



Australian
Music
Therapy
Association

Competency standards in Music Therapy

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

Units of competency

A. Music Skills for Therapy Practice

B. Psychosocial knowledge

C. Clinical knowledge

D. Music therapy knowledge

E. Music therapy practice

Units of competency A, D and E must be taught by a person who holds current registration as a Registered Music Therapist with the Australian Music Therapy Association Inc., and has at least two years full time clinical experience (or part time equivalent).

Preamble.

The purpose of this document is to outline the core competencies that should be acquired by students on graduation from courses accredited by the Australian Music Therapy Association for entry to the profession. Accredited courses in music therapy must provide education and training in these competencies.

The competencies are also used as a reference point:

- For Accreditation of new courses
- In the Validation of courses that have been accredited with AMTA Inc., and
- In approving appropriate Continuing Professional Development activities.

A. Music Skills for Therapy Practice:

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

- 1.1 Plays a music instrument, including voice, at a skill level that is effective therapeutically as evidenced by clinical supervisor reports.

2. Improvisation skill:

- 2.1 Can improvise freely in a range of styles
2.2 Improvises sensitively to elicit and respond to an idea, emotion or movement
2.3 Can improvise to engage individual clients and groups responsively
2.4 Can expand musical ideas through empathic techniques, such as meeting, matching, mirroring and extending

3. Composes songs/music

- 3.1 Can compose songs/music for and with client/s based on client choices and therapeutic direction
3.2 Can compose songs/music in a range of styles for and with a variety of clients

4. Plays repertoire suitable to a wide range of ages, interests and cultures

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

- 4.1 Can play songs and music suitable for infants, children, adolescents, adults and older adults
4.2 Can play songs and music of a wide range of genres and cultural backgrounds
4.3 Can play repertoire from memory
4.4 Can adapt existing repertoire for use within the therapeutic context and the needs of client/s, including dynamically adapting musical elements within sessions

5. Singing skill

- 5.1 Sings confidently and in tune in an appropriate vocal register
5.2 Can project voice
5.3 Sings clearly with voice leading qualities
5.4 Can sing and accompany self while engaged with clients
5.5 Can identify and demonstrate warm-up techniques crucial to vocal care for self and client/s
5.6 Understands problems in vocal production for self and client/s

6. Is aurally competent:

- 6.1 Can sing and play melodies by ear
- 6.2 Can transpose a melody instrumentally and vocally, after listening to it or reading musical notation

7. Accompaniment skill

- 7.1 Can sing and accompany melodies at sight
- 7.2 Understands harmonic progressions and provides appropriate harmonic accompaniment on chord-playing instrument
- 7.3 Can maintain balance between accompaniment and voice

8. Receptive Music Therapy Skill

- 8.1 Selects appropriate pre-composed music for relaxation methods with individuals or groups
- 8.2 Selects appropriate pre-composed music for music & imagery methods with individuals and groups

9. Music technology

- 9.1 Is familiar with relevant and up-to-date technologies used in music therapy practice
- 9.2. Is familiar with the production and reproduction of music, including recording techniques

B. Psychosocial knowledge:

1. Understands contemporary theories and their applications

- 1.1 Can describe the salient features of theories such as: 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 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 in group work
- 2.7 Understands how to evaluate group work
- 2.8 Can distinguish between the appropriateness of group and individual work in meeting therapeutic goals.

3. Development through the life span:

- 3.1 Understands theories that contribute to an understanding of human development through the lifespan.
- 3.2 Can describe socio-cultural influences on individual development

4. Theories of resilience, coping and wellbeing

- 4.1 Understands the impact of stressful life events on the individual and family

- 4.2 Understands theories of resilience and coping strategies to enhance wellbeing for individuals and families
- 4.3 Understands the impact of socio-economic and marginalised status on the individual and family
- 4.4 Understands the impact of cultural dislocation on the individual and family
- 4.5 Understands and respects cultural diversity of individuals and groups.

C. Clinical knowledge:

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

- 1.1 In any context can gather information and provide a written cogent summary of major features of a disability /disorder of an individual client or group
- 1.2 Discover necessary information about an individual's circumstances using different resources, such as case notes, and information from staff/carers/family members/the individual.
- 1.3 Can identify allied therapeutic treatments/interventions adopted in working with clients

2. Understands the impact of government policy on health/welfare services
e.g., child protection and NDIS)

3. Understands the role of music therapy alongside other creative arts therapies, education and allied health and medical professions

D. 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 Can identify settings and client group(s) with whom music therapy is practised
- 1.4 Can identify and describe key approaches and methods used in music therapy practice
- 1.5 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
- 1.6 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 Is aware of the potential of music for eliciting physiological and psychological responses
- 2.2 Is aware of current knowledge of neurological processing in relation to music
- 2.3 Understands the potential of music to affect levels of arousal

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 qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and evidenced-based research methods and their applications in music therapy research
- 3.4 Understands the relevance of statistical methods in quantitative music therapy research

E. Music therapy practice:

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

- 1.1 Can identify & communicate salient features of the role of the music therapist in the team/program/facility

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 the purpose of assessment
- 3.3 Can identify needs of individual clients and groups
- 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
- 4.5 Can make appropriate selection of techniques and implementation of same.

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 and their musical experience and preferences

- 6.1 Is able to contribute to multi-disciplinary team diagnoses of clients based on the client's musical material
- 6.2 Is able to identify stage of musical development based on client's musical material

- 6.3 Is able to undertake client assessments and evaluations based on their musical material
- 6.4 Is able to select or modify musical instruments in order for clients to take part in music making

7. Communication skills and processing:

- 7.1 Can use interpersonal skills to engage clients and relate to them verbally as well as non-verbally and musically
- 7.2 Can use discussion effectively in processing musical material with individuals and groups
- 7.3 Can interpret key emotions present in verbal, non-verbal and musical communication with individuals
- 7.4 Can process key emotions expressed in a group context both verbally and musically

8. Reporting

In any context:

- 8.1 Keeps accurate and up-to-date records documenting salient features of progress in music therapy in the format required by the facility
- 8.2 Reports progress in music therapy as required by the facility/client/family

9. Ethics

- 9.1 Understands the rights of individuals with whom music therapists work including confidentiality and ethical practice
- 9.2 Understands the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and the Constitution of the Australian Music Therapy AMTA Inc.
- 9.3 Behaves ethically in the therapeutic context with regard to the rights of people receiving music therapy services
- 9.4 Maintains Standards of Practice and Duty of Care in all contexts
- 9.5 Works within the Scope of Practice for Registered Music Therapists

10. Self-Care

- 10.1 Understands the importance of self-care as a music therapist
- 10.2 Engages in self-reflection around clinical experiences, personal growth and support
- 10.3 Can identify coping strategies and resilience in self care

11. Supervision

- 11.1 Understands the importance of professional supervision in maintaining standards of practice
- 11.2 Is aware of the importance of supervision (formal and informal) that supports professional and personal development.

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