

***Competency standards  
in Music Therapy***

***The Australian Music Therapy  
Association Inc.***

***1996 (revised 2002/2004)***

***Units of competency***

- 1. Music therapy skills***
- 2. Psychosocial knowledge***
- 3. Clinical knowledge***
- 4. Music therapy knowledge***
- 5. Music therapy practice***

***Competencies marked with an asterisk (\*) must be taught by a person who holds current registration as a Registered Music Therapist with the Australian Music Therapy Association Inc.***

### **Preamble.**

The purpose of this document is to outline the competencies that must be acquired by students on graduation from courses accredited by the Australian Music Therapy Association for entry to the profession. These competencies are developed through course work and by clinical training.

Accredited courses in music therapy must provide education and training in these competencies.

The competencies are also used as a reference point:

- In the Validation of courses that have been accredited with AMTA Inc., and
- Approving appropriate Continuing Professional Development courses.

### **Unit of competency 1**

#### **Music therapy skills:**

#### 1. Principal instrument/voice is at an advanced stage of musicianship

1.1 Can play a wide range of music encompassing different styles and idioms.

#### 2. Improvises on piano or guitar:

2.1 Improvises freely in a range of styles\*

2.2 Improvises to an idea or emotion or movement\*

2.3 Improvises using different modes/scales on keyboard/guitar and tuned percussion instruments\*

2.4 Improvises individually or in a group on keyboard/guitar or tuned/untuned percussion instruments\*

#### 3. Composes songs/music

3.1 Composes songs/music for a client/s based on client choices and direction\*

3.2 Composes songs/music for a client or group of clients in order to support the achievement of specific therapeutic goals\*

3.3 Composes songs/music in a range of styles for a variety of clients\*

#### 4. Plays repertoire suitable to a wide range of ages, interests or culture

(Note: the word "plays" in this document refers to live performance of a song or piece of music)

4.1 Plays songs and music suitable for infants, children, adolescents, adults and older adults

4.2 Plays songs and music of a wide range of genres including any of the following styles; popular, rock and roll, country and western, jazz, blues and nostalgia

4.3 Plays repertoire from memory

4.4 Can sing and accompany melodies at sight

#### 5. Sings

5.1 Sings while accompanying self on portable accompanying instrument or keyboard

5.2 Sings clearly with voice leading qualities

#### 6. Is aurally competent:

6.1 Can sing and play melodies by ear

6.2 Can transpose melodies either sight read or by ear

#### 7. Understands vocal production and voice care

7.1 Can identify and demonstrate warm-up techniques crucial to vocal care for self and client/s

7.2 Can identify and solve problems in vocal production for self/ and client/s.

## **Unit of competency 2**

### **Psychosocial skill and knowledge:**

#### 1. Understands contemporary psychological theories and their applications

- 1.1 Can describe the salient features of cognitive, behavioural, existential, humanistic, psychoanalytic and transpersonal theories
- 1.2 Can differentiate between educational and therapeutic contexts in which these theories have influence.
- 1.3 Can articulate the meaning of the term “therapy” in historical and cultural contexts.

#### 2. Understands the theory of group work and group dynamics:

- 2.1 Can identify major theories of group work and group dynamics
- 2.2 Understands various types of groups and their therapeutic applications
- 2.3 Understands the role of the therapist in group work
- 2.4 Can identify therapeutic goals addressed within group work
- 2.5 Can identify stages in group development
- 2.6 Can identify styles of leadership suitable to group work
- 2.7 Understands the role of evaluation in group work
- 2.8 Can identify when group work rather than individual work is appropriate to meet therapeutic goals

#### 3. Communication skills and processing:

- 3.1 Can use interpersonal skills to engage clients and relate to them verbally as well as non-verbally and musically\*
- 3.2 Can use discussion effectively in processing material with individuals and groups\*
- 3.3 Can interpret key emotions present in verbal as well as non-verbal and musical communication with individuals\*
- 3.4 Can process key emotions expressed in a group context both verbally and musically\*

#### 4. Development through the life span:

- 4.1 Understands major theories which have contributed to knowledge of the musical, cognitive, motor, social and language development of the normal child
- 4.2 Can describe the development of the normal child including musical, cognitive, motor, social and language development
- 4.3 Understands theories which contribute to an understanding of human development through the lifespan
- 4.4 Can describe influences on individual development including socio-cultural influences (the influence of cultural background, customs, beliefs, values and institutions).

#### 5. Theories of stress, loss and grief.

- 5.1 Understands the impact of stressful life events on the individual and family
- 5.2 Understands the impact of loss and grief on the individual and family
- 5.3 Can describe theories of stress and coping, grief and bereavement
- 5.3 Can identify coping strategies and defence mechanisms
- 5.4 Understand the impact of socio-economic status on the individual and family
- 5.5 Understands the impact of cultural dislocation on the individual and family

### **Unit of competency 3**

#### **Clinical knowledge:**

##### 1. Understands aetiology, and characteristics of disorders and conditions in the treatment of clients of all ages.

In any context, has the resources to:

- 1.1 Identify major features of difficulty/disorder of individual or group
- 1.2 Discover necessary information about an individual's circumstances through appropriate resources such as case notes, research literature and information from staff/carers/family members/the individual
- 1.3 Identify causes of the person's circumstances by same means as 1.2
- 1.4 Identify the therapeutic treatments/interventions adopted in working with clients.

##### 2. Understands milestones of development through the life span

In any context, has the resources to:

- 2.1 Identify developmental stage of individual client or group members
- 2.2 Define key tasks or abilities of the identified developmental stage
- 2.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the key skills of the life stage in terms of musical, language, motor, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

##### 3. Understands impact of policy on health/welfare service:

In any context has the resources to:

- 3.1 Identify philosophy of practice of the setting
- 3.2 Identify government policies which impact on the service
- 3.3 Identify community attitudes which impact on the service and service recipients

### **Unit of competency 4**

#### **Music therapy knowledge\***

##### 1. Understands music therapy

- 1.1 Understands the history of the profession of music therapy\*
- 1.2 Can identify milestones in the development of the profession and key individuals who have shaped the profession world-wide\*
- 1.3 Is familiar with the Constitution of the Australian Music Therapy AMTA Inc. and requirements for Registration\*
- 1.4 Can identify settings and client group(s) with whom music therapy is practised\*
- 1.5 Can identify and describe key approaches and methods used in music therapy practice\*
- 1.6 Can identify, describe and demonstrate the philosophies, theories and clinical work of significant theorists and practitioners in music therapy and the techniques used in their approach.\*
- 1.7 Understands the role of the therapist in different therapy contexts (e.g., individual/group/family/community).\*

##### 2. Understands the influence of music on behaviour

- 2.1 Selects appropriate pre-composed music for application in work with individuals or groups\*
- 2.2 Is aware of the potential of pre-composed music for eliciting physiological and psychological responses\*
- 2.3 Can anticipate and process responses to pre-recorded music in both individual and group settings\*
- 2.4 Can select and implement appropriate receptive methods to accompany pre-recorded music including relaxation, imagery, movement and reminiscence\*

3. Understands music therapy research:

- 3.1 Can prepare and present literature reviews on aspects of music therapy\*
- 3.2 Can identify most suitable research methods to be applied to research questions in music therapy\*
- 3.3 Can identify and describe the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods and their applications in music therapy research\*
- 3.4 Understands the application of statistical methods in quantitative music therapy research\*

4. Understands the context of music therapy within other creative arts therapies, education and allied health professions

***Unit of competency 5  
Music therapy practice \****

In any context:

1. Understands the role of music therapy as it applies in the context\*

- 1.1 Can communicate salient features of the role of the music therapist in the facility/program\*
- 1.2 Can identify and communicate the role of the music therapist in the team\*

2. Receives referrals

- 2.1 Can communicate criteria for referral to the team/other workers\*
- 2.2 Can communicate with client(s) to follow up referral where appropriate\*

3. Assessment

- 3.1 Develops and uses appropriate assessments\*
- 3.2 Can identify purpose of assessment\*
- 3.3 Can identify needs of client or group\*
- 3.4 Can communicate assessment outcomes to others\*

4. Program design

- 4.1 Can use knowledge of needs of clients to develop goals and objectives for a music therapy program\*
- 4.2 Uses suitable resources and techniques to facilitate an effective music therapy program\*
- 4.3 Modifies program design when goals and objectives change or when client response demands it\*
- 4.4 Can communicate rationale for program design\*

5. Evaluation

- 5.1 Can identify methods of evaluation suitable to the music therapy program being undertaken\*
- 5.2 Can use evaluations appropriately\*

5.3 Can develop suitable evaluation procedure where none currently exists or is appropriate\*

5.4 Can communicate rationale for evaluation\*

#### 6. Understands the musical material of clients

6.1 Is able to contribute to multi-disciplinary team diagnoses of clients based on their musical material\*

6.2 Is able to identify stage of musical development based on clients musical material\*

6.2 Is able to undertake client assessments and evaluations based on their musical material\*

6.3 Is able to assist clients to access musical instruments in order for them to take part in music making\*

6.4 Understands the role and application of improvisation in a range of music therapy approaches\*

#### 7. Reporting

In any context:

7.1 Keeps records documenting salient features of progress in music therapy in the format required by the facility\*

7.2 Reports progress in music therapy as required by the facility/client/family\*

#### 8. Ethics

8.1 Understands the rights of individuals with whom music therapists work including confidentiality and ethical practice\*

8.2 Understands the code of ethics of the Australian Music Therapy AMTA Inc.\*

8.3 Behaves ethically in the therapeutic context with regard to the rights of people receiving music therapy services\*

#### 9. Self Care

9.1 Understand the importance of self-care as a music therapist\*

9.2 Engages in self-reflection around clinical experiences, personal growth and support\*.