

Qualification Guide

OCNLR Level 4 Qualifications in Canine Hydrotherapy

OCN London Qualification Guide

OCNLR Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy

Qualification No: 610/7565/6

OCNLR Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy

Qualification No: 610/7566/8

Important Note:

The qualifications included within this guide replace the previous OCN London Level 4 Award and Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy.

The earlier Level 4 qualifications were developed primarily as progression qualifications for learners who had already completed Level 3 study. The revised qualifications have been redesigned in response to changing industry expectations and the growing move towards Level 4 occupational standards for canine hydrotherapists.

The revised qualification suite now includes:

- the **OCNLR Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy**, providing learners with a recognised introduction to Level 4 study and a structured progression route towards the full Diploma; and
- the **OCNLR Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy**, providing the comprehensive knowledge, clinical understanding, and practical competence required for professional practice within the canine hydrotherapy sector.

Learners who have previously achieved relevant canine hydrotherapy qualifications may be eligible to claim Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) towards the revised Diploma, subject to OCN London policies and Centre approval.

OCN London aims to support learning and widening opportunities by recognising achievement through credit-based courses and qualifications, promoting high standards of excellence and inclusiveness. We are proud of our long-term role and unique history in providing innovative learning solutions for a wide range of learners and particularly those who have not previously benefitted from education.

At the heart of what OCN London offers is:

- a commitment to inclusive credit-based learning;
- the creative use of credit with responsive, demand-led qualification development;
- high quality service and support;
- respect for and encouragement of diversity – in learners and learning approaches, partners and settings;
- the development of people, capacity and resources that will ensure effective business partnerships.

To navigate within this Qualification Guide

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General Information

This qualification guide contains details of everything you need to know about the **OCNLR Level 4 Qualifications in Canine Hydrotherapy**. It makes reference to the curriculum areas covered and identifies the learners for whom the qualification has been developed. The guide also covers important aspects of assessment and moderation that are particular to the qualification. The guide should be used by all involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification. The Account Manager for your Centre will provide support and advice on how to seek approval to offer the qualification.

If you are not yet an OCN London Approved Centre but wish to use these qualifications, then please contact us on enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk for details of the Centre Approval application process.

Qualification Overview

The **OCNLR Level 4 Qualifications in Canine Hydrotherapy** have been developed to support learners wishing to enter or progress within the canine hydrotherapy sector. The qualifications provide learners with the theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and professional understanding required to work safely and effectively with canine patients within hydrotherapy settings.

The qualifications reflect the increasing professionalisation of the sector and the move by industry registration and membership organisations towards Level 4 standards for new practitioners. They have been designed in consultation with industry specialists to ensure that learners develop the occupational competence required for contemporary canine hydrotherapy practice.

The qualification suite consists of:

- **OCNLR Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy**
- **OCNLR Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy**

The **Level 4 Certificate** provides learners with core underpinning knowledge and introductory practical skills in canine hydrotherapy. It is one of the principal qualifications for learners seeking to work as canine hydrotherapists within the sector. It provides comprehensive coverage of hydrotherapy theory, clinical application, anatomy and physiology, neurological and orthopaedic conditions, hydrotherapy techniques, and professional practice. The qualification has been designed to align with current and emerging expectations from professional organisations and employers across the canine hydrotherapy industry. It is intended as a progression pathway towards the Level 4 Diploma and may also support continuing professional development for individuals already working within related animal care or rehabilitation sectors.

The **Level 4 Diploma** is one of the principal qualifications for learners seeking to work as canine hydrotherapists within the sector. It provides comprehensive coverage of hydrotherapy theory, clinical application, anatomy and physiology, neurological and orthopaedic conditions, hydrotherapy techniques, gait analysis, applied treadmill techniques, behaviour, massage and professional practice. The qualification has been designed to align with current and emerging expectations from professional organisations and employers across the canine hydrotherapy industry.

Learners will benefit from developing both the technical and professional skills required to deliver hydrotherapy treatments ethically, responsibly, and safely, while supporting canine rehabilitation and wellbeing.

The qualifications are regulated by Ofqual and sit on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

These qualifications have been developed in partnership with Greyfriars Veterinary Rehabilitation and Hydrotherapy Referrals, a long-established specialist training provider within the canine hydrotherapy sector.

Qualification details

This Qualification is also available at Level 3.

Level 4 Certificate

- Qualification Number: 610/7565/6
- Qualification credit value: 33
- Operational start date: 01/06/26
- Review date: 01/06/28
- Total Qualification Time (TQT): 330
- Guided Learning Hours (GLH): 264
- Assessment requirements: internally assessed, internally and externally moderated.

Level 4 Diploma

- Qualification Number: 610/7566/8
- Qualification credit value: 48
- Operational start date: 01/06/26
- Review date: 01/06/28
- Total Qualification Time (TQT): 480
- Guided Learning Hours (GLH): 384
- Assessment requirements: internally assessed, internally and externally moderated

Purpose of the qualifications

The purpose of the **OCNLR Level 4 Qualifications in Canine Hydrotherapy** is to provide learners with the knowledge, understanding, and practical skills required to progress into employment or professional practice within the canine hydrotherapy sector.

The qualifications have been designed in response to significant developments within the industry, including the increasing adoption of Level 4 entry standards by professional registration and membership organisations. They support learners in developing the occupational competence required to work effectively within hydrotherapy and rehabilitation environments and to meet the expectations of employers, clients, and professional bodies.

The **Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy** is intended to:

- prepare learners for employment as canine hydrotherapists;

- support eligibility for professional registration and membership within relevant industry organisations;
- provide learners with a recognised introduction to Level 4 study within canine hydrotherapy;
- support progression towards the Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy;
- enable learners to develop core knowledge and practical understanding relevant to hydrotherapy settings;
- support continuing professional development for individuals already working within related sectors.

The **Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy** is intended to:

- prepare learners for employment as canine hydrotherapists;
- support eligibility for professional registration and membership within relevant industry organisations;
- develop advanced knowledge and practical competence in hydrotherapy assessment and treatment techniques;
- provide progression opportunities into higher level study and specialist rehabilitation practice.

The qualifications also support learners in developing transferable professional skills including communication, ethical practice, clinical reasoning, observation, record keeping, and reflective practice.

Who the qualifications are for

The **OCNLR Level 4 Qualifications in Canine Hydrotherapy** are suitable for adults who are working, or want to work, in the canine hydrotherapy sector.

Requirements for delivering these qualifications

Please refer to the sections on [tutor/assessor requirements for specific units](#) and [facility requirements](#) before applying to deliver these qualifications. It should be noted that Centres delivering these qualifications need to ensure learners have access to the facilities and equipment needed for them to carry out, and provide evidence of:

- At least 20 hours of practical canine hydrotherapy pool and water treadmill treatment
- 4 hours of practical first aid
- 4 hours of practical water management
- 10 hours of practical for 'Applied Water Treadmill Techniques for Canine Hydrotherapy'
- 5 hours of practical for 'Canine Behaviour in a Hydrotherapy Setting'
- 6 hours of practical for 'Gait Analysis for Canine Hydrotherapy'
- 5 hours of practical for 'Massage for Canine Hydrotherapy'

Entry guidance

The minimum age for access to the qualification is 18 years.

Learners must have competent language skills in both spoken and written English.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) will be considered and assessed on an individual basis.

Progression and related qualifications

These qualifications will enable learners to build on their experience of canine hydrotherapy and advance their skills and knowledge as canine hydrotherapists. The qualifications are a gateway to higher level qualifications in this subject.

Structure of the qualifications

Rules of combination for achievement

The **OCNLR Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy qualification** comprises nine mandatory units. Learners must achieve 33 credits in total.

Qualification units – Level 4 Certificate

Ofqual Unit Reference Number	OCNLR Unit Code	Unit Title	Level	Credit Value	GLH
Mandatory					
D/652/2020	SP2/3/LQ/030	Anatomy, Physiology and Biomechanics for Canine Hydrotherapy	3	4	32
F/652/2021	SP2/4/LQ/013	Canine Hydrotherapy Theory	4	6	48
H/652/2022	SP2/4/LQ/014	First Aid for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
J/652/2023	SP2/4/LQ/015	Observed Practice for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	6	48
K/652/2024	SP2/4/LQ/016	Orthopaedic Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
L/652/2025	SP2/4/LQ/017	Personal and Professional Development for Canine Hydrotherapists	4	2	16
M/652/2026	SP2/4/LQ/018	Spinal and Neurological Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
R/652/2027	PC8/4/LQ/001	Water Management for Hydrotherapy Pools and Water Treadmills	4	3	24
T/652/2028	PC8/4/LQ/002	Working Professionally and Ethically as a Canine Hydrotherapist	4	3	24

Rules of combination for achievement

The **OCNLR Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy qualification** comprises thirteen mandatory units. Learners must achieve 48 credits in total.

Qualification units – Level 4 Diploma

Ofqual Unit Reference Number	OCNLR Unit Code	Unit Title	Level	Credit Value	GLH
Mandatory					
D/652/2020	SP2/3/LQ/030	Anatomy, Physiology and Biomechanics for Canine Hydrotherapy	3	4	32
Y/652/2029	PC8/4/LQ/003	Applied Water Treadmill Techniques for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	6	48
F/652/2030	SP2/4/LQ/019	Canine Behaviour in a Hydrotherapy Setting	4	3	24
F/652/2021	SP2/4/LQ/013	Canine Hydrotherapy Theory	4	6	48
H/652/2022	SP2/4/LQ/014	First Aid for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
H/652/2031	SP2/4/LQ/020	Gait Analysis for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
J/652/2032	SP2/4/LQ/021	Massage for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
J/652/2023	SP2/4/LQ/015	Observed Practice for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	6	48
K/652/2024	SP2/4/LQ/016	Orthopaedic Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
L/652/2025	SP2/4/LQ/017	Personal and Professional Development for Canine Hydrotherapists	4	2	16
M/652/2026	SP2/4/LQ/018	Spinal and Neurological Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	4	3	24
R/652/2027	PC8/4/LQ/001	Water Management for Hydrotherapy Pools and Water Treadmills	4	3	24
T/652/2028	PC8/4/LQ/002	Working Professionally and Ethically as a Canine Hydrotherapist	4	3	24

Assessment and Moderation

Assessment process

The assessment process for these qualifications are as follows:

- The learners are assessed through activities that are internally set by tutor assessors;
- The activities must be designed to enable learners to meet the assessment criteria of the unit;
- Learners' portfolios of assessed evidence must be internally moderated at the Centre;
- The portfolios of assessed evidence will be externally moderated by an OCN London External Moderator.

There is no additional external assessment for these qualifications.

Devising assessments

Each unit has a supplementary page with information on the types of assessment activities that can (indicated as 'Optional' or 'O') and/or must (indicated as 'Prescribed' or 'P') be used to assess learners against the unit. Tutor assessors must always refer to this page before devising assessment tasks.

Centre devised assessments should be scrutinised by the Internal Moderator before use to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Centre devised assessments will be scrutinised by the External Moderator to ensure reliability and validity of assessment.

Marking assessment activities

Each activity must be marked against the identified assessment criteria in the unit and judged to be either achieved or not achieved.

Assessors need to ensure that the work in a learner's portfolio is:

- Authentic – it is the result of the learner's own performance or activity;
- Sufficient – enabling the assessor to make a consistent and reliable judgement;
- Adequate – appropriate to the level.

Where a series of activities are set, learners must demonstrate the achievement of the required standard identified in the assessment criteria in all activities. All of the assessment criteria in a unit must be met before the unit is deemed achieved.

The unit achievement is not graded. Units are either achieved or not achieved.

Standardisation

Standardisation is a process that promotes consistency in the understanding and application of standards in relation to assessment. It:

- compares assessment judgements from different tutor/assessors;
- promotes consistent judgements by different tutor/assessors;
- identifies good practice in assessment;
- promotes the sharing of good practice in assessment between centre staff.

Standardisation events should be held periodically within centres to ensure consistent and effective assessment practice. Standardisation events may also be held by OCN London and it is a requirement that each Centre offering units from these qualifications must contribute assessment materials and learners' evidence for standardisation, if requested.

OCN London will notify Centres of the required sample for standardisation purposes and assessment materials, learners' evidence and tutor feedback may be collected by External Moderators.

Learners with particular requirements

If learners have particular requirements the Centre should refer to the 'Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure' which can be found on our website at: [Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure](#) and gives clear guidance on the reasonable adjustments and arrangements that can be made to take account of disability or learning difficulty, without compromising the achievement of the assessment criteria.

Requirements for tutor/assessors

To be sufficiently competent

In addition to being qualified to make assessment decisions, each assessor must be capable of carrying out the full requirements within the competency of the units they are assessing. This competence should be maintained annually through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and professional development.

Expert witnesses can be used where they have suitable expertise for specialist areas. The use of expert witnesses should be determined and agreed by the assessor.

To be sufficiently knowledgeable

Each assessor should possess relevant knowledge and understanding of the subject and so be able to make robust and reliable assessment decisions in relation to the subject.

Requirements for tutor/assessors to deliver specific units and facility requirements

Requirements for tutor/assessors to deliver specific units, and facility requirements are set out in the following sections (see Table 1 and Table 2 below for each qualification).

Requirements for internal moderators

Internal moderators must hold an internal quality assurance qualification and one qualification from Group B or C in Table 2.

Tutor/assessor requirements for specific units

Tutors/assessors must be qualified and experienced as indicated in Table 1 in order to be eligible to teach/assess the specific units identified. Qualifications in the groups referred to are listed in Table 2.

Table 1: Tutor/assessor requirements

Unit	Tutor/Assessor Requirements (see Table 2 for group definitions)
Anatomy, Physiology and Biomechanics for Canine Hydrotherapy	MRCVS or DVM or Veterinary Physiotherapist 1 from Group E
Applied Water Treadmill Techniques for Canine Hydrotherapy	Relevant Level 6 qualification 1 from Group B or C (must include Advanced Water Treadmill training) 1 from Group D 1 from Group E Minimum of 5 years sector experience
First Aid for Canine Hydrotherapy	MRCVS or DVM or RVN from Group A 1 from Group E
Canine Behaviour in a Hydrotherapy Setting	Canine Behaviour qualification at Level 6 or 7 1 from Group B or C 1 from Group E
Canine Hydrotherapy Theory	1 from Group B or C 1 from Group D 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience
Gait Analysis for Canine Hydrotherapy	MRCVS or DVM or Veterinary Physiotherapist 1 from Group E
Massage for Canine Hydrotherapy	Veterinary Physiotherapist or recognised qualification in Canine Massage 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience
Observed Practice for Canine Hydrotherapy	1 from Group B or C 1 from Group D 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience
Orthopaedic Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	1 from Group A 1 from Group B or C 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience
Personal and Professional Development for Canine Hydrotherapists	1 from Group B or C 1 from Group E

Spinal and Neurological Referrals for Canine Hydrotherapy	1 from Group A 1 from Group B or C 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience
Water Management for Hydrotherapy Pools and Water Treadmills	1 from Group B or C or a Water Management Qualification 1 from Group E Minimum of 2 years sector experience in either canine hydrotherapy or pool water management.
Working Professionally and Ethically as a Canine Hydrotherapist	1 from Group B or C 1 from Group E

Table 2: Qualification/experience groups

Qualification/Experience Groups	Qualification/Experience
Group A Veterinary, physiotherapy and rehabilitation qualifications	Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS) Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP) Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT) Level 6 or 7 Veterinary Physiotherapy qualification
Group B Hydrotherapy qualifications	ABC Awards Level 3 Certificate in Hydrotherapy for Small Animals ABC Awards Level 3 Diploma in Hydrotherapy for Small Animals OCNLR Level 3 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy OCNLR Level 4 Award in Canine Hydrotherapy OCNLR Level 4 Certificate in Canine Hydrotherapy Aim Awards Level 4 Diploma in Hydrotherapy for Small Animals Other comparable qualifications
Group C Higher level hydrotherapy qualifications	OCNLR Level 4 Award in Canine Hydrotherapy OCNLR Level 4 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy ABC Awards QLS Level 5 Diploma in Canine Hydrotherapy Other comparable qualifications
Group D	Membership of the National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists (NARCH), Canine Hydrotherapy Association (CHA), Institute of Canine Hydrotherapists (ICH), South African Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists (SAARCH) or an equivalent recognised professional canine hydrotherapy organisation/regulator
Group E	Certificate in Education Award in Education and Training Certificate in Education and Training Diploma in Education and Training Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTTLS)

	Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTTLS) Teaching Degree Clinical Educator Proof of relevant teaching experience and expertise in the subject matter
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Facility requirements

In addition to having the appropriately qualified trained tutor/assessors, Centres offering these qualifications must have the following facilities:

- a hydrotherapy pool that is large enough to allow students to be in the pool with trainer(s) and dog(s)
- the hydrotherapy pool should have safe access for both learners and dogs and be able to accommodate a wide range of patients, including small and large breeds
- water treadmill – the design/model must allow students to enter the water treadmill and safely gain practical ‘hands on’ experience with a wide range of patients, including small and large breeds
- a client base that enables the centre to provide practical training for students, giving experience of a wide range of patients/breeds/conditions
- classroom facilities or access to classroom facilities.

It should be noted that Centres delivering these qualifications need to ensure learners have access to the facilities and equipment needed for them to carry out, and provide evidence of:

- At least 20 hours of practical canine hydrotherapy pool and water treadmill treatment
- 4 hours of practical first aid
- 4 hours of practical water management
- 10 hours of practical for ‘Applied Water Treadmill Techniques for Canine Hydrotherapy’
- 5 hours of practical for ‘Canine Behaviour in a Hydrotherapy Setting’
- 6 hours of practical for ‘Gait Analysis for Canine Hydrotherapy’
- 5 hours of practical for ‘Massage for Canine Hydrotherapy’

Please also note that all Centres applying to deliver these qualifications will have to provide evidence that the facility requirements are met, which may include a centre approval visit.



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