



Yoga Therapy Educational Standards

everything you need to know





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Definition of Yoga Therapy

Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and wellbeing through the application of the teachings and practices of yoga.

Yoga is a scientific system of self-investigation, self-transformation, and self-realisation that originated in India. The teachings of yoga are rooted in the Vedas and grounded in classical texts and a rich oral tradition. This tradition recognises that the human being's essential nature is unchanging awareness that exists in relationship to and identification with the changing phenomena of the empirical world.

The yoga tradition views humans as a multi-dimensional system that includes all aspects of body; breath; mind; intellect; and emotions and their mutual interaction. Yoga is founded on the basic principle that intelligent practice can positively influence the direction of change within these human dimensions, which are distinct from an individual's unchanging nature or spirit.

The practices of yoga traditionally include, but are not limited to, asana, pranayama, meditation, mantra, chanting, mudra, ritual, and a disciplined lifestyle. Yoga therapy is the appropriate application of these teachings and practices in a therapeutic context in order to support a consistent yoga practice that will increase self-awareness and engage the

client/student's energy in the direction of desired goals. The goals of yoga therapy include eliminating, reducing, or managing symptoms that cause suffering; improving function; helping to prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of underlying causes of illness; and moving toward improved health and wellbeing. Yoga therapy also helps clients/students change their relationship to and identification with their condition.

The practice of yoga therapy requires specialised training and skill development to support the relationship between the client/student and therapist and to effect positive change for the individual.

Yoga therapy is informed by its sister science, Ayurveda. As part of a living tradition, yoga therapy continues to evolve and adapt to the cultural context in which it is practiced, and today, it is also informed by contemporary health sciences. Its efficacy is supported by an increasing body of research evidence, which contributes to the growing understanding and acceptance of its value as a therapeutic discipline.

Education standards for the training of Yoga Therapists

Yoga Australia's Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists are the benchmark for yoga therapy education in Australia and New Zealand. These Standards

represent the foundational requirements for a program to become accredited to deliver training of an appropriate quality.

Yoga Australia's Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists provide an important pillar for the growth and maturing of the field of yoga therapy in Australia and New Zealand and are aimed at:

- Supporting the professional and vocational development of yoga therapists.
- Establishing yoga therapy as a credible and valued modality within the broader field of integrative healthcare.
- Providing clear guidelines and parameters for schools wishing to deliver credible yoga therapy training.
- Provide a well-recognised and respected accreditation framework and process for yoga therapy education.
- Provide career path guidelines for yoga teachers wishing to further develop their skill and knowledge in the area of yoga therapy.

Further, the Standards:

- Emphasise the importance of yoga as the ancient tradition in which yoga therapy is rooted and from which its innumerable healing applications have sprung.
- Acknowledge the hours necessary to teach the competencies as a therapeutic discipline but also the time needed for students to integrate the depth and breadth of the teachings as a personal lifestyle and practice.

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- Recognise that to serve the clients of yoga therapy, yoga therapists must be grounded in the foundations of anatomy, basic physiology, and the common terminology of modern healthcare.
- Recognise that developing a therapeutic relationship is the hallmark of person-centred therapy.
- Acknowledge that yoga therapists are in relationship with related healthcare professions and the business world more broadly.

These Standards recognise that it is the prerogative of each school to teach from its own unique perspective, and have allowed for flexibility regarding which tools to emphasise within and beyond the required knowledge of certain subjects. Yoga Australia acknowledges and thanks the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) for its Educational Standards, upon which some of these standards are based. While these Standards relate to the accrediting of training programs, the credentialing of individual yoga therapists is also related to these Standards. Yoga Australia has separately published guidelines and application processes for registration as a yoga therapist. These Standards have five parts – Part A to Part E, providing the necessary details for the accreditation of programs.

Part A: Minimum Pre-Requisite Admission Requirements

To ensure that students undertaking a Yoga Australia Accredited Yoga Therapy Training Program have a solid foundation in the principles and practices of yoga and appropriate qualifications in yoga teaching, the following minimum pre-requisite admission requirements must be met, prior to enrolment in the yoga therapy program. It is the responsibility of the school delivering the yoga therapy program, to ensure these requirements are met and to provide evidence to this effect when applying for accreditation.

Pre requisite	Detail
1. Yoga teacher training	Minimum - Yoga Australia Level 1 (350hr) Registered Yoga Teacher, or equivalent.
2. Teaching experience	Minimum of 2 years and at least 300 hours regular yoga teaching, up to 1 year or up to 150 hours of which may be concurrent with Yoga Therapy training.
3. Personal practice	Minimum 2 years of regular practice.
4. First aid	Current First Aid certificate as required for all Yoga Australia registered yoga teachers.

Part B: Overview of Yoga Therapy Education

Education in Yoga Therapy must cover the Key Learning Areas outlines in Part D and the Competencies detailed in Part E.

Hours

The program must provide a minimum of 650 hours over a minimum two-year period. A minimum of 500 hours of the education is to be allocated to core curricular learning that develops the students' knowledge base. A minimum of 150 hours is to be allocated to practicum. A minimum of 350 hours of the core curricular learning are to be contact learning, which may comprise: residential or synchronous (real-time) distance learning. (See definitions below.) Up to 150 hours of the core curricular learning may be delivered by asynchronous (non-real-time) distance learning. Of the 150 hours practicum, students' direct case work with individual clients or therapeutic groups must be a minimum of 100 hours. The remaining 50 hours of practicum may be allocated to (any combination of): mentoring, case preparation by the student, practicum documentation. However it is recommended that mentoring account for at least 10 of these hours.

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Program Length

The minimum length of a Yoga Australia Accredited Yoga Therapy Training Program will be two (2) years.

This allows for not only the hours necessary to teach the competencies as a therapeutic discipline but also the time needed for students to integrate the depth and breadth of the teachings as a personal lifestyle and practice. The length of the program allows time to integrate knowledge and develop a skill set through contact hours, self-study, and practicum.

Faculty

Faculty members must have well-established expertise and experience in the course or program area(s) they teach, including training and certification in the field in which they teach, along with a minimum of three years practical experience. At least one faculty member will be a Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapist and it is recommended that faculty who teach yoga/yoga therapy related subjects are Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Teachers.

It is strongly recommended that at least one faculty member has the National Training and Assessment (TAE) qualification.

Part C: Definitions of Terms in the Competencies Profile and Training Requirements

Blended learning	Blended Learning is an approach to learning that combines distance learning and residential learning.
Competency	Competency is the expected, measurable knowledge, skills, and abilities at the completion of a training course or program.
Contact Learning	Contact Learning is an approach to learning in which faculty interact with students in curricular studies in real time. Contact learning may be residential or synchronous distance learning.
Course	A course provides depth and breadth in an area of study, such as anatomy and physiology, within the full training program.
Asynchronous Distance Learning	Asynchronous distance Learning is an approach to learning that takes place when a faculty member is in one location and a student or students are in another location or in dispersed locations and there is no 'real-time' interaction between faculty and students.
Synchronous Distance Learning	Synchronous distance Learning is an approach to learning that takes place when a faculty member is in one location and a student or students are in another location or in dispersed locations and there is 'real-time' interaction between faculty and students in curricular studies.
Faculty Member	Faculty Member is a teacher of the program, course, or workshop.
Group Yoga Therapy	Group Yoga Therapy is a session(s) in which a yoga therapist works with a small group of clients who have a similar condition or symptom(s), or with clients who have a variety of health or health-related conditions. A hallmark that differentiates group yoga therapy from group yoga teaching is the presence of an individual intake and assessment for each client in the group prior to commencing the class, personalisation of the practice(s) based on the individual assessment, and reassessment at regular intervals throughout a series of classes.
Homework	Homework is any preparation for a course or any activity that supplements student learning hours. It is not counted as part of the minimum 650 hours.
Mentor	Mentor is a person who supervises a student(s) in training and advises a student(s) in the practicum and his or her personal and professional growth throughout training. Mentorship is guidance provided to a student by a faculty member and/or assigned mentor, either in person, or at a distance with respect to the student's studies and management of his or her yoga therapy cases.

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Part C: Definitions of Terms in the Competencies Profile and Training Requirements (continued)

Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance Learning Hours are the amount of time a student or students spend in curriculum studies or mentorship in which the faculty member or mentor is in one location and a student or students are in another location or in dispersed locations. They may be synchronous or asynchronous. • Mentored Hours are the amount of time a student spends, either in person or at a distance, with a faculty member or assigned mentor who supports and/or tutors a student's curriculum studies and guides his or her personal growth in relation to maturing as a yoga therapist. • Practicum Preparation Hours are the amount of time spent preparing students to deliver yoga therapy, including learning case-taking skills, assessment, and protocol development. Teaching tools may include clinical observation of yoga therapy sessions, role playing, case study, and didactic learning. • Practicum Hours are the amount of time a student spends in the practical application of previously studied yoga therapy theory as it relates to the competencies under the mentorship of a faculty member or assigned mentor. Practicum hours are divided into: Practicum Delivery Hours and Practicum Documentation and Mentorship Hours. • Practicum Delivery Hours are the amount of time a student leads the delivery of one-on-one or group yoga therapy sessions in real time. During practicum delivery, a student takes responsibility for the full delivery of the yoga therapy session, whether observed or non-observed by mentors and/or classmates. Depending on when protocol development takes place, it can be counted under practicum delivery hours or practicum documentation and mentorship hours. • Practicum Documentation and Mentorship Hours are the amount of time a student spends with his/her mentor discussing cases, including support in protocol development, when necessary, documenting cases, and preparing reports for his/her mentor. Depending on when protocol development takes place, it can be counted under practicum delivery hours or practicum documentation and mentorship hours. • Residential Hours are the amount of time a student spends in the same physical location in face-to-face curricular studies with faculty. • Transfer Hours are hours completed in another yoga therapy training program or educational institution that can be applied to total hours for a yoga therapy program a student is completing.
Practicum	Practicum is a course of study designed to provide practical application of previously studied yoga therapy theory, as it relates to the competencies, under the mentorship of a faculty member or mentor.
Program	Program is the full curriculum for the yoga therapy training. It includes a group or series of organised courses, lessons, or units of instruction pursued to attain a yoga therapy certification.
Residential Learning	Residential Learning is an approach to learning in which a student is in the same physical location in face-to face curricular studies with faculty.
Workshop	Workshop is a learning format that focuses on a topic of study within a yoga therapy-related course.

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Part C: Definitions of Terms in the Competencies Profile and Training Requirements (continued)

Definitions of Additional, Related Terms

Continuing Education	Continuing Education is a course that leads to an occupational objective, enhances education in a specific program area, or is required for renewal of a certification.
Co-requisite	Co-requisite is a course or workshop that can be taken concurrently with a program or with another course or workshop.
Prerequisite	Prerequisite is a course or topic of study that must be completed before another course or topic of study can be started.

Category	Details	Minimum Hours
Section 1 – Yoga Foundations	Yoga Teachings and Philosophy	35 hours
	Yoga and the Mind	35 hours
	Yogic Framework for Health and Disease	50 hours
Section 2 – Biomedical and psychological Foundations	Anatomy and Physiology	75 hours
	Additional Biomedical Knowledge	20 hours
	Psychology and Mental Health	45 hours
	Additional knowledge	15 hours
Section 3 – Yoga Therapy tools and therapeutic skills	Body Mind Integration	15hours
	Yoga Therapy Tools	75 hours
	Basic Principles of the Therapeutic Relationship	35 hours
	Principles and Skills for Educating Clients/Students	60 hours
Section 4 – Practicum	Principles and Skills for Working with Groups	15 hours
	Providing Yoga Therapy	150 hours
	Section 5 – Professional Practice	
Section 5 – Professional Practice	Ethical Principles	10 hours
	Legal, Regulatory, and Business Issues Pertaining to Yoga Therapy	5 hours
	Relationships with Peers, Mentors, Clinicians, and Organisations	5 hours
	Personal and Professional Development and Continuing Education	5 hours

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Part E: Competencies Profile

Section 1: Yoga Foundations

Suggested Guidelines: 120 hours minimum for this section

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Yoga Teachings and Philosophy	35 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Familiarity with the evolution of the teachings and philosophy of the yoga tradition and its relevance and application to yoga therapy, including teachings from Vedic and post-Vedic periods, Samkhya, Yoga, Tantra, and Ayurveda. Examples of concepts and models from the above teachings and philosophy relevant to yoga therapy, include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. tanmatra/bhuta/indriya (subtle element/gross elements/senses); b. purusha/prakrti (consciousness/material world); c. pancamaya kosha (dimensions of the human system); d. guna (fundamental forces of nature); and e. duhkha (suffering/discomfort).
Yoga and the Mind	35 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Knowledge of yoga perspectives on the structure, states, functioning, and conditions of the mind, including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > drashtr (seer), drshya (seen); > antahkarana citta (consciousness), buddhi (intellect), ahamkara (ego), manas (mind); > citta vrtti (activities of the mind), citta parinama (structural changes in the mind), vyutthana/nirodha (mind's potential for distraction and focus); > artha (cognition), bhava (mood), svabhava (inborn nature), vasana (residue of experience), samskara (conditioned pattern of thinking and behavior); and > states of mind: mudha (stupefied/dull), kshipta (disturbed), vikshipta (alternating between distraction and focus), ekagrata (one-pointed), nirodha (focus enveloped/held/ restrained), vaishvanara (waking), taijasa (dream), prajña (deep sleep), turiya (beyond). > Knowledge of yoga perspectives on distracted/disturbed conditions of mind and their expressions as expressed in such texts as the Yoga Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and other texts, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > klesha (affliction); > lobha, krodha, and moha (greed, anger, attachment); > duhkha and daurmanasya (suffering/discomfort and negative attitude/thinking), sarupyam (identification with the contents of the mind or seer taking the same form as the mind); and > antaraya (obstacles to progress in yoga).

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Section 1: Yoga Foundations (continued)

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Yogic Framework for Health and Disease	50 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the basic perspectives on health and disease from yoga and Ayurveda relevant to the practice of yoga therapy, including the concepts of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • panca maya (kosha) (fundamental structure of the human system); • subtle anatomy; • tri-dosha (effect of the elements on the physical body); • tri-guna (effect of sattva (equilibrium), rajas (activity), tamas [inertia]); • prakrti/vikrti (dosha constitution at birth/imbalance of the dosha currently expressed in the body); • ama (undigested food, emotions, etc. accumulated in the body); • agni (internal fire(s) and their contribution to health); • prana vayu (prana, apana, vyana, udana, samana); • prana prakopa (disturbance of the vayu); • surya/chandra (sun/moon); • brmhana/langhana (expansion/contraction); and • vyuha model: heya (the symptoms), hetu (the causes), hana (the goal), upaya (the tools). • In depth knowledge of categorising illness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/evolution of disease (samprapti [pathogenesis]), including but not limited to direction, intensity, onset, and duration and their influence on the ease or difficulty of healing and disease management. • Setting priorities: symptoms/pacification (shamana [short term]) and purification/strengthening (shodhana [long term]).

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Part E: Competencies Profile

Section 2: Biomedical and Psychological Foundations

Suggested Guidelines: 170 hours minimum for this section

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Anatomy and Physiology	75 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Knowledge of human anatomy and physiology, including all major systems of the body and their interrelationships, as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist. > Knowledge of biomechanics and movement as they relate to the practice of yoga and the work of a yoga therapist. > Knowledge of common pathologies and disorders of all the major systems, including symptoms, management, illness trajectories, and contraindications, as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist.
Additional Biomedical Knowledge	20 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Familiarity with commonly used drugs and surgical procedures, as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist. > Familiarity with common medical terminology. > Knowledge of how to reference current healthcare information relevant to the work of a yoga therapist, including pathologies, disorders, drugs, and surgical procedures, as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist.
Psychology and Mental Health	45 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Basic knowledge of commonly occurring mental health conditions—from psychological distress to psychiatric conditions—their symptoms, and common approaches/interventions, as they relate to the work of a yoga therapist. > Basic knowledge of psychological concepts and terminology, including mood, cognition, behavior, and personality, as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist.
Additional Knowledge	15 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Familiarity with models of human development, including developmental stages, lifecycles, and personality, and their importance to medical and psychological health and well-being. > Familiarity with the influence of familial, social, cultural, and religious conditioning on mental and medical perspectives of health and healing.
Body Mind Integration	15 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Knowledge of the interaction of the body, breath, mind, intellect, and emotions in health and well-being.

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Part E: Competencies Profile

Section 3: Yoga Therapy Tools and Therapeutic Skills

Suggested Guidelines: 185 hours minimum for this section

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Yoga Therapy Tools	75 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of the application of yama and niyama in the context of yoga therapy. • In-depth knowledge of the range of yoga practices and their potential therapeutic effects for common conditions. Practices may include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asana (postures); • pranayama (regulated breathing); • meditation and relaxation techniques such as bhavana (visualisation), mantra (recitation), and ritualised activities such as nyasa and mudra; and • vihara (lifestyle modifications) including basic yogic dietary concepts. • In-depth knowledge of contraindications of yoga practices for specific conditions and circumstances.
Basic Principles of the Therapeutic Relationship	35 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of, and observed capacity for, well-developed communication skills: listening, presence, directive and non-directive dialogue. • Demonstrated ability to recognise, adjust, and adapt to specific client/student needs in the evolving therapeutic/professional relationship. • Demonstrated ability to recognise and manage the subtle dynamics inherent in the therapist/client relationship. • In-depth knowledge of the scope of practice of yoga therapy and how to assess the need for referral to other professional services.
Principles and Skills for Educating Clients/ Students	60 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of and demonstrated ability to implement effective teaching methods, adapt to unique styles of learning, provide supportive and effective feedback, acknowledge the client's/student's progress, and cope with unique difficulties/successes. • In-depth knowledge of and demonstrated ability to transmit the value of self-awareness and self-responsibility throughout the therapeutic process. • In-depth knowledge of and demonstrated ability to develop and adjust appropriate practice strategies to the client/student. • In-depth knowledge of how to translate practicum preparation, such as clinical observation of yoga therapy sessions, role playing and case study into effective practicum delivery.
Principles and Skills for Working with Groups	15 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge of and demonstrated ability to design, implement, and evaluate group programs. • Familiarity with group dynamics and techniques, including communication skills, time management, and the establishment of priorities and boundaries, as well as techniques to address the specific needs of individual participants, to the degree possible in a group setting.

Section 4: Practicum

Suggested Guidelines: 150 hours minimum for this section

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Providing Yoga Therapy	Minimum of 150 hours of practicum delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated ability to conduct intake and assess the client/student, including: • Taking a history of the client and his/her condition(s); and • Assessing the current condition using the tools relevant to the yoga therapist, including an evaluation of the physical, energetic, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. • Demonstrated ability to elicit the goals, expectations, and aspirations of the client/student. • Demonstrated ability to integrate information from the intake, evaluation, and observation to develop a working assessment of the client's condition, limitations, and possibilities. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of how to determine which aspects of the client/student's conditions, goals, and aspirations might be addressed through yoga therapy. • Demonstrated ability to identify priorities and set both long- and short-term goals with the client/student. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of pacification, purification, and strengthening strategies. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of strategies that address common disorders and pathologies of the major human systems and common mental health conditions, as well as other goals and aspirations of the student as relevant to the work of a yoga therapist. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of how to combine intake, evaluation, observations, and working assessment to develop an appropriate practice or session strategy for individual clients/students as well as group classes, taking into consideration the holistic nature of the individual. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of how to choose and prioritise the use of yoga tools and techniques, including selecting, sequencing, adapting, and modifying yoga practices appropriate to the needs of clients. • Demonstrated ability to teach or deliver the appropriate practices for individuals as well as groups, taking into consideration the assessment of their conditions, limitations, possibilities, and the overall practice strategy. • Demonstrated ability to facilitate the client/student's experience of the practice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing instruction, demonstration, education of the client/student using multimodal strategies of education such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning tools; and • providing supportive strategies for the client/student to actively participate in his/her practice, such as a means to remember his/her practice (e.g., auditory and visual tools). • Demonstrated ability to develop and maintain therapeutic relationships including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fostering trust by establishing an appropriate therapeutic environment through privacy, confidentiality, and safety; and • practicing effective, client/student-centered communication based upon a respect for, and sensitivity to, individual, familial, cultural, social, ethnic, and religious factors. • demonstrated ability to provide follow up and re-planning, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering feedback. Re-assess, and refine the practice and to determine short-term and long-term goals and priorities; • addressing new and changing conditions, goals, aspirations, and priorities of the student/client and to provide appropriate support; and • providing appropriate closure for the therapy sessions.

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Part E: Competencies Profile

Section 5: Professional Practice

Suggested Guidelines: 25 hours minimum for this section

Category	Suggested hours	Description
Ethical Principles	10 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of yoga practices and methods for self-inquiry related to establishing, practicing, and maintaining ethical principles. • In-depth knowledge of generally accepted ethical principles of health care codes of conduct and yoga's ethical principles. • Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge of generally accepted ethical principles and related concepts from the yoga tradition to professional interactions and relationships. • In-depth knowledge of the scope of practice of yoga therapy, resulting in the demonstrated ability to discern the need for referral to other modalities. • Knowledge of the extent of one's own individual training, skills, and evolving experience in yoga therapy, and knowledge of the importance of practicing within such parameters.
Legal, Regulatory, and Business Issues Pertaining to Yoga Therapy	5 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of current relevant local, state, and national laws and regulations impacting the work of a yoga therapist. • Basic knowledge of business practices relevant to the work of a yoga therapist, including record keeping, planning, and financial management.
Relationships with Peers, Mentors, Clinicians, and Organisations	5 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge of other healthcare fields and their potential role in and relevance to the work of a yoga therapist. • Basic knowledge of how to establish, maintain, and utilise a referral network of peers and related healthcare practitioners and organisations. • Basic knowledge of how to develop and maintain ongoing collaborative relationships.
Personal and Professional Development and Continuing Education	5 hours minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the fundamental value of ongoing personal practice, long-term mentorship, and skills maintenance/development through continuing education. • Knowledge of when and how to seek advice and support for case consultation, educational advancement, and personal practice.

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Terms Used in the Competencies

Familiarity: Acquire introductory knowledge of a subject sufficient to bring the student's awareness to the existence and central essence of that subject and for the student to know when further knowledge is required for the practice of yoga therapy.

Basic Knowledge Acquire an overview of the broad principles of a subject, including a general awareness of its relevance to and/or potential use in the practice of yoga therapy.

Knowledge: Develop an understanding of all aspects of a subject and its specific applications to the practice of yoga therapy.

In-Depth Knowledge: Through study and practicum, acquire a confident, in-depth knowledge of a subject and its multiple applications as well as its potential limitations in the practice of yoga therapy.

Demonstrated Ability: Demonstrate the ability to undertake particular tasks associated with the work of a yoga therapist.

Demonstrated Ability to Apply Knowledge: Demonstrate the application of knowledge to specific cases.

Scope of Practice for Yoga Therapy

Background

This Scope of Practice (Scope) forms part of Yoga Australia's (YA) professional standards for yoga therapists. It

accompanies the YA Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists¹, which represents world's best-practice and aligns with the standards of the International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT). As the peak body for yoga in Australia, YA provides an accreditation process for recognising training programs that meet these standards and a registration process for credentialing individual yoga therapists who meet YA's standards.

At least one faculty member will be a Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapist and it is recommended that faculty who teach yoga/yoga therapy related subjects are Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Teachers.

It is strongly recommended that at least one faculty member has the National Training and Assessment (TAE) qualification.

Introduction

This Scope document was developed by YA primarily to inform Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapists about the activities, practices, skills, and knowledge that YA believes every registered yoga therapist should be able to utilise and responsibly apply in professional practice. Because YA is not a licensing body for yoga therapists, the Scope is not a legally binding document. Rather, it serves as a set of guidelines and parameters for Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapists and the yoga therapy community. Additionally, the Scope is intended to be an information resource for healthcare practitioners, clients, healthcare insurers, and other individuals and entities that may be interested in learning what yoga therapy is and how it is practiced. YA acknowledges that there are varying approaches to and styles of yoga therapy,

so the Scope is not meant to prescribe or standardise the practice. Yoga therapy may adapt to diverse cultural and social environments and takes into account modern medical research and practice innovations. As such, each Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapist may apply skills and knowledge according to his/her training in an appropriate and adaptive way, consistent with the therapeutic principles and accepted conventions of yoga therapy.

It is important to note that this Scope is not meant to imply in any way that yoga therapists are physicians or practitioners of other licensed healthcare fields who are capable of diagnosing and treating conditions from the perspectives of these professions. Yoga therapists may, however, hold additional qualifications in other healthcare fields that enable them to utilise practices that fall outside of the Scope set forth in this document. In such instances, this Scope is not intended to limit in any way practices that may fall under the scope of practice of the concurrent healthcare qualification, or otherwise impede or prevent a licensed healthcare practitioner from practicing according to their scope of practice.

It is recommended that all yoga therapists provide a client information document to ensure that clients understand the nature and extent of the services being provided; the practitioner's education, training, experience, and other qualifications; and the fact that yoga therapy is not a licensed healthcare profession in the state or other jurisdiction in which they practice (unless this does not apply). As with any other healthcare provider, it is the responsibility of a yoga therapist to ensure the safety of a client at all times and to refer to a more appropriate therapist or medical practitioner when a

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client seeks care for conditions that cannot be appropriately addressed within the Scope.

Framework

Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and well-being through the application of the teachings and practices of yoga. The yoga tradition views each human being as a multidimensional system that includes numerous aspects—including body, breath, and mind (intellect and emotions)—and their mutual interaction. Yoga therapy is founded on the basic principle that intelligent practice can positively influence the direction of change within these human dimensions, which are distinct from an individual's unchanging nature or spirit. The goals of yoga therapy include eliminating, reducing, and/or managing symptoms that cause suffering; improving function; helping to prevent the occurrence or re-occurrence of underlying causes of illness; and moving toward improved health and well-being.²

Yoga therapists draw from the principles of yoga and the full range of yogic practices and assessment skills, as well as familiarity with biomedical and psychological foundational knowledge. Yoga therapists work with the client to develop and implement a self-empowering therapeutic plan³ appropriate to the client's needs and oriented around prevention and health promotion.

A Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapist has undertaken specialised training beyond that of a yoga teacher, in accordance with YA's Educational Standards for the Training

of Yoga Therapists. She/he adheres to the Ethics Guidelines⁴ and Code of Professional Conduct⁵ relating to the practice of yoga therapy as defined by YA and commit to not making false or inaccurate claims about yoga's therapeutic and healing capacities.

Yoga therapy may occur in the following settings:

- Individualised one-on-one yoga therapy sessions. (If the client is a child/minor, the state or other local jurisdiction laws governing the safety of children/minors are to be adhered to.)
- Group yoga therapy. Group Yoga Therapy is a session(s) in which a yoga therapist works with a small group of clients who have a similar condition or symptom(s), or with clients who have a variety of health or health-related conditions. A hallmark that differentiates group yoga therapy from group yoga teaching is the presence of an individual intake and assessment⁶ for each client in the group prior to commencing the class, personalisation of the practice(s) based on the individual assessment, and reassessment at regular intervals throughout a series of classes.

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1. A yoga therapist is qualified to:

- Practice in a way that responsibly reflects his/her yoga therapy education, training, and experience.
- Assess each individual client using qualitative and/or quantitative yoga therapy assessment tools and maintain records according to any applicable statutory requirements.
- Use the assessment process to identify any risk factors or contraindications to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the yoga therapy intervention and to develop an appropriate therapeutic plan.
- Develop a therapeutic plan and/or provide advice within the yoga therapy framework in accordance with the individual client's needs, goals, learning style, life circumstances, and access to resources such as time and equipment.
- Guide clients in implementing the therapeutic plan, aimed at prevention and health promotion.
- Teach an integrated set of practices aligned with the needs and goals of the individual and consistent with the yoga therapy framework.

Include yoga practices such as asana (postures), pranayama (breath-work), relaxation, meditation, mudra (energetic gestures and seals), bandha (energy locks), mantra (sacred sounds), mindfulness, bhavana (imagery), sankalpa (affirmation/intention), yogic lifestyle, and dietary advice⁷ according to the yoga therapy framework, education in yoga philosophy, and other practices in the yoga tradition and for which the therapist has received appropriate education and training.

- Provide appropriate follow-up and review at regular intervals.
- Use and modify practices of yoga therapy to support the client and help the client manage their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.
- Make adjustments⁸ to postures by verbal instruction or gentle touch to the area of the body that needs modification.
- Provide clear goals for each yoga therapy session.
- Provide clear instructions for any home practice that is recommended, with appropriate feedback mechanisms.
- Foster the client's own support networks, independent practice, and self-responsibility for his/her own well-being.
- Provide clear processes for client feedback.
- Provide guidance for lifestyle changes to create improved health and well-being according to the yoga therapy framework provided in yoga therapy training.

A yoga therapist is NOT qualified to:

- Work with clients presenting with issues outside the therapist's areas of competence/professional expertise.
- Advertise himself or herself as a licensed healthcare practitioner, unless he/she is also a licensed healthcare practitioner.
- Perform physical adjustments,⁸ manipulations, or massage, unless appropriately qualified to do so.
- Undertake individual or group psychological counselling, unless appropriately qualified to do so.
- Recommend specific lifestyle or nutrition changes outside of a yoga therapy framework, unless appropriately qualified to do so.

Yoga Therapy Educational Standards

<p>2. A yoga therapist is qualified by virtue of his/her knowledge of health and health systems to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a basic understanding of typical disease states and associated symptoms, the effects of medications, and associated contraindications. The therapist will use this understanding to inform what is recommended as a suitable practice for each individual. • Understand and integrate information provided by diagnoses from other qualified healthcare professionals. • Have a basic understanding of different treatments and procedures from a variety of sources, or be able to identify and source credible and relevant information on other healthcare modalities, as needed. • Have a basic understanding of health reports obtained from a variety of sources. • Have a basic understanding of how to manage interpersonal issues that may arise in therapeutic relationships. 	<p>A yoga therapist is NOT qualified to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnose a medical or psychological condition, unless qualified to do so as a licensed healthcare practitioner.
<p>3. A yoga therapist is qualified to communicate with other health professionals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and provide referrals from and to other appropriate healthcare providers. • Be part of a multi-disciplinary team when necessary or useful to optimise the care of the client. • Engage with medical or other healthcare professionals (when appropriate) and use best-practice referral/ feedback processes to optimise client health and well-being outcomes. 	<p>A yoga therapist is NOT qualified to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise about other health treatment modalities, other than referring clients to appropriate personnel or services, unless appropriately qualified to do so. • Request diagnostic tests or procedures outside their professional areas of expertise or qualifications. • Interpret raw medical or psychological diagnostic test results, unless qualified to do so as a licensed healthcare practitioner. • Prescribe medication, unless qualified to do so as a licensed healthcare practitioner. • Prescribe nutritional supplements or herbs from Western or traditional medical methods such as Chinese Medicine or Ayurveda, unless appropriately qualified to do so. • Advise clients about ceasing medication prescribed by another healthcare practitioner, unless qualified to do so as a licensed healthcare practitioner. • Perform any invasive procedures, unless qualified to do so as a licensed healthcare practitioner. • Make recommendations regarding the advice or treatment provided by another healthcare professional, unless appropriately qualified to do so.

4. As part of their professional practice, a yoga therapist is required to:

- Meet the requirements for registration as a Yoga Australia Registered Yoga Therapist, by way of either graduation from a Yoga Australia accredited program, an accepted grandparenting arrangement, or an established reciprocity arrangement.
- Maintain all qualifications and ongoing continuing education / continuing professional development requirements.
- Maintain registration with Yoga Australia.
- Maintain confidentiality of client information, including health records.
- Comply with the YA Ethics Guidelines and Code of Professional Conduct.
- Observe all applicable state or other local jurisdiction laws relating to the practice of healthcare.

5. As part of their professional practice, a yoga therapist is encouraged to:

- Acquire a basic understanding of current yoga evidence-based practices.
- Maintain a network of healthcare practitioner peers for the purpose of referrals.

¹Link to Yoga Australia Yoga Therapy Standards

²Link to Yoga Australia Definition of Yoga Therapy

³The term 'therapeutic plan' refers to the implementation of yoga therapy and does not imply providing any medical treatment.

⁴Link to Yoga Australia Ethics Guidelines

⁵Link to Yoga Australia Code of Professional Conduct for Yoga Therapist

⁶Assessment refers to assessing a client's presenting condition(s) and underlying cause(s) according to the yoga therapy framework and determining the appropriate yoga therapy goals, priorities,

and tools useful for improving the client's condition. It does not include any medical assessment, but may be informed by a medical assessment report provided by a referring healthcare practitioner.

⁷Dietary advice refers to advice relating to foods that may support or hinder a client's progress toward well-being, according to the tradition in which the yoga therapist is trained. It does not include the prescribing of herbs or other nutritional supplements, nor imply that a yoga therapist is a nutritionist or Ayurvedic practitioner, unless he/she has other appropriate qualifications.

⁸Adjustment. A yoga therapist may need to support and assist a

client's proprioceptive awareness and alignment through appropriate use of touch to modify the application of a yoga practice. This should only occur after permission has been verbally requested by the therapist and verbally provided by the client and/or documented in the client's health record.