, the number of tutor-led contact hours (GLH) for a qualification is 30 and the number of hours spent by the learner (non-GLH) on preparation, studying and the assessment is six hours. Therefore the Total Qualification Time (TQT) for the qualification is 36 hours.

Progression opportunities

This qualification has been designed as a step in the ladder for professional development for aspiring and practising counsellors. Learners may progress onto the AIM Qualifications Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills.

Entry guidance

There are no specific learner entry requirements for this qualification.

Qualification dates

The qualification review date is the date by which we will have carried out a review of the qualification. We work with industry representatives to make any changes necessary to meet industry needs and to reflect recent developments. In most cases, we'll extend the qualification and set a new review date. If we make a decision to withdraw a qualification, we'll set an operational end date.

We will post information relating to changes or extensions to qualifications on our website and centres approved to offer the qualification will be kept updated. The certification end date will be three years from the operational end date.

Resource requirements

Please see the individual components for specific resource requirements.

It is anticipated that the rooms available for this qualification will be appropriate to the teaching of the individual component and the practising of the developing skills. For the purpose of practising skills in triads, it is expected that rooms will provide the essential privacy needed for such practical sessions.

Teaching resources will, hopefully, provide a white-board; multi-media projection facilities and video/audio equipment.

Library resources should include an up-to-date and developing range of essential texts, journals and, where possible videos/DVD's. The required and recommended reading lists are detailed on the individual components.

Section two

Qualification structure and components

Qualification structure and components

This section details the rules of combinations for this qualification. Select the component titles to view the component details.

Rules of combination for: AIM Qualifications Level 2 Award in Introduction to Counselling Skills			
Learners must achieve the two mandatory components to achieve this qualification.			
Component code	Component title	Level	GLH
M/617/4238	The Fundamentals of Counselling	Two	15
R/617/4233	Introduction to Counselling Skills	Two	15

Section three

Assessment

Centre staff requirements

As an awarding organisation, we require that:

Tutors have relevant teaching experience and/or a qualification, and experience and/or a qualification in the relevant subject area. Suitable teaching qualifications include:

- Level 3 or 4 Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) or above
- Level 3 Education and Training or above
- Diploma or certificate in education
- Bachelors or Masters Degree in Education

Assessors have an assessor qualification or evidence of recent relevant experience. Suitable assessor qualifications include:

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
- Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
- A1 Assess Candidate Performance using a Range of Methods
- D32 Assess Candidate Performance and D33 Assess Candidate using Differing Sources of Evidence

In addition, Assessors must hold a counselling qualification at Level 2 or above.

Internal Verifiers (IV) have an internal verification qualification or evidence of recent relevant experience. Suitable internal verification qualifications include:

- Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- V1 Conduct Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process
- D34 Internally Verify the Assessment Process

In addition, Internal Verifiers must hold a counselling qualification at Level 2 or above.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment method	Overview
Written assignment	Externally set, internally marked, externally verified. Tests the learner's knowledge of the fundamentals of counselling through a written assignment.
Role play	Externally set, internally marked, externally verified. Takes place towards the end of the scheme of work, after the teaching of counselling skills are completed. Learners are trained and assessed in three roles (counsellor, client and observer).
Professional discussion	Externally set, internally marked, externally verified. Gives the learners an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of confidentiality in counselling and knowledge about safeguarding as applied to counselling practice.

This section should be read in parallel with this qualification's assignment briefs and mark schemes (in Appendix 2), which contain in depth information on the planning, delivery and assessment of the assessments.

Internally marked assessments are to be based on the assignment briefs provided by AIM. Where specified on the brief these may be contextualised by the centre, for example centres may choose to incorporate industry set scenarios. Centres must take a best practice approach, where appropriate, to the assessment such that learners are assessed in a real or realistic working environment.

AIM assignment briefs include marking templates for internal assessors to use to support consistent marking, feedback and evidence for quality assurance. All assessment decisions made by a centre will be externally quality assured by AIM.

A full mapping of components to assignments is available below.

Qualification assessment mapping

Component title	Written assignment	Role play	Professional discussion
Mandatory components			
The Fundamentals of Counselling	✓		
Introduction to Counselling Skills		✓	✓

Assessment: Written Assignment - The Key Fundamental Concepts of Counselling

Please contact AIM for the full assessment brief.

Overview:

This assignment consists of externally set tasks (based on our brief), is internally marked, quality assured by centres and subject to external verification by AIM.

Centres must use the assignment brief and mark scheme set by AIM (see Appendix 2) and may contextualise it and set tasks to suit their learners.

Assessors should provide learners with constructive and useful feedback on the finished submission and this must be recorded on the mark sheet.

Guidance:

The written assignment tests the learner's understanding of key fundamental concepts of counselling:

- What is counselling?
- The personal qualities of a counsellor
- Professional frameworks and codes of conduct
- Ethical use of counselling skills

The written assignments must be written in a formal style appropriate to the brief with:

- an introduction
- the main body of text
- a conclusion
- a list of references used

Assessment: Role Play

Please contact AIM for the full assessment brief.

Overview:

This assignment consists of an externally set role play (based on our brief), is internally marked, quality assured by centres and subject to external verification by AIM.

Centres must use the assignment brief and mark scheme set by AIM (in Appendix 2) and may contextualise it and set tasks to suit their learners.

Assessors should provide learners with constructive and useful feedback on the finished submission and this must be recorded on the mark sheet.

Guidance for assessment:

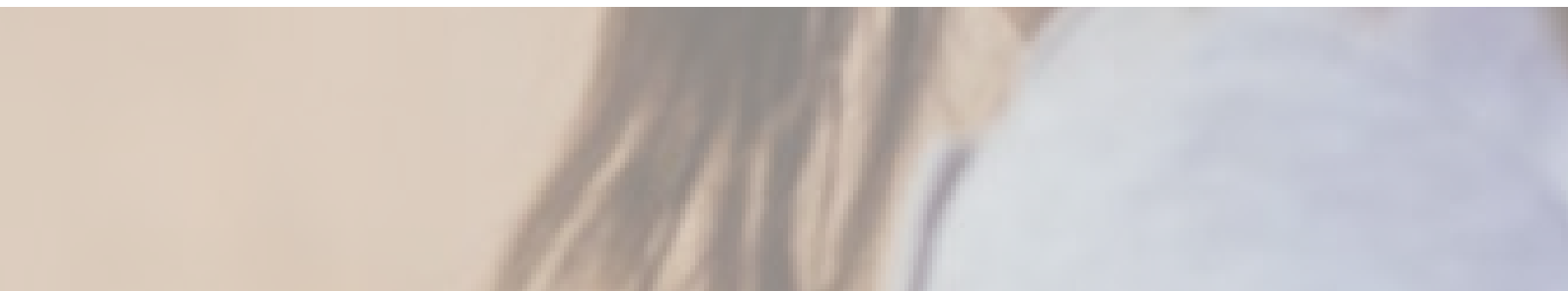
Learners will work in groups of three (triads) and will each be assessed in all three triad roles:

1. Counsellor
2. Client
3. Observer

This summative assessment should take place towards the end of the scheme of work, after the teaching of counselling skills are completed. Learners must be trained in the three roles and know the system well before any attempt is made to assess them. It is recommended that tutors/assessors carry out ongoing formative assessments to check progress made. The learner's ability to play roles is likely to vary considerably from learner to learner and it is important to keep in mind the objective is to assess counselling skills and not the learner's ability to act out a role.

Role play guidelines

1. Sessions are organised in triads – counsellor, client and observer.
2. Each session should last 30 minutes in total. This is made up of 20 minutes of the actual role play “counselling” session and the feedback session which should last 10 minutes.
3. In the feedback session, the observer is the first to provide feedback on what they thought about the session; the beginning, middle, ending, timing, orientation, skills and therapeutic alliance.



4. Following this the counsellor offers their views of the role play – again with the help of the Tutor/Assessor. Finally, the client (client) offers their views as they are the expert on what they have said.
5. The Tutor/Assessor will need to de-role at the conclusion of the session.

The feedback process is important as sometimes a learner may have underperformed in the session but can make up for this by their own awareness of this in the feedback session.

The recommended practical skills assessment procedure

1. Learners should be notified at least two weeks in advance of the dates and times when they will be required to attend the formal practical assessment
2. The Centre will provide a number of alternative fictitious role briefs to be available on the day
3. The learners are assigned roles and their role responsibilities are explained
4. The learner with the client role chooses an appropriate role brief and is given at least 10 minutes to prepare before the session begins. The client must not communicate with the other two participants during this period. Learners are to be given the choice of at least two different scenarios to reduce the likelihood of them having to face personal issues
5. The observer learner plays no part in the simulated session other than to observe it from an appropriate unobtrusive position out of the line of sight of both client and counsellor, but from where both can be clearly seen and heard
6. The time boundary for the skills session is 20 minutes
7. The Assessor leads the 10 minute feedback session in which:
 - a. Firstly, the observer gives a verbal report to the counsellor
 - b. Secondly, the counsellor summarises the session
 - c. Thirdly, the client describes the experience
 - d. Finally, the Assessor formally de-roles each member of the triad
 - e. The Assessor completes the role play observation report for each learner, and completes the mark sheet on page 4 for each learner.

Guidance for assessors

The assessment methods outlined here are based on the assumptions that the learners being assessed have completed a course of study for the unit and:

- are experienced in the role play method and in all of the roles
- know by name the ethical principles that underpin counselling
- have been instructed in the management of risk to the health and safety of counsellors and clients
- can identify by name the specified range of basic counselling skills
- are able to explain the purpose of using each skill in a helping interaction.

Assessors may be observed by Internal Verifiers from the centre and/or AIM External Verifiers to confirm that assessment decisions are being reached appropriately.

Guidance for learners participating in the practical assessment

To successfully complete and pass the practical assessment at Level 2, learners should have demonstrated a broad and developing knowledge of counselling skills and know how they should be used within a framework of ethical counselling. However, learners at Level 2 are not learners or trainees of counselling but only learners of counselling skills; therefore, no more than an emerging and basic level of competence to use counselling skills will be judged in the assessment process.

Counsellor role

In this role, we expect learners:

- to make a reasonable attempt at demonstrating three key skills for rapport building
- to respond appropriately and ethically to the client's behaviour and apparent needs
- during the course of the session the client must show some awareness of the progress made towards establishing a helping relationship
- establish and keep within agreed boundaries
- make a conscious choice of counselling skills which are appropriate.

Observer role

Observer learners are required to recognise key events during the process and provide feedback on the quality of the exchange between counsellor and client by identifying, and commenting on, the use of counselling skills and to comment on the listener – client relationship. They will also be expected to identify the model of counselling being used, if any, and to comment on the beginning, middle and ending part of the session.

Client role

The Assessor/Centre will provide the role play scenarios for the learner. The client must make every effort to play the role with honesty and integrity and to the best of his or her ability. The client will be consistent throughout and co-operate with the counsellor. The client must be referred in this role if he or she sets out to make the role more complex than is realistically expected, or if they seek to disrupt or mislead the counsellor.

Assessment: Professional discussion - Confidentiality and Safeguarding in Counselling

Please contact AIM for the full assessment brief.

Overview:

This discussion consists of externally set tasks (based on our brief), is internally marked, quality assured by centres and subject to external verification by AIM.

Centres must use the assignment brief and mark scheme set by AIM (in Appendix 2) and may contextualise it and set tasks to suit their learners.

Assessors should provide learners with constructive and useful feedback on the finished submission and this must be recorded on the mark sheet.

Guidance:

The professional discussion will give learner's the opportunity to demonstrate their:

- Understanding of confidentiality in counselling
- Knowledge about safeguarding as applied to counselling practice

The professional discussion will be a 10-20 minute assessment to enable the learner to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding about confidentiality and safeguarding in counselling.

A professional discussion is a structured conversation. It is a two-way process and should feel open, fluid and dynamic so that the learner can offer insights, knowledge and input that is unprompted, but still captured by the Tutor/Assessor as an outcome of the discussion.

Marking learner work (internally marked work)

Learners must achieve the requisite number of components as specified in the rules of combination. Summative feedback should be provided to learners and the completed mark sheets must be presented alongside the learner marked work for internal and external verification. If opportunities for recognition of prior learning (RPL) have been identified, then the evidence to support the claim for RPL must be submitted along with a completed RPL form to the external verifier. This is available on the AIM website.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process of assessing and validating learning or achievement that has not been certificated or accredited previously towards the qualification being studied.

The tutor or assessor should carry out an effective interview and initial assessment of learners to establish their previous qualifications and experience. Funding may be affected if a learner achieves more than 50% of the assessment through RPL.

Please refer to the AIM website for more information.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. The nature of any reasonable adjustments depends on the particular requirements as well as on the qualification and assessment methods. Reasonable adjustments are generally not appropriate where the learner's particular difficulty directly affects performance in the actual attributes to be assessed.

For internally marked learner work:

The Internal Verifier (IV) may give permission for reasonable adjustments for a learner without having to apply to AIM for approval, provided that such arrangements do not confer an unfair advantage. The IV must approve and record the details of all reasonable adjustments made at the discretion of the centre and must make this available for external verification.

Special considerations

Special consideration is consideration to be given to a learner who has temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury, or
- some other event outside of their control

which has had or is reasonably likely to have had an effect on their ability to take an assessment or on their level of attainment in an assessment. Special consideration is not appropriate for a minor illness or a minor disturbance.

It may not be possible to apply special consideration where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date rather than apply special considerations.

Further details are provided in our reasonable adjustments and special considerations document available on the AIM website.

Section four

Operational guidance

Offering this qualification

Centres wishing to offer this qualification must be an AIM recognised centre. New centres can apply to become a centre using the centre recognition application process on our website (www.aim-group.org.uk).

We can advise centres of the best and most efficient methods for offering this qualification. All procedures for the use of this qualification, including approval, registration of learners, verification and certification will be completed through AIM and all centres will have an allocated customer experience advisor to support them.

Approval to offer the qualification

Centres wishing to offer this qualification must complete and submit a Qualification Approval request (found on the AIM website). Some qualifications require centres to have specific resources in place and/or their assessors/ internal verifiers should hold certain qualifications. Where this is the case, centres must provide evidence of resources/staff qualifications when completing the Qualification Approval request.

Registration and certification

Once your centre has approval to offer a qualification, you will be able to register learners using the AIM portal. Learners must be registered onto the correct qualification via the portal. Centres then select their chosen components.

For all registration and certification processes, please refer to the portal guidance document which can be downloaded from our website (www.aim-group.org.uk). Details of assessment, internal verification and external verification can be found in Appendix 1 - A guide to assessing AIM qualifications of this handbook.

Learners achieving a qualification will be issued with a qualification certificate detailing the achieved qualification and components. Learners who have not achieved a qualification will, on request, be issued with a component certificate detailing the components achieved.

Internally marked assessments

Once internally marked work has been completed:

- AIM External Verifiers (EVs) will verify the assessment of learner work and internal verification practice following standard AIM quality assurance procedures. The EV will electronically verify to confirm achievement of the learners once they have completed their verification.
- Once the claims have been submitted and verified, certificates and a summary of achievement will be produced and issued. Learners that have achieved a qualification will be issued with a qualification certificate with details of the qualification and components achieved within 10 working days (2 weeks) of the completed verification process. Learners that have not achieved a qualification will be issued with a component certificate with details of the components achieved.

Fees and charges

The AIM Fees and Charges brochure includes all qualification charges and is available on our website. Please note that registrations will not be processed if centre fees have not been paid.

Section five

Appendices

Appendices and links

Appendix title

Please click on the below links to access the appendices.

Appendix 1 - 'A Guide to Assessing AIM Qualifications'

Appendix 2 - Assignment briefs *(available to assigned counselling contact via secure portal, please contact AIM for further information)*



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