

AIM Awards Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Theory June 2016

Report on the Examination

Introduction

166 scripts were received from 15 centres. The question paper was designed to test the 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 found in the Qualification Specification.

Question Mark Scheme

The paper contained a total of 21 questions and was divided into 2 sections. Section A contained:

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

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 relatively high 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.

There were a few instances of where word processing was used, rather than handwriting, where there was no evidence that approval for this had been obtained. In addition, 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.

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

Question 6: a significant number of candidates did not identify 'Learning Theory' as important in the Cognitive-Behavioural approach.

Question 16: many candidates did not know that 'working at relational depth' is, particularly emphasised in the Person-Centred and therefore in the Humanistic approach, which may mean that Mearns and Cooper's book has fallen out of favour. It is understandable that many candidates thought this related instead to the Psychodynamic approach, and this will be born in mind in future.

Question 18: 'transparency' was not well recognised as important in the Person-Centred, and therefore in the Humanistic approach, even though Rogers often mentions it as an aspect of the necessary and sufficient condition of congruence.

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 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.

Recommendations

Centres are recommended to:

Ensure that permission is obtained, and evidence of this provided, for the use of scribes or word processing in the examination.

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.