Crossfields Institute
Qualifications | Education | Development

Qualification Specification

CFI Level 2 Award in Autism & Animal Assisted Intervention

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Key Facts

Qualification Title	CFI Level 2 Award in Autism & Animal Assisted Intervention
Qualification Number (QAN)	610/4932/3
Qualification Type	VRQ
Sector	1.3 Health and Social Care
Level	2
Rules of Combination	A single, compulsory unit
Total Qualification Time	10 hours
Guided Learning Hours	6 hours
Minimum age of learners	18
Assessment Methods	Portfolio of evidence
Grading system	Pass/Fail
How long will it take to complete?	This qualification can be completed as a one-day course
Developed by	The qualification has been developed by CFI with subject-specific expertise provided by Elysian UK

Section 1: About this Qualification

1.1 Why take this qualification?

The objective of the CFI Level 2 Award in Autism & Animal Assisted Intervention is to equip learners with foundational knowledge and practical skills for working effectively with children, young people and adults on the autism spectrum, using animals to support their development and wellbeing.

By the end of the qualification, learners will understand the characteristics of autism and how animals can play a role in therapeutic and educational settings to support individuals with autism.

This Award is designed for individuals working in educational, social care or therapeutic settings. It is suitable for those who are interested in learning more about autism and how animals can be used to enhance the wellbeing and development of individuals with autism.

1.2 What are the entry requirements?

To study this qualification, learners must:

- be currently working with individuals on the autism spectrum or have a strong interest in autism support
- have some experience working with animals or a willingness to learn how to use animals in therapeutic or educational settings
- if English is not their first language, be able to demonstrate that they are able to meet the requirements of the qualification (a spoken and written ability in English at a level equivalent to IELTS 6.0)
- Be over 18 years of age

1.3 What does the qualification cover?

This qualification consists of a single unit which covers two key areas:

Understanding Autism
Learners will learn about autism spectrum disorders (ASD), including key characteristics, communication challenges, sensory processing issues and behavioural patterns. They will also explore how autism affects individuals and social settings and the best practices for supporting them.

Animal Assisted Interventions for Autism
This focuses on how animals can support individuals with autism. Learners will be introduced to various therapeutic activities involving animals, including how they can aid in emotional regulation, communication development and reducing anxiety. They will also

learn how to safely and ethically integrate animals into a supportive environment for people with autism.

This qualification is at Level 2 as defined by Ofqual:

Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition - Section E - Design and development of qualifications - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Knowledge descriptor (the holder ...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can ...)
Has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Can interpret relevant information and ideas. Is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work.	Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems. Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions. Identify how effective actions have been.

1.4 What are the assessment methods?

You will create a portfolio of evidence throughout your time working towards this qualification. This may include:

- **Observation**
  Your participation in practical, hands-on activities will be observed by a tutor/assessor.
- **Reflection**
  You will be asked to reflect on your learning and how you will apply it in your workplace.
- **Presentations**
  You may give a short presentation on how animals can support people with autism.
- **Creative Materials**
  This could include posters, leaflets or other materials that explain how AAI benefits individuals with autism.

There is no requirement for each unit to be assessed separately. Assessors are advised to adopt a holistic approach. One activity/piece of evidence can be used to demonstrate that multiple learning outcomes and assessment criteria from different units have been met. However, it is essential that evidence for the assessment criteria in each unit is identified individually.

Note: Plagiarism This means claiming work to be your own which has been copied from someone or somewhere else. All the work you submit must be your own and not copied from anyone else unless you clearly reference the source of your information. This includes the use of AI (please see our AI policy for further information). If there is evidence that your work is copied from elsewhere, it will not be accepted, and you may be subject to a disciplinary procedure.

1.5 What are the progression opportunities?

This qualification is designed to enhance your skills and practice within your current role or prepare you for further opportunities in:

- Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) in autism support
- education, social care and healthcare roles focusing on autism
- progression to further qualifications in therapeutic and animal-assisted work with children, young people or adults

Section 2: Units

2.1 Unit List

This qualification has a single, compulsory unit.

Unit title	Ofqual ref	Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Total qualification time (TQT)	Credits
Autism & Animal Assisted Intervention	M/651/3883	6	10	1
Qualification total		**6**	**10**	**1**

Unit 1: Autism and Animal Assisted Intervention

Unit reference	M/651/3883	**Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**	6
Unit level	2	**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**	10

Unit aim

This unit will introduce learners to key knowledge and practical insights into autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and how animals can support individuals with autism. They will explore how animals can assist in emotional, social and sensory development, offering therapeutic benefits for people on the autism spectrum. The unit also focuses on developing learners' ability to apply animal assisted interventions (AAI) effectively in their practice.

Learning outcomes

The learner will be able to:

1. Describe characteristics of autism
2. Explain how animals can support individuals with autism
3. Evaluate the benefits and challenges of using AAI with individuals with autism
4. Design basic AAI activities which effectively cater for individuals with autism

Amplification

LO1
Learners will be introduced to the core characteristics of autism, including communication differences, sensory sensitivities, repetitive behaviours and social challenges. You should be able to differentiate between these traits and provide examples.

LO2
Learners will explore how animals can play a therapeutic role in supporting individuals with autism. This includes emotional regulation, improving social interaction, enhancing communication and reducing anxiety.

LO3
Learners will assess how different animal assisted interventions (AAI) can support individuals with autism, including what type of animals may be suitable, how to tailor activities to individual needs and potential challenges or risks in working with animals.

LO4
Learners will be guided to create simple animal assisted activities that align with the specific needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. You will focus on planning, safety and the desired outcomes of these activities.

Indicative Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- **Understanding Autism:** Overview of autism spectrum disorder, communication differences, sensory processing, and behavioural characteristics.
- **Therapeutic Role of Animals:** How animals can be used to aid emotional, social, and cognitive development in individuals with autism.
- **Matching Animals to Needs:** Selecting appropriate animals and activities for different individuals, considering their needs and preferences.
- **Sensory and Emotional Regulation:** Exploring how animals can assist in calming sensory overload and reducing anxiety.
- **Building Social Skills:** Using animals to promote interaction, empathy, and communication among individuals with autism.
- **Challenges and Ethical Considerations:** Identifying potential risks and challenges of using AAI with individuals on the autism spectrum, ensuring safety and wellbeing for both the individual and the animal.

Additional Requirements for Delivery and Assessment

Learners must be prepared to take part in group discussions and practical demonstrations, where their contributions will be observed and assessed. Participation in reflective activities and planning of AAI sessions is essential.

Key Learning Resources

Cumine V., Dunlop J. and Stevenson G. (2009) *Asperger Syndrome: A Practical Guide for Teachers*, David Fulton Books

Fine H.A. (2019) *Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy, Foundations and Guidelines for Animal-Assisted Interventions*, Elsevier Academic Press

Jalongo M., Astrino T. and Bomboy N. (2004) *Canine Visitors: The Influence of Therapy Dogs on Young Children's Learning and Wellbeing in Classrooms*, Day Care and Early Education, 32 (1) pp. 9-16

Katcher A. (2000) *The future of education and research on the animal-human bond and animal-assisted therapy*, Academic Press

Katcher A. and Beck A.M. (2010) *Newer and older perspectives on the therapeutic effects of animals and nature*, Academic Press

Levinson B.M. (1972) *Pets and human development*, Thomas

Hines L.M. and Bustad (1986) *Historical perspectives on human-animal interactions*, National Forum, 66 (1) pp. 4-6

Levinson B.M. (1969) *Pet-oriented psychotherapy*, Thomas

Melson G. (2001) *Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children*, Harvard University Press

Myers O. (1998) *Children and Animals*, Westview Press

Section 3: Delivering this qualification

3.1 Requirements for Centres

Centres must be approved by CFI. In order to be approved to offer this qualification, centres must have:

- Staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced
- A learning environment that combines both theoretical and practical experiences

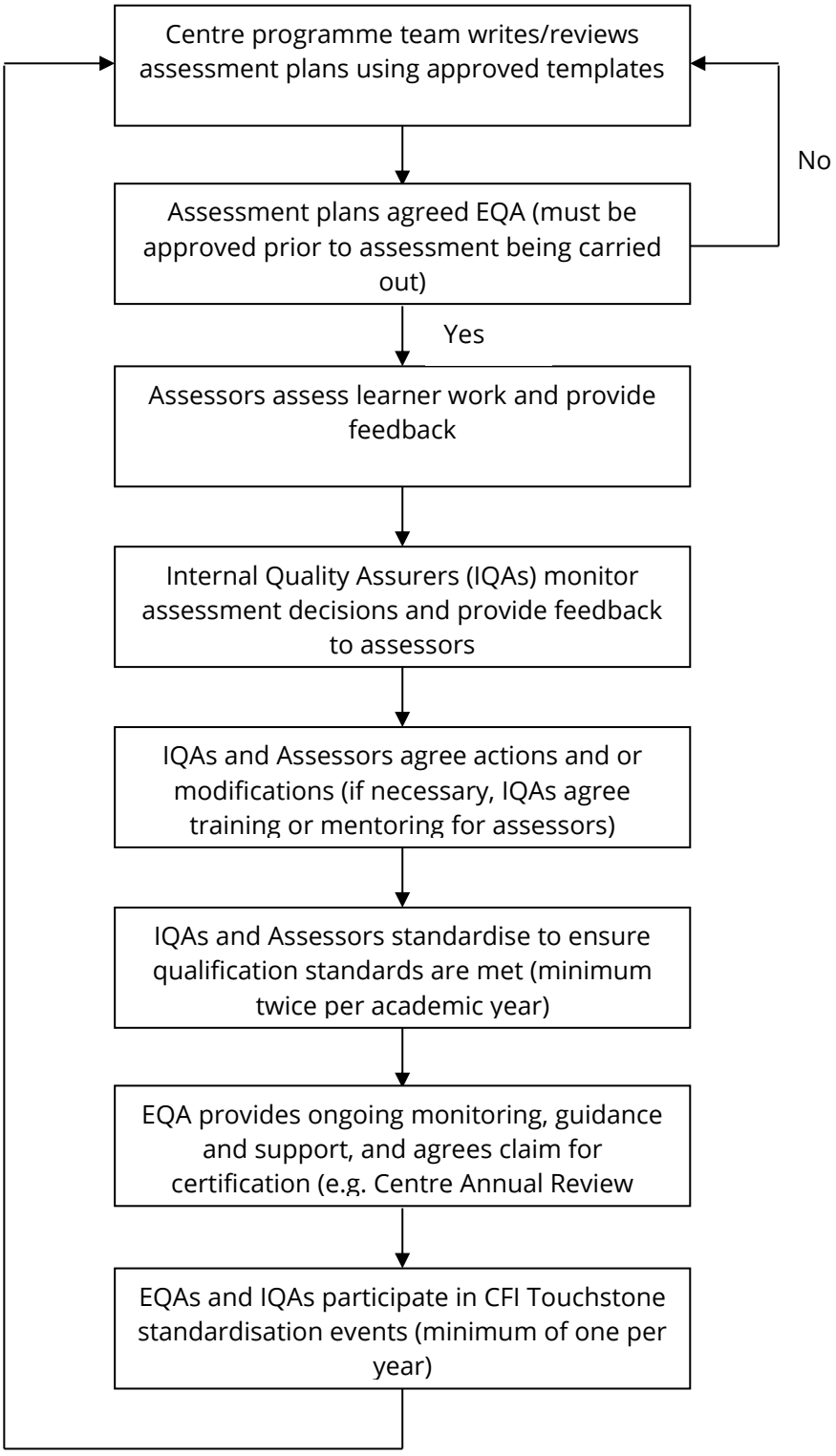
For more information about the process of becoming a centre, please contact us at info@cfiwarding.com or refer to our Centre Handbook (www.cfiawarding.com).

3.2 Quality Assurance

The CFI approach to quality assurance is underpinned by educational values which address the holistic development and transformation of the learner. In this qualification teaching, learning and assessment should be interconnected in order to support each individual to reach their full potential.

The primary aim of the CFI Quality Team is to support centres in delivering the best possible learning experience and high levels of achievement for learners. Centres will be allocated an External Quality Assurer (EQA) by the CFI QA Team.

Centres delivering this qualification are required to follow this CFI Quality Assurance process:


Centre programme team writes/reviews assessment plans using approved templates
Assessment plans agreed EQA (must be approved prior to assessment being carried out)
No
Yes
Assessors assess learner work and provide feedback
Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) monitor assessment decisions and provide feedback to assessors
IQAs and Assessors agree actions and or modifications (if necessary, IQAs agree training or mentoring for assessors)
IQAs and Assessors standardise to ensure qualification standards are met (minimum twice per academic year)
EQA provides ongoing monitoring, guidance and support, and agrees claim for certification (e.g. Centre Annual Review
EQAs and IQAs participate in CFI Touchstone standardisation events (minimum of one per year)

3.3 Assessment Planning Guidance

This qualification uses a centre-devised approach to assessment. In planning their assessments, centres should ensure that assessment activities:

- are fit for purpose
- can be delivered efficiently
- meet the assessment criteria
- permit Reasonable Adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them
- allow each learner to generate evidence which can be authenticated
- allow the specified level of attainment detailed in this specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding
- allow assessors to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners

They should also ensure that:

- sufficient time is allowed for assessment planning
- assessment tasks do not produce unreasonably adverse outcomes for learners who share a common attribute
- methods of assessment are in line with the assessment requirements in this specification
- reasonable timescales for assessment and feedback are given to learners
- a timely quality assurance process is conducted

3.4 Training and Support

To support centres in carrying out high-quality assessment and quality assurance practice, the following training and support measures have been put in place for this qualification:

- All centre assessors and quality assurance staff for this qualification are required to meet National Occupational Standards for assessors and IQAs. National qualifications (NVQs) are available for these roles. CFI can also provide customised assessor and IQA education as well as review of assessor and IQA practice
- Assessors and IQAs must keep an up-to-date CPD log and be able to demonstrate the relevance of their CPD to this qualification and their role
- Handbooks, exemplars and templates are available from CFI
- Where required, a customised Quality Assurance Action and Development Plan will be provided by CFI for centres

Please note: there may be a charge for training and resources provided by CFI.

3.5 Policies and Procedures

Each centre is required to work in partnership with CFI to ensure that all learners have the best possible experience whilst taking this qualification and are treated fairly. Our commitment to this is supported by our Centre Handbook, which all centres should become familiar with.

CFI has policies and procedures in place to support centres and learners. All centres must also implement their own policies, which comply with CFI's requirements – these will be checked during centre approval and in subsequent centre monitoring activities. It is the centre's responsibility to make relevant policies available to learners.

Relevant policies include:

- Learner Complaints Policy: which allows learners to take action if they feel they have been treated unfairly
- Learner Appeals Policy: which allows learners to appeal decisions made by centres
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy: which allows centres to make any necessary adjustments to assessments in the light of learners' individual circumstances at the start of the programme
- Special Considerations Policy: which allows centres to request extensions for learners in light of learners' individual circumstances which have delayed their completion of the programme
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy: which gives a framework through which concerns about the delivery and assessment of the qualification can be addressed
- Equality and Diversity Policies: which ensures centres treat learners fairly and without any bias

CFI policies and other key documents are available on our website at www.cfiawarding.com or upon request via info@cfiawarding.com