

## AIM Awards Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling: Synoptic Assessment June 2016

### Report on the Examination

#### Introduction

20 scripts were received from 2 centres. The very small entry for this paper means that few reliable statistical conclusions can be drawn from this entry.

The question paper was designed to test the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the use of Counselling Supervision: Ethical and Legal Issues; and Research in Counselling.

The relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria are shown below:

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Unit Title: Counselling Supervision, Ethical and Legal Issues	
1. Understand theoretical aspects of counselling supervision	1.1.Critically evaluate the different: (a) forms (b) styles (c) models of counselling supervision
2. Understand practical aspects of counselling supervision	2.1.Demonstrate increasing self-awareness as a result of the use of counselling supervision 2.2.Analyse how the process of supervision can affect the counsellor-client relationship and clinical outcomes
3. Understand key ethical and legal issues for counsellors	3.1.Review the impact of key ethical and legal issues on counselling practice 3.2.Critically evaluate working within an ethical framework or code of ethics
Unit Title: Research in Counselling	
1. Understand the field of counselling research	1.1.Review and evaluate key aspects of counselling research

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

The mark scheme for this paper is partly generic, grading responses in terms of Academic Skills and Application of Content, at levels of Good Pass, Pass, Borderline and Did Not Achieve. The mark scheme also contained examples of content which responses of a Pass standard were considered likely to contain. These examples are not prescriptive; examiners are experienced practitioners and are expected to use their professional judgment in recognising creditworthy material.

The borderline scripts, and the 3 papers which did not achieve, were cross marked and/or discussed at the Awarding meeting.

The paper contained a total of 3 questions.

## Markers Comments and Feedback

Overall, the standards achieved by most candidates in this examination were considered by the examiners to be similar to previous series and to comparable tests held elsewhere. The few exceptions to this were candidates who, while they showed a degree of sound understanding of the subject, wrote relatively little in the 3 hours available and/or confined themselves to very generalised answers with little relevance to the actual questions posed.

**Question 1** provided a quotation from a well-known text about the importance of the supervisee preparing in advance for supervision sessions. Candidates were asked to discuss how far they believed this to be true, and to provide examples from their own experience as supervisees.

Overall, this question was not answered particularly well. There was a tendency in many scripts for the candidate to pay rather brief attention to the question of *preparation* for supervision and then to move to a general description of their experience as supervisees. Those candidates who did very well were able to discuss the possible disadvantages of preparing for a supervision session (for example, that it might inhibit spontaneous discovery of valuable material) as well as the more obvious advantages. The least successful did not do this, and had very little at all to say about preparing for supervision.

**Question 2** on the whole was answered more successfully. It provided a scenario where a counsellor faced ethical and legal issues following a client revealing she had once broken the law and was now suspected of having done so again. Most candidates showed a reasonably firm grasp of possible legal constraints including a court requiring access to notes and records, and of the fact that the scenario suggested there was no *prima facie* duty on the counsellor's part to break confidentiality. Most managed to refer to relevant legislation, although the least successful responses did not. Relevant ethical principles were fairly well applied, with the least successful responses limiting themselves to a general description rather than an application to the scenario.

**Question 3** invited candidates to discuss their understanding, with examples, of the importance of using a consent form as a counselling researcher. This question was well addressed by the majority of candidates, who drew fruitfully on their own experience of devising a research proposal and were able to give relevant detailed examples of what such forms should contain. The least successful responses were too brief and/or general to show a convincing grasp of the subject.

Overall, the examiners were pleased with the results from this examination. In such a small entry, it would not be appropriate to draw firm conclusions, but there was substantial evidence that candidates had been well taught and prepared, and that the paper provided a fair opportunity, at an appropriate level, for students to demonstrate the results of a great deal of hard work.

## Recommendations

### **Centres are recommended to:**

Encourage candidates to make every effort to answer the actual question posed rather than writing generalised accounts of their understanding of the broader subject.