

## Study of Supervised Practice – AIM Awards Level 4 Diploma in Counselling Skills and Theory June 2017 Series

### Introduction

96 scripts were received from 14 Centres. The briefing paper was designed to assist candidates to record and evaluate 50 hours of their own counselling practice through a Study of Supervised Practice.

The relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria are shown below:

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
<b>The learner will:</b>	<b>The learner can:</b>
1. Understand working within legal and ethical requirements as a counselling practitioner	1.1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a professional ethical framework and its application to counselling practice 1.2 Respond effectively to complex client issues and ethical dilemmas 1.3 Describe the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement
2. Understand the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement	2.2 Demonstrate the use of counselling supervision 2.3 Evaluate the effects of using counselling supervision on own practice
3. Understand how developing self-awareness can contribute as a counselling practitioner	3.1 Evaluate how developing self-awareness can contribute to the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship and process

### Distribution of marks against questions

Evidence had to be presented for each assessment criterion and these were graded as PASS or REFER – all assessment criteria had to attract a PASS grade for this assessment to PASS overall.

### Comments

Overall, the standards achieved by candidates in this examination were considered by the examiners to have improved compared to previous series and to comparable tests held elsewhere. The introduction of a template helped candidates structure their work to meet the brief set out in the briefing paper.

Examiners noted that there were less studies that were simply retelling the client's 'story' or quoting large 'chunks' of the BACP Ethical Framework; although this was still a feature of the weaker (and therefore, referred) studies). Although very few of the studies were not on the template, some candidates had amended it removing the space for the examiner to indicate whether the criterion had been met or not.

Students must NOT amend the template and other pages from the assessment pack should NOT be attached to the study. Studies that are not on the template as issued by AIM Awards will be returned unmarked.

The examiners were concerned that most of the referred studies failed to reach the required standard in understanding what constitutes ethical practice. There were many examples, but the commonest was failing to appreciate the influence of Gillick competence on offering young people confidentiality; misunderstanding that the aspects listed in a professional body code applied to the practitioner not the client; and, clearly indicating a lack of understanding of what it means in real terms to promote a client's autonomy.

## **Describe the key professional issues arising in the counselling placement**

There were five obvious potential ways of providing evidence that this assessment criterion had been met:

- Legal and ethical requirements
- Ethical decision making
- Counselling, confidentiality and the law
- Use of supervision
- Developing self-awareness

The examiners however allowed credit for other relevant examples. In the best work candidates could focus on one of the above and specifically explain how it related to the subject of the study. General and vague descriptions that could apply to ANY client should be avoided

## **Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a professional ethical framework and its application to counselling practice**

Here the examiners were looking for a description and explanation of 3 or 4 examples of the principles, qualities or undertakings contained in an ethical framework or code. In particular, emphasis should be placed on how these were relevant to particular client work under discussion and with some attempt to evaluate their usefulness. Very good answers focussed on the ethical issues of working with the client who was the subject of the study, others were rather more general. Long quotations from professional body documents should be avoided and lists of principles and qualities are not going to achieve a pass grade.

## **Respond effectively to complex client issues and ethical dilemmas**

In this area, the examiners expected that the candidate would identify clearly what was particularly challenging about their client's presentation, their relationship, or any ethical dilemma which arose or could readily have done so; or indeed any combination of these features. After identifying the features of the counselling for discussion candidates were expected to give a coherent account of attempts to respond constructively, with examples of choice of interventions, rationale for so doing, and apparent effectiveness. As above answers that could apply to any client did not reach the standard required for a pass.

## **Demonstrate the use of counselling supervision and evaluate the effects of using counselling supervision on own practice**

Some candidates discussed the effective use of supervision and/or other support mechanisms to enable them to work effectively with the client who was the subject of the study. However, more could have been developed in this area in order to secure a pass. Many answers were characterised by a description of what the trainee counsellor told their supervisor or how supportive the supervisee/supervisor relationship was. What is required here is how matters discussed in supervision translate back into work with the client.

## **Evaluate how developing self-awareness can contribute to the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship and process**

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of self-awareness and gave examples of how it affected the counselling relationship. In weaker answers the emphasis was on client 'story' rather than their own efforts as the counsellor. Many were unable to link their own actions to client outcome.

## Recommendations

Encourage candidates to provide a clear introduction (as required on the briefing paper) that states the core theoretical model of the study as well as addressing issues of Gillick competence if the client is under the age of 16.

Encourage candidates to provide more analysis and less description in the finished work. Examiners are looking for clear, coherent, and consistent analysis of the client work which goes beyond simple description.

Remind candidates that the examiners are looking for knowledge and understanding (not simply inserting the principles) of an Ethical Framework together with the ability to correctly relate this to their client.

Encourage candidates to provide more evidence of counselling supervision and its effect upon the candidates work with clients rather than a description of the client narrative discussed with supervisor.

Make sure that candidates are using the most up to date version of the ethical framework or code used on the course e.g. the 2016 version of the BACP Ethical Framework.