

## AIM Awards Level 3 Certificate in Counselling June 2017 Series

### Introduction

176 scripts were received from 13 Centres. The question paper was designed to test candidates'

- 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
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 focussed on, though not entirely limited to, the Indicative Content to be found in the Qualification Specification.

### Distribution of marks against questions

The paper contained a total of 24 questions. It was divided into 2 sections.

A total of 40 marks was available.

Section A contained:

No. of Questions	Criterion Covered
6	1.1
5	1.2
5	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 8 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.

## Comments

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

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

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. 1 candidate succeeded in getting 100% correct.

The questions most successfully answered included:

Q5: 99% of candidates knew that unconditional positive regard is most relevant in humanistic theory

Q12: 100% of candidates knew that communication of empathic understanding is most likely to be used in the Humanistic approach

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

Q6: 25% of candidates thought that it was true that the conditioned reflex is a key idea in Freud's theories.

Q10: 25% of candidates did not know that the Psychodynamic approach is most relevant where Object Relations is concerned.

Q16: 19% of candidates did not know that that CBT is most likely to use Reality Testing.

## Section B

Question 17 invited the candidate to name one of the 3 main approaches as most likely to be helpful in a given scenario and to explain their choice. The scenario named Peter as an assessor and Errol as the client being assessed. A substantial number of candidates referred to Peter as the client in their response. Marks were not lost for this confusion on this occasion, though this emphasises the importance of reading the question carefully. These 3 questions were overall well answered.

Question 18 asked candidates to give and explain 3 examples of limitations of CBT. This question was overall well answered. Where this was not the case, candidates tended to name aspects of CBT which not in any way identified or explained as limitations.

Questions 19 and 20 presented candidates with statements about potential limitations of 2 of the main approaches. They were asked to identify the approach being described and to explain their answer. The mark scheme specifies a correct answer for part 1 of each of these questions. 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 majority could identify the expected approach accurately, though explanations were overall rather weak.

# Principal Examiner's Report

*For centre staff*



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.

## General observations

Overall, the ability to respond to questions about strengths and limitations of approaches seems to be improving.

The belief that the necessary and sufficient conditions are simply a tool to be put in place once is happily much less in evidence than was once the case.

The belief that humanistic counsellors are expressly forbidden to ask questions about the client's past experience or to explore it in any way persists.

## Recommendations

Encourage candidates to read the question carefully.

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 understand that humanistic theory does not forbid counsellors from being curious about their clients' past experiences, for example about how conditions of worth may have arisen, or how needs may not have been met.