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2023 - 2024

External Assessment Guide

Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling (PC-L5)

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

Qualification/learning aim number: 500/8386/7

Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

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Please note that:

- This document can be downloaded from the [CPCAB Website](#) along with [tutor support materials](#).
- Tutor resources to support your teaching are also available: [shop](#), [videos](#), [YouTube](#)

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1. Introduction

This guide is provided to help our recognised centres understand the external assessment (EA) arrangements for PC-L5 (Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling). While this guidance is directed at centre staff, including tutors, exam departments and centre managers, it will also be available for public viewing on our website. In the interests of transparency and consistency of information, CPCAB believe it is important that this guide is also available to candidates. If you are unsure about any of the guidance, please contact us on either exams@cpcab.co.uk or supportlevel5-6@cpcab.co.uk

Candidates must have completed at least two-thirds of the course before undertaking the external assessment.

For this external assessment candidates complete a structured **Case Review** using the section headings given in the [PC-L5 – Guidance to Writing External Assessment Case Review](#) document. The Case Review is not written under exam conditions, but it must be the candidate's own work.

2. Example Case Review

Centres will be sent an Example External Assessment Case Review, which includes example answers and a marking scheme, when registering new groups. The Example Case Review is modelled on the format of the formal external assessment and is designed to provide candidates with an opportunity to become accustomed to the structure of the paper and the process for submission. This helps identify if there any potential issues with the facilitation process. The Example Case Review also supports tutors in preparing candidates in time for their selected external assessment window. Please contact exams@cpcab.co.uk if documents are not received at the time of registration.

3. Structure of the External Assessment

The Case Review allows candidates to demonstrate that they have developed the skills and knowledge needed to work safely, effectively and at depth as an independent, autonomous counsellor at level 5. Candidates should provide a coherent summary of therapeutic counselling work with **one** client (covering at least six sessions) that has been undertaken during the PC-L5 course. Candidates can choose a client with whom they have worked in an in-person, or online/ telephone relationship. Specific examples from the work with this client should be given throughout the case review. This may include brief examples of what was said, if relevant, but it should not be a transcript and nor should it be a session-by-session account. Please ensure that client confidentiality is always maintained.

Tutors should ensure that they provide candidates with the [PC-L5 – Guidance to Writing External Assessment Case Review](#). This gives detailed information on how to structure the Case Review and what key areas will gain them marks. This sheet also provides the headings for each section of the Case

Review; any papers submitted without these headings, or written in a free-flow format, will not be put forward for assessment.

The Case Review is divided into seven sections (please see Content and Depth section for further details), with each section being worth a total of three marks. Candidates may be marked in half mark increments within each question. To be found Proficient candidates need to achieve **11 out of 21** possible marks, and also need to achieve **1 full mark** in each of the seven sections. Please note that each section carries equal marks (3), so candidates are advised to take this into account when deciding how much to write in each section.

Candidates are asked to reference their work accurately and to include a bibliography at the end. The total word count, including all quotations, must be between **3000 and 3500 words**. Section headings, footnotes and the bibliography are not included in the word count. If using footnotes candidates should be mindful of their purpose, and not include additional case review work that they wish to be assessed. Because footnotes are not included in the word count material within them should be kept to a minimum, e.g., a citation, reference to a model, or link to an outside source. In addition, appendices and other material are not required and will not be marked.

There is no 10% leeway above this word count and Case Reviews that exceed the maximum word count of 3500 will be found Not Proficient.

It is important that candidates write their overall word count in the box on the front of the Cover Sheet before submitting it to their tutor. Case Reviews which do not state a word count may not be assessed.

4. Content and Depth

The aim of the external assessment is that candidates demonstrate the knowledge they have gained throughout the qualification to date and that they show their ability to reflect on their application of skills at level 5 depth. The case review is designed to allow candidates to show their knowledge and to give them the opportunity to do their best in external assessment.

In the Case Review candidates are asked to:

- evidence their work as an independent practitioner at level 5
- reflect a sound underpinning of integrated theory and skills
- demonstrate a coherent framework for assessing clients which is in line with their core theoretical approach
- evidence a clear understanding of the therapeutic relationship and the therapeutic process with reference to their own and the client's 'implicit' patterns and processes
- show a mature use of supervision appropriate to working at this depth

Candidates are encouraged to show how their practice has developed as they have grown in experience, demonstrating maturity in their self-awareness and the ability to integrate theory into practice, as well as how they apply their learning from supervision.

The Case Review needs to be structured using each of the following section headings:

- Context and boundaries of work
- Assessment
- Awareness of diversity issues
- Development of the therapeutic relationship
- Use of self-awareness
- Theory underpinning skills
- Use of supervision

Further guidance on the content to include under each heading can be found in the [PC-L5 – Guidance to Writing External Assessment Case Review](#) document.

5. Centre Facilitation

The submission windows for PC-L5 Case Reviews are provided on the [CPCAB website](#). These normally take place twice a year, in November and June. There is no timed invigilation involved.

It is vital that the Case Review is **all the candidates own work**. Any forms of plagiarism will result in a paper being declared void. Tutors have a vital role in confirming the authenticity of submitted work and should carefully read the section below for guidance on how to check a paper for authenticity and confirm this prior to submission.

Candidates are not permitted to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate content and put this forward for assessment as their own work. To do so is candidate malpractice.

CPCAB issue the Tutor Group Facilitation Form, PC-L5 External Assessment Cover Sheet and Example External Assessment Case Review by secure email to centres at the time of group registration. In this email centres will be notified of the date and time that the submission window closes.

When the Case Reviews are returned to the centre by the candidates the tutor also needs to complete and sign and return the 'Tutor Group Facilitation Form'. This form confirms that the correct timeframes and processes have been followed; if this form is not completed it may result in papers not being assessed. Please make sure that all sections of the Case Review Cover Sheets are completed prior to submission to CPCAB. This includes candidate names and numbers, candidate and tutor e-signatures to confirm authenticity, and the word count.

Centres must submit all Case Reviews, Cover Sheets and the completed Tutor Group Facilitation Form to CPCAB's Exams Department by the published deadline. Any Case Review received after the published deadline will not be assessed. See the section below on the requirements for submitting documents to CPCAB for further guidance.

Centres have a responsibility to perform a series of checks prior to submission to CPCAB to ensure that:

- The correct guidance is issued to candidates
- All candidate details are correctly completed
- Authenticity checks have been carried out correctly
- The Case Review is in the correct format
- The Cover Sheet has been signed and dated by the candidate
- The Case Review has been checked, and the Cover Sheet signed and dated by the tutor
- The correct Case Reviews and completed Tutor Group Facilitation Form are submitted before the close of the assessment window

6. Checking Authenticity

For this style of external assessment there is no requirement for tutors or the centre to invigilate a timed examination. Instead, centres and tutors hold primary responsibility for ensuring that authenticity checks are carried out and confirm that the candidate has completed the work themselves without any external input.

Case Reviews need to be returned with the External Assessment Cover Sheet which must be e-signed and dated by candidates and tutors upon completion and prior to submitting the papers to CPCAB.

Candidate signatures confirm they have not:

- Received external help in the composition of their answers for the external assessment
- Copied/plagiarised materials or ideas (from texts/internet/peers/tutor/external points of authority) that are not their own when forming their answers
- Used any AI tools to generate content for this assessment
- Sought or gained an advantage from other candidates/tutors/centre staff/external points of authority
- If a re-sit, used the same client as in any previous submission(s)

It is vital that the wording of their answers is their own, and not that of texts, internet, peers, tutors, or other external points of authority. However, they are allowed to use their course resources, texts, the internet etc, to research if required. If plagiarism is identified in candidate work, then the paper(s) involved will be declared void.

Tutor signatures confirm that:

- They have not provided feedback, suggestions, or any form of assessment of the candidate's case review
- They have reviewed the submission to check that it does not duplicate that of other candidates
- The submission is written (based on their professional experience of the candidate) in their recognised style of composition and level of work
- The submission does not contain obvious evidence of work plagiarised from texts or the internet

- The submission, to the best of the tutor's knowledge, has not been generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- If a re-sit, is based upon a different client to previous submissions
- To the best of their understanding the paper represents the candidate's own authentic work

It is important that the tutor understands their role in ensuring the authenticity of any candidate submissions sent to CPCAB. The presence of the registered tutor's signature on the Authenticity Cover Sheet is a crucial factor in CPCAB upholding the integrity of the assessment process. By signing the authenticity statement the tutor, who has been involved in the candidate's teaching and assessment, is confirming that they have had view of the Reflective Review paper and believe that the writing style is that of the student and that it is their own work. In rare instances where the registered tutor is unavailable to authenticate candidate work, centres must contact exams@cpcab.co.uk to discuss and agree an appropriate contingency plan.

The tutor must e-sign the authenticity statement on the cover sheet and provide the date that this check was completed. CPCAB are unable to assess submissions received without both the candidate and registered tutor e-signatures. Where tutors and/or candidates do not have an e-signature, we can accept their name typed into the signature box. If a tutor becomes aware of any authenticity issues with a candidate's work, e.g., that it has been copied or that a candidate has allowed another to copy their work, they are obliged to report this to their centre and follow the centre's own plagiarism procedures.

Please do not submit papers to CPCAB if you are unable to confidently assure us of their authenticity.

7. E-Signatures

Where CPCAB require forms to contain an e-signature this can take several formats:

- An individual can use a touch screen, or mouse to sign a blank document and then save this as a small image on their computers to be used when required. This can be cut and pasted onto the e-signature line of CPCAB forms and dragged to an appropriate size.
- An individual can hand-sign a sheet of paper and then scan or take a photo of this signature and save it as a small image on their computers to be used when required. This can be cut and pasted onto the e-signature line of CPCAB forms and dragged to an appropriate size.
- An individual can type in their name to the box on the form. This is acceptable provided it is not completed by anyone other than the person named. If centres accept this type of e-signature from a candidate, they should check they have received the document from a known email address or have another way of confirming the typed signature has been made by the candidate. Where CPCAB accepts tutor e-signatures of this kind we will expect to see the document arrive via a known email address or correspondence source.

8. External Assessment Window

CPCAB have set a 'submission window' for the PC-L5 Case Reviews. Centres can issue the Case Review Guidance and the Example External Assessment Case Review to candidates when they feel they have reached an appropriate point in the course to do so. Candidates are then free to compose their submissions between that time and the opening of the 'submission window'. Once candidates have submitted their Case Review to the centres, the tutor will need to ensure enough time is allocated to complete authentication checks. The submission window date is 'week commencing' and centres must ensure that the reviews reach us by the end of that week.

9. Submission Process of Case Reviews

The whole group's Case Reviews, Cover Sheets and Tutor Group Facilitation Form need to be returned to CPCAB in one batch. This can be done via email to exams@cpcab.co.uk or using the platform WeTransfer. CPCAB request that Case Reviews are not password protected and that they are submitted as an **accessible word-processed document**.

CPCAB are unable to accept Case Reviews in PDF format; this is because in most cases it is not possible to verify the word count or carry out plagiarism checks if required. CPCAB also ask that hard copies of the Case Reviews are not posted. Hard copies, unless agreed in advance with CPCAB in the form of a Reasonable Adjustment, are not able to be assessed.

Additional points:

- When Case Reviews, Cover Sheets and Tutor Group Facilitation Form are emailed to exams@cpcab.co.uk please include in the email subject heading the qualification title and group number i.e.: PC-L5 Group 123. Only one group should be included in each email.
- Individual candidate Case Reviews need to be saved with the title including either the candidate's name or candidate number i.e.: 'Case Review Joe Bloggs' or 'Case Review 123456' as this eases the identification of candidate work.
- The word count and both candidate and tutor signatures must be completed on the cover sheet.

CPCAB are unable to put forward for assessment:

- Case Reviews that are received after the external assessment submission window has closed
- Where CPCAB cannot confirm that authenticity checks have been carried out, i.e., through presence of dated tutor and candidate signatures and correct completion of the Tutor Group Facilitation Form
- Any Case Reviews received without candidate or tutor signatures

- Any Case Reviews that are submitted in the incorrect format (e.g., PDF)
- Cover Sheets that have not been dated correctly

If a candidate is absent from the external assessment, then they can be entered to sit at the next available window; there is no fee applied to this request. Please contact exams@cpcab.co.uk to ensure that they are entered. This needs to be done at least 14 days before the external assessment window.

10. Reasonable Adjustments

CPCAB are committed to offering reasonable adjustments to any external assessment arrangements which may place disabled candidates and candidates with additional learning needs at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other candidates. Reasonable adjustments for the external assessment should reflect candidates' normal way of working within the centre. More information is available in CPCAB's [Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy](#).

Please ensure that you inform us about any candidates requiring Reasonable Adjustments at least eight weeks prior to the date for the external assessment. Centres can make a reasonable adjustment application using the [CR3](#) form available on the CPCAB website.

11. External Assessment Results

CPCAB release External Assessment results within set time frames. The external assessment dates and the results release dates are available on the CPCAB [website](#).

Results will be released according to the published schedule and will be available to view on the CPCAB portal. Please note that CPCAB do not provide results directly to candidates. If you do not have access to the CPCAB portal it is recommended that you contact your centre exams department for these results.

Following the release of EA results for PC-L5 a consultancy feedback form will be sent to tutors via email. This document provides detailed feedback on the candidate group and any Not Proficient candidates.

12. Feedback Appointments, Re-sits, and Appeals

Feedback Appointments

Tutors can request a feedback appointment to discuss any Not Proficient candidate's results with one of the Counselling Qualifications Professionals (CQPs) from CPCAB. This request can be made via the

CPCAB portal. There is no charge for this service, and it is available for four weeks from the date the results were released. You can also discuss whether an appeal would be warranted.

Re-sits

Should a candidate be assessed as Not Proficient in the External Assessment they can re-sit the assessment at the next available window, for which a fee is applicable. Centres can book re-sits directly via our Portal. CPCAB recommends that any Not Proficient candidates are fully supported to prepare them for the next assessment. Candidates should not be entered for a re-sit if they are not likely to achieve proficiency in their internal assessment.

Re-sit candidates need to ensure that they use a new client and write a fresh Case Review. However, they may re-use (if they have very few clients to choose from) a client who they have previously selected for a verbal case presentation as part of the Internal Assessment (IA). It is essential that a candidate does not plagiarise their own work and that the Case Review for External Assessment is entirely new and has not been previously assessed in any way by the tutor.

Second Re-sits

Candidates are not automatically entitled to a second re-sit, i.e. a third attempt. They can be entered for a second re-sit if the candidate has been assessed as Proficient in the internal assessment and if the re-sit is supported by the tutor(s). A candidate may have a maximum of three attempts in the external assessment.

Appeals

An appeal against an External Assessment Not Proficient result should first be discussed with a Counselling Qualifications Professional (CQP) from CPCAB. If it is considered that an appeal is warranted and has the full support of the tutor, an appeal can be requested in writing by the centre by completing form [CR12](#) and emailing this to exams@cpcab.co.uk. Please see the [Appeals Policy](#) for further information. Appeals initiate a re-marking of the assessment by a new assessor and (if necessary) a new moderator. There is a fee for this service. If the appeal is successful, the fee will be refunded.

13. External Assessment Support

Our friendly and experienced team are on hand to support you through the external assessment facilitation process. If you have any subject specific queries regarding the external assessment, please contact our team of Counselling Qualification Professionals at supportlevel5-6@cpcab.co.uk.

If you would like any support with the facilitation of the external assessment or help with any of the assessment material or documentation, please contact exams@cpcab.co.uk.