

Masters Education Standards
For Master's Degree Programs Providing Art Therapy Education
Effective Date: June 30, 2007

Mission Statement The American Art Therapy Association, Inc. (AATA) is an organization of professionals dedicated to the belief that making art is healing and life enhancing. Its mission is to serve its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy.

Education Committee Statement of Purpose The purpose of the Education Committee is to serve the art therapy profession and general public by:

1. establishing and promoting standards for art therapy education
2. supporting the development of educational programs and encouraging diversity among these programs
3. fostering communication among educators
4. providing information to the public regarding educational standards and opportunities

Introduction Art therapy education came into existence through the pioneering efforts of independent practitioners of art therapy. Standards were developed and have evolved to assist educators in planning and implementing effective graduate programs of study.

Professional entry to art therapy requires a master's degree. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the current standards and procedures of the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB) including but not limited to Adopted Revised Standards and Procedures for Registration.

This document will be effective June 30, 2007 and replaces the Education Standards that were effective July 1, 2002. In this document the title ATR signifies that an art therapist is currently registered with the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB). In this document the title ATR-BC signifies that an individual is currently registered and, in addition, Board Certified through examination by the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB).

AATA grants approval for educational programs preparing students for practice as art therapists. Approved degree programs must meet the following standards adopted by the AATA. These standards are predicated on the view that preparation for the practice of art therapy is achieved at the master's degree level. AATA recognizes that alternative instruction methods (e.g., distance learning), currently exist in art therapy education programs. The same standards of approval will apply to all programs and all programs will be evaluated based on their demonstrated compliance with AATA Education Standards. The Education Standards of the AATA are not intended to discourage creativity on the part of programs.

I. Institutional Accreditation All education must be offered in an academic institution accredited by one of the regional or national institutional accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). AATA offers educational standards under which programs may apply to the AATA Education Program Approval Board (EPAB) for approval. Programs that have received approval by AATA have met standards in effect at the time of their application for initial approval or reapproval.

II. Admission of Students

- A. The graduate program shall require that each student admitted to the program hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in the United States, be accepted into a bachelor's/master's dual degree program in art therapy, or have the equivalent academic preparation from an institution outside the United States.
- B. Programs shall require that each student, before admission to the program, submit a portfolio of original artwork, demonstrating competence with art materials.
- C. Programs shall require that each student admitted to the degree program successfully complete not later than twelve (12) months after entering the program (and including credits taken before admission):
 - 1. a minimum of eighteen (18) semester hour credits (or twenty-seven [27] quarter-hour credits) of study in studio art which demonstrates proficiency and disciplined commitment in art making. Equivalency of non-academic studio art experience or art therapy based coursework may be specified in the graduate program's literature. It is imperative that the applicant evidence a range of experience using a variety of art materials and processes.
 - 2. a minimum of twelve (12) semester hour credits (or eighteen [18] quarter-hour credits) of study in psychology, which must include developmental psychology and abnormal psychology.

III. Faculty The program must demonstrate that faculty members and their assignments adequately provide for course teaching, student advisement, and supervision.

- A. The directorship of the art therapy program must:
 - 1. be a full-time position in the institution for degree programs;
 - 2. be held by professionally qualified art therapist(s): Registered and Board Certified Art Therapists (ATR-BC) or Registered Art Therapists (ATR) with licensure in a mental health related field (e.g., art therapy, counseling, social work, psychology) or Registered Art Therapists (ATR) with a doctorate in art therapy or related field (e.g., counseling, psychology, social work).
- B. All members of the graduate faculty teaching required art therapy content areas (IV.A.) must be Registered Art Therapists.
- C. At least one-half of the art therapy faculty must have practiced art therapy within the most recent five (5) year period.

IV. Required Curriculum For the master's degree, a minimum of 48 graduate semester credits (or 72 quarter-hour credits) is required to meet standards for graduate level art therapy

education. [60 graduate semester credits (or 90 quarter-hour credits) may be required for licensure or clinical education standards in some states].

A. Required Content Areas

1. Required art therapy content areas: A minimum of 24 semester credits (or 36 quarter-hour credits) in art therapy content is required. Content areas must be taught by faculty who hold an ATR. The titles which follow are strictly content/competency areas, not course titles. The program director is responsible to determine how the content/competency is addressed. Attention to licensure standards will assist programs in determining structure and course titling. The course of study must be sequential and include the following:
 - a. History and theory of art therapy: To include art therapy history and theory, events, and practitioners, and the development of art therapy as a distinct therapeutic practice. Overview of psychotherapy theories relevant to art therapy.
 - b. Techniques of practice in art therapy: Direct experience of the therapeutic utility and psychological influence of art processes and materials. Identifying the therapeutic effect of art making leading to establishment of therapeutic goals and intervention strategies.
 - c. Application of art therapy with people in different treatment settings: Clinical interventions for the treatment of children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in inpatient, outpatient, partial treatment programs, and aftercare. Essential interviewing and counseling skills for developing the therapeutic relationship. Exploration of verbal, behavioral, and artistic communication, assessment, treatment planning, treatment approaches, relationship dynamics, and role on the treatment team.
 - d. Group work: Theoretical and experiential understanding of group art therapy and counseling methods and skills. Principles of group dynamics, therapeutic factors, member roles and behaviors, leadership styles and approaches, selection criteria, and short- and long-term group process.
 - e. Art therapy assessment: Fundamentals of art therapy assessment, statistical concepts including reliability and validity, selection of the assessment tool, and familiarity with a variety of specific art therapy instruments and procedures used in appraisal and evaluation. Understanding of developmental levels, cultural factors, psychopathology, and psychological health manifested in artwork and art-making. Administration and documentation of art therapy assessment, formulation of treatment goals,

- objectives, and strategies related to assessment and evaluation.
- f. Ethical and legal issues of art therapy practice: Professional identity, professional ethics, and the ethical practice of art therapy. Familiarity with the ethical standards of the American Art Therapy Association and ATCB, as well as the ACA and other related fields. The proper application of ethical and legal principles of art therapy practice.
 - g. Standards of practice in art therapy: Professional role as an art therapist with regard to function and relationships with other mental health providers. Knowledge of professional organizations, credentialing and licensure, public policy, advocating for the profession, and client advocacy. Preparation to enter the job market and practice in resume writing and professional interviewing skills.
 - h. Cultural and social diversity: Foundation of knowledge in cultural diversity theory and competency models applied to an understanding of diversity of artistic language, symbolism, and meaning in artwork and art making across culture and within a diverse society. Investigation of the role of the art therapist in social justice, advocacy, and conflict resolution.
 - i. Thesis or culminating project: The integration of knowledge with regard to the profession of art therapy including the literature in the field through a culminating project including, but not limited to, thesis or other extensive and indepth projects. Use of structured methods and formats such as quantitative and qualitative research, formal case studies, and arts-based research.
2. Required related content areas: These content areas may be taught by faculty from related fields and/or by faculty members who hold an ATR. The following are content/competency areas, not course titles. (See A.1. above).
- a. Psychopathology: Criteria of psychiatric diagnoses, use of the DSM multi-axial system, and theories of psychopathology. Ability to recognize indicators of functional and organic disorders in behavior and artwork of clients. Basic knowledge of types of psychopharmacological medications.
 - b. Human growth and development: Human psychological development across the life span, theories of personality development, cultural and environmental influences. Familiarity with human behavior, including developmental crises, disability, exceptional behavior, and addictive behavior.

- c. Counseling and psychological theories: Historical development of counseling and psychological theories, understanding of systems perspective, application to case material, and interviewing and counseling skills. Critical thinking with regard to similarities and differences between art therapy intervention and counseling intervention.
- d. Cultural and social diversity: Theories of counseling and development of competencies essential for a culturally responsive therapist with regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, developmental disability, education, family values, and religious and spiritual values. Cultural self-awareness through self-assessment, strategies for working with diverse communities, and critical thinking with regard to attitudes, beliefs, and competent practice.
- e. Assessment: Historical perspectives of assessment, basic concepts of standardized and non-standardized testing and assessment, fundamentals of psychological testing, biopsychosocial assessment, statistical concepts including reliability and validity, strategies for selection of the assessment tool, and familiarity with a variety of specific instruments and procedures used in appraisal and evaluation.
- f. Research: Basic tenets of planning, conducting, and evaluating research and understanding research methodology, to include qualitative and quantitative designs. The importance of research in the psychotherapy professions, ethical, practical, and legal considerations, and the use of research to assess effectiveness of mental health and art therapy services.
- g. Studio art: Maintain contact with the discipline of art making. Explore the impact of art processes and materials through ongoing participation in personal art making. Strengthen connection to the creative process, understanding of personal symbolic language, and arts based learning allowing for the opportunity to integrate intellectual, emotional, artistic, and interpersonal knowledge.
- h. Career and lifestyle development— optional—(As career counseling is a required element for counseling licensure in many but not all states, this content/competency is listed as optional): Occupational counseling, career development theory, information/ resources, diversity factors, supervision, and ethical and legal issues. Knowledge and skills considered essential in enabling individuals and organizations to positively

affect career development and aptitude. Development of art therapy based career counseling.

B. Practicum/Internship

1. Practicum and Internship: In order to develop art therapy and counseling skills, each student must successfully complete supervised practice as follows:

- a. a minimum of one hundred (100) hours of supervised art therapy practicum involving observation and practice in preparation for internship;
- b. a minimum of six hundred (600) hours of supervised art therapy internship over at least two academic terms. Three hundred (300) hours must be working directly with patients in individual, group, or family formats. A minimum of 350 total client contact hours must be accumulated in practicum and/or internship. It is recommended that programs preparing students for mental health counseling licensure require a minimum of nine hundred (900) hours of supervised art therapy internship during which at least 400 total client contact hours must be accumulated in practicum and/or internship. The balance of the supervised hours (indirect hours) must include discussion of student's work with the supervisor(s) and related activities including, but not limited to: case review, record keeping, preparation, treatment team meetings, in-service conferences, and related milieu activities, evaluation of outcome, and successful termination of therapy. Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate clinical material and integrate theory and practice through case presentation.

2. Supervision: Students must have both individual and group supervision.

- a. Individual Supervision: For every ten (10) hours of client contact, there must be one (1) hour of supervision by a registered art therapist (ATR) or licensed professional in a related field (e.g., creative arts therapy, social work, psychology, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, or counseling). This may be one-to-one or triadic and is usually performed by the onsite supervisor
- b. Group Supervision: There must be one and a half (1.5) hours of group supervision by a registered art therapist for every ten (10) hours of client contact. The ratio of eight (8) students to one (1) ATR supervisor may not be exceeded. This is usually performed by a program faculty member.

- c. Specialization The art therapy program must provide opportunities for specialization in competency areas such as variations in patient age, practice setting, and type of intervention (individual, group, or family)

V. Evaluation

A. Student Evaluation

1. Each student must be evaluated regularly on achievement and progress in course work and clinical competencies.
2. The program must maintain a record of the evaluation of each student in each course and in supervised practice. These records should be maintained through the student's graduation.

B. Program Evaluation

1. The program must maintain and follow a regular procedure by which courses, internship, instruction, supervision, and administration are evaluated by students and graduates. Recommendations for change are to be requested, compiled, and considered.
2. Evaluations of the program may be used to modify the program to promote improvement and implement recommendations as appropriate.

VI. Facilities and Equipment

A. The program must have regular access to the following facilities:

1. classrooms for academic courses;
2. studio space for working with art materials; and
3. offices and conference rooms for faculty and student advisement.

B. The program must have regular access to the following equipment:

1. .audio-visual equipment for classroom instruction;
2. studio art equipment and special supplies;
3. office equipment and supplies; and
4. computers with internet access.

C. Students and art therapy faculty must have access to a collection of art therapy books and journals, in addition to literature and journals in mental health and fine arts.

VII. Staff Support Secretarial, clerical, and other administrative support must be available to the director and faculty of the art therapy program. This flyer, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced in any form whatsoever, whether by graphic, visual, electronic, filming, microfilming, tape recording, or any other means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

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