

AIM Awards Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Theory January 2017

Report on the Examination

Introduction

48 scripts were received from 11 centres. The question paper was designed to test candidate's:

- knowledge and understanding of the three main approaches to counselling and the theorists that underpin most counselling practice
- awareness of the strengths and limitations of the main approaches

The relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria are shown below:

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the key concepts in the main approaches to counselling	1.1. Explain the view taken of the development and perpetuation of psychological problems as seen by each of the approaches 1.2. Distinguish between the nature and process of therapeutic change as seen by each of the approaches 1.3. Summarise the key therapeutic interventions typical of each of the approaches
2. Understand the strengths and limitations of the main approaches to counselling	2.1. Explain the key strengths for each of the approaches 2.2. Explain the key limitations for each of the approaches

Questions were focused on, though not entirely limited to, the Indicative Content to be found in the Qualification Specification.

Question Mark Scheme

The paper contained a total of 21 questions and was divided into 2 sections. A total of 41 marks was available.

Section A contained:

- 6 questions relating to Criterion 1.1
- 6 questions relating to Criterion 1.2
- 6 questions relating to Criterion 1.3

Questions in Section A required candidates to decide whether a statement was true or false, or to select the correct answer from a given range of options.

Section B contained 3 longer questions, each concerned with Criteria 2.1 and 2.2. These questions presented candidates with a brief statement or scenario, and asked them to identify which of the 3 main approaches seemed most and least relevant and to explain their response.

Markers Comments and Feedback

Overall, the standards achieved by candidates in this examination were considered by the examiners to be similar to previous series and to comparable tests held elsewhere.

The vast majority of candidates succeeded in attempting all the questions in the time available.

There were a few instances of word processing rather than handwriting being used without evidence that approval for this had been obtained. On this occasion, the examiners marked the paper as if said approval had been given. Although examiners are experienced in reading a wide range of handwriting styles, there were a few instances where lack of legibility may have disadvantaged a candidate.

Section A

Where the short questions in Section A were concerned, most candidates succeeded in giving the correct response to over 80% of the questions, and a number succeeded in getting 100% correct.

The questions most successfully answered included:

Question 2: 100% of candidates knew that Humanistic theory does not focus in particular on early childhood.

Question 5: 99% of candidates knew that Negative Automatic Thoughts are a very important concept in Humanistic theory.

Question 17: 100% of candidates knew that communication of empathic understanding as a way of working is most relevant to the Humanistic approach.

Of the questions which were least successfully answered, the following are worthy of mention:

Question 3: This question asked whether it is true or false that “Psychodynamic theory regards defence mechanisms as a useful concept.” It was apparent from some responses that a few candidates thought this was false because although defence mechanisms are a psychodynamic idea, they believe that they are always a problem or an obstacle.

Question 8: 50% of candidates did not know that Locus of Evaluation is a Humanistic concept. Many believed it to be an idea found in CBT.

Question 12: Almost 50% of candidates did not know that that Reaction Formation is an idea found in the psychodynamic approach.

Question 18: Almost 50% of candidates did not know that the use of diversion techniques is a feature of CBT.

Section B

Each of these questions contained 3 parts. In each question, the first part invited the candidate to name one of the 3 main approaches as most likely to be helpful in a given scenario or most likely to fit a given description. The second part of each question asked the candidate to explain their choice. The third part asked for an explanation as to why the candidate thought another of the 3 approaches was least likely to be helpful or to fit the description. The mark scheme specifies a correct answer for part 1 of each question. Credit was nevertheless given when marking part 2 if convincing understanding of theory was shown, even when a candidate had not given the expected response to part 1.

The longer questions in Section B, as might be expected, produced a wider range of quality of response than did those in Section A. Those candidates who did well managed to answer the actual question posed, and to connect their answer specifically to the scenario or definition provided. Less successful candidates tended to write a general account of what they knew about an approach, for example by listing the core conditions.

Recommendations

Centres are recommended to:

Encourage candidates to make every effort to write in a legible fashion, difficult though this can be under exam conditions.

When teaching Person-Centred theory, encourage students to gain an understanding of the necessary and sufficient conditions that goes beyond simply being able to list the 3 best known of them.