

Qualification Unit

This unit forms part of a regulated qualification.

Unit Title: Foundations of Outdoor and Adventure Therapy

Unit Reference Number: R/651/7999

Level: Four (4)

Credit Value: Four (4)

Minimum Guided Learning Hours: 25

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand the historical and future development of Outdoor and Adventure Therapy	1.1 Define 'Outdoor and Adventure Therapy'
	1.2 Summarise key historical developments in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	1.3 Identify emerging trends in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
2. Understand how to apply Outdoor and Adventure Therapy in different settings	2.1 Give three examples of how Outdoor and Adventure Therapy can be applied in different settings
3. Understand neurological and psychological principles that underpin the therapeutic benefits of nature and adventure-based activities	3.1 Describe key neuroscience principles related to nature's impact on mental health
	3.2 Explain how adventure-based activities contribute to emotional regulation and resilience
	3.3 Evaluate two psychological theories that support nature-based therapeutic interventions
4. Understand the benefits of Integrative Practice in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy	4.1 Outline three therapy models used in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	4.2 Evaluate the benefits of an integrative approach in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy
	4.3 Apply an integrative framework to a case study using three therapy models

Indicative Content

LO1	<p>AC 1.2. Learners must show understanding of the four key foundations Outdoor and Adventure Therapy is built on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential Learning Theory (David Kolb, 1984): Growth through experience, reflection, and active learning. • Humanistic Psychology (e.g., Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow): Client-centred, growth-oriented therapeutic approaches. • Early Wilderness Therapy Movements: Programmes like Outward Bound using challenge and nature to promote resilience and healing. • Nature Connection Research (e.g., Biophilia Hypothesis, E.O. Wilson): Early evidence of nature’s role in mental and emotional wellbeing. <p>Learners must summarise how these traditions shaped the evolution of Outdoor and Adventure Therapy into a professional discipline.</p> <p>AC 1.3. Learners must identify emerging trends, showing an understanding of how Outdoor and Adventure Therapy is evolving to meet contemporary needs. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Integration and Evidence-Based Practice: Outdoor therapy is increasingly embedded within mainstream healthcare, requiring formal outcome measures and professional standards. • Integration of Modern Psychological Models: Therapists now draw on CBT, ACT, Polyvagal Theory, and mindfulness to strengthen therapeutic outcomes. • Social Prescribing and Mental Health Integration: Outdoor therapy is used as part of social prescribing to support mental health and wellbeing. • Inclusivity and Accessibility: There is a growing focus on trauma-sensitive, neuroaffirmative, and inclusive outdoor therapeutic practices. • Supporting Environmental Responsibility: Therapy increasingly nurtures emotional connections with nature, fostering wellbeing alongside environmental care.
LO2	<p>AC 2.1 Learners must include how Outdoor and Adventure Therapy can be applied in educational, community-based and clinical settings.</p>
LO3	<p>AC 3.1 could include the following neuroscience principles: nature exposure reduces cortisol and stress hormone levels, promoting stress recovery, time in nature activates the parasympathetic nervous system (“rest and digest” state), exposure to green spaces calms the amygdala, helping to reduce fear and anxiety, sensory engagement with nature supports emotional regulation.</p> <p>AC 3.2 could include how manageable challenges in outdoor activities builds emotional regulation skills, balance between challenge and support to strengthen coping skills, physical movement in natural environments can support the nervous system.</p> <p>A.C 3.3 Learners must choose two of the following psychological theories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson): Humans are biologically wired to connect with nature. • Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan): Nature restores focus and

	<p>reduces mental fatigue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress Recovery Theory (Ulrich): Natural environments speed up emotional recovery from stress. • Polyvagal Theory (Porges): Nature supports co-regulation and nervous system calming.
LO4	<p>AC 4.1 Learners must outline the following three key therapy models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) • Acceptable and Commitment Therapy (ACT) • Mindfulness-Based Approaches <p>AC 4.2 Learners must evaluate the benefits of an integrative approach. This could include adapting interventions to meet individual client needs, combining strengths from different models, responding flexibly, addressing internal processes (thought and emotions) and external experiences (challenge, mastery, nature connection).</p>