



Qualification Specification

GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy (610/6519/5)

This qualification is subject to the GA Centre Assessment and Standards Scrutiny and General Moderation policy.

This qualification is exclusively delivered by Canine Massage Therapy Ltd.

Section 1 - Qualifications Overview

1.1 Introduction: About this Qualification.

Gatehouse Awards (GA) qualifications are designed to give learners the skills to be active in the modern labour market and progress in their career and/or onto higher-level study.

This Qualification Specification covers the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy (610/6519/5).

The GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification has been developed to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, and professional competence required to assess, plan, deliver, and evaluate massage therapy treatments for the canine. The qualification enables practitioners to work confidently with musculoskeletal and soft tissue dysfunction, chronic pain management for orthopedic conditions, and rehabilitation of soft tissue and sporting injuries seen in dog whilst maintaining safe and ethical practice in line with veterinary referral procedures and welfare legislation.

Learners will acquire a thorough understanding of functional anatomy, pathology, and biomechanics, alongside advanced palpation, assessment, and clinical reasoning skills. A distinctive feature of this qualification is training in the Lenton Method® of Neuromyofascial Release, an evidence-based approach unique to this programme, underpinned by peer-reviewed research published in *The Veterinary Record* (University of Winchester/British Veterinary Association) (Riley, L.M., Satchell, L., Stilwell, L.M. and Lenton, N.S. (2021) 'Effect of massage therapy on pain and quality of life in dogs: A cross sectional study', *Veterinary Record*, 189(11). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.586>). This research provides the qualification with a scientific foundation that directly supports its application within the multidisciplinary team approach to canine healthcare.

The qualification integrates a range of massage disciplines including sports, Swedish, deep tissue, and both direct and indirect myofascial release as well as the Lenton Method® and advanced myofascial release protocols, providing successful learners with an extensive repertoire of over 80 core techniques, variations, and adaptations. This ensures practitioners can tailor treatment plans to the individual dog, improving mobility, comfort, and quality of life across companion, working, and sporting populations.

Completion of this qualification will allow learners to practice as highly skilled clinical canine massage therapists, work collaboratively with veterinary professionals and other allied professionals, and pursue professional membership routes such as the Canine Massage Guild. The diploma sets a benchmark for excellence within the industry and addresses a clear sector need for regulated evidence-based training in clinical canine massage therapy.

This document provides centre staff, learners and employers with a comprehensive overview of the qualification content as well as the assessment and quality assurance requirements for this qualification.

The qualification is regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations (Ofqual) in England and is part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

All versions of this qualification are listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications which is operated by Ofqual at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

This qualification is not designed to replace any existing qualifications.

1.2 Canine Massage Guild (CMG) Endorsement



“Learners who achieve the Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy are eligible to apply for Practitioner Membership of the Canine Massage Guild (CMG).

Recognition by the CMG confirms that the learner has demonstrated the knowledge, skills and professional standards required to practice safely and effectively at RQF Level 5.

Eligibility for membership is subject to verification of the qualification, adherence to the CMG Code of Conduct, evidence of appropriate insurance, compliance with veterinary industry standards, and a commitment to ongoing Continuing Professional Development.

Successful applicants may be included on the CMG’s practitioner register, providing assurance to veterinary professionals, clients and the public that practice is evidence-informed, accountable and subject to professional oversight.

This model of post-award recognition is consistent with wider sector practice, where achievement of a regulated qualification confers eligibility to apply for professional membership, rather than automatic registration.”

- The Canine Massage Guild (2025).

1.3 Endorsed by Animal Health Professions' Register



The Animal Health Professions' Register (AHPR) is a voluntary-regulatory body that promotes high standards of education, professional conduct and public protection across animal health professions, predominantly within the veterinary musculoskeletal sector. Unlike professional associations, whose primary role is to represent and support their members, AHPR's focus is on setting standards and maintaining a register of practitioners who meet those standards. AHPR accreditation gives students and graduates confidence that their qualification has been independently assessed against recognised professional standards and supports a more straightforward route to registration, although applicants must still meet all registration requirements before being admitted to the Register.

1.4 Qualification Title, Qualification Number and Important Dates

Qualification Title and Level	Qualification Number	Operational Start Date	Operational Review Date
GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy	610/6519/5	20/10/2025	October 2030

1.5 Qualification Aims and Objectives

This qualification aims to develop competent, reflective, and evidence-informed clinical canine massage therapists who can work safely and effectively within veterinary-led multidisciplinary care pathways.

On completion of this qualification, learners will be able to:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of canine musculoskeletal function using advanced palpation and clinical reasoning skills
- Plan, deliver, and evaluate evidence-based massage therapy interventions for injury rehabilitation, chronic pain management, and performance optimisation

- Apply a diverse range of massage techniques and protocols, including the proprietary Lenton Method®, adapting approaches to individual canine needs
- Demonstrate professional competence in communication, clinical documentation, and collaborative working with veterinary surgeons and allied professionals
- Operate within defined scope of practice, maintaining compliance with veterinary referral procedures, animal welfare legislation, and professional standards
- Establish and manage professional practice through application of business principles, ethical decision-making, and reflective practice

This qualification prepares learners to:

- Work as independent practitioners within the clinical canine massage therapy sector
- Contribute meaningfully to canine health, welfare, and quality of life through skilled therapeutic intervention
- Pursue professional development and membership opportunities within the canine therapy profession

1.6 Qualification Structure and Overview: GLH, TQT, Credit Values and Units

The GA 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification is listed on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications as part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The structure of this qualification is as follows:

GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy (610/6519/5)					
Mandatory Units	Unit Reference	Level	Credits	GLH*	Study Time
1. Canine Anatomy, Physiology, and Biomechanics for Massage Therapy	A/651/8142	5	15	40	110
2. Soft Tissue Dysfunction and Orthopedic Pathologies for Clinical Canine Massage	F/651/8144	5	9	21	69
3. Clinical Risk Assessment and Canine Welfare for Clinical Canine Massage	H/651/8145	5	6	17	43
4. Therapeutic Canine Handling and Professional Standards of Practice	J/651/8146	5	8	25	55
5. Advanced Clinical Assessment for Canine Massage Therapy	K/651/8147	5	11	35	75

6. Application of Advanced Techniques in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy	L/651/8148	5	17	46	124
7. The Lenton Method: Advanced Clinical Canine Massage Protocols	M/651/8149	5	15	54	96
8. Home Care Planning and Post-Treatment Support in Canine Massage	Y/651/8150	5	7	8	62
9. Professional Practice and Business Principles for Canine Massage Therapists	A/651/8151	5	8	8	72
			Total Credits 96	Total GLH 254	GLH + Study Time = TQT** 960

***Guided Learning Hours (GLH): Definition**

The activity of a learner in being taught or instructed by – or otherwise participating in education or training under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

****Total Qualification Time (TQT): Definition**

The number of Guided Learning Hours assigned, plus an estimate of the number of study 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 by – 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 number of study hours a learner is expected to undertake in order to complete each unit is expressed in the '**Study Time**' above. This, including the GLH, provides the Total Qualification Time, or TQT, and 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 the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of this qualification.

The estimates for Guided Learning Hours and Total Qualification Time above have been produced with due regard to information gathered from those with experience in education and training and is in line with guidance published by Ofqual on the allocation and expression of Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours.

Level

The qualifications within this specification are designated at Level 5 on the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) according to the Level Descriptors for knowledge and understanding, which build on those used within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This means that this qualification is considered by GA to lead to the outcome as follows:

Achievement at Level 5 reflects the ability to use practical, theoretical or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts and analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas. It reflects an awareness of the nature and scope of the area of study or work and an understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them. It also reflects the ability to determine, adapt and use appropriate methods, cognitive and practical skills to address broadly defined, complex problems, use relevant research or development to inform actions and evaluate actions, methods and results.

1.7 Intended Audience, Age and Entry Requirements

The GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy is designed for learners from a variety of backgrounds who wish to develop a professional career in canine massage therapy, as well as those seeking to enhance their existing skills within the wider animal care or veterinary sectors. It is particularly appropriate for individuals with a passion for canine welfare, including those pursuing a career change, veterinary nurses, canine hydrotherapists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, behaviorists, and trainers.

This qualification is intended for learners who already have experience of working or handling canines, either in a paid, voluntary or personal capacity as well as those seeking a career change driven by a passion for animal care. All learners must therefore demonstrate prior experience of handling and interacting with dogs and be confident in working safely around healthy canines - this experience may be gained through employment in a canine-related role, voluntary work with rescue or welfare organisations, training facilities, or through responsible ownership and handling of dogs as pets. Learners are expected to have a working knowledge of canine behaviour sufficient to ensure safe participation in practical training.

Learners must have access to a suitable, healthy dog for practice and assessment purposes, whether their own or another individual's (with the owner's consent). Both the learner and their dog are required to attend the training provider's premises for scheduled practical training and assessment activities.

Learners must be aged 21 years or over at the start of the programme.

There are no other formal entry requirements for this qualification; however, due to the nature of the qualification content, those undertaking the qualification must have a proficient level of spoken and written English (e.g. GCSE Grade C / Grade 4 or above or equivalent).

If English is not the learner's first language, an English language level of International English C1 (CEFR) is required.

It is recommended that prior to commencing a programme of study leading to this qualification, learners receive detailed advice and guidance from the training provider in order to ensure the programme and qualification will meet their needs.

1.8 Rules of Combination

The Rules of Combination for this qualification are:

- in order to achieve the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification, learners must achieve all 9 mandatory units.

1.9 Recognition of Prior Learning and Transfer of Credits

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessing whether a learner's previous experience and achievements meet the standard requirements of a GA unit or units prior to the candidate taking the assessment for the qualification, or part of the qualification, they are registered for.

Any prior learning must be relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and GA will subsequently amend the requirements which a learner must have satisfied before they are assessed as eligible to be awarded the qualification.

Where there is evidence that the learner's knowledge and skills are current, valid and sufficient the use of RPL may be acceptable for recognising achievement of a unit, units or whole qualification. The requirement for RPL in such instances will include a consideration of the currency of the knowledge gained by the learner at the time they undertook the prior learning. RPL cannot be guaranteed in instances where industry practice or legislation has significantly changed in the time since the prior learning was undertaken / a previous award was issued.

All RPL decisions and processes are subject to External Quality Assurance (EQA) scrutiny and must be documented in line with GA's quality assurance requirements.

No transfer of credits is permitted.

1.10 Relationship to Other Qualifications & Progression Opportunities

The GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification is an ideal qualification for learners who wish to progress onto further higher-level study, practical occupational training or employment or self-employment.

Progression may include further continued professional development in the animal care and veterinary science sector.

Examples of qualifications and further learning which learners may wish to consider following completion of the Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy are:

- GA Level 6 Diploma in Animal Osteopathy
- GA Level 6 Diploma in Animal Physiotherapy

1.11 Language of Assessment

This qualification is offered in English.

Further information concerning the provision of qualification and assessment materials in other languages may be obtained from GA.

1.12 Grading

All learning outcomes and assessment requirements must be met before a learner can be considered having achieved this qualification.

This qualification is not graded on a scale. Learners are assessed as Pass or Fail. Learners who aren't successful can resubmit work within the registration period.

1.13 Qualification Availability

This qualification is available via the authorised GA Approved Centre, Canine Massage Therapy Ltd.

For further information, please contact us.

Our contact details appear on our website www.gatehouseawards.org

Section 2: Qualification Delivery, Assessment & Quality Assurance Model

2.1 Teaching and Learning Requirements

Courses leading to this qualification may consist of e-learning courses or classroom-based courses, or a blended option.

Learners can therefore undertake learning and assessment on a flexible basis.

Learners must have suitable access to teaching and assessment staff as well as technical support. It is essential that the centre provides specialist staff, high quality learning materials and access to assessment opportunities.

Further details and guidance on the content of teaching and learning for each unit can be accessed by the approved GA centre.

2.2 Assessment and Quality Assurance Model

For this qualification, learners' work is internally assessed and internally moderated by centre staff to clearly show where learners have achieved the learning outcomes and qualification requirements.

Assessment, internal moderation and quality assurance activities are subject to external moderation and quality assurance conducted by GA.

Centres are subject to the GA Centre Assessment and Standards Scrutiny (CASS) and General Moderation Policy.

2.3 Assessment Strategy

The table below indicates the methods of assessment for each of the units within the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy.

Unit	Assessment Criteria	Assessment Method
1. Canine Anatomy, Physiology, and Biomechanics for Massage Therapy	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
2. Soft Tissue Dysfunction and Orthopedic Pathologies for Clinical Canine Massage	ALL	Portfolio

3. Clinical Risk Assessment and Canine Welfare for Clinical Canine Massage	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
4. Therapeutic Canine Handling and Professional Standards of Practice	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
5. Advanced Clinical Assessment for Canine Massage Therapy	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
6. Application of Advanced Techniques in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
7. The Lenton Method: Advanced Clinical Canine Massage Protocols	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
8. Home Care Planning and Post-Treatment Support in Canine Massage	ALL	Portfolio and Hands on Practical
9. Professional Practice and Business Principles for Canine Massage Therapists	ALL	Portfolio

2.4 Components of Assessment

The Portfolio of assessed work will consist of the following components:

- **Component 1 – Theory Portfolio:** A portfolio of work covering all knowledge and understanding content of the qualification.
- **Component 2 – Logbook (Practical Hours):** A log of a minimum of 100 hours of taught and supervised ‘hands-on’ practical hours.

Component 1 – Theory Portfolio

This component comprises all theory content across all units in the qualification.

Evidence can be presented in various formats, allowing flexibility while ensuring thorough knowledge and understanding.

Various types of evidence may be used, for example:

- essays/assignments
- short questions and answers
- professional discussions
- workbooks
- reflective accounts
- records of questioning

Component 2 – Logbook (Practical Hours)

This component requires learners to complete a minimum of 100 hours of hands-on practical training with canines in a massage setting, allowing learners to apply their knowledge in a real-world, practical environment.

These hours must be evidenced in a Clinical Skills Logbook.

All hours must be directly supervised, and the centre is responsible for ensuring suitable supervisor-to-learner ratios appropriate to their facility.

Practical hours sessions focus on hands-on canine massage practice with on-going assessment of competency and skills development, with all activities mapped to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria specified within the individual units.

The facility where practical training takes place must meet the minimum equipment standards outlined below and maintain appropriate insurance for its activities.

Practical hours will be based on real case scenarios or client sessions, with learners applying techniques detailed in the Unit Specifications.

Practical hours sessions will therefore incorporate:

- Indoor practical sessions and supervised visiting client clinic days
- Outdoor gait analysis sessions
- Floorwork and massage table work
- A range and variety of canines across breeds, temperaments and presenting pathologies to simulate real-world professional practice conditions

Learners will be required to gain hands-on experience with:

- a minimum of 24 individual canines throughout their in-person practical training. These will include their own dogs, those of fellow learners and tutors, as well as visiting client dogs during clinic day

and

- a minimum of 12 additional canines during their externship, prior to final sign-off by the training provider. These cases are to be documented and submitted as case studies.

The centre must provide access to a diverse range of breeds, sizes, ages, and temperaments to ensure breadth and depth of exposure. All canines selected must be in good health, appropriately assessed for suitability, and managed in a way that prioritises welfare at all times.

The learner is also required to demonstrate a variety of working positions to enable safe and compassionate handling for each canine.

The practical element must be structured to reflect the requirements of professional practice.

Learners will engage with case scenarios that incorporate the natural variation of the canines available, alongside planned simulations to address situations not readily accessible during training. This includes working with canines presenting with orthopaedic conditions, soft tissue injuries, and neurological pathologies relevant to chronic pain management and soft tissue rehabilitation. This ensures that learners develop the breadth of clinical competence required for effective practice in clinical canine massage therapy.

The centre may determine their own delivery schedules and timelines for completing the required hours. All practical hours must be completed within the learner's registration period.

2.5 Assessment of Learners and Order of Delivery

Learners are expected to build a portfolio of evidence, clearly demonstrating where they have met the learning outcomes and qualification requirements.

To meet the assessment requirements, learners must:

- follow a suitable programme of learning.
- maintain and submit a portfolio of all coursework incorporating all materials related to assessment, including their Clinical Skills Logbook.

All evidence must be mapped against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, reflecting the type of evidence supplied and indicating its location. Using portfolio reference numbers will enable the learner, assessor, IQA and EQA to quickly locate the evidence submitted.

Learners MUST complete Unit 1 – 6 prior to commencing learning and assessment for Unit 7: The Lenton Method: Advanced Clinical Canine Massage Protocols. Unit 7 requires advanced competency in canine anatomy, palpation assessment, clinical reasoning, and complex technique application developed through prior units. The centre must confirm learner readiness before permitting progression to this specialist unit.

2.6 Practical Hours

This qualification requires a **minimum of 100 hours** of face-to-face practical training. This training must take place in a massage therapy centre under the direct supervision of qualified Tutors and/or Assessors.

The practical hours must consist of hands-on practical experience of working in a canine massage therapy centre.

All practical hours must be directly supervised by qualified Tutors or Assessors, with the centre determining appropriate supervisor-to-learner ratios appropriate for within their facility.

Practical hours must be documented in a clinical skills Logbook devised by the training provider. The Logbook must map to the qualification's learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Evidence of practical hours should include images, videos, photos, and relevant documentation. The centre's qualified Assessor must sign off all completed hours.

The massage therapy centre must meet the minimum equipment requirements specified below and must maintain appropriate insurance cover for their facility.

Supervised practice will include:

- Live Gross Canine Anatomy
- Gait analysis and postural analysis
- Advanced palpation and tissue assessment
- Biomechanics for the therapist and canine
- Application of Swedish, Sports, Deep Tissue, and Myofascial Release techniques
- Integration and application of the Lenton Method® (Advanced Palpation, Bodymapping, 7 Series protocols)
- Treatment planning and adaptation for dogs with orthopaedic, neurological, or chronic pain conditions
- Evaluation and application of thermotherapy
- Orthopaedic testing for therapy and veterinary referral
- Passive range of movement
- Live-client clinic days with sporting, senior, post-operative, and companion dogs
- Application of safe handling, consultation, and welfare compliance
- Record-keeping, veterinary report writing, and client communication
- Safe handling, risk assessment, health and safety
- Clinician skills and professional business practice

The centre determines their own schedules and timeframes for completion of the practical hours. Learners must complete all required practical hours within the timescale of their registration.

2.7 CRAVES Requirements

Assessors must ensure that all evidence within the learner's portfolio judged to meet GA's 'CRAVES' requirements is:

- **current:** the work is relevant at the time of the assessment
- **reliable:** the work is consistent with that produced by other learners
- **authentic:** the work is the candidate's own work
- **valid:** the work is relevant and appropriate to the subject being assessed and is at the required level
- **evaluated:** where the learner has not been assessed as competent, the deficiencies have been clearly and accurately identified via feedback to the learner
- **sufficient:** the work covers the expected learning outcomes and any range statements as specified in the criteria or requirements in the assessment strategy

2.8 Internal Moderation and Quality Assurance Arrangements

Internal Moderators (also known as Internal Quality Assurers or IQAs) ensure that Assessors are assessing to the same standards, i.e. consistently and reliably, and that assessment decisions are correct. IQA activities will include:

- ensuring Assessors are suitably experienced and qualified in line with the qualification requirements
- sampling assessments and assessment decisions
- ensuring that assessment decisions meet the GA 'CRAVES' requirements (Current, Reliable, Authentic, Valid, Evaluated and Sufficient)
- conducting standardisation and moderation of assessment decisions
- providing Assessors with clear and constructive feedback
- supporting Assessors and providing training and development where appropriate
- ensuring any stimulus or materials used for the purposes of assessment are fit for purpose.

Sampling of assessment will be planned and carried out in line with a clear IQA and moderation strategy, which incorporates the number of learners, number of Assessors, and the experience and competency of Assessors.

Centre IQAs may wish to refer to the guidance documents provided by GA to approved centres in order to formulate an appropriate Sampling Strategy. An overview of the IQA process is provided in Appendix 1 of this document.

2.9 External Moderation and Quality Assurance Arrangements

Assessment and internal moderation and quality assurance activities are subject to external moderation and wider scrutiny and centre controls as per GA's quality assurance arrangements for centre-assessed qualifications.

All GA Approved Centres are entitled to two EQA visits per year. Additional visits can be requested, for which there may be an additional charge.

EQA activities will focus on the centre's continuing adherence to and maintenance of the GA *Centre Approval Criteria* and the criteria and requirements for the specific qualifications for which it holds approval. These include:

- checking that the management of the centre and the management arrangements relating to the qualification are sufficient
- checking that resources to support the delivery of the qualifications, including physical resources and staffing, are in place and sufficient
- ensuring that the centre has appropriate policies and procedures in place relevant to the organisation and to the delivery and quality assurance of the qualifications
- the use of assessment materials and the arrangements in place to ensure that evidence for assessment is 'CRAVES' (Current, Reliable, Authentic, Valid, Evaluated and Sufficient)
- sampling assessment decisions against the qualification requirements across the range of levels, number of Assessors and assessment sites, according to the number of candidates
- the internal moderation and quality assurance arrangements
- sampling internal moderation records against the qualification requirements across the range of levels, number of Assessors and assessment sites, according to the number of candidates
- administrative arrangements
- ensuring that any actions from moderation and wider quality assurance activity have been carried out by the centre
- confirming any claims for RPL, reasonable adjustments or special considerations

Through discussions with centre staff, examining learner's work, moderation of assessment, talking to learners and reviewing documentation and systems, the GA EQA will provide the centre with full support, advice and guidance as necessary.

2.10 Registering Candidates & Unique Learner Numbers

Learners must be registered through the Ark, the GA online Learner Management System.

Owing to the Total Qualification Time of this qualification, the validity period of registrations made will be 2 years. Should a learner not have achieved in the timescale, a new registration is required.

Each approved GA centre is provided with a user account to allow approved staff access to the online system.

Where the Unique Learner Number (ULN) of a learner is known, this should be provided at the point of registration in order for GA to issue updates to the Learner Record Service.

2.11 ID Requirements

It is the responsibility of the centre to have systems in place to confirm each learner's identity.

Learners are required to declare that all work submitted for assessment is their own work.

2.12 Results

Centres may make claims for certification via the Ark when learners complete and the Assessor and Internal Moderator have confirmed achievement. Such claims for certification are subject to successful external moderation (EQA).

Following the External Moderator's confirmation of a learner's achievement, GA will authorise claims for the certification of learners, details of which will be visible to the centre in the centre's Ark account. Certificates are usually issued within 10 working days of the award of the qualification.

2.13 Certificates

The qualification certificate will indicate both the title and the level at which the qualification is achieved.

Certificates will only be issued to learners who have achieved sufficient credits and met the rules of combination for the qualification they are registered for. If a learner has not achieved

sufficient credits or failed to meet the rules of combination, the qualification certificate will not be issued.

Replacement certificates are available upon request.

Amendments to certificates are available upon request but may require the centre to provide evidence of the need for any amendment (e.g. learner proof of identification) and will involve the return of the original certificate. Replacements and amendments may incur an additional charge.

2.14 Direct Claims Status (DCS)

Direct Claims Status is not available for this qualification.

2.15 Appeals and Enquiries

GA has an appeals procedure in accordance with the arrangements for regulated qualifications.

General enquiries can be made at any time and should be directed to a GA Centre Administrator.

2.16 Record Keeping

Records of learner's details, their work and any records of Reasonable Adjustments, Special Considerations and records containing learners' personal details must be kept by the centre in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 (including GDPR and all relevant privacy regulations) for a minimum of 2 years.

The centre must operate a safe and effective system of care and comply with clinical and information governance requirements, with appropriate policies and procedures in place to maintain confidentiality related to clients, staff and learners.

All records must be easily retrievable and made available to GA or the Regulator upon request.

Portfolios must be retained until the following External Quality Assurance visit to allow them to be sampled. Following external moderation and the award of a qualification by GA, centres may return portfolios to learners.

Records of all internal quality assurance and moderation activity undertaken must be kept and made available to GA upon request.

Section 3 – Centre Requirements: Staff and Physical Resources

Course providers offering these GA qualifications must ensure that they have the following resources in place.

3.1 Staff

The knowledge and experience of all staff involved in the teaching, assessment and internal quality assurance of this qualification will be considered during the approval and re-approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits.

The course provider must ensure that they hold up-to-date and detailed information about the staff involved with the delivery and quality assurance of this qualification and must make records available to GA upon request. The information GA expects the course provider to hold for each member of staff includes, as a minimum:

- current up to date CV
- copies of relevant qualification certificates
- relevant and up to date CPD (Continuous Professional Development) records

The course provider must also ensure that they have the management and administrative arrangements in place which are suitable to support the registration of candidates and the qualification delivery.

Requirements for Tutors and Assessors

Teaching staff ('Tutors') include those who deliver teaching and learning content for knowledge and understanding elements and those who are involved in teaching and learning of practical skills.

The primary responsibility of an Assessor is to assess a learner's performance and ensure that the evidence submitted by the learner meets the requirements of the qualification.

All Tutors must:

- hold a or be working towards the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification, or equivalent.
- have demonstrable subject knowledge of Clinical Canine Massage techniques and the Lenton Method®.
- be actively working in the industry.

AND

- hold, or be working towards, a recognised teaching or training qualification, e.g. Level 3 Award in Education and Training or equivalent*

All Assessors must:

- hold a or be working towards the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification, or equivalent.
- have demonstrable subject knowledge of Clinical Canine Massage techniques and the Lenton Method®.
- be actively working in the industry.

AND

- hold, or be working towards, a recognised assessor qualification or their recognised equivalent** e.g.,
 - o Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment / Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally-Related Achievement
 - o Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
 - o A1 Assess Candidate Performance Using a Range of Methods
 - o D32 Assess Candidate Performance and D33 Assess Candidate Using Differing Sources of Evidence

*In the absence of a regulated teaching qualification, the Tutor must ensure that they are able to demonstrate that they have delivered a minimum of 30 hours of teaching or assessing. They are then required to agree to update their training to an Ofqual-regulated teaching qualification within 18 months of commencing their role in order to continue to deliver the qualification.

**Assessors may be working towards a relevant equivalent qualification in assessing under the guidance of a suitably qualified and experienced Assessor and their IQA. Trainee Assessors' decisions MUST be counter-signed by a suitably qualified, experienced Assessor.

All staff involved with the delivery and assessment of this qualification must also be able to demonstrate ongoing professional development relevant to the sector subject area.

All staff involved with the delivery and assessment of this qualification must also be able to demonstrate ongoing professional development relevant to the sector subject area.

Requirements for Internal Moderators (also referred to as an Internal Quality Assurers or IQAs)

IQAs are responsible for internal moderation and quality assurance of the qualification to ensure standardisation, reliability, validity and sufficiency of the assessor's assessment decisions.

IQAs therefore need to have a thorough understanding of quality assurance and assessment practices, as well as sufficient technical understanding related to the qualifications that they are internally quality assuring. It is the centre's responsibility to select and appoint IQAs.

Assessors may have one or several appointed Internal Moderators.

This qualification is assessed by an Assessor and internally moderated and quality assured by an Internal Moderator to ensure standardisation, reliability, validity and sufficiency of the Assessor's assessment decisions.

To be able to perform the internal moderation and quality assurance role, an Internal Moderator must:

- hold a or be working towards the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy qualification, or equivalent.
- have demonstrable subject knowledge of Clinical Canine Massage techniques and the Lenton Method®.

AND

- have a minimum of 3 years' experience working in their role
- be actively working in the industry as either a practitioner or in an educational quality assurance capacity

AND

- hold, or be working towards**, one of the following internal quality assurance qualifications or their recognised equivalent:
 - Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
 - Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice

- V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
- D34 Internally verify the assessment process

**Internal Moderators may be working towards a relevant equivalent quality assurance qualification under the guidance of a suitably qualified and experienced Internal Moderator. Trainee Internal Moderator's decisions MUST be counter-signed by a suitably qualified, experienced Internal Moderator.

Staff may undertake more than one role within the centre, e.g., Teacher, Assessor and Internal Moderator. However, members of staff must NOT IQA their own assessment decisions.

The Internal Moderator must have relevant occupational experience and hold relevant qualifications in the particular subject area being assessed. They must hold a regulated qualification at least at the level of the qualification they are assessing.

Note, for Tutors, Assessors and IQAs:

- relevant professional registration/licenses must remain current, where applicable
- annual CPD requirements apply

The knowledge and experience of Tutors, Assessors and Internal Moderators will be considered during the centre and qualification approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits.

3.2 Venue Requirements

When training premises are used in the delivery of teaching and assessment of this qualification, centres should, wherever possible, provide suitable access in line with Disability Discrimination, Diversity & Equality law and regulations and any other regulations which apply.

Centres must ensure that all products and equipment used in the delivery and assessment of this qualification are confirmed as fit for purpose and compliant with current Health and Safety legislation and any other relevant regulations. This will be considered at approval and during the on-going monitoring of centres.

Where specific products and equipment are required for the delivery and assessment of a GA qualification, the suitability of the products and equipment at the centre will be considered during the centre and qualification approval process and at External Quality Assurance Visits.

For this qualification, suitable venue and equipment should include the learner having access to canine training areas providing sufficient space, as follows:

- Indoor classroom area minimum of 12m x 10m for learner, canine and visitor access
- A separate room for canines requiring more space
- Outdoor area minimum of 20 metres x 10 metres to ensure sufficient and safe space for dogs to move freely for gait and postural analysis
- Suitable massage matting for floorwork
- Privacy boards
- Massage couch
- Thermotherapy equipment
- Muzzles
- Equipment storage

In addition to the above, the centre must also ensure the venue has suitable:

- Documentation equipment: WiFi/4G connectivity and suitable video/audio recording equipment for assessment purposes.
- Safety provisions: Appropriate fire extinguishers where applicable, fire exits, and designated emergency gathering area.
- Learner facilities: Kitchen and toilet facilities, seating and tables for clients and students to complete written assessments and study notes.

All areas must have non-slip flooring, adequate ventilation, and appropriate lighting.

The training setting must maintain documented risk assessments and must maintain appropriate insurance cover for the facility.

3.3 Canine Requirements

The centre must be able to provide a range of canines across varying breeds, sizes, temperaments and soft tissue and orthopedic conditions.

3.4 Teaching and Learning Resources

GA does not prescribe the use of set course books, workbooks or other materials but expects that centres providing such courses should use relevant and up-to-date, high-quality teaching and learning materials which allow learners to adequately prepare for assessment.

All delivery and assessment resources should be inclusive of the principles of equality and diversity and the safeguarding of learners.

Please note, any references to books, journals, websites or other third-party materials and publications are made in good faith only and GA does not accept responsibility for the content of such materials or any opinions expressed within them.

3.5 Ongoing Support

There are a number of documents on the GA website that centres and candidates may find useful: www.gatehouseawards.org

The website is updated regularly with news, information about all GA qualifications, sample materials, updates on regulations and other important notices.

Within the centre, a named Examinations Officer is responsible for ensuring that all information and documents provided to centre staff and candidates are correct and up to date.

GA must be kept up to date with contact details of all changes of personnel so centres can be provided with the best level of support and guidance.

At the time of approval, centres are assigned a designated Centre Administrator who is their primary point of contact for all aspects of service or support.

Learners should always speak to a member of staff at the centre for information relating to GA and our qualifications prior to approaching GA directly.

Contact details for GA can be found on the GA website www.gatehouseawards.org.

Section 4: Unit Specifications

4.1 GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy (610/6519/5)

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
1	Canine Anatomy, Physiology, and Functional Biomechanics for Massage Therapy	40	15	5	A/651/8142
In this unit the learner will develop their understanding of canine anatomy, physiology, and functional biomechanics as the foundation for safe and effective massage therapy practice. Learners will explore the skeletal, muscular, fascial, and nervous systems, examining how these structures interact to produce movement and maintain postural stability. The unit addresses breed-specific variations, compensatory patterns, and the physiological effects of massage on tissue health. Coverage of the integumentary, vascular, lymphatic, and respiratory systems highlights their relevance to massage therapy and contraindications for treatment. Practical skills development includes palpation of key anatomical landmarks, static and dynamic assessment of posture and gait, and evaluation of joint mobility and proprioceptive responses. Learners will integrate assessment findings with client history to inform evidence-based treatment planning, while recognising when referral to veterinary professionals is required. This unit provides the essential anatomical and biomechanical knowledge required to underpin all subsequent massage therapy units, ensuring learners can work safely, competently, and within their professional scope of practice.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand the canine skeletal system in relation to movement and support.	1.1 Explain bone formation and remodelling in the canine skeleton.
	1.2 Explain skeletal functions in relation to movement, support, and protection.
	1.3 Identify major skeletal landmarks and explain their anatomical relevance.
	1.4 Describe the functional anatomy of the pelvic, thoracic, and axial skeleton in relation to gait, load-bearing, and posture.
	1.5 Identify the five types of vertebrae and describe their location and range of motion.
	1.6 Describe breed-specific skeletal variations and their implications for canine massage therapy.
2. Understand joint structure and biomechanics.	2.1 Apply standardised anatomical terminology to describe joint motion.
	2.2 Differentiate ligament types and evaluate their functional role.
	2.3 Describe joint components, articulations, and classifications.
	2.4 Analyse structural variations and their biomechanical implications.
	2.5 Evaluate the functional significance of joints in relation to movement efficiency and injury susceptibility.
3. Understand the canine muscular and fascial systems.	3.1 Differentiate between skeletal, smooth, and cardiac muscle.
	3.2 Explain voluntary and involuntary muscle function.

	3.3 Describe the different types of muscles and their functional roles.
	3.4 Describe the main skeletal muscle shapes and their structural characteristics.
	3.5 Describe the physiology of muscle contraction.
	3.6 Analyse agonist–antagonist relationships in balanced movement.
	3.7 Explain the structure and function of fascia.
	3.8 Evaluate the role of fascia in canine movement.
	3.9 Explain the clinical relevance of trigger points and fascial dysfunction.
4. Understand the integumentary, vascular, lymphatic, and respiratory systems.	4.1 Analyse the functions of skin and hair in canine health.
	4.2 Identify dermatological disorders relevant to massage.
	4.3 Describe the lymphatic system, major lymph nodes, and their significance.
	4.4 Analyse physiological effects of massage on vascular and lymphatic flow.
	4.5 Describe cardiovascular and respiratory physiology relevant to tissue health.
5. Understand the canine nervous system in relation to massage.	5.1 Describe the structure and function of the nervous system.
	5.2 Explain the role of peripheral nerves in movement and sensation.

	5.3 Analyse proprioceptive mechanisms and their importance in posture and gait.
	5.4 Outline neurological conditions relevant to massage therapy.
	5.5 Explain parasympathetic/sympathetic states and their implications for therapy.
	5.6 Describe mechanoreceptors, proprioceptors, and nociceptors in relation to massage.
	5.7 Explain reflex responses relevant to therapeutic application.
6. Understand biomechanics, gait, and conformation.	6.1 Describe common gait patterns and movement sequences.
	6.2 Analyse the effect of conformation on posture, pain, and dysfunction.
	6.3 Explain how anatomical structure influences capacity and limitations of movement.
	6.4 Describe common compensatory patterns and underlying causes.
7. Understand referral requirements and appropriate massage interventions in canine therapy.	7.1 Recognise orthopaedic and neurological conditions requiring referral.
	7.2 Evaluate massage interventions suitable for chronic pain management.
8. Identify and locate key anatomical structures.	8.1 Locate major skeletal landmarks on a canine.
	8.2 Locate and palpate vertebrae and confirm mobility.
	8.3 Identify and palpate major skeletal muscles, relating findings to function.

	8.4 Identify major lymph node sites and explain their clinical relevance
9. Assess canine movement, posture, and biomechanics.	9.1 Conduct static postural assessment, identifying abnormalities.
	9.2 Perform gait analysis, identifying compensations and dysfunctions.
	9.3 Evaluate joint flexion, extension, and proprioceptive responses.
	9.4 Perform end-range testing to identify restriction or abnormal patterns.
	9.5 Integrate findings with history to inform treatment planning.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
2	Soft Tissue Dysfunction and Orthopaedic Pathologies for Clinical Canine Massage Therapy	21	9	5	F/651/8144
In this unit the learner will develop their understanding of soft tissue dysfunctions and orthopaedic pathologies commonly encountered in clinical canine massage therapy practice. Building on foundational anatomical knowledge, learners will explore the pathophysiology of soft tissue injuries, myofascial trigger points, and chronic orthopaedic conditions, evaluating how massage therapy can be applied as a therapeutic intervention or supportive management strategy. The unit distinguishes between soft tissue dysfunctions that massage may resolve and orthopaedic pathologies where massage addresses secondary compensatory effects. Learners will examine tissue healing processes, contraindications, and evidence-based rationale for clinical decision-making. Emphasis is placed on understanding compensation patterns that develop in response to both soft tissue injury and structural orthopaedic conditions, enabling learners to identify primary and secondary treatment priorities. Practical applications include clinical examination techniques for trigger point identification, gait and postural analysis, soft tissue palpation, and passive range of motion testing. Learners will develop treatment planning skills for chronic pain management and orthopaedic presentations, integrating appropriate massage techniques with ongoing outcome evaluation to ensure safe, effective, and client-centred care.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand soft tissue dysfunctions relevant to canine massage therapy.	1.1 Describe strains, myofascial pain, trigger points, hypertonicity, and other soft tissue conditions relevant to canine massage.
	1.2 Justify the use of massage for a range of soft tissue pathologies using evidence-based reasoning.

	1.3 Determine the expected therapeutic outcomes in relation to the individual signalment.
	1.4 Identify primary areas of soft tissue injury and describe resulting compensatory patterns.
	1.5 Appraise the suitability of different massage techniques for presenting conditions.
	1.6 Outline tissue healing times, integrating theoretical understanding with practical reassessment between sessions.
	1.7 Recognise local and global contraindications for canine massage.
2. Understand orthopaedic conditions and degenerative diseases suitable for clinical canine massage therapy.	2.1 Describe common orthopaedic conditions.
	2.2 Describe grading of cruciate ligament, sprains and CCL rupture and repair.
	2.3 Evaluate contraindications and precautions for massage in the presence of orthopaedic pathologies.
	2.4 Outline chronic pain management protocols and the sequencing of techniques for orthopaedic presentations.
	2.5 Analyse muscle involvement in dysfunctional passive and dynamic movement linked to orthopaedic pathologies.
	2.6 Create a treatment plan for a canine with an orthopaedic pathology, integrating massage therapy principles.
3. Understand compensation patterns in clinical canine massage therapy.	3.1 Evaluate presenting issues to determine primary and secondary priorities for treatment planning.
	3.2 Explain patterns of overcompensation within myofascial networks, muscles and orthopaedic conditions.
	3.3 Determine therapeutic strategies to address issues arising from orthopaedic conditions.

4. Understand the importance of consistent and repeated evaluation of treatment outcomes.	4.1 Analyse gait and posture for measurable improvements.
	4.2 Evaluate soft tissue changes using myofascial and muscular palpation assessment methods.
	4.3 Assess improvements through structured owner feedback and targeted questioning.
	4.4 Appraise joint movement using passive range testing to end range and arc of movement.
5. Understand the role of cross-bridge cycling in skeletal muscle contraction and its implications in myofascial trigger points.	5.1 Explain cross-bridge cycling in skeletal muscle contraction and its role in trigger point formation.
	5.2 Analyse physiological responses following trigger point release.
	5.3 Conduct structured clinical examinations to identify trigger points and plan appropriate interventions.
	5.4 Apply trigger point release techniques within a structured treatment session.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
3	Clinical Risk Assessment and Canine Welfare for Clinical Canine Massage	17	6	5	H/651/8145
In this unit the learner will develop their understanding of clinical risk assessment, canine welfare management, and professional decision-making in massage therapy practice. Learners will explore contraindications, positive treatment indicators, and pre-treatment risk management procedures, including emergency response protocols and veterinary communication. The unit emphasises the importance of environmental assessment, human-canine dynamics, and client communication in achieving safe and effective treatment outcomes. Learners will develop skills in recognising and responding to indicators of anxiety, pain, or distress, and in making justified professional decisions to continue, modify, or cease treatment based on welfare considerations. Practical application includes interpreting canine body language, evaluating soft tissue responses, and identifying musculoskeletal, neurological, and behavioural indicators requiring veterinary referral. Emphasis is placed on accurate documentation and maintaining professional standards throughout the therapeutic process, ensuring client-centred and evidence-informed practice.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand clinical risk assessment for massage treatment.	1.1 Explain contraindications to massage therapy.
	1.2 Assess positive indicators supporting treatment suitability.

	1.3 Explain pre-treatment risk management procedures.
	1.4 Describe appropriate emergency procedures and first aid considerations in response to common canine incidents.
	1.5 Explain the correct procedures for urgently contacting veterinary professionals, including the information that should be communicated.
2. Understand managing canine welfare and client communication during massage treatment.	2.1 Analyse the dynamics of the canine–owner relationship and their impact on treatment outcomes.
	2.2 Justify treatment approaches in relation to treatment effectiveness and canine welfare.
	2.3 Implement and evaluate adaptations to maintain the safety and comfort of the canine, owner, and therapist during the session.
	2.4 Evaluate indicators of anxiety and adapt or modify treatment accordingly.
	2.5 Explain the importance of owner education and communication, including how to outline potential risks and manage owner expectations.
3. Conduct comprehensive risk assessments.	3.1 Evaluate environmental suitability for massage therapy.
	3.2 Analyse and record environmental risks to all participants.
	3.3 Justify the indications for safe and humane restraint of a dog, ensuring welfare and minimising stress.
	3.4 Determine treatment suitability prior to commencing massage therapy.
	3.5 Justify professional decisions to continue, modify, or cease treatment in response to changes during the session.
4. Continuously assess the dog during massage treatment.	4.1 Evaluate soft tissue responses and adapt techniques accordingly.

	4.2 Explain how to respond to signs of severe or escalating pain or distress during treatment.
	4.3 Analyse musculoskeletal, neurological, and behavioural indicators to determine the need for veterinary referral, justifying decisions through clinical reasoning.
	4.4 Interpret canine body language and behaviour to assess on-going cooperation and treatment suitability.
	4.5 Record and maintain accurate documentation of changes observed during treatment, ensuring compliance with professional and organisational standards.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
4	Therapeutic Canine Handling and Professional Standards of Practice	25	8	5	J/651/8146
In this unit the learner will develop their understanding of professional standards, legal obligations, and effective communication in clinical canine massage practice. Learners will explore the legislative frameworks governing massage therapy, including veterinary consent requirements, animal welfare legislation, and the processes for making appropriate veterinary referrals. The unit emphasises the importance of accurate record-keeping, data protection compliance, and continuity of care strategies to support professional accountability and inter-professional collaboration. Practical skills development includes safe and effective biomechanical handling techniques for floor-based and table-based massage, positioning dogs to optimise comfort and therapeutic outcomes, and applying humane restraint methods with clear ethical consideration. Learners will conduct comprehensive initial consultations, produce professional written reports using accepted veterinary terminology, and communicate effectively with owners, veterinarians, and allied professionals to ensure coordinated, client-centred care throughout the therapeutic process.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand professional communication and clinical reasoning in canine massage practice.	1.1 Explain the selection of massage disciplines and approaches.
	1.2 Analyse the process for assessing canine suitability for massage through effective liaison with owners and veterinary professionals.
	1.3 Provide guidance on treatment processes, expected outcomes and session structure.

2. Understand legal and professional obligations in clinical canine massage practice.	2.1 Explain legislation relevant to massage practice.
	2.2 Explain how veterinary consent forms and medical histories are used to inform practice.
	2.3 Explain how animal welfare legislation relates to canine massage practice, including environmental and behavioural considerations.
	2.4 Explain the process of making veterinary referrals, including the information required and professional protocols.
	2.5 Critically evaluate the role of continuing professional development and education in maintaining standards, meeting regulatory requirements, and enhancing clinical practice.
	2.6 Evaluate the role of complaints procedures in ensuring accountability, safeguarding welfare, and improving professional practice.
3. Understand professional requirements for accurate record keeping and continuity of care.	3.1 Explain the importance of maintaining accurate records in line with insurance and data protection requirements.
	3.2 Construct professional massage records with accurate structure and content to support practice.
	3.3 State document retention and destruction protocols.
	3.4 Evaluate continuity of care strategies.
4. Apply safe and effective biomechanical and therapeutic handling techniques.	4.1 Demonstrate appropriate positioning for floor-based and table-based massage.
	4.2 Position and handle the dog biomechanically to optimise comfort, safety, and therapeutic effect.
	4.3 Apply and adapt massage techniques in relation to muscle contraction, joint alignment, and body positioning.
	4.4 Conduct soft tissue palpation and orthopaedic tests to ensure safe and effective treatment delivery.
	5.1 Describe when muzzles or other restraints may or may not be appropriate.

5. Apply safe and humane handling and restraint methods.	5.2 Demonstrate safe muzzle use and communicate clearly with owners about its use.
	5.3 Evaluate ethical considerations in the use of restraint.
6. Conduct professional consultations and maintain inter-professional communication.	6.1 Conduct a comprehensive initial consultation.
	6.2 Produce written reports using accepted terminology and professional standards.
	6.3 Communicate effectively and professionally with others to support continuity of care.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
5	Advanced Clinical Assessment for Canine Massage Therapy	35	11	5	K/651/8147
In this unit the learner will develop advanced assessment skills essential for evidence-based canine massage practice. Building on their anatomical knowledge, learners will conduct comprehensive gait and postural assessments, correlating findings with veterinary diagnoses and case histories to inform treatment planning. The unit emphasises practical application of Passive Range of Movement (PROM) and end-range testing to evaluate joint function, identify restrictions, and recognise potential orthopaedic pathologies. Learners will develop their skills in systematic palpation techniques to assess soft tissue quality, differentiate between tissue layers, and evaluate nervous system responses during treatment. Critical emphasis is placed on recognising absolute and relative contraindications, identifying red flags requiring immediate action, and determining when veterinary referral is necessary. Learners will apply clinical reasoning to evaluate treatment suitability, adapt protocols based on reassessment findings, and maintain accurate professional documentation throughout the therapeutic process.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centres.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Conduct canine gait and posture assessments for treatment planning.	1.1 Conduct gait assessment and compare findings with veterinary diagnosis and history.
	1.2 Conduct postural analysis, and correlate with gait findings.
	1.3 Use assessment results to develop an evidence-based treatment plan.

	1.4. Communicate assessment findings and treatment rationale clearly and professionally to owners and veterinary professionals.
2. Apply Passive Range of Movement (PROM) in clinical decision-making.	2.1 Demonstrate Passive Range of Movement (PROM) in lateral recumbency for therapeutic and assessment purposes.
	2.2 Evaluate and record joint, movement and proprioceptive responses.
	2.3 Perform end-range testing to identify restrictions and compensations.
	2.4 Interpret joint movement findings to identify potential orthopaedic pathologies and determine when veterinary referral is necessary.
	2.5 Apply massage techniques that integrate PROM and end-range assessment, and evaluate their effectiveness.
3. Apply advanced palpation techniques for soft tissue assessment.	3.1 Perform a full-body muscular and fascial palpation using recognised routines in standing and lateral positions.
	3.2 Apply palpation systematically with body mapping to assess soft tissue condition.
	3.3 Apply and adapt palpation techniques to differentiate between muscle layers, fascia, and tendons.
	3.4 Apply structured assessment frameworks, of muscular and fascial assessment to interpret tissue quality.
	3.5 Interpret palpation findings to distinguish dysfunctional tissue, identify potential pathologies, and justify technique selection.
	3.6 Evaluate nervous system responses during palpation and adapt techniques to influence autonomic activity, including assessing sympathetic-to-parasympathetic transitions.
	3.7 Identify muscle origin, belly, and insertion points through palpation to inform treatment planning.
4. Recognise and act on contraindications to canine massage therapy.	4.1 Identify absolute contraindications and red flags requiring immediate cessation of treatment.

	4.2 Identify relative contraindications and tissue abnormalities requiring treatment modification or caution.
	4.3 Identify findings requiring veterinary referral and communicate appropriately.
	4.4 Document contraindication findings and clinical decisions in accordance with professional standards.
5. Apply clinical reasoning in treatment planning and modification.	5.1 Evaluate treatment suitability based on signalment, case history and assessment findings.
	5.2 Assess treatment safety and refuse treatment where necessary.
	5.3 Adapt treatment plans based on reassessment and response to treatment.
	5.4 Record assessment outcomes and treatment plans using correct terminology and professional standards.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
6	Application of Advanced Techniques in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy	46	17	5	L/651/8148
In this unit the learner will develop advanced practical skills in applying complex massage techniques for clinical canine massage practice. Building on their knowledge and skills in assessment, learners will perform advanced techniques from various massage disciplines, such as sports massage, Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, and myofascial release, adapting approaches based on individual canine needs and clinical presentations. The unit emphasises the integration of assessment findings into treatment planning, enabling learners to select appropriate techniques, sequence interventions logically, and address soft tissue and orthopaedic pathologies systematically. Learners will apply specialised fascial treatment techniques using structured models, perform advanced myofascial release protocols, and incorporate thermotherapy where clinically indicated. Critical emphasis is placed on real-time clinical reasoning, monitoring tissue and behavioural responses during treatment, and adapting techniques based on feedback. Learners will evaluate treatment effectiveness through reassessment, recognise contraindications for advanced techniques, and demonstrate precise application to achieve agreed clinical objectives in safe, evidence-based practice.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Apply advanced massage disciplines and techniques in clinical practice.	1.1 Perform advanced techniques from various disciplines with appropriate adaptations where necessary.
	1.2 Select and combine techniques based on clinical presentation
	1.3 Adjust techniques according to the dog's individual needs, temperament and positioning requirements.

	1.4 Apply massage techniques with correct grip, force and sensitivity.
2. Integrate complex assessment findings into treatment planning.	2.1 Analyse findings to determine the necessity for specific techniques.
	2.2 Apply techniques in a logical sequence based on assessment and objectives.
	2.3 Appraise skeletal and muscular pathologies appropriate for massage.
3. Provide massage treatments for soft tissue and orthopaedic pathologies.	3.1 Implement systematic intervention sequencing to address identified pathologies.
	3.2 Interpret clinical and behavioural indicators to adapt treatment strategy.
	3.3 Modify treatment plans in response to tissue and behavioural feedback during sessions.
	3.4 Demonstrate precise application of advanced techniques to achieve clinical aims.
	3.5 Evaluate how individual differences between canines influence treatment responses.
4. Apply advanced fascial treatment techniques.	4.1 Apply the 3 Interconnected Qualities of Fascia model to inform treatment selection and application.
	4.2 Select and apply techniques most suitable for different fascia layers.
	4.3 Monitor and evaluate tissue response during fascial treatment.
5. Apply advanced release techniques.	5.1 Select and apply appropriate myofascial release protocols.
	5.2 Position the dog safely for optimal release.

	5.3 Monitor and evaluate the dog's response during the treatment session.
	5.4 Recognise when techniques are not achieving the desired response and adapt the approach accordingly.
	5.5 Identify contraindications and precautions for advanced release techniques.
	5.6 Conduct post-treatment reassessment to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.
6. Apply thermotherapy in clinical canine massage.	6.1 Assess the need for thermotherapy based on pathology and physiological indicators.
	6.2 Apply and secure the chosen thermotherapy modality safely on a canine.
	6.3 Monitor responses during thermotherapy to evaluate its effectiveness.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
7	The Lenton Method: Advanced Clinical Canine Massage Protocols	54	15	5	M/651/8149
In this unit, the learner will develop advanced practical competence in the application of the Lenton Method® of Neuromyofascial Release, a proprietary, evidence-based approach developed by Natalie Lenton and validated through collaborative research with the University of Winchester, published in The Veterinary Record by the British Veterinary Association. The peer-reviewed clinical trial demonstrated statistically significant improvements in gait, mobility, and quality of life in dogs presenting with musculoskeletal pain following application of the method. The Lenton Method® is a three-tiered approach comprising advanced palpation, bodymapping, and the structured application of seven treatment protocols. Learners will refine palpatory skill through precise grip modulation, force control, and the interpretation of neuromyofascial responses to identify soft tissue dysfunction with accuracy and sensitivity. The bodymapping process is employed to correlate palpatory findings with anatomical presentation, enhancing clinical reasoning and treatment planning. Through extensive supervised practice, learners will master the safe, effective, and repeatable execution of the seven protocol series, applying appropriate pressure, pacing, and positioning to achieve targeted neuromyofascial release while ensuring patient comfort. On completion, learners will demonstrate the professional competence required to apply the Lenton Method® within a clinical context, in accordance with evidence-based principles, veterinary referral requirements, and the highest standards of canine therapeutic care.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Perform advanced muscular and myofascial assessment using the	1.1 Demonstrate optimal biomechanical positioning of the dog for safe handling and accurate palpation.

Lenton Method® palpation routine.	1.2 Distinguish between muscular and myofascial palpatory methods specific to the Lenton Method®.
	1.3 Apply the Lenton Method® for muscular assessment and prioritise findings.
	1.4 Apply the Lenton Method® for fascial assessment and evaluate findings.
	1.5 Apply appropriate palpation techniques for paired muscles, adapting to fibre direction, depth, and fascial layer.
	1.6 Present and justify palpatory findings with reference to relevant soft tissue and orthopaedic pathologies.
2. Apply bodymapping for clinical reasoning.	2.1 Accurately map the muscles of the canine body using diagrammatic representation.
	2.2 Map fascial septa affected by adhesions and restrictions.
	2.3 Classify injuries by type and severity to inform treatment planning.
	2.4 Combine bodymapping with palpation data for diagnostic accuracy.
3. Perform advanced myofascial releases using the Lenton Method®.	3.1 Select and perform relevant myofascial release protocols based on clinical findings.
	3.2 Justify protocol selection using evidence gathered from palpation and bodymapping assessments.
	3.3 Apply protocols with appropriate grip modulation and force control, adapting to the canine's needs.
	3.4 Position the canine optimally to achieve an effective myofascial release.
	3.5 Select and demonstrate techniques to invoke parasympathetic or sympathetic responses of the nervous system.

	3.6 Evaluate protocol performance by reassessing the treated area to determine effectiveness.
4. Integrate the Lenton Method® into comprehensive treatment planning and delivery.	4.1 Perform combined palpation and bodymapping assessments to identify and confirm the primary presenting issue.
	4.2 Select and apply protocols based on combined assessment data, providing real-time clinical justification.
	4.3 Prioritise sequencing of protocols to maximise therapeutic effect.
	4.4 Combine the Lenton Method® with techniques from other massage disciplines.
	4.5 Modify treatment plans to account for breed, temperament, physical condition, and client objectives.
	4.6 Justify sequencing and technique selection with anatomical, pathological, and evidence-based reasoning.
	4.7 Monitor and record tissue changes across sessions in alignment with owner-agreed goals.
	4.8 Reassess primary and secondary conditions to determine ongoing treatment suitability.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
8	Home Care Planning and Post-Treatment Support in Canine Massage	8	7	5	Y/651/8150
In this unit, the learner will develop their knowledge and practical skills required to support canine recovery through effective home care planning and after-treatment guidance. The learner will therefore focus on both proactive home care planning as well as reactive post-treatment support. Learners will explore the importance of owner engagement, environmental and lifestyle influences on pathology, and the role of collaborative working in optimising therapeutic outcomes. The unit also develops the learner's ability to assess environmental and exercise-related factors affecting recovery, formulate appropriate home care plans, and communicate effectively with owners to ensure understanding and adherence. Learners will also gain insight into the concept of the healing crisis, including recognising post-treatment responses and explaining their physiological basis and relevance to recovery. Throughout this unit, the learner will demonstrate their competence in developing, implementing, and reviewing individualised home care strategies that align with therapy goals and promote long-term wellbeing in canines.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand owner engagement in supporting canine recovery.	1.1 Analyse environmental factors that may cause or exacerbate pathologies.
	1.2 Explain varying internal and external factors influencing recovery.
	1.3 Assess the suitability of the canine's exercise type, frequency, and routine in relation to rehabilitation timelines.

	1.4 Formulate suitable questions to assess owner understanding and encourage dialogue.
	1.5 Explain the value of therapist-owner collaboration in optimising recovery.
2. Understand environmental and lifestyle factors affecting pathology.	2.1 Determine environment and activity-related causes of pathologies.
	2.2 Appraise environmental and exercise-related influences on the canine's clinical presentation.
	2.3 Recommend environmental adaptations and exercise modifications to support therapeutic aims.
3. Develop, implement, and review home care plans.	3.1 Gather clinical findings and knowledge of environmental factors to inform home care planning.
	3.2 Design individualised home care plans that support therapy objectives and fit the canine's lifestyle.
	3.3 Demonstrate collaborative working with owners to implement home care plans, monitor progress and adapt strategies.
	3.4 Demonstrate strategies to enhance owner understanding and engagement.
4. Understand the healing crisis in the context of canine massage therapy.	4.1 Describe the symptoms of the healing crisis.
	4.2 Explain the physiological basis of post-treatment responses.
	4.3 Explain the relevance of post-treatment responses to therapy outcomes.
	4.4 Apply communication strategies to reassure owners and promote adherence to the recovery plan.

Mandatory Unit		GLH	Credits	Level	Unit Reference
9	Professional Practice and Business Principles for Canine Massage Therapists	8	8	5	A/651/8151
In this unit the learner will develop their understanding of the legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities required to operate as a clinical canine massage therapist. Learners will explore scope of practice, duty of care, and legal obligations including welfare considerations, multidisciplinary team working, and professional boundaries. The unit covers business structures, financial management, insurance requirements, and pricing strategies, equipping learners with the knowledge needed to establish and manage a professional canine massage practice. Learners will examine marketing strategies, client relationship management, and professional networking to support sustainable business development. Emphasis is placed on professional practice standards, including contracts, terms of service, and the role of professional bodies and registers. Through reflective practice, learners will evaluate their own performance and recognise the importance of continuing professional development in maintaining professional integrity and competence.					
Assessment Guidance & Indicative Content					
Additional Guidance and Indicative Content documentation is made available to the approved GA centre.					

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
The learner will	The learner can
1. Understand the legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities of clinical canine massage therapists.	1.1 Explain the roles and function of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).
	1.2 Analyse duty of care principles in canine massage.
	1.3 Explain the role and scope of practice of the clinical canine massage therapist, including limitations.

	1.4 Explain the legal, ethical, and welfare obligations of a clinical canine massage therapist.
	1.5 Analyse ethical and animal welfare challenges in clinical canine massage therapy.
	1.6 Evaluate welfare strategies for canine health and wellbeing.
	1.7 Analyse consent procedures in clinical canine massage therapy.
	1.8 Evaluate confidentiality and data protection obligations in clinical canine massage therapy.
2. Understand canine massage business structures and management.	2.1 Explain different business structures and their implications
	2.2 Describe essential business insurance requirements
	2.3 Evaluate pricing strategies and fee structures for clinical canine massage therapy services.
	2.4 Explain financial management principles.
3. Understand marketing, networking and client relationships.	3.1 Describe effective marketing strategies for clinical canine massage therapy services.
	3.2 Evaluate the importance of professional networking for career progression and sector influence.
	3.3 Apply communication strategies to build trust and credibility within professional networks.
	3.4 Critically reflect on personal networking practices to identify strengths and areas for development.
	3.5 Develop a professional networking plan that aligns with long-term career or organisational objectives.

	3.6 Explain client consultation and assessment processes.
	3.7 Evaluate methods for building and maintaining client relationships.
	3.8 Describe complaint handling and conflict resolution procedures.
4. Understand professional practice standards.	4.1 Identify the principles of professional practice and their workplace application.
	4.2 Explain the need for contracts and terms of service documentation.
	4.3 Explain why ongoing education (CPD) is essential to the clinical canine therapist.
	4.4 Explain the differences between a professional body and a professional register.
5. Understand the importance of self-reflection.	5.1 Describe the term self-reflection.
	5.2 Describe methods and tools for self-reflection.
	5.3 Evaluate the importance, benefits and challenges of professional self-reflection.

Appendix 1: Internal Moderation and Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidance

1.1 Introduction to Internal Moderation

Internal Moderation is a centre's internal system that ensures learner evidence is complete and genuinely meets all the required criteria by which the learner is judged to have met in order to be awarded a qualification. The process involves regularly sampling and evaluating the centre's assessment practices and decisions, and it is the Internal Moderator's responsibility to act on their findings to ensure consistency and fairness.

Ensuring quality standards are maintained and are consistent within and across a centre's provision is the responsibility of the head of centre, who must ensure that suitable staff are in place to act as Internal Moderator(s) and provide full support and standards scrutiny of the centre's Assessment decisions.

1.2 Internal Moderation Processes

Internal Moderation involves three key processes: co-ordination of the assessment process, standardisation of assessment practice, and sampling of assessed work.

These processes are conducted by one Internal Moderator or, if there is more than one, a team of Internal Moderators who are under the direction of a Lead Internal Moderator.

Information about the experience and qualification requirements for Internal Moderators is provided in the *Qualification Specification*.

1.3. Co-ordination of the Assessment Process

Prior to delivery commencing, it is the Internal Moderator who will confirm that assessment tasks are appropriate. This may involve checking that proposed assessment activities, plans for practical assessments, or the briefs of any assignments or reports are fit for purpose. It may also include checking that internal tests or examination materials are fit for purpose.

In order to ensure that the planned assessment activities and materials are fit for purpose, the Internal Moderator will consider and judge whether the activities and materials provide inclusive opportunities for all learners to meet the assessment objectives and generate evidence which is current, reliable, authentic, valid, able to be evaluated and sufficient to meet the requirements of the qualification.

During delivery of assessment, Internal Moderators will work with the Assessment team, ensuring that assessment practices are being carried out correctly. This may involve observing assessment taking place.

1.4 Standardisation of Assessment

The standardisation process helps to ensure that all centre staff involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance are consistent and fair to all learners and interpret and follow the requirements of the qualification in the same way.

Internal Moderators are expected to ensure high levels of consistency across Assessors and centre delivery sites through sharing good practice and providing feedback and support, doing so accurately and in good time. The internal Moderator may highlight areas for further CPD or additional training as necessary.

1.5. Sampling Process

When planning and carrying out internal moderation activities, it is important that the Internal Moderator works to a sound sampling strategy to ensure that standardisation of assessment decisions can take place.

A centre's sampling strategy involves reviewing the quality of Assessor's judgements, which will include reviewing learner work.

The learner work may be sampled before the learner has completed the full qualification, for example by sampling one or two assignments, topic areas or units, as the learner completes them.

The Internal Moderator should check that planning and reviewing has taken place and feedback is given to learners by the Assessor. The Internal Moderator will also check and confirm the accuracy of the application of any mark schemes, guidance and overall assessment decisions.

The Internal Moderator will therefore be able to evaluate the quality and consistency of the Assessor's assessment decisions and be able to identify any problems at an early stage. It will highlight individual Assessor training and development needs, which in turn can inform the programme of CPD for the assessment team as a whole.

The Internal Moderator must plan their sampling activities as outlined below.

1.6 Establishing a Sampling Strategy

Sampling should enable the Internal Moderator to evaluate how Assessors have reached their decisions. They must be able to follow documentation which clearly shows that Assessors have checked that the evidence presented meets the rules of evidence.

Evidence must be confirmed by Assessors as '**CRAVES**'

- **Current:** the work is relevant at the time of the assessment
- **Reliable:** the work is consistent with that produced by other learners
- **Authentic:** the work is the learner's own work
- **Valid:** the work is relevant and appropriate to the subject being assessed and is at the required level
- **Evaluated:** Where the learner has not been assessed as competent, the deficiencies have been clearly and accurately identified via feedback to the learner resulting in improvements in knowledge or competency leading to the award
- **Sufficient:** the work covers the expected learning outcomes and any range statements as specified in the criteria or requirements in the assessment strategy.

1.7 Planning Sampling Activities

The Internal Moderator should consider the following when considering the volume of work that they should sample:

- the learners' ethnic origin, age and gender to ensure a representative range of learners are sampled
- the Assessors' experience and qualifications, workload and their occupational competence. For example, if Assessors are qualified and experienced it may not be necessary to look at everything in a learner's portfolio. If Assessors have less than 12 months' experience, are new to the centre or a particular qualification, or perhaps have not assessed for a length of time, the Internal Moderator will need to sample substantially more of their decisions for the first 6 - 12 months
- the full range of assessment methods used for any one qualification, for example observation, witness testimony, professional discussion, reflective accounts, questioning, assignments, products, RPL, simulation, etc and ensure a good, representative range of assessment evidence is sampled
- previous feedback to Assessors regarding good practice and/or involved highlighting development needs, for example If the Internal Moderator has a particular concern regarding the assessment decisions of a particular Assessor they should focus on increasing the volume of work from that Assessor to continue increased monitoring and evaluation of risk
- whether any changes have been implemented relating to the assessment of the qualification or its units, for example if there have been amendments to the qualification specification, or instances where industry practice or legislation has changed
- the range of locations where assessments have taken place
- the sampling process must not be determined by any rule of thumb such as '10%.'

1.8 Producing a Sampling Plan

The Internal Moderator must develop a sampling plan at the beginning of the learner's (or cohort's) programme and record, on the plan, which topic areas/assessment methods they plan to sample, and when.

Copies of sampling plans should be made available to other Internal Moderators and the assessment team, and sampling carried out according to the plan.

Where variations are made, these should be recorded on the plan.

1.9 Completing a Sample Record

The Internal Moderator should record the quality assurance sampling activities on a Sample Record. As a minimum, this record must indicate the Assessor's decision, the content of the sample, the Internal Moderator's decision and relevant feedback to the Assessor.

Where the Internal Moderator agrees with the assessment decisions, certification claims can go ahead.

Where the Internal Moderator does not agree with the assessment decisions, full feedback must be given to the Assessor, with action points agreed which relate to the Assessor's areas for improvement and instructions for how the learner can be supported to produce the required evidence of knowledge and skills.

Sampling must take place before any certification claims are made by the centre and all records, including those of standardisation meetings, feedback to Assessors and CPD activity should be made available to the GA-appointed External Moderator (also referred to as the EQA) upon request.

Document Specification:					
Purpose:	To detail the specification of the GA Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Canine Massage Therapy (610/6519/5) qualification.				
Accountability:	GA Governance Committee	Responsibility :	GA Senior Product Development Manager		
Version:	2.1	Effective From:	Aug 2026	Indicative Review Date:	Oct 2030
Links to Ofqual GCR	E3; G6; G7; H2	Other relevant documents:	GA Centre Handbook GA Candidate Access Policy GA Malpractice & Maladministration Policy GA CASS & General Moderation Policy Relevant Indicative Content, Assessment Instructions and Guidance documents specific to this qualification.		