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2024 - 2025

Candidate Guide

Level 5 Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Skills and Theory (CBT-L5)

This RQF qualification is regulated by Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland.

Qualification/learning aim number: 500/8460/4

Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

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Please note:

This document, along with candidate support materials, can be downloaded from the [CPCAB website](#). These provide you with the information needed to enable you to maximise your learning on this course and to complete the qualification successfully. If you need help with the accessibility of this document, please email contact@cpcab.co.uk with your request.

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1. Introduction for Candidates

You are undertaking a course that leads to a nationally regulated qualification awarded by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB) – the only nationally regulated awarding body to specialise in the field of counselling and supervision.

This qualification is for candidates who are already working as counselling practitioners and who want to develop their skills in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and use these skills as an integral part of their work. Candidates are expected to be working with clients within a professional framework in order to apply their learning on this course and to meet the assessment requirements.

It is designed to enhance the employability of counsellors in organisational settings and as independent practitioners by giving them a solid grounding in CBT skills and theory. CBT is one of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended psychological therapies and counsellors with CBT skills are often sought after in multidisciplinary psychological therapy teams especially NHS Talking Therapies (formerly known as IAPT – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies).

The qualification will help you to:

- Practise and develop CBT skills and theory.
- Integrate CBT skills and theory into your existing client work.

Tip:

You will need to work with at least three different clients (minimum total of 30 hours) using a CBT approach and to participate in group training supervision as part of the course.

2. Qualification Structure

This qualification is made up of 7 mandatory learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. This structure is based on the 7 processes of the [CPCAB's Model](#).

Tip:

Think of the assessment criteria as learning tasks which you complete and then record so that your tutor can see you have achieved the task.

To achieve the qualification, you **MUST** be internally assessed by your tutor as **Proficient** in all seven learning outcomes.

This qualification is eligible for fully in-person, blended or online delivery.

3. Internal Assessment

Art students keep a portfolio of their coursework which they use to show other people what they, as artists, have learnt. In a similar way you need to keep a portfolio of your coursework, which you can use to show your tutor what you have learnt. Keeping a portfolio of your coursework will not only provide your tutor with evidence of your learning, but also really help you with the learning process itself.

You also need to complete your ([Candidate Learning Record \(CLR\)](#)), which should be placed at the front of your portfolio to signpost the evidence for each assessment criterion. The CLR has brief notes beside each assessment criterion to help you understand what is being asked for and guidelines on how to record your learning.

You must give **two** pieces of evidence for each criterion. In addition, the CLR (when complete) must include references to the following three types of course work.¹:

1. **Documents** – You must include a learning review, a self-review (see section below on the tutor-assessed self-review) and two written assignments (3,000 – 3,500 words), a client record of a minimum of 30 hours counselling with at least 3 different clients using CBT, and a supervision record². You might also include, for example, an audio/video recording (including verbatim transcripts), tutorial records (when written by you) and notes on your personal development.
2. **Tutor observation** – You must include records of tutor feedback on (a) your counselling practice sessions using CBT skills and (b) a case presentation. You might also include tutorial records (when written by your tutor), and tutor feedback on group discussions (including contributions to seminars, group-work and group training supervision).
3. **Testimony** – You must include records of peer feedback on your counselling practice sessions and at least one supervisor report. You might also include, for example, peer feedback on case presentations and group discussions (including contributions to seminars, group-work and group training supervision), and client evaluation/feedback.
 - See [CBT-L5 Specification](#) for a summary of minimum assessment requirements.
 - See the CPCAB film on [How to build a student portfolio](#).

¹ Please note that if it is appropriate you can reference the same section of your portfolio, or the same piece of work, a number of times.

² Supervision must meet the supervision ratio requirements of their chosen professional membership association/ethical framework

Tip:

It is a good idea to outline possible sections in your portfolio, for example:

- Document: learning reviews
- Document: written assignments
- Tutor observation: tutor feedbacks on counselling practice
- Testimony: peer feedbacks on counselling practice

An example reference in your CLR might read: *Learning review p 21, para 3, lines 3-6 (document)*

Peer feedback Sheet No. 6, line 29 (testimony)

CPCAB recommends that you attach a Criteria Assessment Sheet (CAS) to any work you hand in to your tutor for assessment. Your tutor can use the CAS to tell you which criteria you have met and to give you helpful feedback throughout the course. In this way you can gradually collect evidence as you go along and keep track of what evidence you still need to look out for.

Self-review

Towards the end of your course your tutor will support you to complete a self-review of your learning. A template document is available on the [CPCAB website](#). This will allow you to reflect on what you have learnt and show your understanding of CBT skills and theory in practice. Your tutor will assess your self-review and provide you with feedback on how you are progressing towards competence in all 7 areas. If you need to undertake any specific activities to address areas for development your tutor's feedback will explain how to do so.

Tip:

Meeting criteria is important, but the overall experience of learning about CBT should be much richer than criteria. Try to keep a balance.

After you have completed your portfolio your tutor will look at the evidence you have referenced in your Candidate Learning Record (CLR) and assess whether or not you have completed the assessment criteria, achieved the learning outcomes and met all the other qualification requirements. They may decide that you are not yet Proficient – and will identify what you still need to complete/achieve and how you might work towards doing this.

- Your tutor will give you further guidance on developing your portfolio, the three types of coursework and filling in the Candidate Learning Record (CLR).

The final assessment of your work is recorded on the Completion Statement at the end of your Candidate Learning Record.

Tip:

It is important to realise that simply presenting evidence to meet criteria may not be sufficient to meet the overall learning outcomes and/or the qualification requirements. Your tutor may have observed substantive evidence which indicates that a specific assessment criterion or learning outcome has not been met despite evidence you have submitted. If that is the case, they may record a final result of Not Proficient on the basis of contraindications.

Please note that all the work you include in your portfolio is *assessable material*, so it may be seen not just by your tutor but also by all those involved in your training centre's internal assessment process or any associated appeal or complaint. Such people will include the internal moderator and verifier as part of internal quality assurance (IQA) as well as the CPCAB external verifier.

4. Equal Opportunities and Reasonable Adjustments

In order to make sure that assessment is fair to all candidates, CPCAB requires all recognised centres to have an effective candidate support system in place and to make appropriate arrangements to meet individual assessment needs. You can ensure that your own learning and assessment needs are being met by discussing your own needs/difficulties with your tutor, who can ensure that you receive the appropriate support at your centre. Please talk to your centre prior to your enrolment and about any additional support that you may need regarding learning and assessment.

Please see CPCAB's [Reasonable Adjustment Guidance for Centres](#).

Both CPCAB and centres are required to recognise and comply with both the spirit and the word of equal opportunities legislation. Previous Acts were amalgamated into the [Equality Act 2010](#).

See [CPCAB's Equal Opportunities Policy](#).

5. Appeals and Complaints

CPCAB are committed to maintaining standards across our recognised centres so that the public can have confidence in us and our qualifications. We provide our own complaints and appeals policies for the benefit of centres and candidates.

- Please view our policies on Complaints, Appeals and Whistleblowing on the [CPCAB website](#).

All CPCAB approved centres are required to have a complaints and appeals procedure which is available to candidates. Candidates must address all appeals about internal assessment or complaints about any aspect of their learning experience on the course via the centre's own internal complaints and appeals procedures. It is the centre's responsibility to make these procedures available to candidates. Candidates who contact CPCAB directly on these issues will normally be directed back to their centre.

6. Additional Qualification Requirements

In addition to meeting the assessment criteria and learning outcomes, you need to meet the following additional course requirements:

Client work

You are required to undertake a minimum of 30 hours of one-to-one client work with at least three clients using the CBT approach, although it is recognised that you may also be working with other approaches in your client work setting. This setting must be approved by the centre and offer you the opportunity to meet the qualification specifications. You need to keep a log of your client work.

Candidates can complete placement hours for this qualification in-person, online/telephone, or a mix of both. The maximum amount of online placement hours will depend on the individual's own practice methods, and no CPCAB limit is set. Work with your centre to ensure you only undertake work in a format where you are well prepared, competent and appropriately supported. You should maintain records of the type of session in your client log.

- See [CBT-L5 Guidance to Client Work Experience](#) for more information.

Group training supervision

You are required to take part in group training supervision as part of your course. This will normally take the form of group supervision and can be linked to the requirement for case presentations. You are expected to present your work, receive supervisory support from your tutor and peers, learn from the work of other candidates in the group and specifically examine the application of CBT theory and skills to your client work. The emphasis here is on your learning, not on the client work outcome. Group training supervision does not imply any clinical responsibility being taken by the training centre.

External supervision

In addition, you are required to have external supervision of your counselling work (which may or may not be all within a CBT framework). Placement hours should be appropriately supervised and approved by your tutor. You should aim to meet the supervision ratio requirements of your chosen professional membership association/ethical framework. This varies depending on the amount of client work undertaken and you should seek guidance from your professional membership association, placement agency (if applicable) and centre as to how these ratios are ethically achieved. For example, the BACP requirements for trainee counsellors in individual supervision is a minimum of 1.5 hours per calendar month. Ratio of 8 hours counselling to 1-hour supervision, with supervision every two weeks. The BACP formula for counting time gained through group supervision is that if a candidate is in a group of four or less, half the time of the session can be claimed. So, if there are four people in a session of 1½ hours, then each person can claim 45 minutes each. If there are five or more in a session, then divide the length of the session by the number of people present - i.e. five people in a 2½ hour session could claim ½ an hour each.

Personal tutorials

You will be offered tutorials throughout your course to support your learning, develop your practice and help you identify learning goals. Your tutors will also take the opportunity of tutorials to raise any concerns likely to affect the outcome of your internal assessment. You need to keep a record of your tutorials in your portfolio.

7. Candidate Feedback

Your feedback is vital to CPCAB to ensure the ongoing quality of our qualifications. Feedback enables us to meet our requirements as a regulated Awarding Organisation and contributes towards our annual qualification review process. Please ensure that you complete the online feedback survey at the conclusion of your course.

Please click on this link to access the survey - [Candidate feedback](#).

Appendix 1: Candidate Learning Record

Level 5 Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Therapeutic Skills and Theory (CBT-L5)

Instruction:

Print out (or otherwise detach) this Candidate Learning Record (CLR) and the Completion Statement which follows it. Then insert both documents in the front of your portfolio.

Please confirm that your portfolio contains the following items (which are required in order to complete the qualification) by ticking each box below:

- A client record of work with at least three clients (minimum total 30 hours) using the CBT model
- Clinical supervision record
- A supervisor report

When you have completed your Candidate Learning Record please tick the following box to confirm that you have provided evidence all three types of coursework (i.e. documents, tutor observation and testimony):

CBT-L5		
LEARNING OUTCOME:	1. Work safely, legally and ethically as a counsellor using the CBT approach	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
1.1 Work within an ethical, legal and professional framework for CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a thorough knowledge of ethical frameworks for counselling. For example: the BACP “Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions”, the NCPS “Code of Ethical Practice”, the BABCP “Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics” or another similar framework. • Show that you understand ethical/ legal/ professional issues relating to protection of clients physically and clinically in a range of contexts. • Demonstrate ability to develop and make use of referral routes/other sources of help for clients as appropriate. • Communicate the personal and professional limitations of your practice. 	

1.2 Prepare the client to work within a CBT framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples of how you have worked in a collaborative and exploratory way with clients. • Reflect on the relevance of setting and working to an agenda, agreeing homework tasks, eliciting feedback and possible time limitations. • Explain the CBT approach to a client in roleplay and in practice. 	
1.3 Use CBT strategies to identify and manage risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the nature of risk and explore the range of risks which could affect clients. • Apply CBT strategies for identifying risk. • Understand the guidance provided in NICE Guideline NG225 and its relevance to counselling practice. • Reflect on situations in which you have managed clients at risk or considered how you would do so. 	
1.4 Research and access appropriate personal and professional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement strategies to improve own clinical practice. • Discuss (in case presentation sessions) the use of supervision to support assessment and treatment plans. • Report on your use of both group and individual supervision. • Show how you have drawn on appropriate personal support as a practitioner. 	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	2. Use the CBT framework to structure the therapeutic relationship	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
2.1 Critically reflect on the nature of the CBT therapeutic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the significance and nature of the working alliance for the CBT practitioner. • Show an awareness of how the CBT relationship differs from other therapeutic approaches. • Reflect on the implicit (unspoken, implied) and explicit (clearly evident) aspects of the therapeutic relationship. 	
2.2 Use CBT concepts and the case formulation to establish and maintain the therapeutic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use regular reviews of the case formulation to explore the idiosyncratic nature of the therapeutic relationship. • Reflect on the implication(s) of your case formulation for the therapeutic relationship. • Use case examples to show how you established a therapeutic relationship in which you carried out the assessment process. 	

2.3 Use the CBT framework to maintain and end the therapeutic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on how to maintain and end a working alliance that is collaborative, structured, educative and exploratory. • Show how you have maintained a balance between structure and bond (relationship) whilst exploring issues and educating your client. • With reference to a CBT model, show how you have worked within a structured framework to benefit the client. 	
2.4 Use research findings on relationship factors to inform CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show evidence of your having reviewed research findings (on relationship factors) in order to question and deepen your understanding of CBT. • Apply this understanding to critically evaluate your own work. 	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	3. Integrate understanding of diversity in CBT work	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
3.1 Use theory and research on diversity to inform client assessment and treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate research on impact of client diversity on the therapeutic process. • Relate theory on diversity to client assessment and treatment choices. • Apply insights from understanding social, cultural and biological factors to inform treatment plans. 	
3.2 Reflect on diversity issues that contribute to clients' patterns and schemas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how social, cultural and biological factors influence clients' patterns and schemas. • Explore a range of different patterns and schemas and practise using a selection of appropriate therapeutic interventions. • Use case presentations or your case study to show that you have explored with a client the possible origins of patterns and schemas. 	
3.3 Apply CBT theory to work with the idiosyncratic nature of clients' core beliefs, rules and assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore a range of behavioural and belief patterns and schemas. • Reflect on the diverse experiences and possible origins that contribute to the client's patterns and schemas. • Implement appropriate therapeutic interventions in response to your clients' core beliefs, rules and assumptions. 	
3.4 Use research findings on client factors to inform CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review research on how 'client factors' influence therapeutic outcomes. • Consider how clients' own patterns of relating influence CBT work. • Relate understanding of the role of client factors in therapeutic work to own client work. • Show how insights from this learning have informed work with individual clients. 	

3.5 Reflect on diversity issues which impact on clients accessing CBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a range of different clients and their needs. • Reflect on the appropriateness of CBT for meeting the above identified range of needs. • Reflect on factors which might prevent clients accessing CBT. • Explore the work of organisations developed with a vision to improve the accessibility of counselling services, for example BAATN. 	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	4. Use a coherent CBT approach to work with individual clients and their needs	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
4.1 Use empirical evidence and assessment data to produce a problem list and initial case formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on and evaluate the process of collaborative assessment both from your perspective and that of the client. • Gather empirical evidence and use that evidence to propose and agree an initial case formulation, a problem list and subsequent treatment plan with a client. • Reflect on your use of assessment tools and techniques to identify and understand achievable therapeutic goals and outcomes. 	
4.2 Share the initial case formulation with the client and agree a treatment plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you can conduct an assessment in collaboration with a client and that you can work with that client to formulate and prioritise a problem list and negotiate a treatment plan. • Give practical examples of how you used objective data collaboratively in the therapeutic process. 	
4.3 Use the case formulation to guide the work and facilitate the client's process of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the value of agreed case formulations to develop a diagnosis and treatment plan (this may require reference to ICD-11/DSM 5 e.g. diagnosing depression). • Use the case formulation to work with explicit behavioural patterns, and with implicit patterns/schema. • Discuss the process in your case review or learning journal. 	
4.4 Use ongoing assessment to monitor client progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the process of monitoring client change. • Use assessment tools or recognised CBT inventories to review client progress. • Using the data collected develop a reformulation and update the treatment plan for your client(s). 	

LEARNING OUTCOME:	5. Work with self-awareness as a counsellor using the CBT approach	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
5.1 Use CBT theory, tools and techniques to develop own self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the value of focusing on your own key automatic thoughts, beliefs and patterns of behaving. • Use CBT tools and techniques to develop own self-awareness. 	
5.2 Use self-awareness in CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the difficulties and problems associated with awareness of self in your CBT counselling work. • Evaluate the impact of use of self in your therapeutic work with a client. 	
5.3 Produce a personal case formulation to develop understanding of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record how you facilitated your own self exploration and development by producing your own case formulation. • Evaluate the use of own case formulation to identify behaviour/belief patterns and initiate personal change. 	
5.4 Use personal case formulation to work on personal patterns and schema that might impact on CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the process of developing a case formulation in collaboration with another. • Record how you have used CBT tools and techniques to bring about change in yourself. • Suggest ways in which the personal patterns and schema identified could impact on – or have impacted on – your CBT work. 	
5.5 Use research findings on therapist factors to inform CBT work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research literature on role of therapist factors in therapeutic outcomes. • Relate understanding of role of therapist factors in therapeutic outcomes to own client work. • Show how insights from this learning have informed work with individual clients. 	
LEARNING OUTCOME:	6. Use CBT theory, research and techniques coherently within counselling work	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
6.1 Critically reflect on the CBT model of emotional disorders and mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain and apply key concepts of the main theories informing the cognitive model of emotional disorders – so as to structure your work with a client. • Compare different cultural attitudes to defining mental health/well-being. • Reflect on the impact of such perceptions on individual clients both from the therapist's and the client's perspective. 	

<p>6.2 Use CBT theory, tools and techniques to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ structure therapeutic work ➤ work with client beliefs, behaviours and schemas ➤ work with clients patterns of relating ➤ work therapeutically with common life problems and common mental health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on how you integrate CBT theory, tools and techniques. • Refer to work done in the learning group – e.g. discuss how you worked with patterns of maintenance, avoidance or compensation of maladaptive schema (include relevant evaluation, reflection and feedback). • Document how you have integrated CBT theory, tools and techniques – as specified in this criterion – to work with individual clients. 	
<p>6.3 Develop and evaluate homework tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with clients to develop homework tasks to support collection of empirical evidence. • Specifically use client tailored homework tasks to work with a client's issues. Reflect on the implementation and outcome of this process. For example, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the client's attitude to the agreed homework set; ➤ the client's attention given to homework. • In relation to using homework tasks for working toward the client's agreed goals, reflect on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the appropriateness of the design; ➤ outcome of completing the task(s) set; ➤ how you worked with (or might work with) non-compliance with homework tasks. 	
<p>6.4 Use research findings on the effectiveness of treatments to inform CBT work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate research findings on the effectiveness of treatment protocols that inform CBT work – e.g. for OCD, depression, anxiety, PTSD, phobia. • Show how you have applied research findings to work with own clients. 	
<p>6.5 Integrate concepts of psychopathology when assessing and referring clients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the different understandings of psychopathology. • Present your understanding of psychopathology in relation to CBT counselling practice. • Show how your understanding of psychopathology (supported by supervision) informs your judgement in making decisions about assessment and referral. 	

LEARNING OUTCOME:	7. Monitor and maintain professional effectiveness as a counsellor using the CBT approach	
Assessment criteria	Candidate guidance to criteria	Portfolio references
<p>7.1 Use CBT supervision to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ evaluate the continuing validity of individual client case formulation ➤ support implementation of the treatment plan ➤ support the therapeutic relationship and the therapeutic process ➤ identify clients with severe or complex mental health problems and support the referral process ➤ monitor personal well-being, competence and efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically reflect on your use of group or individual supervision in relation to the areas described in this criterion. • Evaluate your use of supervision to support your assessment and treatment plans. 	
<p>7.2 Implement a clinical audit tool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate your use of an appropriate audit tool for reviewing the progress of CBT work. 	
<p>7.3 Research and plan own programme for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the role/importance of CPD in professional development. • Identify own development needs with reference to specific experience as a CBT counsellor. • Develop a plan for meeting your CPD needs. 	

Appendix 2: Completion Statement for CBT-L5

Completion statement for Candidate Learning Record Level 5 Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Therapeutic Skills and Theory			
Learning outcome		Contra-indications present Y/N	Tutor signature if learning outcome has been achieved
1	Work safely, legally and ethically as a counsellor using the CBT approach		
2	Use the CBT framework to structure the therapeutic relationship		
3	Integrate understanding of diversity in CBT work		
4	Use a coherent CBT approach to work with individual clients and their needs		
5	Work with self-awareness as a counsellor using the CBT approach		
6	Use CBT theory, research and techniques coherently within counselling work		
7	Monitor and maintain professional effectiveness as a counsellor using the CBT approach		

To be completed by core tutor:

Where the learning outcome has not been achieved please:

- (a) State clearly which learning outcome this relates to.
- (b) Give specific and relevant reasons why the learning outcome has not been achieved.
- (c) Record proposed course of action agreed between tutor and candidate to address/remedy concerns.

Learning outcome	Details of relevant contra-indications	Proposed course of action

I declare this Candidate Learning Record to be a true and authentic record of evidence submitted in my portfolio:

Candidate name: Candidate signature: Date:

I declare that this Completion Statement is a true record of the candidate's achievement:

I declare that this candidate has achieved all the above qualification requirements for CBT-L5:

Tutor name: Tutor signature: Date:

Appendix 3: Criteria Assessment Sheet (CAS)

Candidate:

Group:

Qualification:

Coursework:

Candidates: In the table below, identify the criteria evidenced in the assignment concerned and cross-reference these in the relevant page margin of your assignment.

Assessors: Grade the robustness of the evidence identified by the candidate against the Assessment Criteria: YES (achieved) or NO (not yet achieved).

For completion by the candidate: Candidate reference to coursework			For completion by the tutor: Tutor assessment	
Unit (CAST-L3 and TC-L4 only)	Criteria number	Page number	YES/NO	Tutor feedback

General comments:

Tutor name:

Date: