

Standards for Complementary Therapies

The Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999 requires HETAC to determine standards of knowledge, skill and competence to be acquired by learners (Section 23 (b)). These standards are based on the level indicators and award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications.

In November 2003, HETAC adopted the generic award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as Interim Standards, for the purpose of developing programmes. Since then, Standards for a number of broad fields of learning have been developed for awards at level 6 to level 9 on the NFQ. Standards for **Complementary Therapies** have now been developed. These are an elaboration of the generic descriptors of the NFQ.

HETAC has agreed that as part of a pilot study relating to complementary therapy, it will initially validate programmes in three areas, namely, acupuncture, herbal medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Only ab-initio major awards at level 7 and above will be considered. Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards will not be considered at this time.

It is intended that these standards should facilitate experts in the three specified therapies to create a link between their programmes and the NFQ. The standards are not programme specifications. It is through these, however, that the relationship between a programme, its component parts and the NFQ should be evident. The standards are a reference point and a point of comparison against which individual programmes may be justified. They are intended to provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a particular field of learning.

In designing programmes leading to major awards for the specified therapies, providers will be required to take cognisance of the award standards and use them as reference points for the design of relevant programmes.

In defining the standards, every effort has been made to ensure that they will provide for flexibility and variety in the design of programmes and therefore encourage innovation within an overall agreed framework. It is not expected that all programmes will include every learning outcome identified in a standard. It is, however, expected that some programmes may include learning outcomes that are not included in the relevant standard.

September 2008

**Award Standards
Complementary Therapies**

Knowledge-Breadth	<i>Specialised knowledge of a broad area</i>	<i>Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas</i>	<i>Understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning</i>	<i>A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning</i>
	Level 6¹	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate a good understanding of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a complementary therapy process and an appropriate range of complementary therapy interventions essential for safe and effective practice; 2. holism, health, ethics, interpersonal communication, management, information technology, and literacy as applied to health care. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate an integrated knowledge and understanding of a systematic approach to care within the domain of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. complementary therapy processes and the appropriate range of complementary therapy interventions essential for safe and effective practice; 2. holism, health, ethics, interpersonal communication, management, information technology, and literacy. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate a comprehensive, in-depth understanding of the theory, concepts and methods, pertaining to the field of complementary therapy essential for safe and effective practice.</p>	<p>The learner is expected to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. know how knowledge is created, generated and evolves within the profession and the wider healthcare community; 2. be able to demonstrate a knowledge base that exercises higher levels of judgement, discretion and decision making within complementary therapy; 3. be able to demonstrate the value of complementary therapy through the generation of knowledge and innovative practice, complementary therapy education and management.

¹ Only major awards at level 7 (180 credits) and above will be considered for validation during the pilot phase. Learning outcomes at level 6 are embedded in awards at level 7 and above

Knowledge-Kind	<i>Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory</i>	<i>Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas</i>	<i>Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)</i>	<i>A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate a basic knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of complementary therapy care; - concepts that underpin complementary therapy practice and health care, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. ethics, codes and scope of practice; b. biological and related sciences (anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, nutrition, pathology, infection control, first aid); c. social and behavioural science (psychology, sociology, interpersonal skills); 2. recognise the limitations of current competence. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate an integration of knowledge; 2. access sources of new knowledge; 3. contextualise complementary therapy within wider health care practice; 4. recognise the limitations to current competence. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate an understanding of relevant biological and related sciences, social and behavioural sciences as they apply to complementary therapy; 2. critically analyse and evaluate relevant knowledge in complementary therapy; 3. critically analyse and evaluate relevant knowledge in health education and health care policy; 4. demonstrate relevant knowledge to adopt systematic approaches to complementary therapy practice based on best available evidence. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate the synthesis and integration of knowledge from various sources showing a breadth and depth of knowledge of their profession; 2. demonstrate the synthesis and integration of knowledge from a broad range of disciplines that inform and develop complementary therapy practice; 3. demonstrate the synthesis and integration of research methodologies.

Know-How & Skill-Range	<i>Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools</i>	<i>Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study</i>	<i>Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity</i>	<i>Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a defined range of complementary therapy activities to practice safely, with supervision as appropriate, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment and diagnosis - determining treatment plan - carrying out treatments - recording and evaluating; 2. interpersonal and communication skills; 3. compliance with Codes of Practice and relevant regulatory requirements 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. defined specialised technical, creative or conceptual complementary therapy skills and tools, with supervision as appropriate, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment and diagnosis - determining treatment plan - carrying out treatments - recording and evaluating; 2. an ability to analyse sources of information and critically evaluate values, assumptions, statements of evidence in their own work and that of others. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. assist in the achievement of optimum health in a professional caring manner; 2. provide and manage complementary therapy; 3. demonstrate evidence based skills essential for safe complementary therapy practice; 4. demonstrate ability to review literature, to access data from a variety of sources and to use appropriate data collection techniques for the purpose of research; 5. write, present and defend material that articulates ideas, insights and analysis. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. make critical choices in the selection of approaches to research problems; 2. synthesise different approaches to research and justify their use in practice; 3. systematically gather, interpret and evaluate evidence drawn from a diverse range of sources that are chosen independently; 4. conduct a comprehensive health needs assessment as the basis for complementary therapy practice; 5. demonstrate expert skill in providing care, within the scope of practice framework and multidisciplinary team; 6. demonstrate advanced clinical decision-making skills; 7. evaluate and critique current evidence base to set standards for best practice.

Know-How & Skill-Selectivity	<i>Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems</i>	<i>Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes</i>	<i>Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing</i>	<i>Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. respond appropriately within defined complementary therapy situations; 2. seek guidance as appropriate in situations beyond experience or competence. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. exercise relevant judgement in participating in the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of complementary therapy with appropriate supervision; 2. seek guidance in situations beyond experience or competence; 3. utilise knowledge, experience and learning resources from diverse sources to enhance competence. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate appropriate judgement and informed decision making in complementary therapy, using the skills of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analysis - critical thinking - problem solving, and - reflection; 2. evaluate practice and use current research findings to underpin clinical practice. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. critically evaluate with discrimination the complex theories and concepts underpinning professional practice; 2. utilise advanced knowledge and critical thinking skills to directly and indirectly provide optimum complementary therapy care; 3. develop and apply critical faculties to practice through advanced reflection skills; 4. demonstrate vision of professional practice that can be developed beyond current scope of practice; 5. act proactively as an educational resource for healthcare professionals; 6. apply critical faculties to professional practice through analysis of the underlying epistemology of its knowledge base.

Competence-Context	<i>Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts</i>	<i>Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts</i>	<i>Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts</i>	<i>Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. practice, with appropriate supervision, in a defined range of contexts in the complementary therapy and healthcare setting; 2. act responsibly in a practice context and in accordance with health and safety regulations; 3. transfer and apply theoretical concepts to practical situations encountered in the complementary therapy context; 4. demonstrate an understanding of, and apply basic principles appropriately to different situations. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. utilise skills in a wide range of complementary therapy and healthcare contexts, with supervision where appropriate; 2. seek and understand sources of evidence to underpin complementary therapy interventions; 3. act professionally in a range of practice settings; 4. analyse existing research and conduct research in the complementary therapy field. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. adopt a holistic approach to care and to the integration of knowledge; 2. conduct a systematic holistic assessment of client needs based on complementary therapy theory and evidence-based practice; 3. apply appropriate complementary therapy skills to conduct research, in order to better understand the application of research findings in a variety of complementary therapy contexts; 4. develop and demonstrate effective competences in collaboration and research; 5. plan care in consultation with the client taking into consideration the therapeutic regimes of all members of the health care team; 6. act ethically and be accountable for ensuring the maintenance of ethical and professional standards within the sphere of practice; 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate autonomy, experience, competence, accountability, authority and responsibility in complementary therapy practice; 2. use knowledge to autonomously identify, resolve and evaluate intellectual issues and practical problems that appear in practice; 3. identify and integrate research into areas of healthcare that can incorporate best evidence based practice; 4. use advanced skills to conduct an in-depth research study relevant to the field of complementary therapy.

Competence-Context [contd.]	<i>Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts</i>	<i>Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts</i>	<i>Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts</i>	<i>Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
			The learner is expected to be able to: 7. analyse and interpret information in the pursuit of solutions; 8. apply problem solving and implement planned complementary therapy care/interventions to achieve the identified outcomes; 9. evaluate client progress towards expected outcomes.	

Competence-Role	<i>Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/ or for allocation of resources: form and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups</i>	<i>Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/ or group outcomes; take significant supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work</i>	<i>Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups</i>	<i>Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. work within the boundaries of role competence and seek guidance when unsure how to intervene or act; 2. practice with supervision as appropriate; 3. demonstrate self-awareness; 4. interact with openness and sensitivity, and communicate effectively with others; 5. increase public awareness of the value of complementary therapy. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrate, where appropriate, an ability to act autonomously and be self-directed in terms of motivation and learning; 2. seek professional support/guidance where necessary; 3. take direction, accept criticism and use feedback to enhance own practice; 4. identify how skills and self-study can support individual practice and the practice of others by working collaboratively. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. engage in self-directed practice and effectively manage the complementary therapy care of clients/ groups/communities. 2. determine priorities for care based on need; 3. contribute proactively to the complementary therapy and healthcare community; 4. ensure quality assurance in management and practice; 5. reflect on own practice, and recognise and acknowledge limitations of current knowledge, skills, competence and transcend these limits through further learning; 6. take responsibility for own learning and practice in a culture respectful of academic and ethical standards. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. research, develop and evaluate complementary therapy practice; 2. enhance the professional body of complementary therapy knowledge; 3. contribute to education and innovation of complementary practice; 4. teach others from a broad and in-depth knowledge base, derived from reflection on complementary therapy practice and expertise; 5. critically review the working of teams and demonstrate skills in negotiation and the management of conflict.

Competence- Learning to Learn	<i>Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs</i>	<i>Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group</i>	<i>Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically</i>	<i>Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. recognise limitations of own level of knowledge, skill, attitude or competence; 2. demonstrate a capacity for independent and self-managed learning and take appropriate opportunities to enhance own level of knowledge, skill, attitude or competence by means of collaboration and self-study; 3. show evidence and understanding of interpersonal and communication skills required for collaboration. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. reflect on personal experience to integrate experiential learning with theoretical knowledge; 2. identify personal and professional development needs and address these needs; 3. take appropriate opportunities to enhance own level of knowledge, skill, attitude and competence; 4. show self-direction in use of time, motivation and commitment to enhancing professional development and engage in life-long learning 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. take responsibility for personal and professional development and demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning; 2. act to enhance the personal and professional development of self and others; 3. contribute to the learning experiences of colleagues through support, supervision and teaching; 4. educate clients/groups/communities to support and promote complementary therapy in a socially responsible manner; 5. provide teaching, facilitation, supervision, mentoring and assistance to students of complementary therapies. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify personal learning needs and the steps needed to meet them; 2. reflect critically on practice in order to improve it in self and others; 3. undertake complex and sustained analysis of practice and provide a balanced, logical and coherent conclusion; 4. continually evaluate personal contribution to current body of knowledge in practice; 5. utilise life-long learning skills to continue to develop knowledge applied to complementary therapy practice; 6. explore beyond scope of practice, developing effective and innovative complementary therapy practice; 7. demonstrate commitment to advancing the body of knowledge in complementary therapy practice, including publishing research in peer reviewed journals; 8. provide teaching, facilitation, supervision, mentoring and assistance to students of complementary therapies.

Competence-Insight	<i>Express an internalised personal world view, reflecting engagement with others</i>	<i>Express an internalised personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others</i>	<i>Express a comprehensive internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others</i>	<i>Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them</i>
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	<p>The learner is expected to be able to demonstrate an awareness of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the principles of professional regulation; 2. relevant ethical and social issues; 3. the limitations of own level of knowledge, skill, attitude or competence; 4. the need for personal reflection on complementary therapy practice. 	<p>The learner is expected to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. possess conceptual analytical skills to enable questioning of existing knowledge and theories with a view to exploring further the principles of professional regulation and the role of professional bodies; 2. demonstrate the principles of professional regulation and principles governing ethical behaviour in health care; 3. recognise the limitations of own level of knowledge, skill, attitude or competence; 4. nurture an approach to practice that emphasises personal growth and awareness of self and others 5. appreciate the need for personal reflection on complementary therapy practice; 6. appreciate current issues of concern to society and an appreciation of the ethical issues involved. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provide safe and effective practice based on sound theoretical knowledge; 2. practice in accordance with legislation and professional body requirements effecting complementary therapy practice; 3. practice within the limits of own competence and take measures to develop own competence; 4. demonstrate an understanding and consciousness of professional complementary therapy practice issues through the process of reflection on experience. 	<p>The learner is expected to be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify and implement action to improve practice and initiate change; 2. identify and critically evaluate ethical issues and work with others towards their resolution; 3. contribute effectively to the development of relevant professional body and legislative policy; 4. challenge assumptions and question values, beliefs and policies underpinning care at individual, team and organisational level; 5. actively contribute to the quality of care through research that can advance complementary therapy and healthcare knowledge; 6. develop advanced communication skills in order to present balanced arguments; 7. present structured, rational and evidenced coherent arguments using appropriate strategies; 8. engage confidently in academic and multi-professional debate.