NCFE Active IQ Level 3 Diploma in Sports Massage Therapy
QN: 610/5190/1



Qualification Specification

Qualification summary

Qualification title	**NCFE Active IQ Level 3 Diploma in Sports Massage Therapy**
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/5190/1
Guided learning hours (GLH)	225
Total qualification time (TQT)	370
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This qualification is designed to provide learners with the knowledge and skills to provide sports massage treatments to clients. This qualification includes the essential knowledge and skills that are needed to meet the minimum requirements for deployment. This additional specialist qualification supports practitioners to work with clients who have dysfunctional tissue but do not have acute/post-acute injuries or underlying pathological conditions.
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence
Work/industry placement experience	Work/industry placement experience is not required.
Apprenticeship/ Occupational standards	The qualification is mapped against the following standards: ST0302: The Personal Trainer Apprenticeship standard Skills for Health CNH27: Provide sports massage therapy to clients
UCAS	Please refer to the UCAS website for further details of points allocation and the most up-to-date information.
Performance points	Please check the performance points data produced by the Department for Education (DfE) and available online.
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/5190/1.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.

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Section 1: introduction

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- focus on the study of sports massage therapy
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge
- provide opportunities to acquire a number of practical and technical skills.

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry and registration

This qualification is designed for learners aged 16 and over, who wish to become a sports massage therapist.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

There are no specific prior skills/knowledge a learner must have for this qualification. However, the course requires physical exertion and individual participation is essential, therefore a degree of physical fitness is necessary. There is an element of communication (discussing, presenting, reading and writing) involved and learners should have basic skills in communication pitched at level 2.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the units and/or learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy, and health and safety requirements.

Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully achieve **5 units** from the mandatory units.

Please refer to the list of units in Appendix A for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification. A partial certificate may be requested for learners who

do not achieve the full qualification but have achieved at least one whole unit; partial achievement certificate fees can be found in the Fees and Pricing document on the NCFE website.

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- employment:
  - sports massage therapist
- further education:
  - sports massage therapy
  - personal training
- higher education:
  - apprenticeship in personal training.

Progression to higher-level studies

Level 3 qualifications can support progression to higher-level study, which requires knowledge and skills different from those gained at levels 1 and 2. Level 3 qualifications enable learners to:

- apply factual, procedural and theoretical subject knowledge
- use relevant knowledge and methods to address complex, non-routine problems
- interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas
- understand the nature of the area of study or work
- demonstrate an awareness of different perspectives and approaches
- identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills
- use appropriate research to inform actions
- review and evaluate the effectiveness of their own methods.

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

Realistic work environment (RWE) requirement/recommendation

The assessment of competence-based criteria should ideally be conducted within the workplace. However, in instances where this is not feasible, learners can be assessed in a realistic work environment (RWE) designed to replicate real work settings.

It is essential for organisations utilising an RWE to ensure it accurately reflects current and authentic work environments. By doing so, employers can be confident that competence demonstrated by a learner in an RWE will be translated into successful performance in employment.

In establishing an RWE, the following factors should be considered.

The work situation being represented is relevant to the competence requirements being assessed:

- The work situation should closely resemble the relevant setting.
- Equipment and resources that replicate the work situation must be current and available for use to ensure that assessment requirements can be met.
- Time constraints, resource access and information availability should mirror real conditions.

The learner's work activities reflect those found in the work environment being represented, for example:

- Interaction with colleagues and others should reflect expected communication approaches.
- Tasks performed must be completed to an acceptable timescale.
- Learners must be able to achieve a realistic volume of work as would be expected in the work situation being represented.
- Learners operate professionally with clear understanding of their work activities and responsibilities.
- Feedback from colleagues and others (for example, customers or service users) is maintained and acted upon.
- Account must be taken of any legislation, regulations or standard procedures that would be followed in the workplace.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

This qualification is internally assessed and externally quality assured.

The assessment consists of one component:

- an internally assessed portfolio of evidence, which is assessed by centre staff and externally quality assured by NCFE (internal quality assurance must still be completed by the centre as usual).

Learners must be successful in this component to gain the Level 3 Diploma in Sports Massage Therapy.

Learners who are not successful can resubmit work within the registration period; however, a charge may apply in cases where additional external quality assurance visits are required.

Unless otherwise stated in this Qualification Specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

Internal assessment

Each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks to demonstrate achievement of all the LOs associated with each unit. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this.

If a centre needs to create their own internal assessment tasks, there are four essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks; these are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes
- appropriate coverage of the content, LOs or assessment criteria (AC)
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers.

Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification, including grading, level, and guided learning hours (GLH).

The types of evidence listed are for guidance purposes only. Within learners' portfolios, other types of evidence are acceptable if all learning outcomes (LOs) are covered, and if the evidence generated can be internally and externally quality assured. For approval of methods of internal assessment other than portfolio building, please contact your external quality assurer (EQA).

The explanation of terms explains how the terms used in the unit content are applied to this qualification. This can be found in Section 3.

Unit 01 Anatomy and physiology for sports massage therapy (D/651/4093)

Assessment			
Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 3**	**40 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand the structural organisation of the human body	1.1 Identify the **structural organisation of the human body**
	1.2 Identify the basic **structure of a human cell**
	1.3 Identify the **primary functions of a human cell**
	1.4 Describe the different **types of human tissue** relevant to sports massage
	1.5 Explain the **functions of the different types of human tissue** relevant to sports massage
	1.6 Identify **anatomical landmarking and movement-related terminology**
2. Understand the structure and functions of the skeletal system	2.1 Identify the **structure of the skeletal system**
	2.2 Identify the **functions of the skeletal system**
	2.3 Identify the **classification of bones**
	2.4 Describe the stages of **bone growth and repair**
3. Understand the structure and functions of joints	3.1 Identify the different **joint categories**
	3.2 Identify the **structure of synovial joints**
	3.3 Describe the **characteristics of ligaments**
	3.4 Describe the **characteristics of tendons**
	3.5 Identify the **anatomical movements** available at the **major joints**
4. Understand the fundamental biomechanics of postural alignment	4.1 Identify **ideal, balanced standing posture**
	4.2 Define **neutral spinal alignment**
	4.3 Identify **spinal alignment variations**
	4.4 Identify and describe the most **common standing postural types** in relation to dominant pelvic and joint positions
5. Understand the structure and functions of the muscular system	5.1 Identify the different **types and characteristics of muscle tissue**
	5.2 Identify the **biomechanical principles of muscle contraction**
	5.3 Identify the different **types of muscle contraction**
	5.4 Describe the **roles of muscles during movement**
	5.5 Identify and locate the **major anterior and posterior skeletal muscles**
	5.6 Identify and locate the **attachment sites for the major muscles** of the body
	5.7 Describe **why knowledge of the muscle attachment sites is beneficial** to sports massage therapy practice
	5.8 Identify the **joint movements** caused by contraction of the major anterior and posterior skeletal muscles
6. Understand the structure and functions of the nervous system	6.1 Identify the **structure of the nervous system**
	6.2 Summarise the functions of each **subdivision of the nervous system**
	6.3 Identify the **structure of a neuron**
	6.4 Identify the **transmission of an action potential**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
7. Understand the structure and functions of the skin	7.1 Identify the **structure of the skin**
	7.2 Identify the **functions of the skin**
	7.3 Describe the **importance of the skin in relation to sports massage therapy**
8. Understand the structure and functions of the respiratory system	8.1 Identify the **structure of the respiratory system**
	8.2 Identify the **functions of the respiratory system**
	8.3 Identify the **main respiratory muscles**
	8.4 Identify the **passage of air** through the respiratory system
	8.5 Describe **how breathing methods can be used as an aid** to sports massage therapy practice
9. Understand the structure and functions of the cardiovascular system	9.1 Identify the **structure of the cardiovascular system**
	9.2 Identify the **functions of the cardiovascular system**
	9.3 Identify the **flow of blood** around the circulatory system
	9.4 Identify the **composition of blood**
	9.5 Describe **blood pressure and its diagnostic categories**
	9.6 Describe the **factors that may affect blood pressure**
	9.7 Identify the **local and systemic effects** of sports massage on the circulatory system
10. Understand the structure and functions of the lymphatic system	10.1 Identify the **structure of the lymphatic system**
	10.2 Describe the **functions of the lymphatic system**
	10.3 Identify the **structure of a lymph node**
	10.4 Identify the **functions of a lymph node**
	10.5 Identify the **location of the major lymph nodes**
	10.6 Describe the **effects of sports massage on the lymphatic system**
11. Understand the structure and functions of the endocrine system	11.1 Identify the **structure of the endocrine system**
	11.2 Identify the **general functions of the endocrine system**
	11.3 Identify the **physiological process regarding hormones** and how they exert their effects
	11.4 Describe a range of **hormones and their actions**
	11.5 Identify the potential **effects of sports massage on the endocrine system**
12. Know the structure and functions of the digestive system	12.1 Identify the basic **structure of the digestive system**
	12.2 Describe the basic **functions of the digestive system**
	12.3 Identify the potential effects of sports massage on the digestive system
13. Know the structure and functions of the urinary system	13.1 Identify the basic **structure of the urinary system**
	13.2 Describe the basic **functions of the urinary system**
	13.3 Identify the potential **effects of sports massage on the urinary system**
14. Understand the physiological effects of sports massage on body systems	14.1 Identify and introduce a range of fundamental **sports massage techniques**
	14.2 Describe the basic **physical and mechanical effects** of a range of fundamental sports massage techniques
	14.3 Describe the **physiological and neurological effects** of a range of fundamental sports massage techniques

Range
1. Understand the structural organisation of the human body
1.1 Structural organisation of the human body must include: • cells, tissues, organs and systems • the hierarchical organisation of the body • the interrelationship between body systems. **1.2 Structure of a human cell** must include: • key organelles including nucleus, ribosomes, endoplasmic reticulum, Golgi apparatus, lysosomes, mitochondria and cell membrane • basic structure and role of each component. **1.3 Primary functions of a human cell** must include: • structure and support • growth and replication • transport across the cell membrane • energy production • metabolic reactions (anabolic and catabolic) • reproduction (mitosis). **1.4 Types of human tissue** must include: • epithelial • connective • muscle • nervous. **1.5 Functions of the different types of human tissue** must include: • growth, repair and energy • coordination of bodily functions • physical support and movement • reproduction and blood. **1.6 Anatomical landmarking and movement-related terminology** must include: • location • orientation • positioning • regional terms • directional terms (for example, anterior, posterior, medial, lateral, proximal, distal, superficial, deep) • planes of movement (sagittal, frontal, transverse).
2. Understand the structure and functions of the skeletal system
2.1 Structure of the skeletal system must include:

Range

- bones, joints, cartilage and ligaments
- axial and appendicular skeleton
- general organisation of the skeleton.

2.2 Functions of the skeletal system must include:

- shape/support
- protection of vital organs
- movement (levers)
- muscle attachment
- mineral storage
- blood cell production.

2.3 Classification of bones must include:

- long
- short
- flat
- irregular
- sesamoid.

2.4 Bone growth and repair must include:

- ossification (primary and secondary)
- growth at epiphyseal plates
- bone remodelling (osteoblasts and osteoclasts)
- stages of bone repair (haematoma, soft callus, hard callus, remodelling).

3. Understand the structure and functions of joints

3.1 Joint categories must include:

- fibrous
- cartilaginous
- synovial.

3.2 Structure of synovial joints must include:

- joint capsule
- synovial membrane and synovial fluid
- articular cartilage
- ligaments.

3.3 Characteristics of ligaments must include:

- structure (fibrous connective tissue)
- role in joint stability
- function in limiting movement.

3.4 Characteristics of tendons must include:

Range
• structure (fibrous connective tissue) • role in attaching muscle to bone • function in transmitting force. **3.5 Anatomical movements** must include: • types of movement relevant to each joint (for example, flexion, extension, abduction, adduction, rotation). **Major joints** must include: • neck and spine • shoulder, elbow, wrist, hand and fingers • hip, knee, ankle, foot and toes.
4. Understand the fundamental biomechanics of postural alignment
4.1 Ideal, balanced standing posture must include: • alignment of head, spine and pelvis • even weight distribution • neutral joint positioning. **4.2 Neutral spinal alignment** must include: • natural curves of the spine • maintenance of alignment in standing posture. **4.3 Spinal alignment variations** must include: • neutral • kyphosis • lordosis • scoliosis. **4.4 Common standing postural types** must include: • hollow back (anterior pelvic tilt) • flat back (posterior pelvic tilt) • sway back (forward hip translation) • weight shift (lateral pelvic tilt).
5. Understand the structure and functions of the muscular system
5.1 Types and characteristics of muscle tissue must include: • cardiac • smooth • skeletal. **5.2 Biomechanical principles of muscle contraction** must include: • sliding filament theory

Range

- interaction of actin and myosin
- role of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) and calcium.

5.3 Types of muscle contraction must include:

- concentric
- eccentric
- isometric.

5.4 Roles of muscles during movement must include:

- agonist
- antagonist
- synergist
- fixator.

5.5 Major anterior and posterior skeletal muscles may include:

- head and neck:
  - sternocleidomastoid
  - scalenes
- shoulder and upper back:
  - trapezius
  - rhomboids
  - levator scapulae
  - deltoid (anterior, medial, posterior)
- rotator cuff:
  - supraspinatus
  - infraspinatus
  - teres minor
  - subscapularis
- chest:
  - pectoralis major
  - pectoralis minor
- upper arm:
  - biceps brachii
  - brachialis
  - triceps brachii
- forearm:
  - wrist flexors (group)
  - wrist extensors (group)
- core/trunk:
  - rectus abdominis
  - internal obliques
  - external obliques
  - transversus abdominis
  - erector spinae
- hip/gluteal region:
  - gluteus maximus
  - gluteus medius

Range

- gluteus minimus
- iliopsoas (psoas major + iliacus)

- hip adductors:
  - adductor longus
  - adductor magnus
  - adductor brevis
  - gracilis
- thigh (anterior):
  - quadriceps group:
  - rectus femoris
  - vastus lateralis
  - vastus medialis
  - vastus intermedius
- thigh (posterior):
  - hamstrings
  - biceps femoris
  - semitendinosus
  - semimembranosus
- lower leg:
  - gastrocnemius
  - soleus
  - tibialis anterior.

Learners must cover a minimum of 20 major muscles of the body overall with a minimum of 4 muscles from each the following areas of the body.

Upper body – Anterior
Upper body – Posterior
Lower body – Anterior
Lower body – Posterior

5.6 Attachment sites for major muscles must include:

- origin
- insertion.

Learners must cover a minimum of 4 origin sites and 4 insertion sites for the following areas of the body:

- upper body
- lower body.

5.7 Why knowledge of the muscle attachment sites is beneficial must include:

- improved assessment accuracy
- effective treatment planning
- understanding movement and dysfunction.

5.8 Joint movements must include:

Range
• actions of major muscles at joints • relationship between muscle contraction and movement.
6. Understand the structure and functions of the nervous system
6.1 Structure of the nervous system must include: • central nervous system • peripheral nervous system. **6.2 Subdivisions of the nervous system** must include: • central and peripheral • sensory and motor • somatic and autonomic • sympathetic and parasympathetic. **6.3 Structure of a neuron** must include: • cell body • dendrites • axon. **6.4 Transmission of an action potential** must include: • electrical impulse conduction • role of synapses.
7. Understand the structure and functions of the skin
7.1 Structure of the skin must include: • epidermis • dermis • subcutaneous layer. **7.2 Functions of the skin** must include: • protection • thermoregulation • sensation • formation of vitamin D. **7.3 Importance of the skin in relation to sports massage therapy** must include: • sensory role • protective barrier • relevance to treatment.
8. Understand the structure and functions of the respiratory system
8.1 Structure of the respiratory system must include: • airways and lungs.

Range
8.2 Functions of the respiratory system must include: • gaseous exchange • filtration of air • warming and humidifying air • vocal sound production. **8.3 Main respiratory muscles** must include: • diaphragm • intercostals • scalenes • sternocleidomastoid. **8.4 Passage of air** must include: • gaseous exchange in alveoli. **8.5 How breathing methods can be used as an aid** must include: • relaxation • pain management • treatment effectiveness.
9. Understand the structure and functions of the cardiovascular system
9.1 Structure of the cardiovascular system must include: • heart • blood vessels. **9.2 Functions of the cardiovascular system** must include: • transport of gases • transport of nutrients • transport of hormones • fluid balance • thermoregulation • immunity. **9.3 Flow of blood** must include: • pulmonary and systemic circulation. **9.4 Composition of blood** must include: • red blood cells • white blood cells • platelets • plasma.

Range
9.5 Blood pressure and its diagnostic categories must include: • definition of blood pressure • classification ranges. **9.6 Factors that may affect blood pressure** must include: • lifestyle factors • physiological factors.
10. Understand the structure and functions of the lymphatic system
10.1 Structure of the lymphatic system must include: • vessels and nodes. **10.2 Functions of the lymphatic system** must include: • tissue fluid management • filtration • immunity • lipid absorption. **10.3 Structure of a lymph node** must include: • basic structure. **10.4 Functions of a lymph node** must include: • filtration • immune response. **10.5 Location of the major lymph nodes** must include: • key node locations. **10.6 Effects of sports massage on the lymphatic system** must include: • fluid movement • reduction of swelling.
11. Understand the structure and functions of the endocrine system
11.1 Structure of the endocrine system must include: • glands. **11.2 General functions of the endocrine system** must include: • hormone regulation. **11.3 Physiological process regarding hormones** must include: • hormone release and action.

Range
11.4 Hormones and their actions must include: • examples of hormones and effects. **11.5 Effects of sports massage on the endocrine system** must include: • potential hormonal responses.
12. Know the structure and functions of the digestive system
12.1 Structure of the digestive system must include: • digestive tract. **12.2 Functions of the digestive system** must include: • breakdown of food • absorption • waste excretion.
13. Know the structure and functions of the urinary system
13.1 Structure of the urinary system must include: • kidneys and associated structures. **13.2 Functions of the urinary system** must include: • filtration • waste excretion • fluid balance • electrolyte balance. **13.3 Effects of sports massage on the urinary system** must include: • potential effects.
14. Understand the physiological effects of sports massage on body systems
14.1 Sports massage techniques must include: • effleurage • petrissage • tapotement • compressions / vibrations / oscillation • frictions • trigger point therapy • passive stretching • muscle energy techniques. **14.2 Physical and mechanical effects** must include: • • tissue effects • mechanical responses.

Range
14.3 Physiological and neurological effects must include: • physiological responses • neurological responses.

Unit 02 Professional practice in sports massage therapy (F/651/4094)

Assessment			
Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 3**	**25 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand legislation requirements within sports massage therapy	1.1 Explain the current **legal obligations** that relate to the sports massage therapist and their practice
	1.2 Identify **insurance requirements** for sports massage therapy practitioners
	1.3 Explain the importance of obtaining and working within the boundaries of **informed consent**
	1.4 Identify what **information** needs to be given to clients prior to obtaining informed consent
	1.5 Describe the **role and responsibilities** of a sports massage therapist in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
	1.6 Identify the importance of having a **chaperone** present at all times when working with children and vulnerable adults
	1.7 Summarise the consequences of **non-compliance with legislation** and professional standards
2. Understand scope of practice and referral in sports massage	2.1 Identify the general **cautions and contraindications** to sports massage
	2.2 Describe the **actions** to take if presented with cautions or contraindications
	2.3 Identify **circumstances** when client referral to another healthcare practitioner is recommended
	2.4 Describe the **referral procedure** when working with other healthcare professionals
	2.5 Describe **how to communicate** appropriately with other healthcare professionals
	2.6 State the information required within a **referral or follow-up letter**
	2.7 Identify the potential **consequences** of not adhering to recommended advice provided by another healthcare professional
3. Understand the professional standards relevant to sports massage practitioners	3.1 Explain the purpose of **professional regulation**
	3.2 Identify a range of common working **principles and standards** stipulated by professional sports massage associations
	3.3 Identify the **roles and requirements** of professional associations relating to sports massage
	3.4 Explain the need for high standards of **personal and professional conduct** as a sports massage practitioner
	3.5 Identify the **importance of lifelong learning** and professional development to keep knowledge and skills up to date
4. Understand the principles of professional practice in sports massage	4.1 Explain the **importance of professionalism** in client interactions and massage practice
	4.2 Explain the **importance of respect, equality, and diversity** when working with a range of client types

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
	4.3 Identify the **personal and clinical standards** expected of the sports massage therapist
	4.4 Explain the **importance of good client communication skills** before, during, and after sports massage treatment
	4.5 Identify the advantages/disadvantages of **different means of communication**
5. Understand how to produce, maintain, and store client records	5.1 Explain the importance of accurate, confidential, and secure client **record keeping**
	5.2 Identify what **information** should be recorded in relation to a sports massage therapy client
	5.3 Identify the **principles and procedures** to apply when recording and documenting client treatments
	5.4 Identify the **legal requirements** for the storage, management, and disposal of client data and records
6. Know the importance of environmental and personal cleanliness and hygiene when performing sports massage therapy	6.1 Identify the ongoing **personal hygiene and cleanliness standards** required of a sports massage therapist
	6.2 Describe the **cleanliness and hygiene requirements for the massage environment** to reduce and avoid cross-contamination
	6.3 Identify how to encourage massage **clients to contribute to a clean and hygienic environment**
7. Know the current health and safety legislation for equipment used during massage treatment	7.1 Identify the current **legislation** relative to the use of sports massage equipment during treatments performed within the clinical working environment

Range
1. Understand legislation requirements within sports massage therapy
1.1 Legal obligations must include: • legal duties relevant to sports massage therapy practice (for example, duty of care, negligence, data protection, confidentiality) • UK legislation examples • professional responsibility to work within national law and industry expectations • legal implications for poor or unsafe practice • link to sports massage therapy work settings (clinic, home, field). **1.2 Insurance requirements** must include: • types of insurance, to include public liability, professional indemnity, personal accident cover • why insurance is essential for protecting therapist and client • evidence required by insurers (qualification, membership, CPD) • scope of practice limitations within insurance cover. **1.3 Informed consent** must include: • definition of informed consent and why therapists legally must obtain it • forms of consent (written, verbal, implied)

Range
• ethical boundaries, capacity, voluntariness, clear understanding • when consent must be renewed or revoked • implications of working without informed consent (legal and professional). **1.4 Information** must include: • treatment benefits, risks and limitations • techniques, draping, areas to be treated • expected sensations, contra-actions, aftercare • therapist qualifications, pricing, policies • client's right to withdraw consent any time. **1.5 Role and responsibilities** must include: • recognising signs of abuse or neglect • reporting procedures, record keeping, referral • boundaries, communication, safe behaviour • legal responsibilities and organisational policy expectations. **1.6 Chaperone** must include: • when a chaperone should be present (minors, vulnerable adults) • the chaperone's role in maintaining safeguarding, transparency, professionalism • documentation and consent procedures involving a chaperone. **1.7 Non-compliance with legislation** must include: • legal outcomes (claims, civil liability, prosecution) • professional consequences (membership loss, insurer refusal) • ethical issues (breach of trust, damage to reputation).
2. Understand scope of practice and referral in sports massage
2.1 Cautions and contraindications must include: • local contraindications (for example, recent injury, bruising, varicose veins) • systemic contraindications (for example, fever, systemic illness). **2.2 Actions** must include: • whether to modify, defer, or refuse treatment • when to refer to another professional • documentation required • clear explanation to the client. **2.3 Circumstances** must include: • red flags (for example severe unexplained pain, neurological symptoms, systemic issues) • scope limitations • injury patterns requiring referral.

Range
2.4 Referral procedure must include: • how to refer (formal/informal) • communication method (how referral is made) • what information to include • consent from client • confidentiality • record keeping. **2.5 How to communicate** must include: • professional tone, factual accuracy • objective information • use of appropriate terminology • respecting boundaries of roles. **2.6 Referral or follow-up letter** must include: • client details • presenting issue • assessment findings • contraindications/concerns • treatment provided • reason for referral. **2.7 Consequences** must include: • risk of worsening condition • delayed recovery • legal implications • ethical breach • impact on therapist.
3. Understand the professional standards relevant to sports massage practitioners
3.1 Professional regulation must include: • public protection • standardising competence • maintaining professional credibility • ensuring safe, ethical practice. **3.2 Principles and standards** must include: • code of conduct • confidentiality • professionalism • hygiene and infection control • professional boundaries • working within competence • record keeping expectations

Range

- CPD requirements
- client consent.

3.3 Roles and requirements must include:

- membership standards (entry requirements, qualifications, insurance)
- complaints and disciplinary procedures
- ethical frameworks/codes of conduct
- support for professional practice
- benefits of membership may include:
  - credibility
  - insurance access
  - CPD opportunities.

3.4 Personal and professional conduct must include:

- professional appearance and presentation
- communication style and behaviour
- reliability and punctuality
- respect for clients
- building trust and therapeutic relationships
- maintaining client dignity and confidentiality.

3.5 Importance of lifelong learning must include:

- keeping knowledge and skills up to date
- maintaining safe and effective practice
- meeting insurance/professional requirements
- responding to:
  - new research
  - industry developments
  - best practice guidelines.

4. Understand the principles of professional practice in sports massage

4.1 Importance of professionalism must include:

- appropriate communication
- respect, reliability, confidentiality
- clear expectations and professional boundaries
- client trust and confidence
- consistency of service delivery.

4.2 Importance of respect, equality and diversity must include:

- anti-discriminatory practice
- equal treatment of all clients
- adaptations for protected characteristics
- inclusive practice (making services accessible)
- consideration of:
  - cultural differences

Range

- social background
- language barriers.

4.3 Personal and clinical standards must include:

- personal hygiene
- professional appearance
- professional behaviour in all settings
- health and safety awareness
- clinical standards must include:
  - cleanliness of environment
  - equipment hygiene
  - safe working practices.

4.4 Importance of good client communication skills must include:

- active listening
- effective questioning
- clear explanations before treatment
- communication during treatment (feedback, comfort, pressure)
- post-treatment explanations (aftercare, outcomes)
- checking understanding (client confirmation)
- managing:
  - client expectations
  - concerns.

4.5 Different means of communication; learners must cover a minimum of four means of communication, for example:

- verbal (in-person)
- video
- audio
- written
- email
- messaging
- online platforms.

5. Understand how to produce, maintain, and store client records

5.1 Record keeping must include:

- types of client records (for example, handwritten, digital, printed, digital-only)
- legal requirements for record keeping (for example, GDPR, storage, disposal)
- purposes of record keeping (for example, continuity of care, risk management, evidence trail).

5.2 Information must include:

- client personal details
- consultation information
- subjective and objective findings
- treatment plans, consent, aftercare advice

Range
• treatment records and any changes or concerns. **5.3 Principles and procedures** must include: • accuracy, legibility, objectivity • confidentiality of client information • clear and appropriate recording practices • secure storage of records (digital and physical). **5.4 Legal requirements** must include: • data protection requirements (for example, GDPR) • record retention requirements • secure storage and access • secure disposal of records (for example, shredding, digital deletion).
6. Know the importance of environmental and personal cleanliness and hygiene when performing sports massage therapy
6.1 Personal hygiene and cleanliness standards must include: • therapist grooming, cleanliness, non-contamination • clothing standards • infection control practices • therapist health considerations (for example, illness, skin conditions, wounds). **6.2 Cleanliness and hygiene requirements for the massage environment** must include: • cleaning protocols for equipment and workspace • infection control principles • waste disposal and laundry management (for example, towels, couch covers) • differences by environment (for example, massage clinic, home-based massage, massage in a clubhouse or changing room, massage on a sports field). **6.3 Clients to contribute to a clean and hygienic environment** must include: • pre-treatment hygiene expectations • removing jewellery/clothing appropriately • wearing clean clothing • following therapist instructions • informing the therapist of illness or infection-related concerns.
7. Know the current health and safety legislation for equipment used during massage treatment
7.1 Legislation must include: • safe use of sports massage equipment (for example, tables, bolsters, oils) • equipment maintenance and inspection requirements • hygiene and infection control in relation to equipment use • safe manual handling and setup of equipment • relevant health and safety legislation (for example, general health and safety law, equipment safety requirements, manual handling guidance).

Unit 03 Understand the principles of soft tissue dysfunction, injury, and repair (H/651/4095)

Assessment			
Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 3**	**30 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand soft tissue injury	1.1 Define and describe soft tissue **injuries**
	1.2 Identify the different **types of soft tissue injury**
	1.3 Identify **common causes of soft tissue injury**
	1.4 Identify **signs and symptoms of soft tissue injury**
	1.5 Describe **reasons for referral** of treatment
	1.6 Identify how **overtraining** may increase the risk of soft tissue injury
	1.7 Identify the **signs and symptoms that may indicate overtraining**
2. Understand soft tissue dysfunction	2.1 Define and describe soft tissue **dysfunction**
	2.2 Identify the different **types of soft tissue dysfunction**
	2.3 Identify **common causes of soft tissue dysfunction**
	2.4 Identify **signs and symptoms of soft tissue dysfunction**
	2.5 Describe **reasons for deferral** of treatment
	2.6 Identify how **delayed onset muscle soreness** (DOMS) may temporarily create soft tissue dysfunction
	2.7 Identify the **signs and symptoms** that may indicate delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)
3. Understand the process of soft tissue repair	3.1 Describe the **process and phases** of soft tissue repair
	3.2 Identify **factors** that may positively or negatively influence soft tissue repair
	3.3 Identify the importance of **appropriate levels of inflammation** as part of the soft tissue repair process
	3.4 Identify a **progressive list of priorities** to help manage and support the soft tissue repair process
4. Understand the effects of nutrition upon injury and soft tissue repair	4.1 Describe the **primary macronutrients** that support growth and repair of soft tissues
	4.2 Identify and explain the **primary micronutrients** that underpin biological processes involved in growth and repair of soft tissues
	4.3 Identify the **importance of long-term healthy eating habits** in relation to soft tissue maintenance, growth, and repair
	4.4 Identify the importance of adequate **hydration** for soft tissue health

Range
1. Understand soft tissue injury
1.1 Injuries must include: • definitions and key characteristics of soft tissue injury • injury types may include muscle strains, tendon injuries, ligament sprains, overuse injuries, skin injuries • typical causes and tissue response.

Range
1.2 Types of soft tissue injury must include: • graded muscle strains • graded ligament sprains • overuse injuries • acute and chronic injury patterns. **1.3 Common causes of soft tissue injury** must include: • overtraining and overload • poor technique or movement patterns • impact or trauma • inadequate warm-up or preparation • postural factors • environmental factors. **1.4 Signs and symptoms of soft tissue injury** must include: • pain, swelling, bruising • restricted movement and weakness • inflammatory responses. **1.5 Reasons for referral** must include: • red flags (for example, suspected fracture, neurological symptoms, severe or unexplained swelling) • injuries outside scope of practice • systemic signs or conditions requiring further assessment. **1.6 Overtraining** must include: • fatigue and reduced recovery capacity • technique breakdown • increased inflammation and injury risk. **1.7 Signs and symptoms that may indicate overtraining** must include: • fatigue and sleep disruption • irritability or mood changes • decreased performance • frequent illness • persistent soreness.
2. Understand soft tissue dysfunction
2.1 Dysfunction must include: • definitions and key characteristics of soft tissue dysfunction • types may include muscular weakness, shortened muscle tissue, lengthened muscle tissue, neuromuscular inefficiency, soft tissue adhesions, fascial restrictions.

Range

2.2 Types of soft tissue dysfunction must include:

- mechanical and neuromuscular dysfunction
- myofascial dysfunction
- compensatory movement patterns.

2.3 Common causes of soft tissue dysfunction must include:

- postural factors and repetitive behaviours
- compensation following injury
- training errors (for example, overload, poor technique)
- lifestyle factors (for example, inactivity, occupational demands).

2.4 Signs and symptoms of soft tissue dysfunction must include:

- muscle tightness or weakness
- movement restriction or altered movement patterns
- pain or discomfort patterns
- postural deviations.

2.5 Reasons for deferral must include:

- acute flare-ups of pain or inflammation
- systemic illness or infection
- severe or limiting DOMS
- client distress or lack of informed consent.

2.6 Delayed onset muscle soreness must include:

- exercise-induced microtrauma
- associated inflammatory response
- temporary reduction in strength and range of movement.

2.7 Signs and symptoms must include:

- delayed onset muscle pain
- stiffness and reduced range of movement
- localised tenderness
- typical timing pattern (for example, 12 to 72 hours post-exercise).

3. Understand the process of soft tissue repair

3.1 Process and phases must include:

- inflammatory phase
- proliferation (repair) phase
- remodelling phase
- general timelines and key characteristics of each phase
- overlap and progression between phases.

3.2 Factors must include:

Range

- factors that may positively influence repair (for example, nutrition, rest, appropriate loading)
- factors that may negatively influence repair (for example, age, illness, poor circulation, repeated stress).

3.3 Appropriate levels of inflammation must include:

- purpose of inflammation in healing
- risks of insufficient or excessive inflammation
- therapist's role in supporting appropriate inflammatory response within scope of practice.

3.4 Progressive list of priorities may include:

- prevent injury or condition from further deterioration
- control excessive inflammation and pain
- enhance soft tissue quality
- improve circulation (blood and lymph)
- restore joint mobility
- restore or increase joint stability and proprioception
- restore or increase muscle strength and function
- resume and strengthen daily physical activities.

4. Understand the effects of nutrition upon injury and soft tissue repair

4.1 Primary macronutrients must include:

- protein
- carbohydrates
- fats
- general role of macronutrients in tissue growth, repair, and energy provision.

4.2 Primary micronutrients must include:

- key vitamins and minerals involved in tissue repair (for example, vitamin D, B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, zinc)
- general role of micronutrients in supporting healing and tissue formation.

4.3 Importance of long-term healthy eating habits must include:

- the impact of diet on recovery, inflammation, and tissue quality
- importance of consistent, balanced nutrition for long-term soft tissue health
- link between nutrition, recovery, and client outcomes.

4.4 Hydration must include:

- the effects of dehydration on tissue healing
- role of water in cell function and nutrient transport
- physiological signs of dehydration
- importance of hydration for maintaining soft tissue function.

Unit 04 Client consultation, assessment, and treatment planning for sports massage therapy (J/651/4096)

Assessment			
Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 3**	**65 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand the importance of obtaining relevant information to inform sports massage treatment	1.1 Identify the **value of client consultation**
	1.2 Identify the **type of information** that may be gathered during a sports massage consultation
	1.3 Identify the importance of acquiring detailed and relevant **client information** prior to treatment
	1.4 Identify why client information, assessment results, and treatment details must be kept **confidential**
	1.5 Describe how the **biopsychosocial model** may be beneficial in gathering information relevant to the sports massage therapy treatment process
	1.6 Summarise the **basic tenets of the biopsychosocial model**
	1.7 Describe **how to apply the biopsychosocial model** in a sports massage therapy practice
2. Understand the importance of respecting equality, diversity, and providing an inclusive service	2.1 Explain the value of respecting **equality, diversity, culture, and client beliefs**
	2.2 Identify how to **adapt sports massage treatments** and business practices to meet the needs of different groups, communities, and individuals
	2.3 Identify and describe how to **adapt sports massage practices** to the physical, psychological, or emotional needs of individuals
3. Understand how to screen and assess clients prior to sports massage treatment	3.1 Explain how to **screen clients** prior to sports massage assessment or treatment
	3.2 Identify the importance of accurate client **assessment and reassessment**
	3.3 Describe what is meant by **subjective and objective assessment**
	3.4 Identify the **reasons for use of subjective and objective assessment methods**
	3.5 Identify **methods of applying** subjective and objective client assessment
4. Be able to perform sports massage client assessments	4.1 Carry out **subjective client assessments**
	4.2 Obtain **informed consent** prior to a client's objective physical assessment
	4.3 Carry out a range of **objective physical assessments** upon the client
5. Be able to assess static posture, asymmetry, and signs of biomechanical dysfunction	5.1 Determine the joint and muscular characteristics of common **postural types**
	5.2 Use an effective **procedure for assessment of static, standing posture**
	5.3 Perform a **static posture/asymmetry assessment** using a suitable observation record form

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
	5.4 Determine how **postural assessment results** may influence sports massage treatment planning
6. Be able to assess the palpatory characteristics of normal and abnormal body tissues	6.1 Determine how **normal and abnormal soft tissue feels upon palpation**
	6.2 Explain the **purpose and procedure** for using palpation to assess soft tissue to the client
	6.3 Perform a **soft tissue palpation assessment**
	6.4 Explain how **palpation assessment findings** may influence sports massage treatment planning to the client
7. Be able to assess active joint range of movement	7.1 Describe the typical range of movement available at the **major joints** to the client
	7.2 Determine the **purpose and procedure** for assessing active joint range of movement
	7.3 Perform a selection of **active joint range of movement assessments**
	7.4 Explain how the active joint range of movement assessment **results** may influence sports massage treatment planning to the client
8. Be able to assess passive joint range of movement and joint end feel	8.1 Describe **normal and abnormal joint end feel** for each of the major joints to the client
	8.2 Describe the **purpose and procedure** for assessing passive range of movement and joint end feel to the client
	8.3 Perform a selection of **passive joint range of movement assessments** and also determine joint end feel
	8.4 Determine how the **results** of the passive joint range of movement and end feel assessments may influence sports massage treatment planning
9. Be able to assess muscular strength using a recognised therapeutic testing scale	9.1 Define a validated **grading system** used to classify therapeutic muscle strength
	9.2 Describe the **purpose and procedure** for assessing therapeutic muscular strength to the client
	9.3 Perform a selection of **therapeutic muscular strength assessments**
	9.4 Determine how the **results** of the therapeutic muscular strength assessments may influence sports massage treatment planning
10. Be able to devise sports massage therapy treatment plans	10.1 Devise specific **massage strategies** relevant to the client consultation and the collated, interpreted assessment information
	10.2 Use treatment plans that align with the current stage of soft tissue repair and the recommended **progressive treatment priorities**
	10.3 Present the intended massage **goals and strategies** to each client
	10.4 Provide **opportunities for clients to clarify understanding** of their current physical condition and the intended treatment plan
	10.5 **Agree treatment strategies and obtain informed consent** from the client prior to initiating the intended therapy plan
11. Understand the indications and contraindications for a range of sports	11.1 Describe the **indications for a range of sports massage therapy techniques**
	11.2 Identify the **cautions and contraindications** for a range of sports massage therapy techniques

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
massage therapy techniques	11.3 Identify the **required actions** when presented with cautions or contraindications related to specific sports massage therapy techniques
12. Understand the potential impact of psychological effects resulting from therapist/client interaction	12.1 Identify the **characteristics and consequences** of inadequate verbal and non-verbal communication between client and therapist
	12.2 Describe **interpersonal skills** which are supportive of good communication between client and therapist in a clinical or sports setting
13. Be able to plan client-matched mobilisations and remedial exercises	13.1 Describe how to apply joint/muscle anatomy and physiology in the process of selecting client-matched **flexibility and mobility exercises**
	13.2 Describe how to apply muscle anatomy and physiology in the process of selecting client-matched **remedial exercises**
	13.3 Develop a **client-matched mobility and exercise plan** to support and enhance specific sports massage therapy treatment outcomes

Range

1. Understand the importance of obtaining relevant information to inform sports massage treatment

1.1 Value of client consultation must include:

- why consultation is essential for safe practice
- how it establishes therapist-client rapport and trust
- how consultation informs treatment planning and risk screening
- link to treatment suitability and expected outcomes.

1.2 Types of information must include:

- client personal and lifestyle information
- presenting issue and relevant history
- pre-existing conditions
- cautions, contraindications, red flags
- relevant physical activity or training information.

1.3 Client information must include:

- impact of incomplete or inaccurate information on safety
- importance of accurate treatment planning
- identifying risk and adapting treatment
- professional and insurance obligations.

1.4 Confidential must include:

- legal requirements (for example data protection, GDPR)
- ethical obligations in client-therapist relationship
- how confidentiality supports trust and professional reputation
- documentation and secure storage protocols.

Range
1.5 Biopsychosocial model must include: • how biological, psychological, and social factors influence injury, dysfunction, and recovery • why a multidimensional view improves understanding of the client • how the model supports client-centred care. **1.6 Basic tenets of the biopsychosocial model** must include: • biological factors (injury, tissue condition, physical health) • psychological factors (emotion, stress, beliefs, expectations) • social factors (environment, lifestyle, occupation, culture). **1.7 How to apply the biopsychosocial model** must include: • how therapists adapt their approach to treatment and communication based on biopsychosocial factors • influence on communication style and managing expectations • holistic planning that considers wider client context.
2. Understand the importance of respecting equality, diversity, and providing an inclusive service
2.1 Equality, diversity, culture and client beliefs must include: • factors that may influence equality, diversity, and inclusion may include: ○ age   ○ gender and identity   ○ culture and ethnicity   ○ language   ○ beliefs   ○ disability   ○ socio-economic factors. **2.2 Adapt sports massage treatments** may include: • adjustments for individual needs (for example, disability, age, gender identity, mobility) • communication adaptations (for example, language, literacy) • cultural considerations (for example, expectations around touch or modesty) • adapting techniques and approach within scope of practice. **2.3 Adapt sports massage practices** may include: • adapting techniques and pressure based on client comfort and tolerance • adapting communication style to support client confidence and comfort • consideration of anxiety, pain sensitivity, or emotional needs.
3. Understand how to screen and assess clients prior to sports massage treatment
3.1 Screen clients must include: • health questionnaire review • identification of red flags and contraindications • verifying suitability for sports massage treatment • consent and confidentiality procedures.

Range
3.2 Assessment and reassessment must include: • measuring treatment effectiveness • identifying changes in the client's condition • ensuring client safety • using findings to inform treatment decisions. **3.3 Subjective and objective assessment** must include: • subjective (client-reported symptoms and history) • objective (measurable findings for example, range of movement, palpation, posture) • how both contribute to understanding the client's condition. **3.4 Reasons for use of subjective and objective assessment methods** must include: • need for balanced and accurate information • supporting informed decision making • comparing client perception with measurable findings • supporting safe and appropriate treatment planning. **3.5 Methods of applying** must include: • subjective methods (for example, interview, questionnaires, discussion) • objective methods (for example, posture, palpation, range of movement, strength tests) • rationale for when each is used.
4. Be able to perform sports massage client assessments
4.1 Subjective client assessments must include: • gathering relevant client information • using appropriate questioning techniques • recording information clearly and accurately. **4.2 Informed consent** must include: • explaining the nature and purpose of assessments • gaining informed consent prior to assessment • maintaining client dignity and professionalism. **4.3 Objective physical assessments** may include: • postural assessment • palpation • active and passive range of movement • muscle strength testing.
5. Be able to assess static posture, asymmetry, and signs of biomechanical dysfunction
5.1 Postural types may include: • anterior pelvic tilt • posterior pelvic tilt

Range
• sway back posture • lateral weight shift • associated muscular characteristics • observable characteristics using postural assessment. **5.2 Procedure for assessment of static, standing posture** must include: • positioning the client appropriately for assessment • use of appropriate tools (for example, plumb line or grid) • observing alignment at key body segments (for example, head, shoulders, pelvis, knees, feet). **5.3 Static posture/asymmetry assessment** must include: • recording findings clearly using an appropriate observation method • comparing left and right symmetry • identifying patterns and postural deviations. **5.4 Postural assessment results** must include: • using findings to inform sports massage treatment planning • identifying areas of tension, imbalance, or restriction • supporting appropriate treatment focus based on findings.
6. Be able to assess the palpatory characteristics of normal and abnormal body tissues
6.1 Normal and abnormal soft tissue feels upon palpation may include: • characteristics of normal and abnormal soft tissue • differences in texture, tone, and temperature • identification of areas of tension, restriction, or irregularity. **6.2 Purpose and procedure** must include: • purpose of palpation (for example, assessing tissue condition and client response) • safe and appropriate palpation approach • how to explain palpation to the client professionally. **6.3 Soft tissue palpation assessment** must include: • using appropriate palpation techniques • identifying areas of tension, heat, swelling, or restriction • recording findings clearly. **6.4 Palpation assessment findings** must include: • using findings to inform sports massage treatment planning • identifying areas that may require focus • supporting appropriate treatment decisions based on findings.
7. Be able to assess active joint range of movement
7.1 Major joints may include:

Range

- neck
- shoulder and shoulder girdle
- elbow
- spine
- hip
- knee
- ankle and foot.

7.2 Purpose and procedure must include:

- purpose of active ROM assessment (for example, assessing movement and client response)
- safe and appropriate procedure for active ROM assessment
- importance of client-led movement and safety.

7.3 Active joint range of movement assessments must include:

- observing movement quality, control, and symmetry
- identifying pain or discomfort during movement (if applicable)
- recording findings clearly
- comparison to expected movement ranges.

7.4 Results must include:

- using findings to inform sports massage treatment planning
- identifying areas of restricted or limited movement
- monitoring changes over time.

8. Be able to assess passive joint range of movement and joint end feel

8.1 Normal and abnormal joint end feel must include:

- types of joint end feel (for example, hard, soft, firm)
- recognition of unusual or abnormal end feels if applicable (for example, empty, springy, muscle spasm)
- awareness of when findings may indicate the need for caution or referral.

8.2 Purpose and procedure must include:

- purpose of passive range of movement (ROM) and end feel assessment (for example, assessing joint movement and tissue response)
- safe and controlled handling techniques
- communication with the client during assessment.

8.3 Passive joint range of movement assessments must include

- performing slow and controlled movements
- monitoring client response and comfort
- recognising resistance and end feel.

8.4 Results must include:

Range
• using findings to inform sports massage treatment planning • identifying areas of restricted movement • recognising when findings may require caution or referral.
9. Be able to assess muscular strength using a recognised therapeutic testing scale
9.1 Grading system must include: • a recognised grading system used to assess muscle strength (for example, 0–5 scale) • purpose of using a standardised grading system • importance of consistency and accuracy when grading. **9.2 Purpose and procedure** must include: • purpose of assessing muscular strength (for example, identifying imbalance or weakness) • safe and appropriate procedure for muscle strength testing • how to explain the assessment to the client • safety considerations. **9.3 Therapeutic muscular strength assessments** must include: • assessing major muscle groups • appropriate stabilisation and application of resistance • recording results accurately • comparing left and right sides. **9.4 Results** must include: • using findings to inform sports massage treatment planning • identifying areas of weakness or imbalance • monitoring changes over time.
10. Be able to devise sports massage therapy treatment plans
10.1 Massage strategies must include: • tailoring strategies to consultation and assessment findings • selection of appropriate massage techniques linked to client needs • recording treatment plans clearly. **10.2 Progressive treatment priorities** must include: • aligning treatment strategies with the stage of soft tissue repair (for example, inflammatory, repair, remodelling) • using a general progression of treatment priorities, which may include: ○ preventing further aggravation   ○ managing pain and inflammation   ○ supporting tissue quality and relaxation   ○ supporting circulation   ○ improving movement and mobility   ○ supporting return to normal activity. **10.3 Goals and strategies** must include:

Range
• explaining goals and strategies in clear, plain language • managing client expectations • encouraging client engagement. **10.4 Opportunities for clients to clarify understanding** must include: • active checking of comprehension • encouraging questions • client-centred communication. **10.5 Agree treatment strategies and obtain informed consent** must include: • shared decision making • explaining risks and expected outcomes • documenting consent clearly.
11. Understand the indications and contraindications for a range of sports massage therapy techniques
11.1 Indications for a range of sports massage therapy techniques must include: • when different massage techniques are appropriate, which may include: ○ effleurage   ○ petrissage   ○ tapotement   ○ compressions   ○ vibrations   ○ frictions   ○ trigger point therapy   ○ passive stretching   ○ muscle energy techniques • consideration of tissue condition and client goals • general reasons why certain techniques are appropriate in different situations. **11.2 Cautions and contraindications** must include: • local and systemic contraindications • technique-specific risks (for example, frictions, muscle energy techniques, deep pressure techniques) • when to modify, defer, or avoid treatment. **11.3 Required actions** must include: • safe modification or cessation of treatment • referral where appropriate • documenting decisions and explaining actions to the client.
12. Understand the potential impact of psychological effects resulting from therapist/client interaction
12.1 Characteristics and consequences must include: • characteristics of poor verbal and non-verbal communication (for example, unclear instructions, inappropriate tone, lack of eye contact, closed body language)

Range
• misinterpretation of information or instructions • negative impact on client confidence and trust • reduced effectiveness of treatment or client engagement. **12.2 Interpersonal skills** must include: • effective communication skills (for example, empathy, clarity, active listening) • appropriate professional presence and tone • building rapport and client confidence • adapting communication to meet individual client needs.
13. Be able to plan client-matched mobilisations and remedial exercises
13.1 Flexibility and mobility exercises must include: • selection of appropriate flexibility and mobility exercises based on client needs • consideration of joint and muscle function when selecting exercises • general exercise considerations (for example, safety, suitability, client ability). **13.2 Remedial exercise** must include: • use of simple exercises to support movement and function • awareness of basic muscle function when selecting exercises • ensuring exercises are safe and appropriate for the client. **13.3 Client-matched mobility and exercise plan** must include: • developing a simple plan of mobility and exercise recommendations to support massage treatment outcomes • ensuring recommendations are safe, appropriate, and relevant to the client • supporting client understanding and adherence.

Unit 05 Sports massage therapy treatment, aftercare, and remedial exercise (K/651/4097)

Assessment			
Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 3**	**65 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand foundational considerations for applying sports massage treatments	1.1 Describe the **different contexts** in which sports massage therapy may be applied
	1.2 Identify how the **timing** of a sports massage treatment can affect neuromuscular function and physical performance
	1.3 Identify how the **total number of intended treatments and frequency** of treatments may affect the plan of action for each individual sports massage treatment
	1.4 Explain the **requirements of a suitable environment** for sports massage therapy treatment
	1.5 Identify a range of **equipment** needed for sports massage therapy, giving reasons for their use
2. Be able to prepare the treatment area and position the client effectively	2.1 Determine how to **prepare the sports massage environment, available equipment, and practitioner**
	2.2 **Prepare clients** to receive sports massage therapy treatments
	2.3 Position clients for **optimal comfort, maintenance of dignity, and for efficacy of treatment**
	2.4 Use **props and supports** during sports massage therapy
	2.5 Apply careful **towel technique** where appropriate, to maintain body warmth, prevent exposure, and maintain client dignity
3. Understand how to select effective sports massage therapy techniques and mediums	3.1 Apply a range of **sports massage therapy techniques**
	3.2 Identify the intended **treatment effects** for a range of sports massage techniques
	3.3 Apply the relevant sports massage techniques and methods with a range of **sports massage therapy outcomes**
	3.4 **Select appropriate massage techniques** for the client and the intended treatments
	3.5 Demonstrate how to structure and combine a range of different sports massage techniques into a cohesive, **flowing treatment**
	3.6 Identify the properties of **different massage mediums** and how these are suited for use during different sports massage techniques
	3.7 Identify how different massage mediums may be suited to different client **skin types**
	3.8 Identify the typical content of a range of massage mediums with regard to potential **allergens** that may contraindicate to their use
	3.9 Describe **effects and benefits** of commonly used mediums in sports massage therapy
	3.10 Identify the **advantages and disadvantages** of commonly used mediums in sports massage therapy
	3.11 **Select appropriate massage mediums** for the client and the intended treatments

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
4. Be able to apply sports massage treatments	4.1 Apply a range of **sports massage techniques** correctly that meet the presentation and needs of the client
	4.2 Demonstrate how to combine and flow from one massage technique to another, **maintaining treatment continuity**
	4.3 Demonstrate how to **position self and use body weight** to ensure effective application of massage techniques
	4.4 Use massage **speed and depth of pressure** during sports massage therapy
	4.5 **Adapt own posture and position** throughout sports massage to ensure safe and effective application of selected techniques
	4.6 Monitor visual, tactile, and oral feedback and **adapt the treatment strategy** where appropriate
	4.7 Demonstrate how to apply therapeutic **mobility and flexibility techniques** appropriate to the treatment aims and objectives
	4.8 **Remove massage medium** when necessary to ensure effective ongoing treatment
	4.9 Sustain appropriate interaction and **communication** with clients throughout the massage
	4.10 Uphold and apply **professionally accepted standards** throughout sports massage treatments
	4.11 Carry out **post-massage assessment** of clients to identify any resulting physical change or improvement
	4.12 **Restore the working massage environment** to a safe and hygienic condition after the completion of treatment
5. Be able to provide treatment aftercare and instruct mobility and remedial exercise	5.1 **Remove the massage medium after treatment** to comply with specific sporting regulations
	5.2 Advise the client regarding potential **contra-actions or side effects** that may occur following sports massage treatment
	5.3 Discuss with the client **appropriate actions** to take in the event of an adverse response to sports massage treatment
	5.4 Instruct **home-based mobility or remedial exercises** to further enhance or complement the effects of sports massage therapy treatment
	5.5 Offer appropriate **lifestyle advice** in support of treatment aims within the scope of professional practice for a sports massage therapist
	5.6 Check and confirm client understanding of all components of treatment **aftercare**
	5.7 Plan and schedule **follow-up care** to enhance client accountability and exercise compliance
6. Understand the evaluation of sports massage treatments	6.1 Identify **methods used to evaluate** the effectiveness of sports massage treatments
	6.2 Explain why accurate **reassessment** of a client after sports massage is an important treatment evaluation tool
	6.3 Identify the importance of seeking opportunities for **client feedback**
	6.4 Explain the **importance of self-reflection** in relation to sports massage treatment performance
	7.1 Obtain **feedback from clients** regarding the sports massage treatment

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
7. Be able to evaluate sports massage treatments	7.2 Review feedback received and engage in **self-reflection** of the treatment
	7.3 Evaluate the treatment and identify areas and opportunities for **future improvement**
	7.4 **Record massage sessions** as legally required

Range

1. Understand foundational considerations for applying sports massage treatments

1.1 Different contexts must include:

- definitions and characteristics of different sports massage contexts, which may include:
  - pre-event
  - inter/intra-event
  - post-event
  - maintenance
  - soft tissue dysfunction
  - injury rehabilitation
- how context influences treatment goals
- why different contexts require different techniques, pressures, and timing.

1.2 Timing must include:

- effects of massage immediately before performance (for example, stimulating vs relaxing techniques)
- effects of massage too close to competition (for example, potential impact on performance)
- general effects on muscle readiness and performance.

1.3 Total number of intended treatments and frequency must include:

- how treatment frequency may influence outcomes
- consideration of short-term and longer-term treatment planning
- general effects of repeated treatments on recovery.

1.4 Requirements of a suitable environment must include:

- environmental requirements (for example, temperature, hygiene, privacy, lighting, safety)
- differences between environments, which may include:
  - massage clinic
  - home-based setting
  - clubhouse or changing room
  - sports field
- equipment setup to support safe and effective practice.

1.5 Equipment must include:

- equipment used in sports massage, which may include:
  - massage couch
  - bolsters

Range
○ towels ○ massage medium ○ PPE ○ cleaning materials • consideration of different working environments.
2. Be able to prepare the treatment area and position the client effectively
2.1 Prepare the sports massage environment, available equipment, and practitioner must include: • hygiene procedures for environment and tools • appropriate setup (for example, couch height, layout, space management) • therapist preparation (for example, hand hygiene, appropriate clothing, body mechanics) • differences between environments, which may include: ○ massage clinic ○ home-based setting ○ clubhouse or changing room ○ sports field. **2.2 Prepare clients** must include: • communicating expectations • checking for contraindications or concerns • dignity and draping considerations • ensuring appropriate physical and emotional readiness. **2.3 Optimal comfort, maintenance of dignity, and for efficacy of treatment** must include: • appropriate client positioning, which may include: ○ prone ○ supine ○ side-lying ○ seated ○ standing • adjustments for individual needs (for example, mobility limitations) • ensuring comfort, support, and appropriate pressure distribution. **2.4 Props and supports** must include: • use of props and supports, which may include: ○ towels ○ pillows ○ bolsters • supporting different areas of the body (for example, spine, shoulders, pelvis, ankles). **2.5 Towel technique** must include: • techniques to maintain dignity, warmth, and modesty • appropriate use of towels to cover and uncover areas during treatment.
3. Understand how to select effective sports massage therapy techniques and mediums
3.1 Sports massage therapy techniques may include:

Range

- effleurage
- petrissage
- tapotement
- compressions
- vibrations
- frictions
- trigger point therapy
- passive stretching
- muscle energy techniques.

3.2 Treatment effects must include:

- effects of techniques (for example, circulatory effects, effects on muscle and soft tissue)
- when different techniques may support performance or recovery
- suitability of techniques based on tissue condition.

3.3 Sports massage therapy outcomes must include:

- linking technique selection to different treatment contexts, which may include:
  - pre-event
  - inter/intra-event
  - post-event
  - maintenance
  - soft tissue dysfunction
- understanding the effects of techniques (for example, stimulating or relaxing).

3.4 Select appropriate massage techniques must include:

- selecting techniques based on assessment findings
- considering contraindications and client sensitivity
- adapting pressure and speed based on treatment goals.

3.5 Flowing treatment must include:

- sequencing techniques effectively
- maintaining appropriate rhythm and flow
- avoiding abrupt or inconsistent transitions.

3.6 Different massage mediums must include:

- types of massage mediums, which may include:
  - oils
  - creams/lotions
  - gels
  - waxes
  - powders
- properties (for example, absorption, glide, grip, skin compatibility)
- suitability of mediums for different techniques.

Range

Learners must select a minimum of four types of massage mediums.

3.7 Skin types must include:

- different skin types, which may include:
  - dry
  - oily
  - sensitive
  - acne-prone
  - allergy-prone
- selecting appropriate mediums to minimise irritation.

3.8 Allergens must include:

- awareness of common allergens in massage mediums (for example, nuts, fragrances, plant extracts)
- importance of checking for allergies or sensitivities
- consideration of client safety when selecting products.

3.9 Effects and benefits must include:

- effects of massage mediums (for example, moisturising, improving glide, warming tissues)
- benefits for skin protection and treatment effectiveness.

3.10 Advantages and disadvantages must include:

- comparison of properties (for example, glide, absorption, residue)
- suitability for different working environments.

3.11 Select appropriate massage mediums must include:

- selecting appropriate mediums based on client needs
- considering skin type, technique, and environment
- supporting client comfort and professional presentation.

4. Be able to apply sports massage treatments

4.1 Sports massage techniques must include:

- applying techniques accurately and appropriately
- responding to client feedback
- working safely and in line with the treatment plan.

4.2 Maintaining treatment continuity must include:

- smooth transitions between techniques
- maintaining client comfort and relaxation
- logical sequencing of techniques.

4.3 Position self and use body weight must include:

- appropriate use of body weight to apply techniques effectively

Range

- maintaining correct practitioner posture and positioning
- control of pressure, direction, and movement.

4.4 Speed and depth of pressure must include:

- use of different speeds and depths of pressure and their effects
- adapting pressure based on client response
- awareness of risks associated with excessive pressure.

4.5 Adapt own posture and position must include:

- adjusting therapist posture and position to avoid strain
- maintaining safe and effective working practices
- moving safely around the treatment area.

4.6 Adapt the treatment strategy must include:

- monitoring verbal, non-verbal, and tactile feedback
- adjusting techniques, pressure, or sequence where appropriate
- recording relevant feedback where required.

4.7 Mobility and flexibility techniques must include:

- use of mobility and flexibility techniques, which may include:
  - passive stretching
  - muscle energy techniques
- application appropriate to treatment aims.

4.8 Remove massage medium must include:

- removing excess massage medium where necessary
- maintaining skin safety and hygiene
- considering context (for example, pre-event or competition).

4.9 Communication must include:

- clear, calming, professional communication during treatment
- ongoing safety checks and boundaries.

4.10 Professionally accepted standards must include:

- maintaining hygiene, boundaries, draping, and consent
- demonstrating professional behaviour
- working within competence.

4.11 Post-massage assessment must include:

- identifying immediate changes (for example, movement, tension, client feedback)
- comparing pre-treatment findings

Range
• recording relevant outcomes. **4.12 Restore the working massage environment** must include: • cleaning equipment and treatment area • replacing materials and maintaining hygiene • preparing the environment for future use.
5. Be able to provide treatment aftercare and instruct mobility and remedial exercise
5.1 Remove the massage medium after treatment must include: • awareness of sporting requirements (for example, grip-based or equipment-based sports) • maintaining hygiene and safety • ensuring skin is clean and free from excess medium. **5.2 Contra-actions or side effects** must include: • expected reactions (for example, soreness, redness, fatigue) • recognising when reactions may be abnormal • advising clients on safe management of typical reactions. **5.3 Appropriate actions** must include: • advising when to reduce or stop activity • when to seek medical advice • when therapist follow-up may be required • recording relevant information where appropriate. **5.4 Home-based mobility or remedial exercises** must include: • demonstrating simple and safe exercises • ensuring exercises are appropriate to the client's needs • explaining how exercises support treatment outcomes. **5.5 Lifestyle advice** may include: • healthy eating • physical activity • stress management • sleep and rest • smoking reduction • alcohol moderation. **5.6 Aftercare** must include: • providing clear and appropriate aftercare advice • checking client understanding • encouraging questions and clarification. **5.7 Follow-up care** must include:

Range
• recommending appropriate follow-up where necessary • encouraging client adherence to advice • scheduling future appointments appropriately.
6. Understand the evaluation of sports massage treatments
6.1 Methods used to evaluate may include: • range of movement comparison • palpation findings • client feedback • functional movement • observation of posture or movement. **6.2 Reassessment** must include: • identifying changes following treatment (for example, improvement or lack of change) • importance of accurate reassessment for client safety • using reassessment to support future treatment decisions. **6.3 Client feedback** must include: • how feedback supports understanding of treatment effectiveness • identifying areas for improvement • supporting client engagement and rapport. **6.4 Importance of self-reflection** must include: • identifying strengths and areas for improvement • improving technique and practice • supporting ongoing professional development • maintaining safe and effective practice.
7. Be able to evaluate sports massage treatments
7.1 Feedback from clients may include: • verbal • written • observational. **7.2 Self-reflection** must include: • reviewing positive and negative feedback • identifying strengths and areas for improvement • using reflection to inform future practice. **7.3 Future improvements** must include: • comparing treatment outcomes with intended goals • identifying areas for improvement in future treatments • recognising when referral may be appropriate.

Range
7.4 Record massage sessions must include: • accurate and appropriate record keeping • secure and confidential storage of records • meeting legal and professional requirements.

NCFE assessment strategy

The key requirements of the assessment strategies or principles that relate to units in this qualification are summarised below.

The centre must ensure that individuals undertaking assessor or quality assurer roles within the centre conform to the assessment requirements for the unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Knowledge LOs

- Assessors will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make assessment decisions.
- Internal quality assurers (IQAs) will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions.

Competence/skills LOs

- Assessors will need to be both occupationally competent and qualified to make assessment decisions.
- IQAs will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions.

The centre with which the learners are registered will be responsible for making all assessment decisions. Assessors must be **contracted** to work directly with the centre, contributing to all aspects of standardisation. The centre must ensure a process of training is followed, including during induction and quality assurance activities. Occupationally competent and qualified assessors from the centre must use direct observation to assess practical skills-based outcomes.

Section 3: explanation of terms

This table explains how the terms used at **level 3** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Apply	Explain how existing knowledge can be linked to new or different situations in practice.
Analyse	Break down the subject into separate parts and examine each part. Show how the main ideas are related and why they are important. Reference to current research or theory may support the analysis.
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way.
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria.
Collate	Collect and present information arranged in sequential or logical order.
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail and consider the similarities and differences.
Critically compare	This is a development of 'compare' where the learner considers the positive aspects and limitations of the subject.
Consider	Think carefully and write about a problem, action or decision.
Create	Make or produce an artefact as required.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding by describing or applying knowledge in a practical context.
Describe	Write about the subject giving detailed information in a logical way.
Develop (a plan/idea)	Expand a plan or idea by adding more detail and/or depth of information.
Diagnose	Identify the cause based on valid evidence.
Differentiate	Identify the differences between two or more things.
Discuss	Write a detailed account giving a range of views or opinions.
Distinguish	Explain the difference between two or more items, resources, pieces of information.
Draw conclusions	Make a final decision or judgement based on reasons.
Estimate	Form an approximate opinion or judgement using previous knowledge or considering other information.

Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences. Judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgement. Reference to current research or theory may support the evaluation.
Explain	Provide detailed information about the subject with reasons showing how or why. Responses could include examples to support these reasons.
Extrapolate	Use existing knowledge to predict possible outcomes that might be outside the norm.
Identify	Recognise and name the main points accurately (some description may also be necessary to gain higher marks when using compensatory marking).
Implement	Explain how to put an idea or plan into action.
Interpret	Explain the meaning of something.
Judge	Form an opinion or make a decision.
Justify	Give a satisfactory explanation for actions or decisions.
Perform	Carry out a task or process to meet the requirements of the question.
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way using an appropriate format.
Provide	Identify and give relevant and detailed information in relation to the subject.
Reflect	Learners should consider their actions, experiences or learning and the implications of this for their practice and/or professional development.
Review and revise	Look back over the subject and make corrections or changes.
Select	Make an informed choice for a specific purpose.
State	Give the main points clearly in sentences or paragraphs.
Summarise	Give the main ideas or facts in a concise way.
Test	Complete a series of checks utilising a set procedure.

Section 4: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- learning resources
- Qualification Factsheet.

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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To continue to improve our levels of customer service, telephone calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.

Appendix A: units

To simplify cross-referencing assessments and quality assurance, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each unit.

Mandatory units

Unit number	Regulated unit number	Unit title	Level	GLH
Unit 01	D/651/4093	Anatomy and physiology for sports massage therapy	3	40
Unit 02	F/651/4094	Professional practice in sports massage therapy	3	25
Unit 03	H/651/4095	Understand the principles of soft tissue dysfunction, injury, and repair	3	30
Unit 04	J/651/4096	Client consultation, assessment, and treatment planning for sports massage therapy	3	65
Unit 05	K/651/4097	Sports massage therapy treatment, aftercare, and remedial exercise	3	65

The units above may be available as stand-alone unit programmes. Please visit the NCFE website for further information.

Change history record

Version	Publication date	Description of change
AIQ007191	May 2026	Document published.
v2.0	November 2026	Qualification title changed and template updated to new version. Minor wording updates have been made to assessment criteria (AC) to improve clarity and consistency. No changes to learning outcomes (LOs) guided learning hours (GLH), or content requirements.