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## Education Standards

**For Education Programs Providing Post Master's Art Therapy Master's Degrees**  
**Effective Date: January 1, 2008**

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### 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 into art therapy requires a master's degree and post-education supervised experience. Individuals holding a master's degree in a related field may enter the art therapy profession through the acquisition of a second master's degree (in art therapy) and post- education supervised experience. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the current standards and procedures for becoming a credentialed art therapist. See the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. website: [www.atcb.org](http://www.atcb.org).

*This document will be effective January 1, 2008. In this document the title ATR signifies that an art therapist is currently registered with the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB) and the title ATR-BC signifies that an individual is currently registered and, in addition, Board Certified by the Art Therapy Credentials Board, Inc. (ATCB).*

## **EDUCATION STANDARDS**

### **For Programs Providing Post-Master's Art Therapy Master's Degree**

Preparation for the practice of art therapy requires the completion of a master's degree. The American Art Therapy Association AMERICAN establishes educational standards for master's degree programs. Approved status is granted to master's degree programs that elect to undergo evaluation by the American Art Therapy Association Educational Program Approval Board and are found to be in compliance with the standards in effect at the time of application. Following are the current standards adopted by the American Art Therapy Association for programs providing the Post-Master's Art Therapy Master's degree.

#### **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).

#### **II. 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;
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 (see IV.A) must be Registered Art Therapists (ATR).**

##### **C. At least one-half of the art therapy faculty must have practiced art therapy within the most recent five (5) year period.**

#### **III. ADMISSION OF STUDENTS**

**A.** The graduate program shall require that each student admitted to the program hold a related master's degree (minimum 48 semester credits or 72 quarter credits) from an accredited institution in the United States, or have the equivalent academic preparation from an institution outside the United States. Related master's degrees include: expressive or creative arts therapies, counseling, social work, psychology, psychiatric nursing, and other mental health professions. Other related degrees not directly tied to licensure include fine arts, art education, and special education. Other related degrees may be considered and require approval by the program director.

**B.** 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) 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 program's literature. It is imperative that the applicants evidence a range of experience using a variety of art materials and processes.

- C. Prior to completion of the post-master's art therapy master's degree, the program will require proof of completion of the following required related content areas at the graduate level: (these could have been completed as part of a related master's degree, or can be completed simultaneously with study in the post-master's master's degree program):

**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. Basic knowledge of types of psychopharmacological medications.

**b. Human Growth and Development**

Human psychological development across the lifespan, 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.

**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 services.

**g. Studio Art**

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.

#### **IV. REQUIRED CURRICULUM**

Education requires a minimum of 30 graduate semester credits (or 45 quarter-hour credits) to meet standards for post master's art therapy education.

##### **A. Required Art Therapy Content Areas**

A minimum of 24 semester credits (or 36 quarter-hour credits) of art therapy content is required. Faculty who hold an ATR must teach content areas. The categories which follow are strictly content/competency areas, not course titles. The program director is responsible to determine how the content/competency is addressed.

The curriculum for the post-master's art therapy master's degree will take into consideration the individual's previous graduate preparation to ensure that the following content areas are met. For some students additional credit hours may be necessary. Attention to individual state's art therapy and/or counseling 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, theories of creativity, and theoretical foundations of art therapy.

##### **b. Technique 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. Development of a framework for understanding symbolic language.

##### **c. Application of Art Therapy with People in Different Treatment Settings**

Art therapy interventions for the treatment of children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in inpatient, outpatient, partial treatment programs, and aftercare. Critical thinking with regard to similarities and differences between art therapy intervention and counseling intervention. Exploration of verbal, behavioral, and artistic communication, assessment, treatment planning, treatment approaches, relationship dynamics, and role of the art therapist on the treatment team.

##### **d. Group Work**

Theoretical and experiential understanding of group art therapy and the application of art therapy theory and practice to the understanding 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. Ability to recognize indicators of functional and organic disorders in the artwork of clients. Understanding of developmental levels, cultural factors, symbolism and metaphor, 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.

**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. This may include, but is not limited to, thesis or other extensive and in depth projects, use of structured methods and formats such as quantitative and qualitative research, formal case studies, and arts-based research.  
Practicum/Internship:

**B. Practicum and Internship:**

**1. Practicum and Internship**

In order to develop art therapy 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 direct 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.

*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.*

## 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 on-site 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. A program faculty member usually performs this supervision.

## 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.

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