



TECH LEVEL SPECIFICATION

BT3D1 - VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Massage Therapies

(601/6975/8)

Version 16

About VTCT

VTCT (Vocational Training Charitable Trust) was established in 1962 and has maintained its position as the UK's leading specialist awarding organisation for the service industries. VTCT is regulated by Ofqual, the Welsh Government, CCEA and SQA to award Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), and Principal Learning, Functional Skills and Essential Skills Wales qualifications. VTCT has in the region of 100,000 learner registrations for qualifications annually.

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1 Qualification at a glance

Qualification title	VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Massage Therapies
Qualification number	601/6975/8
VTCT product code	BT3D1
First registration date	1 August 2016
Age range	16-18, 19+
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	479
Guided Learning (GL) hours	370
Assessment	<p>To be awarded this qualification, learners must successfully achieve the following assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Externally set and internally marked graded practical assessments (<i>50% of qualification grade</i>) • Externally set and marked examinations (<i>30% of qualification grade</i>) • Externally set and internally marked graded synoptic assessment (<i>20% of qualification grade</i>)
Grading	<p>Mandatory units in this qualification are graded Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction</p> <p>The overall qualification is graded Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction/Distinction*</p>
Performance table points	<p>This qualification has been approved by the Department for Education (DfE) for teaching to 16-19 year olds from September 2016</p> <p>This qualification will be reported in the tech level category of the 2018 16-19 performance tables</p>
Entry requirements	<p>Learners who wish to undertake this qualification must also achieve the VTCT (ITEC) Level 2 Award in Infection Prevention (COVID-19) for Beauty Therapy and Nail Services qualification or a regulated equivalent.</p> <p>In order to optimise their chances of success, a learner will ideally hold a Level 2 qualification or equivalent in beauty therapy</p>
Support materials	<p>Sample assessment materials can be downloaded from the VTCT website (www.vtct.org.uk)</p>

2 About this qualification

This qualification is an advanced (Level 3) technical qualification, which has been developed collaboratively with employers, professional associations and trade bodies to set the standard and content. These stakeholders have helped to identify expectations for the profession, 'must-haves' in employees working at this level, and key or common areas of weakness that need to be addressed. Such activities have informed coverage, evidentiary requirements, and the setting of Pass thresholds and grade descriptors and criteria.

This qualification has been informed by the experience and assets of WorldSkills International. WorldSkills is the global hub for skills excellence and development, with standards specifications that are biennially tested and updated through international skills competitions involving more than 70 member countries. VTCT has drawn upon both the standards and the assessment methodologies of WorldSkills in order to connect to best practice across advanced technical and vocational education systems.

This qualification has a clear statement of purpose (declared purpose) which outlines who the qualification is for, the technical areas covered, progression opportunities and details of the professional associations and/or trade bodies that formally recognise the qualification.

This qualification has been designed with a large proportion of mandatory and appropriate content which contributes to the overall qualification grade. This qualification provides employers and professional associations with greater confidence in the knowledge and skills of a qualification holder.

To ensure that VTCT's tech level qualifications taken by 16-19 year olds enjoy the confidence of industry and education providers, a significant proportion of this qualification's content is subject to external assessment. To be awarded this qualification, learners must achieve a linear programme of study with summative, external examinations which are externally set and marked by VTCT. The examinations are applied, objective, relevant and meaningful to learners, provides challenge and stretch, and assesses the full breadth of mandatory units. All units are subject to a rigorous system of external verification which includes a minimum of two external quality assurance visits a year, plus a system of targeted and unannounced spot checking.

This qualification includes a graded synoptic assessment which must be taken in the last third or final term of the qualification. This assessment requires learners to demonstrate that they can identify, and use effectively in an integrated way, an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the qualification, which are relevant to a key task. The graded synoptic assessment in this qualification largely mirrors the commonly undertaken industry 'trade test' which forms part of the normal recruitment process for employers in the sector. When applying for jobs in the sector, candidates for employment usually provide a complete client treatment in the salon/spa and must be suitably prepared to effectively deal with the variability of treatments and clients; whilst demonstrating proficiency in the full range of skills. The graded synoptic assessment in this qualification covers the full range (or a substantial and suitable breadth) of mandatory units.

The overall qualification is graded Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction/Distinction*.

Centres delivering this qualification must integrate relevant and meaningful employer involvement in the delivery and/or assessment which will be monitored and supported by VTCT's team of external quality assurers (EQA). Meaningful employer involvement provides learners with a clear 'line of sight' to work, enriches learning, raises the credibility of the qualification in the eyes of employers, parents and students and further supports collaboration between the learning and skills sector and industry. Centres will be monitored by their VTCT EQA to ensure that they comply with mandatory employer involvement requirements in the assessment of this qualification.

This qualification has been developed collaboratively with employers, professional associations and key stakeholders. Because of this, the knowledge, skills and competencies gained will provide the best possible opportunity for progression into employment.

3 Declared purpose

3.1 Who is this qualification for?

The VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Massage Therapies is a tech level qualification aimed at 16-18 learners who are in a full-time Level 3 education programme and wish to pursue a career as an employed and/or self-employed massage therapist.

There are no formal entry requirements for this qualification although it is likely that learners will hold a Level 2 beauty therapy or equivalent qualification.

3.2 What does this qualification cover?

This qualification is based on the national occupational standards for massage therapy and includes all the required elements to work effectively as a massage therapist. Learners must achieve all mandatory units which include:

- Health and safety in the salon
- Client care and consultation
- History and origins of massage therapies
- Swedish massage
- Stone therapy
- Indian head massage
- Anatomy and physiology for the face and body systems
- Promote and sell products and services
- Contribute to the effective running of a business

This qualification will develop learners' knowledge and understanding of relevant anatomy and physiology, health and safety, the history and origins of massage therapies and how to effectively contribute to the overall running of a business. Learners will also develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to consult with clients, successfully promote and retail products, whilst also providing a variety of massage therapies. In parallel, learners will develop their communication and customer service skills, their awareness of environmental sustainability and their commercial skills, all of which are valued highly by employers. Problem solving and research skills will also be developed.

3.3 Why is this qualification the most suitable?

This qualification is one of two VTCT tech level qualifications in massage therapies. In addition to this qualification is the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Massage Therapies; both qualify learners to become massage therapists.

At 479 total qualification time (TQT), the Diploma is most suitable for learners who continue, as part of their programme of study to work towards achieving Level 2 English and maths, or those undertaking another qualification in parallel.

The Extended Diploma at 615 TQT is far larger and most suited to learners who have achieved English and maths at Level 2 and wish to focus the majority of their programme on massage therapies, whereby they will develop a broader range of technical skills. Learners may wish to progress from the Diploma to the Extended Diploma.

3.4 What could this qualification lead to?

Learners who achieve this qualification are eligible to become members of the British Association of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology (BABTAC) or Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT). As a massage therapist, learners could progress directly into employment in a variety of contexts, which include:

- commercial salons
- destination/day spas
- massage clinics
- independent/self-employed/mobile/home-based settings
- cruise liners
- airlines or hotel chains
- care homes

Whilst the primary purpose of this qualification is to prepare learners for employment, learners may choose to develop their knowledge and skills further by completing a specialist qualification at Level 4 in one or more of the following areas:

- salon management
- holistic therapies

3.5 Who supports this qualification?

This qualification is regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

This qualification has been approved by the Department for Education for teaching to 16-19 year olds from September 2016, and will be first reported in the tech level category of the 2018 16-19 performance tables.

This qualification has been developed collaboratively with employers, professional associations and key stakeholders in the massage therapy sector. Because of this, the knowledge, skills and competencies gained will provide the best possible opportunity for progression into employment.

This qualification is formally supported by the following organisations:

Name	Website address
British Association of Beauty Therapy	www.babtac.com

4 Qualification structure

To be awarded the Level 3 Diploma in Massage Therapies learners must achieve all mandatory units.

To be awarded this qualification learners must achieve a Pass (or higher) grade in:

- all mandatory units
- the external examination
- the graded synoptic assessment

The minimum TQT required to achieve this qualification is **479**.

VTCT product code	Unit title	Level	GL	Unit reference number
Mandatory units				
UCO28M	Health and safety in the salon	3	30	L/507/5626
UBT90M	Client care and consultation	3	20	D/507/5517
UBT98M	History and origins of massage therapies	3	30	R/507/5546
UBT96M	Swedish massage	3	50	A/507/5539
UBT101M	Stone therapy	3	50	Y/507/5421
UBT100M	Indian head massage	3	50	M/507/5411
UBT95M	Anatomy and physiology for the face and body systems	3	90	M/507/5537
UBT119M	Promote and sell products and services	3	25	A/507/5458
UBT142M	Contribute to the effective running of a business	3	25	R/507/5496

5 Centre requirements

5.1 Approval and recognition

Existing centres that wish to deliver this qualification must obtain recognition using the standard qualification recognition procedures.

New centres that want to deliver this qualification must gain both centre approval and qualification recognition. Please refer to the VTCT website for further information.

Centre staff should be familiar with current practices and standards in the sector and with the qualification structure, content, assessment and quality assurance arrangements before designing a course programme.

5.2 Resources

Centres must possess the physical resources needed to support the delivery of the programme and the assessment of knowledge and skills, which should therefore be of industry standard. Where specific resources are required these have been indicated in individual units.

5.3 Teaching staff

In order to deliver this qualification, teaching staff must:

- be occupational experts and have knowledge and understanding in the area for which they are delivering training. This knowledge must be to the same level or higher as the training being delivered
- understand the qualification's structure and content, and the learning outcomes they are delivering
- have recent and relevant industry experience in the specific area they are delivering
- have credible experience of teaching and/or providing training
- hold or be actively pursuing an appropriate teaching/training qualification
- undertake activities which contribute to their continuing professional development (CPD)

5.4 Internal assessors

Internal assessment includes internally assessed practical assessments that are provided for each unit, as well as the final graded synoptic assessment.

In order to assess learners working towards this qualification, assessors must:

- be occupational experts in the area they are assessing
- understand the assessment process
- have recent and relevant industry experience in the specific area they are assessing
- hold or be working towards (candidate assessor) a recognised assessor qualification
- have credible experience of assessment within a teaching and/or training environment
- undertake activities which contribute to their continuing professional development (CPD)

Note: Candidate assessors who are working towards their assessor qualification must be supervised by a qualified assessor. Candidate assessors must have a clear action plan to achieve the assessor qualification. Assessor approval will be withdrawn if a relevant qualification has not been achieved within 18 months.

Assessors must assess learners' work in accordance with the assessment and grading requirements set out in this specification.

For information on the roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of assessors refer to VTCT's Centre Handbook, which can be downloaded from the VTCT website.

5.5 Internal quality assurers (IQAs)

Centres must have a rigorous internal quality assurance system in place.

Centres must have an IQA to ensure assessment decisions are consistently applied between assessors, and that learner work is to the required standard. Each assessor's work must be checked and confirmed by the IQA. Assessment decisions must be standardised to ensure that all learners' work has been assessed to the same standard and is fair, valid and reliable.

The IQA must observe assessors carrying out assessments, review assessment decisions from the evidence provided and hold standardisation meetings with the assessment team to ensure consistency in the use of documentation and interpretation of the qualification requirements.

Evidence of internal quality assurance must be recorded, retained and made available for the external quality assurer (EQA).

In order to internally quality assure learners working towards this qualification, IQAs must:

- be occupationally competent in the area they are quality assuring
- understand the assessment and internal quality assurance processes
- have recent and relevant industry experience in the specific area they are quality assuring
- have credible experience of assessment and internal quality assurance within a teaching and/or training environment
- hold a recognised qualification in the quality assurance of assessment, such as the 'Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice' or the 'Level 4 Award in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice'
- undertake activities which contribute to their continuing professional development (CPD)

For information on the roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of IQAs, and internal quality assurance more generally, refer to VTCT's Centre Handbook, which can be downloaded from the VTCT website.

5.6 Record keeping

Centres must produce and retain records that include:

- learners on programme, including, learner name, date of birth, contact details, assessor's name, IQA's name, and registration date with VTCT
- assessment plans and IQA sampling plans
- learner assessment records detailing, who assessed what and when, the assessment methods used, the location of the supporting evidence, and the assessment decision/grade awarded with supporting evidence
- records of internal quality assurance activity detailing who internally quality assured what and when, the sample selected and its rationale, records of IQA standardisation meetings, assessor and IQA competence records, monitoring records of assessor/IQA progress towards achievement of the relevant assessor/internal quality assurance qualifications and requirements for the retention of learner evidence

5.7 Meaningful employer involvement

5.7.1 Involving employers in delivery and/or assessment

It is important that centres develop an approach to teaching and learning that supports the technical and applied focus of this qualification. It is a requirement that employers and industry practitioners are involved in the delivery of this qualification and there is also a mandatory requirement to involve employers and/or industry practitioners in the assessment of the qualification. This enriches the learning experience, raises the credibility of the qualification in the eyes of employers, parents and students and further enhances the collaboration between the learning and skills sector and industry.

It is a requirement that all learners undertake meaningful activity involving employers or industry practitioners in the delivery of this qualification. Examples of how employer involvement can be integrated in the delivery of the qualification are outlined below, in Section 5.7.2

It is also a mandatory requirement that centres involve employers or industry practitioners in at least ONE assessment element of this qualification. VTCT recognises the following types of employer involvement in assessment, as meeting this essential requirement:

- Expert witness testimony evidence for the treatment portfolio (mandatory units)
- Employer/Industry practitioner assessor for the graded practical assessment (assessment decisions countersigned by a qualified assessor)
- Employer/Industry practitioner assessor for the graded synoptic assessment (assessment decisions countersigned by a qualified assessor)

The mandatory requirement to involve employers or industry practitioners in at least ONE assessment element of this qualification will be reviewed and monitored by VTCT's team of external quality assurers (EQAs).

A Level 3A sanction (Suspension for certification of some or all qualifications) will be imposed on any centre that fails to meet this mandatory assessment requirement. Centres will not be able to claim certificates for the affected qualifications.

VTCT will write to the centre to inform of the sanction placed and the reasons for the sanction. An action plan will be issued such that the centre is informed of the actions that need to be implemented to resolve this issue. Any action plans will need to be implemented by the centre and will be monitored by VTCT.

VTCT does not stipulate the minimum duration or contribution of meaningful employer involvement to the overall qualification grade, to give centres and employers the flexibility in how they best work together to support the qualification and learners. However, the contribution that meaningful activities make to the qualification must meet the mandatory requirement. As a minimum, meaningful activity must relate to one or more elements of the mandatory content of the qualification.

In all cases, participating industry practitioners and employers must be relevant to the industry sector or occupation/occupational group to which the qualification relates.

5.7.2 Integrating meaningful employer involvement

Examples are as follows:

- learners provide treatments in 'real' commercial salons/spas on paying clients – learners providing treatments in realistic working environments (RWEs) does not constitute meaningful employer involvement
- learners undertake structured work experience or work placements which develop skills and knowledge relevant to this qualification
- learners undertake projects, exercises and/or assessments/examinations set with input from experienced industry practitioners

- learners take one or more units delivered or co-delivered by experienced industry practitioners, this could, for example, take the form of guest lectures or master classes
- industry experts act as 'expert witnesses' who contribute to the assessment of students' work or practice, operating within a specified framework. This may be a specific project, exercise or examination, or all assessments within the qualification
- connecting with employers by participating in WorldSkills competitions and obtaining employer feedback

For the purpose of clarity, the following activities, whilst valuable, DO NOT meet the requirement for meaningful employer involvement:

- simulated or centre-based working environments (realistic working environments)
- employers hosting visits, providing premises, facilities or equipment
- employers or industry practitioners providing talks or contributing to delivery on employability, general careers advice, CV writing, interview training
- student attendance at careers fairs, events or other networking opportunities
- employers providing students with job references

5.8 Total Qualification Time (TQT)

TQT is defined under the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, General Condition J1.8, as the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification.

TQT is comprised of the following two elements:

- the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning, and
- an estimate of the number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

The TQT for this qualification is detailed in Section 4 of this specification.

6 Assessment

6.1 Summary of assessment methods

This qualification comprises internal and external assessments. Learners must achieve the assessments detailed in the table below.

Assessment method	Overview of controls
External examinations (BT3D1.EX1) (BT3D1.EX2)	Externally set and externally marked examinations. Overarching examinations that assess knowledge and understanding from the breadth of mandatory units at the end of the period of learning.
Graded practical assessment	Externally set, internally marked and subject to external verification. Assesses practical performance at the unit level.
Graded synoptic assessment (BT3D1.SYN)	Externally set, internally marked and subject to external verification. Comprises a range of treatments which assess the application of knowledge, understanding and skills from across the breadth of mandatory units. Conducted at the end of the period of learning.
Treatment portfolio*	Externally set and internally marked. Subject to external quality assurance monitoring. A prerequisite evidence requirement at the unit level, which must be completed prior to learners undertaking graded practical assessments, the external examinations and graded synoptic assessment.

*May be referred to as a treatment or service portfolio depending on the nature of individual units.

Sample assessment materials for internal and external assessments are available to download from the VTCT website. See Appendix 1 for detailed information on assessment controls.

6.2 Unit assessment methods

The table below identifies the assessment methods used to assess mandatory units.

Unit product code	Graded practical assessment	External examinations	Graded synoptic assessment*
UCO28M		✓	✓
UBT90M	✓	✓	✓
UBT98M		✓	✓
UBT96M	✓	✓	✓
UBT101M	✓	✓	✓
UBT100M	✓	✓	✓
UBT95M		✓	✓
UBT119M		✓	✓
UBT142M		✓	✓

*It may not be appropriate to assess all mandatory units in the graded synoptic assessment since this does not reflect practice in industry. The graded synoptic assessment will always assess a substantial and suitable breadth of mandatory units to mirror the commonly undertaken 'trade test' which forms part of the normal recruitment process for employers in this sector. All units will contribute to the graded synoptic assessment over the life of the qualification.

6.3 Contribution of assessment to the overall qualification grade

Whilst all units and assessments contribute to the assessment outcome of the qualification, only mandatory units contribute to the overall grade of the qualification. The table below outlines the grading model for each assessment method and the contribution of each to the overall qualification grade.

Assessment method	Grading model	Contribution to the qualification grade
External examinations (BT3D1.EX1) (BT3D1.EX2)	N/A ²	30%
Graded practical assessments	Units are each assessed as Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction	50%
Graded synoptic assessment (BT3D1.SYN)	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction	20%

²The score (marks) achieved in the external examinations will be converted into points which contribute to the overall qualification grade. A notional examination grade will be given to learners to indicate their level of performance in each examination.

6.4 External assessment

6.4.1 Test specification

The specification for the external examination is detailed below.

External examination (BT3D1.EX1)	
Availability (Exam sessions)	<p>Exam dates are specified by VTCT and published at the start of each academic year. Learners should be entered with VTCT into a series window. Series windows will be available in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February • April • June <p>Learners must be entered or scheduled for their exam before the final date for entries as published by VTCT. These will be communicated in the TLQ key dates document.</p>
Assessment controls	<p><i>Task setting - high control.</i> The external examination is set and marked by VTCT.</p> <p><i>Task taking – high control.</i> The examination must take place under controlled examination conditions and in the exam sessions published by VTCT. Centres must ensure that learners are suitably prepared for assessment.</p> <p><i>Task marking – high control.</i> The examination is marked by VTCT.</p>
Duration	70 minutes
Number of marks	The total number of marks available in the exam is 50
Grading model	<p>For each exam session, grade boundaries will be determined by VTCT. The grade awarded will correspond to a points value that will contribute to the overall qualification grade:</p> <p>Fail = 0 points Low Pass = 285 points High Pass = 301 points Low Merit = 318 points High Merit = 334 points Distinction = 351 points Distinction* = 367 points</p>
Units covered	<p>UCO28M - Health and safety in the salon UBT90M - Client care and consultation UBT96M - Swedish massage UBT119M - Promote and sell products and services UBT98M - History and origins of massage therapies</p>
Contribution to overall qualification grade	12%

Type of examination	<p>Written exam.</p> <p>The examination will consist of a written paper with two sections, A and B. Learners will have to complete both sections and there will be no optional questions in either section.</p> <p>Section A consists of a blend of multiple choice and short response questions which will assess knowledge and understanding across the breadth of mandatory units.</p> <p>Section B will largely include extended response questions. Each of these will challenge learners in the application of knowledge and understanding, in a practical technical context. Real-life case studies, scenarios and client examples are used to 'set the scene' and provide the basis for the objective assessment of applied knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Photographs and diagrams are used where applicable to bring the examination to life.</p> <p>The questions in Section B will vary year on year and will cover the full breadth of mandatory content over time. Learners will be required to answer all of the questions in Section B.</p> <p>All mandatory units are assessed in each and every examination. The full breadth of mandatory content will be covered over the life of the qualification.</p>
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External examination (BT3D1.EX2)	
Availability (Exam sessions)	<p>Exam dates are specified by VTCT and published at the start of each academic year. Learners should be entered with VTCT into a series window. Series windows will be available in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February • April • June <p>Learners must be entered or scheduled for their exam before the final date for entries as published by VTCT. These will be communicated in the TLQ key dates document.</p>
Assessment controls	<p><i>Task setting - high control.</i> The external examination is set and marked by VTCT.</p> <p><i>Task taking – high control.</i> The examination must take place under controlled examination conditions and in the exam sessions published by VTCT. Centres must ensure that learners are suitably prepared for assessment.</p> <p><i>Task marking – high control.</i> The examination is marked by VTCT.</p>
Duration	90 minutes
Number of marks	The total number of marks available in the exam is 70

Grading model	<p>For each exam session, grade boundaries will be determined by VTCT. The grade awarded will correspond to a points value that will contribute to the overall qualification grade:</p> <p>Fail = 0 points Low Pass = 429 points High Pass = 453 points Low Merit = 478 points High Merit = 502 points Distinction = 527 points Distinction* = 551 points</p>
Units covered	<p>UBT101M - Stone therapy UBT100M - Indian head massage UBT95M - Anatomy and physiology for the face and body systems UBT142M - Contribute to the effective running of a business</p>
Contribution to overall qualification grade	18%
Type of examination	<p>Written exam.</p> <p>The examination will consist of a written paper with two sections, A and B. Learners will have to complete both sections and there will be no optional questions in either section.</p> <p>Section A consists of a blend of multiple choice and short response questions which will assess knowledge and understanding across the breadth of mandatory units.</p> <p>Section B will largely include extended response questions. Each of these will challenge learners in the application of knowledge and understanding, in a practical technical context. Real-life case studies, scenarios and client examples are used to 'set the scene' and provide the basis for the objective assessment of applied knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Photographs and diagrams are used where applicable to bring the examination to life.</p> <p>The questions in Section B will vary year on year and will cover the full breadth of mandatory content over time. Learners will be required to answer all of the questions in Section B.</p> <p>All mandatory units are assessed in each and every examination. The full breadth of mandatory content will be covered over the life of the qualification.</p>

Learners, based on marks achieved in the examinations, are awarded points that contribute to the overall qualification grade. For the purpose of learner achievement and feedback, learners are issued a notional grade to indicate their level of performance in the examinations.

Examinations must be undertaken by learners under controlled examination conditions in accordance with VTCT's policies and procedures for external assessment.

6.4.2 Retaking external examinations

Repeat submissions are not allowed. Learners who fail to achieve the required Pass mark or are deemed to have underperformed, are permitted ONE retake opportunity. The retake must be at a different examination and sitting and it is expected that further teaching/tuition would have taken place.

6.4.3 Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

Information on the reasonable adjustments allowed for the external examinations within this qualification can be found in the reasonable adjustments section of Linx2Exchange on the VTCT website.

6.5 Internal assessment

VTCT has worked collaboratively with employers, professional associations, trade bodies and key industry stakeholders to devise assessments that are rigorous, valid, relevant and meaningful. The content, format and standards of assessments have been shaped by these groups, whereby the skills assessed and grading criteria and descriptors used are valued and endorsed by employers and industry.

The internal assessment methods that contribute to the assessment outcome of the qualification include:

- graded practical assessment
- graded synoptic assessment
- treatment portfolio

All internal assessment decisions made by a centre will be externally quality assured by VTCT.

Centres must take a best practice approach whereby learners are assessed in a real or realistic working environment. Centres must meet the mandatory requirement to involve employers in the assessment process. See Section 5.7 for detailed information on meaningful employer involvement.

VTCT will provide marking templates for internal assessments to support consistent marking, and importantly, the consistent capture of sufficient, auditable performance evidence for quality assurance.

Assessment controls for each assessment method, specifically the levels of control for task setting, task taking and task marking are detailed in Appendix 1.

6.5.1 Graded practical assessment

Practical assessments are externally set, internally marked, graded and quality assured by centres, and subject to external verification.

In specified mandatory units, learners must carry out a complete practical treatment which must be observed, marked and graded by centre assessors. Assessors must judge learner performance against specified assessment criteria and award a grade of Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction:

- To achieve a Pass, learners must have satisfied all Pass assessment criteria
- To achieve a Merit, learners must have satisfied all Pass and Merit assessment criteria
- To achieve a Distinction, learners must have satisfied all Pass, Merit and Distinction assessment criteria

Learners who do not satisfy all Pass criteria are given a 'Fail' grade.

The grade achieved for the graded practical assessment is the grade awarded for the unit.

The graded practical assessment must take place in a real or realistic working environment on a real client, and in a commercially acceptable time frame. For each mandatory unit that contains a graded practical assessment, VTCT specifies the content and activities that must be covered in the assessment.

Recorded professional discussion can be used as an assessment instrument attached to the graded practical assessment and is particularly useful for gathering evidence for criteria related to justification, evaluation and reflection. Professional discussions should be planned and recorded.

Graded practical assessments should be administered when learners are suitably prepared for assessment. Centres may determine the precise timing of graded practical assessments to suit local needs.

For detailed information on assessment controls for the practical assessment see Section A1.1 in Appendix 1.

6.5.2 Graded synoptic assessment

This section should be read in parallel with this qualification's sample assessment materials, in particular the Assessor Pack and Learner Pack which contain in depth information on the planning, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the graded synoptic assessment.

The graded synoptic assessment is externally set, internally marked, graded and quality assured by centres, and subject to external verification by VTCT.

The graded synoptic assessment in this qualification largely mirrors the commonly undertaken industry 'trade test' which forms part of the normal recruitment process for employers in the sector. When applying for jobs in the sector, candidates for employment usually provide a complete client treatment in the salon/spa and must be suitably prepared to effectively deal with the variability of treatments and clients; whilst demonstrating proficiency in the full range of skills. The graded synoptic assessment in this qualification covers the full range (or a substantial and suitable breadth) of mandatory units.

Learners must complete the graded synoptic assessment for this qualification at the end of their learning programme; this might be during the final term or last third of the learner's learning programme.

The graded synoptic assessment is set by VTCT and requires learners to carry out a range of commercial treatments in a real or realistic working environment on a real and unfamiliar client, thus simultaneously drawing together a range of skills and knowledge, and using them in an integrated way. Learners will provide a range of treatments, whilst taking into account unpredictable, client-centred variable factors; which will mirror commercial practice in industry. This assessment has been designed to cover a range of learning outcomes from across the mandatory units and together with other assessment methods ensures that all learning outcomes across the breadth of the qualification have been achieved.

VTCT publishes an annual assessment brief which includes instructions, and details the treatments to be conducted and the assessment controls to be applied by centres. The annual brief is made available from 1 September.

The structure, format and grade characteristics for the synoptic assessment have been designed with employers and professional associations to reflect industry practice and expectations. Assessors must observe learner performance and assign a single grade based on an overall judgement of the treatments provided. Judgement must be made against specified characteristics that define the Pass, Merit and Distinction grades. Assessors must not attempt to assign a grade to each and every task, instead they must weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of the treatments provided as a whole and decide on which grade best reflects the learner's overall performance.

Grade characteristics are presented in a holistic rubric to support an overarching grading decision based on performance across the whole vocational area. Grade characteristics specifically focus on the grading of those components most valued by employers which include commercialism, customer service, communication, problem solving, creativity, innovation, justification and evaluation of treatments and mastery of techniques and skills. In addition, the completeness and 'bringing together' of the treatments also feature to judge learners' abilities to integrate their knowledge, understanding and skills from across the whole vocational area.

In contrast, graded practical assessments at the unit level are assessed by an analytical rubric which assesses applied knowledge and technical skills extensively, using detailed and comprehensive graded assessment criteria.

Centres must provide VTCT with a schedule of planned graded synoptic assessments; to include learner names and the planned dates and times of assessment. VTCT will conduct external quality assurance visits on the day of graded synoptic assessments to verify the consistency of assessment decisions and that learner work is to the required standard.

VTCT will also conduct targeted and unannounced spot checking of centre assessments with a specific focus on quality assuring graded synoptic assessments. See Section 9.2 of this specification for more information on spot checking.

For detailed information on assessment controls for the graded synoptic assessment see Section A1.2 in Appendix 1.

6.5.3 Treatment portfolio

The treatment portfolio is a prerequisite evidence requirement which must be completed prior to learners undertaking the practical assessment and graded synoptic assessment.

VTCT specifies the treatments to be carried out and evidenced in the portfolio.

The treatment portfolio can be used as a confirmatory and formative assessment to prepare learners for the practical and synoptic assessments. The purpose of this portfolio is to evaluate learner performance and use the information gathered to shape and improve learners' performance in preparation for summative assessments. Centres should consider the use of formative self and peer assessment as part of the learning journey.

Whilst treatment portfolios are not graded, they may be sampled by the EQA.

6.5.4 Retaking internal assessments

6.5.4.1 Retakes for learners who have failed

Learners who fail to reach the required Pass standard in practical assessments and/or the graded synoptic assessment, are permitted ONE retake opportunity after feedback and appropriate tuition have taken place. The assessment retake must be conducted with a different client, which will provide sufficient variation to the original assessment.

6.5.4.2 Retakes for underperforming learners

Learners who achieve the Pass standard or above but are deemed to have underperformed in graded practical assessments and/or the graded synoptic assessment, are permitted ONE retake opportunity. The assessment retake must be conducted with a different client, which will provide sufficient variation to the original assessment.

Evidence of underperformance must be recorded and retained by centres. Evidence may include grades achieved by learners in other assessments which demonstrate comparative underperformance. This evidence must be made available for external quality assurance.

6.5.5 Authentication of learner work

Whilst the majority of units in this qualification require evidence to be produced for assessment under direct supervision and highly controlled conditions, some units require learners to produce evidence without supervision.

Where this is the case, centres must be confident that learners' work is authentic. In such cases, learners must complete a Declaration of Authenticity to confirm that the work produced is their own. This must be countersigned by an assessor. A Declaration of Authenticity form is available to download from the VTCT website.

Centres must ensure that all learner evidence is available to the EQA.

The authentication of learner evidence is the responsibility of the centre.

7 Synopticity

The definition of synopticity used by VTCT is:

'a form of assessment that requires a learner to demonstrate they can identify and use effectively, in an integrated way, an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the whole qualification, which are relevant to a key task.'

This qualification includes a significant amount of synoptic content and assessment. It supports synoptic learning and assessment by:

- detailing the teaching and learning links between units, to allow learners to see how learning in one vocational area relates to, and underpins, another
- providing specific guidance to teachers and tutors on the holistic delivery and assessment of units where there is a natural interdependence
- requiring learners to draw on knowledge and skills from a range of units to carry out treatments
- embedding and assessing transferable skills alongside specific vocational content, which are central to the service industries, in particular, communication, customer service, commercialism, problem solving and research
- including grading criteria that provide challenge and stretch, such as requiring learners to evaluate and justify their decisions, actions and recommendations
- including an explicit graded synoptic assessment, which judges learner performance against a holistic grading rubric
- integrating professional discussion into the graded synoptic assessment to interrogate knowledge and understanding across the vocational area
- providing a coherent learning programme of related units
- including overarching examinations which assess the breadth of mandatory units in an applied and meaningful way, which requires assimilation of materials and analysis
- integrating meaningful employer involvement to enrich the delivery experience
- including the mandatory requirement that centres involve employers or industry practitioners in at least ONE assessment element of this qualification

For detailed information on the graded synoptic assessment please see Section 6.5.2.

The quality of synoptic delivery and assessment will be judged explicitly through VTCT's team of visiting EQAs.

8 Grading

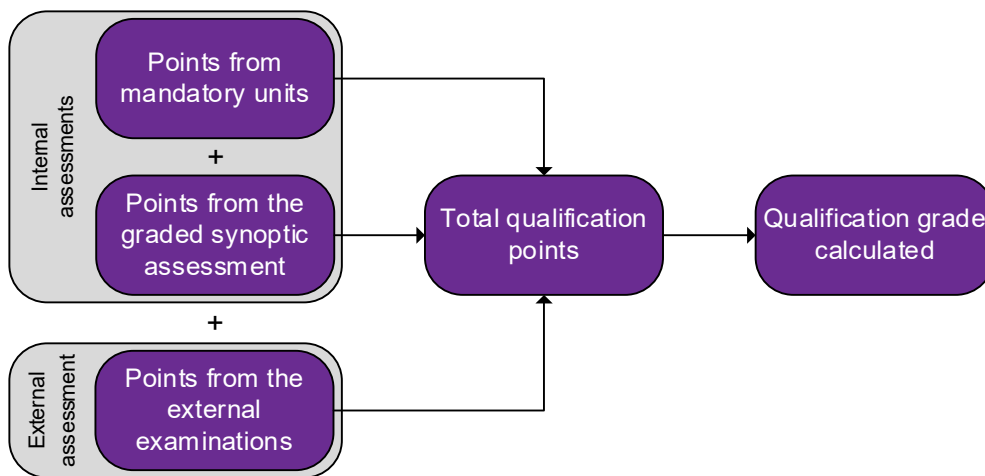
8.1 Overview

Learners must achieve the requisite number of units as specified in the rules of combination. Learners must achieve a Pass grade or higher in all units, the external examinations and graded synoptic assessment.

Performance in mandatory units and the graded synoptic assessment will be graded Pass, Merit or Distinction. Each unit grade carries points.

Learners are also issued points based on their performance in the external examinations.

These points must be added together to determine the overall grade of the qualification, as depicted below:



8.2 Calculating the overall qualification grade

8.2.1 Calculating points for internal assessments

The grade awarded for mandatory units and the graded synoptic assessment must each be cross referenced to the table below to determine the points for internal assessments.

VTCT product code	Unit title/assessment method	Points per grade		
		Pass	Merit	Distinction
UCO28M	Health and safety in the salon	N/A	N/A	N/A
UBT90M	Client care and consultation	140	160	180
UBT98M	History and origins of massage therapies	N/A	N/A	N/A
UBT96M	Swedish massage	350	400	450
UBT101M	Stone therapy	350	400	450
UBT100M	Indian head massage	350	400	450
UBT95M	Anatomy and physiology for the face and body systems	N/A	N/A	N/A
UBT119M	Promote and sell products and services	N/A	N/A	N/A
UBT142M	Contribute to the effective running of a business	N/A	N/A	N/A
BT3D1.SYN	Graded synoptic assessment	476	544	612

8.2.2 Calculating points for the external assessment

The learner's notional grade for the external examinations must be cross referenced to the table below to determine the points for the external assessment.

VTCT product code	Assessment	Points per examination score
BT3D1.EX1	External examination	Fail = 0 points Low Pass = 285 points High Pass = 301 points Low Merit = 318 points High Merit = 334 points Distinction = 351 points Distinction* = 367 points
BT3D1.EX2	External examination	Fail = 0 points Low Pass = 429 points High Pass = 453 points Low Merit = 478 points High Merit = 502 points Distinction = 527 points Distinction* = 551 points

8.2.3 Calculating the overall qualification grade

The overall grade for the qualification is calculated by adding together the points achieved from internal and external assessments.

The conversion table below must be used to determine the learner's overall qualification grade.

Points range	Overall qualification grade
2380 to 2606	Pass
2607 to 2833	Merit
2834 to 2946	Distinction
2947 to 3060	Distinction*

An online grade calculator is available on the VTCT website which carries out all of the calculations in this section.

8.2.4 Grade boundary review

Grade boundaries for units and the overall calculation for the qualification grade are open to annual review. Following this review, these boundaries and overall calculations can be adjusted by VTCT. This review and possible change within a qualification are to ensure the standard of the qualification grade is upheld throughout the qualification's lifecycle.

9 External quality assurance

9.1 External quality assurance visits

This qualification is externally verified by VTCT. Centres delivering this qualification will have a minimum of two external quality assurance visits per year. Between visits EQAs are available to offer advice and guidance on any aspect of quality assurance, via telephone or email; additional quality assurance visits can be arranged.

On a centre visit an EQA:

- verifies that appropriate staff and sufficient resources are in place, and that the centre is continuing to meet the criteria specified in the centre contract
- checks that the centre's policies and procedures, specifically those that relate to internal standardisation and record keeping, continue to meet VTCT's requirements
- reviews and monitors the quality of meaningful employer involvement in the delivery and assessment of the qualification
- judges the quality of synoptic delivery and assessment in line with guidance provided by VTCT
- in line with VTCT's sampling strategy, samples learner work to verify that it is to the required standard for a given grade, this includes observation of graded practical assessments for the unit and of synoptic assessments
- reviews evidence of the activities that have been undertaken to standardise assessments
- samples work and observes assessments at/from different sites if the centre operates at more than one location, from different centres and IQAs and at different stages of delivery. All samples are selected by the EQA

Centres must provide assessment plans to their EQA at the earliest possible opportunity, so that the EQA can plan to undertake visits that coincide with any practical assessments taking place at the centre, so that external verification can take place.

Random sampling is arranged between the centre and the EQA. The EQA will choose a sample of named learners to cover a variety of skills, knowledge, units and assessors. Through the sampling process the EQA will seek to assure that all assessment decisions made at the centre are consistent, fair, valid and reliable. The EQA will also seek to confirm that all assessments conducted meet national standards.

Depending on their findings, the EQA may take different courses of action; including agreeing with the centre an improvement plan and timeline for improvement, increasing the sample size which may result in a further quality assurance visit (chargeable to the centre) or sanctions may be applied in accordance with the VTCT Sanctions Policy.

VTCT operates a rigorous quality assurance system which includes external verification, targeted and unannounced spot checks, risk-based centre analysis profiles (supported by statistical monitoring/evidence) and high sampling of centres delivering this qualification.

9.2 Spot checking

In addition to the two normal EQA visits per year, targeted and unannounced spot checks of centres delivering this qualification will be undertaken as part of VTCT's formal quality assurance process. Spot checks are carried out by VTCT EQAs and will interrogate the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of the graded synoptic assessments.

The EQA conducting a spot check will:

- be independent of the centre
- ensure graded synoptic assessments are conducted appropriately and in line with VTCT procedures
- judge and grade learner performance in graded synoptic assessments alongside centre assessors to ensure the national standard is being achieved
- compare judgements between assessors to ensure grading criteria and characteristics are being consistently applied

VTCT will draw on centre assessment plans to schedule unannounced spot checks.

9.3 Support and guidance

Prior to delivering this qualification, you are strongly encouraged to attend an 'Establishing the Standard' workshop hosted by VTCT, to explore best practice in delivery, assessment and quality assurance.

In parallel to using this qualification specification, unit specifications and sample assessment materials are available to support qualification delivery and assessment.

For more information, visit the VTCT website (www.vtct.org.uk).

10 Unit structure

Units are available as separate specifications and can be downloaded from the VTCT website. Units that make up this qualification are structured as follows:

VTCT product code

The code allocated by VTCT. This should be used when communicating directly with VTCT.

Title

Reflects the content of the unit.

Unit reference number

This is the unit reference number as detailed on Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications.

Level

This represents the level of achievement. The National Qualifications Framework level descriptors and similar qualifications at this level inform the allocation of the unit level.

Guided Learning (GL) hours

All units have GL assigned to them. This is the time a learner spends:

- being taught or given instruction by a lecturer, tutor, supervisor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

Overview

Provides a summary of what learners will cover in a unit, and outlines the knowledge, understanding and skills to be developed.

Learning outcomes

Specify what a learner will know, understand and be able to do as a result of completing a unit.

Assessment requirements

Details the assessments that must be completed and achieved to be awarded a unit. For more information on assessment methods see Section 6 of this specification.

Unit content

Provides the basis for the teaching, learning and assessment of each learning outcome. Teachers and tutors should ensure that the full breadth of unit content is delivered.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria specify the minimum standard required by the learner to achieve the relevant grade. Learners must provide sufficient and valid evidence to achieve the grade.

Assessment guidance

Explains the standard and provides examples of the evidence needed to achieve a given assessment criterion. This section must be used by assessors to judge the quality of evidence for assessment.

Resources

Identifies specific resources required to deliver and assess a unit.

Delivery guidance

Provides information on how teachers and tutors could enhance the learning experience.

Links with other units

Highlights the links between units to facilitate holistic and synoptic delivery and assessment.

Appendix 1 – Assessment controls

A1.1 Assessment controls for practical assessments

The following assessment controls relate to the graded and non-graded practical assessments.

TASK SETTING – high control

VTCT specifies the practical treatments to be undertaken and the components (i.e. techniques, equipment, products and tools) that must be covered in the assessment.

TASK TAKING – medium control

Time (externally defined): Time is explicitly stated where appropriate. In some cases, clients may vary significantly in their presentation and therefore, it is not appropriate to specify assessment time. Assessors, however, must ensure that the entire treatment is completed in a commercially acceptable time frame. The exact time taken must be documented.

Environment (externally defined): Assessments must take place in a real or realistic working environment on a real client.

Resources (externally defined): Learners must be given access to the full range of products, tools and equipment required to carry out the practical assessment. These are detailed in unit specifications.

Supervision/Authenticity (externally defined): The complete assessment must be supervised at all times by an assessor.

Collaboration (externally defined): Whilst learners can work in groups to practise and prepare for this assessment, the practical assessment itself is an assessment of individual learner performance and does not permit collaboration or discussion between learners.

Reflective discussion (externally defined): Reflective discussion provides a holistic approach to assessing learners' analytical and decision making abilities. Reflective discussions must be recorded. There are various options for recording reflective discussions such as audio, video or paper-based recording.

Feedback (externally defined): Learners must not be provided with feedback throughout the assessment. At the end of the assessment a provisional grade can be discussed with learners. Final results and grades can only be confirmed once internal verification and external verification has taken place, following VTCT's EQA visit.

TASK MARKING – medium control

Centre assessors mark the graded practical assessment using analytical grading criteria and amplified assessment guidance provided by VTCT. Assessments are subject to external verification through scheduled centre visits and random spot checking. At least one EQA visit per year will be conducted to observe graded practical assessments and verify that work is to the required standard for the grade given.

A1.2 Assessment controls for the graded synoptic assessment

TASK SETTING – high control

VTCT publishes an annual assessment brief which details the units to be synoptically assessed and the specific practical treatments to be undertaken. Assessment briefs are issued to learners at the start of their graded synoptic assessment. Assessment briefs vary year on year.

TASK TAKING – medium control

Time (externally defined): VTCT specifies the maximum time permitted for graded synoptic assessments. This time may vary year on year and is dependent upon the treatments and tasks that learners are required to undertake. The maximum time permitted is specified in the Learner and Assessor Packs which include the assessment brief. The exact time taken by learners must be documented.

Environment (externally defined): Assessments must take place in a real or realistic working environment on a real client.

Resources (externally defined): Learners must be given access to the full range of products, tools and equipment required to carry out all treatments within the graded synoptic assessment.

Supervision/Authenticity (externally defined): The complete assessment must be supervised at all times by an assessor.

Collaboration (externally defined): Whilst learners can work in groups to practise and prepare for this assessment, the graded synoptic assessment itself is an assessment of individual learner performance and does not permit collaboration or discussion between learners.

Reflective discussion (externally defined): Reflective discussion provides a holistic approach to assessing learners' analytical and decision making abilities. VTCT will provide specific questions for assessors which cover justification and evaluation of learner choices and actions, and recommendations for future practices. Assessors can use these questions to conduct a reflective discussion with learners on completion of their practical assessment. Reflective discussions must be recorded. There are various options for recording reflective discussions such as audio, video or paper-based recording.

Feedback (externally defined): Learners must not be provided with feedback throughout the assessment. At the end of the assessment a provisional grade can be discussed with learners. Final results and grades can only be confirmed once internal verification and external verification has taken place, following VTCT's EQA visit.

TASK MARKING – medium control

Centre assessors mark the assessment using a holistic grading rubric which includes grade characteristics that define each grade. The holistic grading rubric is provided by VTCT. The graded synoptic assessment is subject to external verification through scheduled centre visits and random spot checking. At least one EQA visit per year will be conducted to observe graded synoptic assessments and verify that work is to the required standard for the grade given.

Version	Details of amendments	Date
v14	Key dates amended in Section 6.4.1, page 17 New brand logo added	04/07/2017
v15	Added grade boundary review	03/12/2019
v16	Added COVID-19 Infection Prevention pre-requisite	01/09/2020