



Alliance *for* Massage Therapy Education

National Teacher Education Standards Project

Scope and Rationale | December 2010



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The Alliance for Massage Therapy Education was formed in 2009 to serve as the voice, advocate and resource for the community of massage schools and educators. Within this broader mission, one of the organization's primary goals is *to strengthen and improve the quality of massage education*. In pursuit of this objective, the Alliance is embarking upon a long-term project to address a critical need: **teacher training**.

The massage therapy field has grown tremendously, based in large measure on consumers' interest in health and well-being, combined with efforts to enact legislation for the state and provincial regulation of the practice of massage therapy. Together, these factors have created a demand for training programs needed to prepare people for a career in massage therapy.

There are more than 1500 institutions in the United States and Canada currently offering entry-level training in this field. These include certificate, diploma and degree programs ranging from 250-3000 clock hours, depending on the credentialing requirements of the particular jurisdiction. While no formal tabulation has been made, there are estimated to be 10-12,000 massage therapy instructors at these institutions.

Despite the significant size and distribution of this sector, an overwhelming majority of massage therapy instructors have received little or no specific training in the *core competencies of teaching*. This term refers to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that effective instructors possess and can deliver. Detailed descriptions of KSAs for teachers have been around for a very long time, but the massage therapy field has grown up with little awareness of these widespread standards.

Elsewhere in the world of education – from kindergarten on up – teacher training is a universal requirement. We are four decades into what could be called the "modern era" of massage therapy, and our field still lacks one of the major components needed for effective instruction of students. The potential for success and career longevity of massage school graduates ultimately rests upon this foundation.

Before we can move forward, it's useful to reflect upon how we got here. The massage therapy field has evolved in a random manner, without the benefit of any kind of centralized planning among stakeholder organizations. This has resulted in a patchwork quilt of regulatory standards for the practice of massage therapy, as well as for massage therapy education. Most mature professions require all of its training institutions to be accredited – usually by a single agency dedicated to that discipline. In turn, state licensure requirements are based upon graduation from an accredited school or college of a given discipline, which creates a consistent base of education among all practitioners.

By contrast, only about 45% of all massage programs are accredited. Within that subgroup of schools, there are seven different agencies that deal with the massage sector. Created by massage educators in the early 90's, the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation is the only agency dedicated to the massage field; five of the others are broad-spectrum career school accreditors; and the National Accrediting Commission for Cosmetology Arts & Sciences is focused on beauty and skin care schools, with a secondary interest in massage programs. Appendix A contains a list of the faculty requirements contained in the standards of accreditation of these agencies. Of this group, only the following agencies have specific criteria that require new faculty to be trained in – or be able to demonstrate – the core competencies of teaching:

All faculty must receive training in educational methods, testing and evaluation and evidence strength in instructional methodology, delivery and techniques as indicated by evaluation by supervisory personnel within 30 days of beginning instruction.

– Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools

Faculty members must be trained in instructional methods and teaching skills. The school should hire faculty members who have received training in instructional methods and teaching skills or who are experienced teachers. Should a school hire a faculty member without prior training or experience, the school must provide training before the faculty member assumes primary instructional responsibilities in any classroom, curriculum, laboratory, or program related training. A school's faculty must engage in ongoing development of teaching skills as part of its plan for faculty improvement.

– Accrediting Commission of Career Schools & Colleges

Instructional personnel possess the appropriate combination of educational credential(s), specialized training and/or certification, work experience, and demonstrated teaching and classroom management skills, which qualifies them for their training assignments.

– Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training

While accreditation is a valuable process to assure overall institutional capability, it is evident that this level of standards alone is not sufficient to ensure a fully-qualified corps of teachers – even if all massage schools were accredited today.

Looking at the governmental side of regulation, massage schools come under the authority of a state/provincial educational licensing agency and/or massage licensing board in nearly all jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada. However, these quality assurance programs – and their enforcement – vary greatly in scope and effectiveness. For the most part, regulations only require instructors to have practical knowledge of their subject area; criteria are notoriously lacking around the theory and methodology of teaching itself.

Because of this deficit, it has been generally acceptable for a school to hire massage therapists with the minimum number of years in practice, and place them in a classroom to teach without the benefit of teacher training. This is analogous to hiring a certified elementary school teacher to work as a massage therapist, putting her in a treatment room, and expecting her to deliver a safe and clinically effective session without having received the first day of massage training. We shake our collective heads at the latter scenario, but the former is considered standard operating procedure. This is not only found in the teaching of hands-on courses, but is typical throughout entry-level curricula.

While it may be uncomfortable to acknowledge the depth and breadth of this problem, it is time for the situation to be openly discussed. In fact, the massage therapy field cannot progress any further towards status as a full-fledged profession until these shortcomings are remedied.

The success of a school is directly related to the quality of its faculty.

– ACCSC Standards of Accreditation (JULY 2010 REVISION)

As the principal advocate for the massage education community, the Alliance for Massage Therapy Education is committed to guiding efforts to create new standards for instructors and providing the requisite leadership to implement them over the coming years. Fortunately, the trail has already been blazed by a number of independent education organizations from other professions that have accomplished similar projects. Taking this step – at this time – is an act of self-determination and empowerment for teachers, administrators, school owners and continuing education providers who will be joining together to work for the greater good.

At the Alliance's inaugural Conference this past June in Park City, Utah, a diverse group of people gathered to explore the future of massage therapy education. Out of the visioning sessions that were a key part of this event, consensus emerged on the most pressing challenges facing our sector. The issue of teacher training was at the top of the list.

Following these visioning sessions, the Alliance conducted a survey in November that gathered information on attitudes pertaining to standard-setting for instructor qualifications, entry-level curricula, continuing education, and the Massage Therapy Body of Knowledge. This survey was open to participation from the entire field, and a complete report on its results is available on the Alliance's website at [www.afmte.org]. Here is the distribution of responses to the item about teacher standards:

There is a need for national education standards for massage teachers, which would define the core competencies required for classroom instruction and supporting tasks (such as curriculum and lesson plan development).

46.4% Strongly Agree | 34.0% Agree | 11.5% Neutral

5.2% Disagree | 1.6% Strongly Disagree | 1.3% Does Not Apply or no response

The feedback from the Alliance Conference, along with this survey data, has given the Alliance a compelling indication of direction on this issue. Within the Alliance's Professional Standards Committee, there is a Teacher Education Standards Group that has been tasked with the primary responsibility of conducting this project. The work of these experienced educators will be tracked and reviewed by the Alliance Board of Directors and Professional Staff. Major documents will be made available to the massage field for comment before final versions are adopted.

As envisioned by the leadership of the Alliance, this project will have five phases. The estimated time frame for completion of each phase is listed in parentheses, and an outline of these five phases may be found in Appendix B at the end of this document:

National Teacher Education Standards Project (TESP)

Phase I: Standards Development (6-12 months)

This first step involves the identification of the core competencies for teachers in massage therapy schools and continuing education settings. This details the foundational knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed for teachers to produce successful and consistent outcomes with adult learners in a variety of settings. This initial phase will also include *competency mapping*, which is a separate task that connects the KSAs to the behavioral tasks of teaching.

The workgroup is in the process of gathering and reviewing teacher standards documents from a wide range of domains. They are highlighting the competencies that are common to all areas of education, then adding those that are unique to the teaching of massage therapy from entry-level through post-graduate training.

Phase II: Curriculum Development (12-18 months)

Once the core competencies are established and mapped, a baseline teacher training curriculum will be developed. This will include a recommended minimum number of training hours needed to achieve the core competencies – both in terms of individual competency areas, and a collective total.

Even where teacher training standards currently exist, there is little or no guidance as to how much training is needed to produce a basically-qualified instructor. In the absence of this, some schools are claiming their faculty members are qualified in a

broad range of competencies with as few as 5-10 hours of teacher training. This phase will also help to differentiate formal teacher training from the process of in-class assisting or internship. Serving as a classroom assistant allows nascent teachers to round out their development, but it is not a replacement for teacher training.

Phase III: Identification and Development of Training Resources (1-3 years)

Since we are operating in a field that currently has limited teacher training opportunities, an essential part of this project will be the development of resources to meet emerging needs. This will include traditional face-to-face learning opportunities as well as synchronous and asynchronous online education. Resources will include comprehensive (all-in-one) programs as well as individual courses.

As part of this phase, there will be: 1) a cataloging of existing resources, both inside and outside the massage education community; 2) development of new resources to fill unmet needs; and 3) creation of specialized training programs that will prepare a corps of skilled teacher trainers. Standards for teacher training programs and the trainers themselves will also be developed. Just as graduation from an entry-level massage curriculum does not prepare a person to teach massage, completion of a teacher training program does not make one qualified to be a trainer of other massage teachers.

Phase IV: Competency Assessment (3-5 years)

Developing standards for teacher education is only part of the task. An objective third-party assessment process is necessary to ensure that teachers have successfully achieved the competencies. This phase involves the establishment of a certification program for the purpose of initial competency assessment and the demonstration of continued competency. Given the disparities of experience and training backgrounds found in our domain, this program will help to set a common baseline that all massage school teachers and continuing education providers can use in their ongoing professional development.

The process that has been used in a number of other occupational fields is: 1) conduct a job task analysis; 2) compile a content outline; 3) develop a certification examination; and 4) pursue accreditation status for the program with the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

The Alliance will create an independent non-profit affiliate to house and administer this program, to be called the *Certification Council for Massage Therapy Education*. (Per NCCA accreditation standards, organizational separation is required if the Alliance will be a provider of teacher education that is used to satisfy any part of the eligibility requirement for this exam.) In addition to certifying teachers, this new certification body can oversee the approval of teacher training programs and training staff.

Phase V: Adoption by Regulatory Agencies (3-10 years)

The final stage of this project will involve working with accrediting commissions that oversee massage schools/programs, state educational licensing authorities, and state massage therapy boards to incorporate and reference these teacher education standards. This process will require amendments to national standards of accreditation, as well as state-based administrative rules and certain statutes. With the adoption of new requirements, there will need to be a transition process to allow all current faculty adequate time to meet these standards.

This phase is critical for the ongoing success of the endeavor. The Alliance is a peer-based advocacy organization, not an enforcement agency. It is up to the regulatory sector to ensure that the standards that are endorsed by this community are upheld.

* * *

The overarching goal of this project is to **create a culture of teaching excellence** in our field. To be sure, it will require diligent work, respectful dialogue and a willingness to address the existing shortcomings of massage education without blame or judgment. We have a historic opportunity to dramatically improve the quality of teaching in the massage therapy field. By its nature, this foundational change will improve the success of students in massage programs and continuing education seminars, which will improve the quality of massage therapy delivered to the public. That is the payoff for this bold endeavor.

In support of this project, the Alliance has chosen the theme of "Bringing Teaching to the Next Level" for its 2011 Annual Conference. The event, to be held August 18-20 in Charleston, South Carolina, will feature discussion forums on how to implement teacher training standards, and what these changes will mean for schools, teachers and continuing education providers. Input from those who attend will help shape and organize this project as it moves forward.

You are encouraged to be in ongoing discussion with your colleagues in the education community about this project. Join us on the Alliance's LinkedIn group and share your perspectives and ideas.

Appendix A

Faculty requirements in standards of accreditation

Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools <www.abhes.org>

ABHES Standards of Accreditation (July 2010 Revision)

Chapter V, SECTION E – Supervision and Faculty

Subsection 2 – General faculty requirements

V.E.2.a. Faculty consists of qualified individuals who are knowledgeable and current in the specialty field.

Faculty evidence the following:

i. Graduation from a program accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or an otherwise recognized training entity (e.g., hospital-based program) in the specialty field or subject area in which they teach. Additionally, the faculty member possesses two (2) years of occupational (i.e., practical) experience in the subject field in which they teach; OR

ii. A minimum of three (3) years of job-related training and experience, as described above, for those instructors who are not graduates from an accredited program in the field in which they teach.

In addition, all faculty must:

iii. Receive training in educational methods, testing and evaluation and evidence strength in instructional methodology, delivery and techniques as indicated by evaluation by supervisory personnel within 30 days of beginning instruction.

iv. Hold a current license, certification or other credential as required by local, state and/or federal laws to work in the field, with the exception of those teaching in non core (e.g., general education) courses.

Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges & Schools <www.acics.org>

ACICS Standards of Accreditation (August 2010 revision)

3-1-540 – FACULTY

3-1-541. *Faculty Preparation.* Preparation of faculty members shall be academically and experientially appropriate to the subject matter they teach. Faculty members shall be competent to teach the subject matter offered and shall have reasonable latitude in their choice of teaching methods. The institution must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. Faculty who are graduates from institutions outside the United States must be graduates of institutions recognized by their governments and their transcripts must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE)

or the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the credentials to credentials awarded by institutions in the United States.

3-1-542. *Verification of Credentials.* Institutions must maintain official transcripts for credentials that qualify faculty members to teach their assigned courses and for those credentials that are listed in the catalog. All these credentials shall be on file in the administrative offices at the campus location nearest to where the faculty member is primarily employed. An official transcript is one sent from the registrar's office at the institution where study was completed directly to an employing institution. A transcript bearing the notation "issued to student" is not an official transcript for employment purposes.

3-1-543. *Faculty Development.* Institutions are required to establish faculty development plans including in-service and/or professional growth activities to enhance faculty expertise. There shall be documented evidence on an annual basis of these development plans and their implementation. For those faculty who are trained in teaching methodology on the postsecondary level and who possess limited related outside employment, the plan should concentrate on content update, e.g., new software, equipment, techniques, etc. For those faculty who are practitioners trained in content rather than teaching methodology, the plan should concentrate on curriculum concepts, new theories and techniques of instruction, and new educational media. Institutions are responsible for demonstrating that these plans are appropriate given each faculty members' training, education, and related work experience and that they provide the proper mix of in-service training and/or professional growth based on the academic and experiential background of the faculty. (See Glossary for definitions of "in-service training", "professional growth", and "faculty development").

3-1-544. *Faculty Meetings.* Regularly scheduled faculty meetings or department meetings, with participation by fulltime and part-time faculty, shall be held. Discussions and attendance shall be recorded.

Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training <www.accet.org>

ACCET Standards of Accreditation (November 2010 revision)

STANDARD VI – INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

The institution ensures that qualified instructors, under professional and capable direction, effectively deliver educational and training services.

A. Qualifications of Instructional Personnel: Instructional personnel possess the appropriate combination of educational credential(s), specialized training and/or certification, work experience, and demonstrated teaching and classroom management skills, which qualifies them for their training assignments. Instructional personnel meet all relevant accreditation, federal, state, local, and/or industry-specific requirements.

B. Supervision of Instruction: Individuals with relevant education and experience in instructional delivery and management supervise instructional personnel. Supervisors of instructional personnel demonstrate good practice in the evaluation and direction of instructors.

Regular classroom observations, along with student, peer, and supervisory feedback are documented and effectively utilized to enhance the quality of instruction.

C. Instructor Orientation and Training: The institution develops and implements a written policy for the effective orientation and training of instructional personnel to ensure a consistent, high level of instruction. The institution also develops and implements an effective written policy for the ongoing professional development of instructional personnel that is systematically implemented, monitored, and documented.

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges <www.accsc.org>

ACCSC Standards of Accreditation (July 2010 revision)

Section III. (B):

3. Faculty members must have appropriate qualifications and be able to teach in a manner that permits announced educational objectives to be achieved. All faculty must be able to demonstrate a command of theory and practice, contemporary knowledge, and continuing study in their field.

4. Faculty members must be trained in instructional methods and teaching skills. The school should hire faculty members who have received training in instructional methods and teaching skills or who are experienced teachers. Should a school hire a faculty member without prior training or experience, the school must provide training before the faculty member assumes primary instructional responsibilities in any classroom, curriculum, laboratory, or program related training. A school's faculty must engage in ongoing development of teaching skills as part of its plan for faculty improvement.

The school may provide its own faculty training using in-house resources or utilize resources outside the institution. In either case, teacher training shall include such elements as: formal education; workshops/seminars presented by an appropriate individual focusing on areas related to instructional methods and teaching skill development; or formal in-house mentoring programs with appropriately qualified and experienced faculty.

Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation <www.comta.org>

COMTA Standards of Accreditation (April 2010 Revision)

Standard 3.0 FACULTY

3.1 Faculty members are academically and professionally qualified.

3.1.1 All instruction is provided by individuals with appropriate education and experience.

3.1.2 Instructors of theory and technique must have credentials to practice professionally in the jurisdiction in which the institution is located if the credentials are available. This requirement is waived for non-residents of the jurisdiction if the credential is not available to non-residents, or if the non-resident instructor provides no more than 20 hours of instruction over the length of the program.

3.1.3 Instructors of theory and technique are eligible to sit for an appropriate licensing or certification exam or provide evidence of equivalent training or experience in lieu of eligibility.

3.1.4 Instructors of theory and technique have a minimum of two (2) years practical experience or are able to demonstrate the appropriate knowledge or expertise as required by the course learning objectives.

3.1.5 Instructors of anatomy, physiology and pathology have at least an undergraduate level proficiency in the subject matter being taught.

3.1.6 Official transcripts, diplomas or other documents provided by educational institutions certifying completion of training are on file for all instructors.

3.2 Faculty members are informed of job expectations.

3.2.1 Instructors receive an orientation to their instructional responsibilities.

3.2.2 Instructors receive written job descriptions that include clearly stated performance

3.3 Faculty members engage in ongoing professional development.

3.3.1 Institutions or programs have and follow a written policy regarding faculty professional development in technical knowledge or skills.

3.3.2 Institutions or programs have and follow a written policy regarding faculty professional development in instructional skills.

3.4 Faculty members are evaluated based on the performance expectations outlined in their job description.

3.4.1 Faculty members receive annual written evaluations from their supervisor.

3.4.2 Written evaluations take into account information provided by students.

Council on Occupational Education <www.council.org>

COE Standards of Accreditation (February 2010 Revision)

Standard 8 – Human Resources

B. Faculty

1. The institution has a sufficient number of faculty members to fulfill its mission and operate its programs. (Objective 8-B-1)
2. Each faculty member has at least a high school diploma (or its equivalent) and demonstrated competency in the technical area of instruction. (Objective 8-B-2)
3. Additional requirements established for faculty members by the institution's governing board and/or state regulatory agencies are met. (Objective 8-B-2)
4. Faculty members who teach general education courses in Associate Degree programs hold a minimum of a Bachelor's degree with 15 semester hours or 23 quarter hours in the teaching discipline. (In exceptional cases, evidence of outstanding professional experience or creative achievement in the field may be considered in lieu of formal academic preparation.) (Objective 8-B-2)

5. Faculty members who teach technical courses in associate degree programs have a minimum of an Associate Degree in an area that is related to the technical courses they teach. (In exceptional cases, evidence of documented work experience and skills in the technical field may be considered in lieu of formal academic requirements.) (Objective 8-B-2)
6. The institution plans, provides, supports, and annually documents professional growth opportunities for and participation by all faculty members. (Objective 8-B-2, 3)
7. Documentation is available to demonstrate that each faculty member in a technical field maintains liaison with employers in the technical field through periodic visitations and personal contact. (Objective 8-B-3)

National Accrediting Commission for Cosmetology Arts & Sciences <www.naccas.org>
NACCAS Standards of Accreditation (July 2010 Revision)

II. INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

The institution employs an instructional staff that is fully qualified and of adequate size to fulfill the objectives of the educational courses and/or programs regardless of mode of delivery.

1. Instructors hold teaching credentials demonstrating compliance with applicable state requirements.
2. Qualified substitute instructors are familiar with the institution's curriculum, policies and procedures.
3. Qualified substitute instructors are used when needed.
4. Instructors attend meetings according to the institution's policy.
5. Instructor meeting topics are relevant to the institution's stated mission and educational objectives.
6. The institution has a written plan for continuing education for all instructors.
7. The written plan requires all instructors to meet their state requirements for licensure or certification renewal, if applicable, but no less than 12 clock hours of such activity each year per instructor.
8. Continuing education, completed in person or online, includes a minimum of 4 hours in teaching methodology.
9. Each instructor receives a written performance evaluation at least annually.
10. The evaluation includes, at a minimum, teaching preparation and effectiveness.

Appendix B

Outline for the National Teacher Education Standards Project

Phase I: Standards Development

Identify the core competencies for teachers in massage therapy schools and continuing education settings. This will detail the foundational knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed for teachers to produce successful and consistent outcomes with adult learners in a variety of settings. This initial phase will also include *competency mapping*, which connects the KSAs to the behavioral tasks of teaching. *Timeframe: 6-12 months*

Phase II: Curriculum Development

Create a baseline teacher training curriculum and a recommended minimum number of training hours needed to achieve these core competencies. This will be specified in terms of each competency area, and a collective total. *Timeframe: 12-18 months*

Phase III: Identification and Development of Training Resources

Ensure that there are resources available to meet the teacher training needs in our field. This will include traditional face-to-face learning opportunities as well as synchronous and asynchronous online education. Resources will include comprehensive (all-in-one) programs as well as individual courses. As part of this phase, there will be: 1) a cataloging of existing resources, both inside and outside the massage education community; 2) development of new resources to fill unmet needs; and 3) creation of specialized training programs that will prepare a corps of skilled teacher trainers. *Timeframe: 1-3 years*

Phase IV: Competency Assessment

Establish a certification program for Massage Therapy Educators, for the purpose of competency assessment and demonstration of continued competency. Conduct job task analysis; develop certification examination; pursue NCCA accreditation status for program. *Certification Council for Massage Therapy Education* will be an independent affiliate of AFMTE. *Timeframe: 3-5 years*

Phase V: Adoption by Regulatory Agencies

Work with accrediting commissions that oversee massage schools/programs, state educational licensing authorities, and state massage therapy boards to incorporate and reference these teacher education standards. This process will require amendments to national standards of accreditation, as well as state-based administrative rules and certain statutes. *Timeframe: 3-10 years*