



AIMQUALIFICATIONS

Handbook

for centre staff



AIM Qualifications

Level 3 Certificate in Counselling (VCRF) (603/3986/X)

Version 6 - May 2021

“

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

Document Version History

<i>Version Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
2	20/05/2019	Geographical coverage updated to include Wales and Northern Ireland (page 8)
3	September 2019	Rebrand - 'AIM Awards' changed to 'AIM Qualifications' Qualification family added to qualification details grid (page 8)
4	December 2019	Information on marks and grading for the written examination added (page 22). Information on how to access mandatory assignments briefs added (page 33).
5	October 2020	Added 'Extended ERF Adaptation - Counselling' to Appendix (page 33) Added information about adapted qualifications to 'About this Qualification' section (page 9)
6	May 2021	Removed 'Extended ERF Adaptation' and replaced with VCRF adaptation/guidance (page 9) (page 33)



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Introduction

Welcome to the AIM Qualifications Level 3 Certificate in Counselling 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 3 Certificate in Counselling aims to further develop the skills and knowledge gained at Level 2. This qualification enables learners to work towards becoming a reflective practitioner of counselling by considering theories of human development, self-awareness, supervision and issues of difference and diversity. It also provides knowledge and understanding of the main core theories and theorists that underpin counselling and addresses the nature of psychological problems and how they may be approached.

The specialist skills and knowledge gained in this qualification will be applicable in a range of working contexts. It will enable learners to understand the need for a firm grasp of a coherent theoretical approach to counselling or supporting others. This is particularly important prior to starting work in a supervised placement if learners progress to Level 4.

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 3 Certificate in Counselling	
Qualification Family	Professional
Assessment	Externally set, internally marked and externally verified assessment tasks. See Section 3 for further information
Grading	Fail, Pass, High Pass, Merit, High Merit, Distinction
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	603/3986/X
Learning aim reference	6033986X
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	150
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	282
Minimum learner age	16
Rules of combination	Learners must achieve three 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 6 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 4 Diploma in Counselling Practice.

Entry guidance

It is recommended that learners have Level 2 literacy skills, or English GCSE or equivalent. It is also recommended that learners have achieved the AIM Qualifications Level 2 Certificate in Counselling Skills or equivalent.

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

The required and recommended reading lists are detailed on the individual components.

Rooms available for this qualification will be appropriate to the teaching of the individual components 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.

Adapted Assessments

Learners completing this qualification who have been impacted by COVID-19 closures may be eligible for mitigations to their assessment under the temporary framework (VCRF). [Specific guidance can be found here](#)

Section two

Qualification structure and components

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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 3 Certificate in Counselling			
Learners must achieve three mandatory components to achieve this qualification.			
Component code	Component title	Level	GLH
Mandatory components			
K/617/4240	Counselling Theory	Three	55
T/617/4239	Counselling Skills	Three	55
M/617/4241	Developing Reflective Practice in Counselling	Three	40

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 3 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 3 or above.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment method	Overview
Role play	<p>Externally set, internally marked, externally verified. Graded: Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction</p> <p>This assessment requires learners to demonstrate their ability to consciously apply a relevant theoretical approach to a presenting situation/context. Learners are trained and assessed in three roles (counsellor, client and observer).</p>
Journal	<p>Externally set, internally marked, externally verified. Graded: Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction</p> <p>Learners will reflect on content learned in their teaching sessions and role plays with the aim of introducing reflective practice.</p>
Written examination	<p>Externally set, externally marked written examination. Graded: Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction</p> <p>The examination will consist of questions that cover a broad range of knowledge and understanding of the three main approaches to counselling and the theorists that underpin most counselling practice. It will enable learners to embark on evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of using various approaches to counselling.</p>

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	Role play	Journal	Written examination
Mandatory components			
Counselling Skills	✓	✓	
Developing Reflective Practice in Counselling		✓	
Counselling Theory			✓

Contribution of assessment to the overall qualification grade

All assessments contribute to the overall contribution grade, as set out in the table below:

Assessment	Grading model	% of overall qualification grade
Role play	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction	25%
Journal	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction	40%
Written examination	The grades achieved will be converted to points which contribute to the overall qualification grade	35%

Assessment: Role Play in Context

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 (IVs) from the centre and/or AIM External Verifiers (EVs) 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 3, 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.

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.

The 10-minute feedback discussion is part of the overall assessment process, and learners who recognise missed opportunities or show that they were aware of weaknesses in their triad role may be able to evidence achievement of standards not met in the practical.

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: Journal - Reflections on Counselling Practice

Please contact AIM for the full assessment brief.

Overview:

This assignment consists of an externally set journal (based on our brief), is internally marked, quality assured by centres and subject to external verification by AIM. Learners must complete a journal consisting of one entry per taught session which reflects on the content learned and introduces the concept of reflective practice.

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 journal is an important part of the learning and assessment process of this qualification as both a document recording what has been learned from teaching sessions and an introduction to reflective practice for the learner.

The requirement of writing word-limited reflective journal entries after every course session is good practice for counselling learners. At Level 2, it encourages them to work with a number of essential counselling related skills, such as active listening, observing and giving attention, self-awareness and summarising. In higher level courses, it demonstrates how they are beginning to practise the process of counselling – i.e. establishing the therapeutic alliance, how they work through the ‘client’s presenting story’, and how they prepare for appropriate and meaningful endings. Journal writing also helps the learners to take more of the responsibility for their learning. It is important, therefore, that both learners and Tutors/Assessors understand that the journal is an important integrative part of the course.

For the purpose of assessment, the journal provides permanent and reliable records of each learner’s unique progress and achievement throughout the learning programme. It is, therefore, an ideal means of both formative and summative assessment.

Assessing learners’ journals is a case of comparing what they have written on the subject with what was actually taught, and how learners have demonstrated achievement of the assessment.

Tutors/Assessors who assess journals must have a good grasp of the quality of response that can be reasonably expected from a learner at a particular level. AIM Assessor standardisation training is an essential element in developing the necessary skills of assessment, in addition to the importance of understanding the

Writing the journal for one-to-one counselling simulated sessions

The journal needs to include a record and reflection from the learner on their experience, from work in triads, in all three roles of counsellor, client and observer. The EMPHASIS, however, will be on the learner's own role as a counsellor.

The initial entry will need to clearly describe the contracting process between the individual as counsellor (and their client), and record how this fits into the future work, and the developing relationship.

Each entry will give clear evidence of the interventions made by the counsellor, and say how these interventions affect the work in progress. Learners will need to focus on the developing counselling relationships, and show where trust, intimacy and mutuality are evident in their comments. Learners should try to demonstrate their understanding of the process of change.

In the observer role, learners will need to keep a clear record of what they observe in order to give clear feedback to the counsellor (counsellor). They will need to be aware of describing what they observe in terms of skills used by the counsellor, and the counselling process. Their role is not an interpretive role, the focus is on description. They need to make sure that their record is accurate, and contains clearly expressed examples in order to be useful to the counsellor, and to demonstrate the observer's ability to give accurate and useful feedback.

It is important to distinguish between feedback given immediately, and that offered in the light of journal reflections.

The record of the learner in the client (client) role is to describe, and reflect on what was useful or not, and to consider their experience of the developing relationship between themselves and the counsellor (counsellor).



Assessment: Written examination - Counselling Theory Level 3

Type of assessment	Externally set and externally marked written examination. The examination will consist of questions that cover a broad range of knowledge and understanding of the three main approaches to counselling and the theorists that underpin most counselling practice. It will enable learners to embark on evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of using various approaches to counselling.
Availability (booking)	Two series: January, June. See the AIM website for specific dates and times.
Controls	Tasks are devised by AIM. The examination must take place under controlled examination conditions. The examination is marked by AIM and results issued to centres.
Duration	2 hours
Number of marks	51
Grading	The marks awarded will correspond to a points value that will contribute to the overall qualification grade. See the Learner Grade Record for further information. Published grading algorithms/grade thresholds may be subject to change.
Component covered	Counselling Theory
Sample assessment	Please contact AIM for the sample assessment.

External assessment regulations

Retaking external examinations

Learners who fail to achieve the required pass mark may undertake an examination in the next series. Centres must re-schedule for the next series by the schedule deadline date (see Section 4: Operational guidance for further information).

Internally marked assessment regulations

Deadlines

Deadlines for internally marked assessments may be set by the centre and must be clearly communicated to learners on the assessment tasks.

Late submissions

A late submission is capped at a pass unless an extension was agreed as outlined below. All first submissions must be made before the end of the course.

Extensions

Tutors may agree an extension period of up to two weeks by negotiation and where genuine reasons can be evidenced. In exceptional circumstances, the learner may be granted longer than two weeks to submit, however that would need to be supported by the personal tutor/course leader. The personal tutor will be notified of extensions and will monitor these in order to ensure that the learner is coping with the demands of their qualification.

Resubmission

A first submission that fails to meet the pass criteria may be returned to the learner (with feedback) for resubmission. Feedback must relate to the pass criteria and standards. Resubmission should be within a few days (no longer than a week) and be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement. A timely resubmission that meets all the pass criteria is considered for further grading.

Referral

A learner whose resubmission (submission 2) fails to meet the pass criteria may request a referral i.e. the opportunity to make a second resubmission (submission 3). The request is made of the assessor and Internal Verifier (IV) who collate evidence and subsequently convey the request to the External Verifier (EV). Even if the assessor and IV believe the situation doesn't warrant a referral, it should still be referred to the EV for confirmation or challenge. The EV informs the IV and the assessor of the decision. If approved, conditions of referral are set by the EV and conveyed to the centre. Decisions about referrals made by the EV must include:

- whether or not a second resubmission opportunity should be offered
- the nature and extent of the requirements for second resubmission
- compliance with the relevant requirements for first resubmissions.

Referrals undergo assessment by the assessor, internal verification and external verification. If the pass criteria are not met, the result is a fail.

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 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 Internal Verifier (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.

For externally marked examinations:

If reasonable adjustments are required for learners taking examinations, the centre must gain approval from AIM prior to the date of the examination:

1. The tutor should complete and submit a 'Request for Reasonable Adjustments Form' for each learner with supporting evidence to AIM at least 14 days before the planned examination date
2. AIM will confirm receipt of the form within 2 working days
3. AIM will consider the application and give a decision within 10 working days of receipt. AIM will inform the centre if we will be unable to reach a decision in this timescale.

Types of evidence acceptable:

- Psychologist's report – must be current/valid within two years of the date of the examinations
- Specialist teachers assessment report - must be current/valid within two years of the date of the examinations
- Medical letter – must be specific AND recommend, in detail, the support being requested. For a long term physical/medical condition which is not going to change i.e. hearing/visual impairment – a letter from a doctor/optician or hospital report is acceptable in most cases. A condition which is not permanent, but will not go away, will require a new letter confirming the diagnosis each academic year.

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



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.

In the case of externally marked examinations:

1. the head of centre should complete and submit a request for special consideration. Form for each learner requesting special consideration with supporting evidence, which may include medical/psychological evidence or a statement from the invigilator/verifier to AIM no later than 24 hours after the examination date
2. AIM will confirm receipt of the form within 2 working days

Invigilation of externally marked examinations

Centres are responsible for appointing invigilators according to the 'Invigilation Guidance for AIM External Assessments' in Appendix 4. Centres must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest between the invigilator and learners by checking in advance of the examination (e.g. a relative of a learner, a teacher who has prepared learners for the examination being taken or there is a personal interest in the outcome of the assessment).

There must be at least one invigilator present per thirty learners. Where there are less than thirty learners and a sole invigilator, assistance must be available for the invigilator without them having to leave the room or disturb the learners.

All learners in the room must be able to be seen by an invigilator at all times.

In accordance with JCQ guidance, centres in the UK are allowed to start examinations by **up to 30 minutes earlier than, or later than**, the publishing starting time for the session, without the need to complete any paperwork.

Prior permission from an awarding body is not required. Where this policy is followed, to avoid any possible breach of security, late arriving candidates or early departing candidates must be supervised as if the specified starting time had been in place.

Invigilators must follow the instructions in Appendix 4 – ‘Invigilation of Examinations’ and have a copy of these instructions to hand at all times during the examination.

Invigilators must confirm and be satisfied with the identity of all learners sitting the examination. By signing the assessment cover sheet (see section 4 for further information), the invigilator/head of centre takes responsibility for confirmation of learner attendance at the examination and that there are no conflicts of interest between themselves and learners. Examination scripts and assessment cover sheets must be packed by the invigilator and sealed securely.

Should a conflict of interest be identified at the start of or during the invigilation of an examination, the procedures below must be followed:

Where there is a known potential conflict of interest, the invigilator/assessor must complete and submit a conflict of interest declaration form (available on the AIM website) declaring the potential conflicts of interest prior to invigilating an examination.

AIM will consider all declarations and inform the examination centre of one of the following possible outcomes:

1. The invigilator is accepted to manage the examination/assessor approved to assess
2. Further information is required to demonstrate suitability
3. Further appropriate steps agreed to have the invigilation or assessment subject to scrutiny by another person
4. The invigilator/assessor has a conflict of interest and the application has been rejected.

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision, they can appeal to AIM within two weeks of receiving the outcome.

Should a conflict of interest between staff and learner be identified at the start of or during the examination/assessment, you must:

1. Replace the invigilator/assessor with another suitable member of staff
2. If this is not possible, move the learner to another assessment/examination room
3. If this is not possible, add an additional member of staff to invigilate/assess those learners.
4. If this is not possible and there are no other opportunities for the learner to be examined/assessed, the examination/assessment may take place. Immediately following the examination/assessment, you must complete and submit by email (to the centre’s AIM customer support officer) the conflict of interest: change in circumstance form (available on the AIM website here) explaining this. Any examinations that have taken place where a conflict of interest: change in circumstance form has been submitted will be moderated to ensure that no unfair advantage has been given to those learners.

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.

Opportunities for recognition of prior learning can only be considered against internally assessed elements of this qualification.

Please refer to the AIM website for more information.

Marking and grading marked assessments

Learners must achieve the requisite number of components as specified in the rules of combination. Learners must achieve a pass grade or higher in all assessments. Each internally marked assessment task is graded pass, merit or distinction using the provided criteria. Learners are also issued grades based on their performance in the external written examination.

Assessors must judge learner performance against specified criteria and award a grade of fail, pass, merit or distinction:

- to achieve a pass, learners must have satisfied all pass criteria
- to achieve a merit, learners must have satisfied all pass and merit criteria
- to achieve a distinction, learners must have satisfied all pass, merit and distinction criteria

Learners who do not satisfy all pass criteria are given a fail grade.

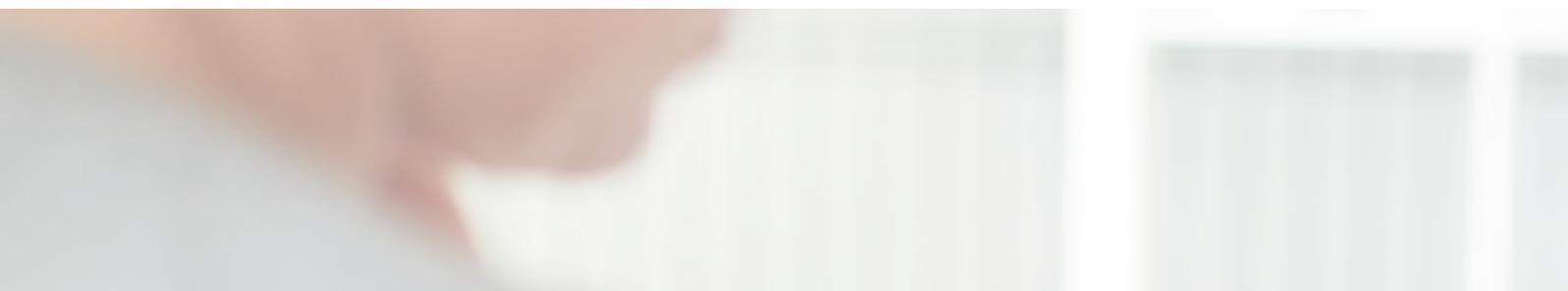
Summative feedback should be provided to learners with feed-forward guidance for how to complete future submissions. The completed mark sheets must be presented alongside the learner marked work for internal and external verification. If opportunities for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been 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.

Each assessment task carries a weighting towards the qualification grade and some tasks are worth more than others. For each assessment task, a number of points are allocated to pass, merit and distinction grades. Once all tasks are achieved, these points are totalled to arrive at the overall qualification grade. AIM calculates the overall qualification grade at the point of certification. A template detailing the points allocated for each grade and for recording these grades is provided in Appendix 3 - Learner Grade Record.



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.



Externally marked examinations

Externally marked assessments are available in two series: January and June of each year. Centres must schedule learners onto an externally marked examination through the AIM Portal by the deadline, (full details can be found in the Portal Guidance on the AIM website). An email invitation will be sent to all centres when the scheduling window opens for each series.

AIM will publish all examination dates one academic year before they are due on the AIM website.

Centres must check whether any reasonable adjustments are required for any learners and seek approval from AIM no less than 14 working days before the intended examination.

Examination papers will be dispatched for each examination series to centres in sealed packages/boxes.

Centres normally receive papers and assessment cover sheets 72 hours before the examination date.

Examination packages should be checked on receipt for the following:

- Examination paper packets match up to the requirements
- Damage to any packet contents
- Any apparent breach of security e.g. tampering with sealed packages

Once received, centres must keep the examination papers in the sealed package in which they are received and store them securely. Access to papers must be restricted to designated personnel in the centre and papers must be issued to learners only at the time of the examination. Where satellite sites have delegated responsibility, they must store and distribute the papers according to the satellite agreement(s).

Centres which fail to meet these deadlines will be charged late entry fees in accordance with the late entry charging policy.

At the end of the examination:

Completed papers must be collected at the end of the examination session, checked to ensure they match the assessment cover sheet and collated by learner number. Fully completed assessment cover sheets must be enclosed in the package containing the learner examination papers. Each centre should also keep a copy of the assessment cover sheets. Completed assessment papers must be kept in a secure location on site as above in a sealed package and sent to the paper printing company within 24 hours of the examination by registered post using the details provided in the package. The centre must retain the tracking details.

Centres must inform AIM immediately of any threat to the confidentiality of examination papers.

AIM examiners will mark the completed examinations. All examiners are trained and their work in quality assured by AIM lead examiners.

The results of examinations are issued to the centre on the published results date for each series.

All enquiries must be made within 25 working days of the issuing of results and it is therefore vital for centres to pass on the results to learners straight away.

Results released dates are published alongside the dates of the examinations, all are available on our website.

AIM will issue certificates of achievement to the centre within 10 working days of the results being issued.

Internally marked assessments

Once internally marked work has been completed:

- AIM External Verifiers (EV) 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.

Re-taking externally marked examinations

Learners who fail to achieve the required pass mark may undertake an examination in the next series. These must take place in the main examination series (January and June) to allow for further teaching and learning activities to take place at the centre.

Centres must schedule learners onto an externally marked examination through the AIM Portal by the deadline (full details can be found in the Portal Guidance on the AIM website). An email invitation will be sent to all centres when the scheduling window opens for each series.

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.

[A Guide to Assessing AIM Qualifications](#)

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

Learner grade record (available to assigned counselling contact via secure portal, please contact AIM for further information)

[‘Invigilation Guidance for AIM External Assessments’](#)

[VCRF Guidance](#)



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