



The only awarding body
run *by* counsellors
for counsellors

2026 - 2027

Trainer Guide

Level 2 Award in Understanding Substance Misuse (USM-L2)

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

Qualification/learning aim number: 500/4684/6

Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

P.O. Box 1768
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 8YP

Tel. 01458 850 350

Website: www.cpcab.co.uk

Email: contact@cpcab.co.uk



Contents

	Page
1. Introduction for Trainers	3
2. Qualification Structure	3
3. Standardisation of Trainer Assessment	3
4. Candidate Registration	4
5. Internal Assessment	5
6. Recording Final Results of Internal Assessment	5
7. Independent Verification (IdV)	7
8. Internal Moderation and Verification/Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	7
9. Annual Practising Certificate (APC)	8
10. Equal Opportunities and Reasonable Adjustments	9
11. Appeals and Complaints	9
12. Tutor Feedback	9

Appendices

	Page
1. Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Guidance for Trainers	10
2. Example Completion Statement	12
3. Criteria Assessment Sheet (CAS)	13
4. Candidate Portfolio Cover Sheet	14
5. Independent Verification Declaration	15
6. Candidate Evaluation Form	<u>16</u>

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: [CPCAB Community Hub](#), [shop](#), [YouTube](#)

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Join the [Tutor Facebook Group](#)

Find us on [LinkedIn](#)

Watch us at [CPCAB Videos](#)

Discover new & interesting things at [CPCAB News](#)

1. Introduction for Trainers

This qualification is designed for candidates who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse in order to:

- Raise awareness of substance misuse and its consequences.
- Improve the knowledge, awareness, understanding and effectiveness of those currently working in the field of substance misuse or supporting people involved in substance misuse.
- Work to prevent substance misuse.

This qualification contributes to a specialist area of counselling and the knowledge gained would be useful in a variety of settings, both professional, paraprofessional and personal.

See the [USM-L2 Specification](#) for more information on qualification purpose.

2. Qualification Structure

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

Tip:

Encourage your candidates to think of the assessment criteria as 'learning tasks' which they complete and then record so that you can see they have achieved the task.

All the qualification information – including the **minimum assessment requirements** – is contained in the [USM-L2 Specification](#).

The Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Guidance for Trainers can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this document.

To achieve the qualification candidates must be **Proficient** in all 7 learning outcomes.

This qualification is eligible for fully in-person, blended or online delivery. Please see [how to run CPCAB's qualifications online](#) for more information.

3. Standardisation of Trainer Assessment

USM-L2 trainers **do not need to attend** standardisation training as this qualification is directly verified by CPCAB.

4. Candidate Registration

Candidates must be registered with CPCAB within six weeks of the course start date. Candidates who are not registered will not receive qualification certificates. Candidate registrations should be completed via the CPCAB portal and by the centre's exams department.

Please note that CPCAB has no responsibility for candidates who are not registered with CPCAB.

- Please see the CPCAB [Guidance on How to Register your Candidates \(CR0\)](#).

When registering candidates please be aware of the need to complete a [Conflict of Interest Declaration \(CR10\)](#) form to inform CPCAB of any dual relationships/conflicts of interest likely to compromise the integrity of the assessment process e.g. if a trainer has any other personal/professional relationship with a prospective candidate¹. If in doubt, please contact CPCAB for further advice or information.

Minimum registration numbers

There is a minimum number of **6 candidates** that need to be registered per group.

The minimum numbers for candidate registrations per centre per year are:

- Levels 2 and 3: a total of 12 candidates per year
- Levels 4 to 6: a total of 9 candidates per year. (*CPCAB strongly recommends a minimum of 9 candidates per group when registering Year 1 of TC-L4*).

Please note that CPCAB reserves the right to refuse to register groups of fewer than 6 candidates.

If registrations are below this number when you register your group you will be prompted by the CPCAB portal to provide details on how this group size will be managed to enable all core assessment activities to take place, and all relational and inter-personal aspects of the course to be fully experienced by all candidates involved. You should also note a contingency plan for what would occur if group numbers reduce further.²

Candidate registration fees

Please see the [CPCAB Fees](#) documents for candidate registration fees and any additional fees the centre may incur.

CPCAB minimum and maximum group size requirements

Please note that the **minimum** tutor numbers are **mandatory**:

Levels 2 and 3:

- minimum of one tutor involved in internal assessment
- maximum of 18 candidates with one tutor

¹ Please see the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) on the CPCAB website for further guidance.

² Until this information is received, we will not be able to approve this registration. Please contact contact@cpcab.co.uk if your candidate group is smaller than the minimum requirements.

- maximum of 24 candidates with two tutors

Levels 4 to 6:

- minimum of two tutors must be involved in internal assessment for higher level qualifications except LC-L4, CBT-L5 and TCSU-L6 which only require one.
- maximum of 16 candidates

5. Internal Assessment

As the trainer you are responsible for carrying out internal assessment which is then internally moderated and verified at the centre and independently verified by CPCAB.

To successfully complete the course candidates must collect evidence of their learning in a portfolio and complete their [Candidate Learning Record \(CLR\)](#), which is placed at the front of the portfolio to signpost the evidence for each criterion. Candidates must give **one** piece of evidence for each criterion.

The portfolio must include the regular exploration of their learning (called the learning review) which contains their reflections on the input, discussions, experiences and readings for the course and which they start right from the beginning of the course. Your candidate must also include an assignment (such as an essay) and can also include tutorial records.

CPCAB recommends that candidates attach a [Criteria Assessment Sheet \(CAS\)](#) to any work they hand in for assessment. You can use the CAS sheets to indicate which criteria have been met and to offer formative feedback throughout the course.

Tip:

Meeting criteria is important, but the overall learning experience should not be criteria driven, achieving this balance is down to your skill as a trainer. You can also encourage candidates to be creative.

It is important to explain to candidates that the work that they include in their portfolios is assessable material and cannot be kept completely confidential. Not only will it be assessed by you the trainer, but it may also be seen by all those involved in the internal assessment process or any associated appeal or complaint. Such people will include the internal moderator and verifier as part of internal quality assurance (IQA) as well as the CPCAB verifier.

6. Recording Final Results of Internal Assessment

At the end of the course you (the trainer) must look at the evidence referenced in the Candidate Learning Record (CLR) and assess whether the candidate has achieved all the learning outcomes and associated criteria (including referencing all three types of course work) and met all the qualification requirements. This final assessment is recorded on the [Completion Statement](#) at the end of the CLR.

Where a candidate has not met the learning outcomes (either because of insufficient evidence or because you as trainer are aware of contra-indications)³ this must be recorded on the Completion Statement at the final assessment. All possible steps should be taken to give candidates prior warning of any concerns likely to affect the final internal assessment decision. These concerns should clearly relate to specific learning outcome(s) and be documented (e.g. in tutorial records) alongside any agreed actions or support offered.

Tip:

It is important to emphasise to candidates at the beginning of the course that simply presenting evidence to meet assessment criteria may not be sufficient to meet the overall learning outcomes and/or qualification requirements.

The trainer's final internal assessment (IA) for the whole group must be recorded (by the centre) online via the CPCAB [Portal](#).

The IA must record one of the following final outcomes:

1. **Proficient (P):** the candidate has met all the assessment criteria, achieved all 7 learning outcomes and has met all the qualification requirements.
2. **Not Proficient (NP)**⁴: the candidate has **not** met the assessment criteria and/or has **not** achieved the 7 learning outcomes and/or has **not** met all the qualification requirements. Or contra-indications have been indicated.
3. **Left course:** the candidate left the course before completing internal assessment.
4. **Deceased:** the candidate died before completing the course.

Some CPCAB qualifications offer the option to record an interim result of "Deferred" in order to allow additional time for incomplete work (e.g. client hours). This option is not available for this qualification.

It is important that centres ensure they submit accurate results. Premature claim of certification, before all qualification requirements are met, is considered centre malpractice.

Alternative arrangements

If any circumstances arise where the approved trainer(s) is unable to sign off the IA for a candidate, the centre must seek formal CPCAB approval for alternative arrangements in order to ensure that these meet CPCAB requirements for valid internal assessment.⁵

³ Substantive evidence which you have observed as trainer which indicates that a specific assessment criterion or learning outcome has not been met despite the evidence submitted by the candidate.

⁴ Candidates must have access to centre internal appeals procedures if they wish to contest an internal assessment decision.

⁵ This is particularly important in situations arising from complaints against internal assessment or breakdown in relationship between candidate and tutors.

7. Independent Verification (IdV)

The candidate portfolios are **internally assessed and moderated**. Once internal assessment and moderation has been carried out, please provide CPCAB with the below documents for independent verification (IdV):

- A sample of candidate portfolios
- Completed [Candidate Portfolio Cover sheet](#)
- Completed [Independent Verification Declaration](#) for USM-L2
- [Candidate Evaluations](#) of the course
- Moderation report for the group

Please email all documents to verification@cpcab.co.uk. Failure to include **ALL** documents will result in a delay in Independent Verification and certification.

Please see [Independent Verification Centre Guide for ELSK-L2 + USM-L2](#) for further information.

The sample should consist of 30% or four portfolios, whichever is the greater number. If a group falls below the minimum number of 6 candidates, then all portfolios will need to be emailed into CPCAB. Please supply a range of abilities.

CPCAB will verify your assessment by independently verifying the portfolios to ensure all the learning outcomes have been met and that tutor assessment is consistent, accurate and fair. Written feedback and any action considered necessary to fulfil the assessment requirements will be sent to the centre with the certificates.

Certification:

CPCAB certifies successful candidates upon receipt of internal assessment results and completion of independent verification.

8. Internal Moderation, Verification, and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

For each group you teach an internal moderator must sample and confirm your assessments for this qualification. Internal Moderation reports are required to be sent to CPCAB along with a sample of candidate portfolios for Independent Verification.

During each teaching year an internal verifier/internal quality assurer must also verify that the centre's programmes are properly in place and operating effectively. Please contact your programme coordinator to find out what procedures operate at your centre.

- See the [CPCAB IQA Policy](#).

9. Annual Practising Certificate (APC)

When a centre first registers with CPCAB they will receive initial approval to run for one year. In order to meet the requirements of its regulators⁶, to comply with UK law and to protect the interests of candidates CPCAB is obliged to obtain a further declaration of compliance from each of its recognised centres **every year**. This declaration is also intended to confirm that the information provided to CPCAB at the time of the centre's first approval remains accurate and up to date.

It must be signed by the person responsible for the quality assurance and management of CPCAB qualifications within the centre via the [CPCAB portal](#) at the beginning of each academic year. Once signed the portal will automatically generate your Annual Practising Certificate (APC) for the current academic year. This declaration will be requested before the first registration is made and may delay further registrations if not completed.

An APC can be withheld:

- Until the annual declaration of compliance has been signed.
- Following an external verification visit to the centre if any serious concerns are identified. The APC will be withheld until these concerns have been rectified. CPCAB will offer appropriate support.

CPCAB reserves the right to refuse to register any further candidates or to delay candidate certification for qualifications where serious concerns have been identified. Failure to respond to the support offered and/or address areas identified as needing development may lead to de-registration. De-registration may also result if a centre is involved in malpractice.

- Please view our policies on Sanctions, Malpractice & Maladministration, and Whistleblowing on the [CPCAB Website](#).

⁶ Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland

10. Equal Opportunities and Reasonable Adjustments

In order to make sure that assessment is fair to all candidates, CPCAB requires all recognised centres to have an appropriate candidate support system in place and to make appropriate arrangements to meet individual assessment needs. As a centre you are required to identify individual candidate assessment needs prior to enrolment in order to make arrangements for reasonable adjustments.

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

All individual assessment needs should be arranged by the centre, but the candidate's work must:

- Meet the requirements of the qualification specifications.
- Be assessable in a way that allows the assessment to be moderated and verified.

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

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

11. Appeals and Complaints

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

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

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

Candidates who contact CPCAB directly on these issues will normally be directed back to their centre.

12. Tutor Feedback

Your feedback is vital to CPCAB to ensure the ongoing quality of our qualifications. Feedback enables us to meet our requirements as a regulated Awarding Organisation and contributes towards our annual qualification review process. Please ensure that you complete the online feedback survey at the conclusion of each course delivery. Please click on this link to access the survey - [Tutor feedback](#).

Appendix 1: USM-L2 Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Guidance for Trainers

USM-L2		
Learning outcomes The learner will/will be able:	Assessment criteria The learner can:	Trainer guidance
1. Know the effects of a range of drugs, including alcohol	1.1 Identify the three main drug groups and the characteristics of each. 1.2 Describe the effects of a range of substances including alcohol. 1.3 Recognise the main signs and symptoms associated with substance use/misuse.	❖ Give a description of each of the 3 groups: hallucinogens, stimulants, depressants. ❖ Identify the physical/emotional/behavioural effects of drugs belonging to each group. ❖ Reflect on a range of signs and symptoms related to substance use, including appearance, behaviour and paraphernalia.
2. Know the harm associated with different substances and related behaviours	2.1 State the routes of administration. 2.2 Identify risks to health posed by intravenous drug use. 2.3 Describe the signs and symptoms of overdose of drugs and alcohol. 2.4 Identify the link between HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and substance use/misuse. 2.5 State how a range of drugs and alcohol use impacts on pregnancy.	❖ Explore the various ways in which drugs enter the body: intravenously, orally, across mucous membranes, inhalation. ❖ Reflect on how injecting drugs can harm the body: e.g. abscesses, deep vein thrombosis, blood borne viruses, infection and overdose. ❖ Be aware of a range of signs and symptoms related to overdose from a range of substances. ❖ Show that you are aware of the relationship between substance use/misuse and the transmission of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. ❖ Understand how substance use/misuse impacts on the health of the mother and the health of her unborn child during the pregnancy and following the birth. Reflect on how the mother's lifestyle could impact on her accessing and receiving appropriate ante natal and postnatal care.
3. Be aware of diversity in relation to substance use/misuse	3.1 State what constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable drugs and their usage. 3.2 Identify social assumptions and stereotypes around substance misuse.	❖ Record personal thoughts and feelings around what drugs are "seen" as acceptable and discuss why. Substances could include caffeine, tobacco, heroin and prescribed drugs. ❖ Discuss the history of drug use. Reflect on how drugs are viewed by various groups, aiming to explore both the positive and negative outcomes of substance use/misuse. ❖ Discuss the stereotypes associated with substance misuse. What personal assumptions have been made? Share (within the group) beliefs around drug users. Explore what a "typical" drug user might look and act like.

4. Understand why people misuse drugs/alcohol	4.1 State possible reasons for use/misuse of drugs and alcohol. 4.2 Describe patterns of substance use/misuse.	❖ Show understanding of potential factors influencing drug use: e.g. peer pressure, escape, pleasure, socialising, culture. ❖ Discuss how childhood experiences could influence drug/alcohol use. ❖ Reflect on the role that genetics play in drug/alcohol use. ❖ Explore the different patterns of use and the risks and harm associated with each - e.g. experimental, recreational, dependent.
5. Be aware of own responses to issues in relation to substance use/misuse	5.1 Identify own attitude towards drug use and drug users. 5.2 Identify personal assumptions in relation to substance misuse.	❖ Explore and invite candidates to share personal attitudes and beliefs around drug use. ❖ Discuss personal thoughts and feelings around drug use. ❖ Develop an awareness of personal patterns of dependency and addiction by looking at a wide range of issues: e.g. drugs, alcohol, food, money, relationships and sex.
6. Know the social and economic effects of substance misuse	6.1 Describe the effect substance misuse could have on the community.	❖ Explore how substance misuse can have far reaching consequences on family, friends and society in terms of emotional, practical and financial costs. Aim to arrive at a picture of the overall cost of substance misuse. ❖ Research local and national provision of drug and alcohol services. ❖ Introduce the <i>Misuse of Drugs Act 1971</i> to explore legal and judicial issues.
7. Use study skills within the learning process	7.1 Use reflection and feedback to identify progress and learning needs.	❖ Explore benefits of constructive feedback and how to give and receive specific, appropriate feedback.

Appendix 2: Example Completion Statement for USM-L2

Completion statement for Candidate Learning Record Level 2 Award in Understanding Substance Misuse			
Learning Outcome	Title	Contra-indications present Y/N	Trainer signature if learning outcome has been achieved
1	Know the effects of a range of drugs, including alcohol		
2	Know the harm associated with different substances and related behaviours		
3	Be aware of diversity in relation to substance use/misuse		
4	Understand why people use/misuse drugs		
5	Be aware of own responses to issues in relation to substance use/misuse		
6	Know the social and economic effects of substance misuse		
7	Use study skills within the learning process		

To be completed by trainer:

Where the learning outcome has not been achieved please:

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

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

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

Candidate name: Candidate signature: Date:

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

I declare that this candidate has achieved all the above qualification requirements for USM-L2: ☐

Trainer name: Trainer signature: Date:

Appendix 3: Criteria Assessment Sheet (CAS)

Candidate:

Group:

Qualification:

Coursework:

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

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

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

General comments:

Trainer name:

Date:

Appendix 4: Independent Verification

Candidate Portfolio Cover Sheet for ELSK-L2 & USM-L2

This form is to be completed by the candidate and trainer. Please attach this to the candidate portfolio samples sent to CPCAB for Independent Verification to support the assessment and quality assurance of this candidate's work.

Failure to provide ALL this information will delay the Independent Verification and certification of the group.

Centre name and number:	Candidate number:
-------------------------	-------------------

I confirm that I have personally completed this portfolio and that it is a true and accurate record of my own work.

Candidate name:

Candidate signature:

Date:

I confirm that this portfolio is the candidate's own work.

Trainer name:

Signature:

Date:

External Quality Assurance

CPCAB Independent Verification

Independent Verifier name:

Signed (for by CPCAB Head Office):

Date:

Appendix 5: Independent Verification Declaration

This form is to be completed by the trainer. Please email all documentation to verification@cpcab.co.uk

Please provide the following documentation to support the assessment of this candidate group. **Failure to provide ALL this information will delay the Independent Verification and certification of the group.** Please use this table as a checklist to ensure that you have provided all the relevant documents for Independent Verification.

Centre name:	Centre number:
Trainer name and e-mail address:	

Which qualification? Please tick box:		ELSK-L2 ☐	USM-L2 ☐
Group number:			
Number of portfolios submitted for Independent Verification:			
How many have been assessed as 'P' (Proficient)?			
How many have been assessed as 'NP' (Not Proficient)?			
Internal Quality Assurance			
Name of Internal Moderator:			
How many portfolios have been Internally Moderated from this group?			
Name of Internal Verifier:			
Has Internal Verification taken place for this cohort?		Yes/No	
Have the Internal Assessment results been uploaded to the CPCAB portal? portal.cpcab.co.uk		Yes/No	
Please ensure you include the following with the candidate portfolios:		Please mark	
Sample of candidate portfolios ⁷			
Signed candidate portfolio cover sheets			
Independent Verification Declaration			
All candidate evaluations of the course			
Internal Moderators' report			

Signed (on behalf of the centre):

Position:

Name (please print):

Date:

⁷ The sample should consist of 30% or four portfolios, whichever is the greater number. If a group falls below the minimum number of 6 candidates, then all portfolios will need to be emailed to CPCAB for Independent Verification - Please supply a range of abilities.

Appendix 6: Candidate Evaluation Form for ELSK-L2 & USM-L2

We hope you have enjoyed your training. Please complete this evaluation form to provide CPCAB with your feedback. You can include your name if you like or keep your feedback confidential.

Which qualification? Please mark appropriate box: ELSK-L2 ☐ USM-L2 ☐						
Candidate name:						
Centre name:						
Date you started:						
Date your course will finish:						
For the questions below, please mark the box that best matches your experience of the qualification.	Definitely agree	Slightly agree	Not sure	Slightly disagree	Definitely disagree	Not applicable
I found the course content was right for the qualification						
I found the assessment clear and understandable						
I found the course was long enough for me to meet all the requirements						
I found the coursework enabled me to demonstrate my knowledge, understanding and skills						
I found that the course met my individual learning needs						
This course has helped my confidence in the subject area						
I have enjoyed my study						
Any other comments about the qualification						