



Australian Natural Therapists Association Ltd

Submission to:

Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council

on

Complementary & Alternative Health

Alignment of Qualifications to the Australian Qualifications Framework

26th November 2013



The Australian Natural Therapists Association Ltd (ANTA) would like to thank the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC) for inviting ANTA to make a submission on the alignment of the Complementary & Alternative Health Qualifications to the Australian Qualifications Framework.

ANTA was founded in 1955 and is the largest national democratic association representing the interests of multi-modality natural therapy professionals who work in the area of health care and preventative medicine.

ANTA:

- provides an egalitarian representation of all disciplines/modalities accredited by the association
- regulates and maintains education and qualification requirements for accreditation of natural therapy professionals

- possesses infrastructure, systems, policies, procedures and resources which enables the association to encompass all aspects of the profession
- represents the interests of individual disciplines/modalities
- acts as advocate for practitioners of all disciplines/modalities accredited by the association
- promotes the health and safety of consumers of traditional medicine and natural therapy health services
- provides course assessment and course recognition services for the natural therapy profession

The disciplines/modalities recognised and accredited by ANTA are:

Acupuncture

Aromatherapy

Ayurvedic Medicine

Chinese Herbal Medicine

Homoeopathy

Naturopathy

Nutrition

Oriental Remedial Therapy

Remedial Massage Therapy

Myotherapy

Musculoskeletal Therapy

Western Herbal Medicine

Shiatsu

Counselling



ANTA is committed to continuous quality improvement and providing the public with the highest possible standards for the conduct and safety of traditional medicine and natural therapies in Australia.

ANTA is committed to improving the skills of practitioners and advancing the standing of the profession.

Since 1955 ANTA has been a major participant and contributor to the ongoing improvement and upgrading of qualifications and skills in the natural therapy profession.

ANTA believes regular and timely reviews of qualification standards and requirements are necessary to ensure the natural therapy profession continues to grow and to provide the public with quality health care services.

The natural therapy profession has over the years been actively involved in progressing qualifications from certificate to Diploma to Advanced Diploma and to Bachelor Degree levels.

Reviews of qualifications and skills over this period has seen the profession develop and grow to a level where practitioners in many instances are now regarded as primary health care service providers.

Natural Therapies are an important part of the health care sector and it is essential the natural therapy profession adopts and embraces continuous quality improvement programs relating to all aspects of the profession and in particular qualification and education standards.

The natural therapy profession has in recent times come under close scrutiny from many areas and it is essential the natural therapy profession clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement.

The discussion paper published by CSHISC seeks to review and discuss alignment or re-alignment of qualifications and in particular Advanced Diploma



and whether the those qualifications should be aligned at Bachelor Degree level.

At this point it is worth considering the key information for both the Advanced Diploma (Level 6) and the Bachelor Degree (Level 7) under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF):

Advanced Diploma (AQF Level 6)

- Knowledge:** Graduates at this level will have broad theoretical and technical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning.
- Skills:** Graduates at this level will have a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to:
- analyse information to complete a range of activities
 - interpret and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems
 - transmit information and skills to others
- Application:
of Knowledge
and Skills** Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility:

- In contexts that are subject to change
 - Within broad parameters to provide specialist advice
- And functions



Bachelor Degree (AQF Level 7)

Knowledge: Graduates at this level will have broad and coherent Theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.

Skills; Graduates at this level will have well-developed cognitive, Technical and communication skills to select and apply Methods and technologies to:

- Analyse and evaluate information to complete a range Of activities
- Analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems
- Transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others

Application of
Knowledge
and Skills

Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to
Demonstrate autonomy, well developed judgement and
responsibility:

- in contexts that require self directed work and learning
- within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions

As many natural therapists are increasingly regarded and utilised by the public as primary health care service providers, there is a growing requirement for practitioners to act as independent professionals or specialists and demonstrate in depth theoretical and technical knowledge as well as critical thinking, assessment and diagnosis skills.

The Advance Diploma AQF level 6 qualifications has served the natural therapy profession well for a significant period of time, however, in order to achieve



continuous quality improvement and meet public expectations, ANTA supports the alignment of natural therapy qualifications to Bachelor Degree AQF level 7.

The AQF level 7 definition benchmarks to the minimum level of knowledge, skill and judgements required of primary health care professionals operating either autonomously or in group healthcare facilities.

A comparison of the key information outlined above in relation to Advanced Diploma and Bachelor Degree qualifications also identifies industry and public expectations are now more aligned with Bachelor Degree knowledge and skills requirements.

Public and industry expectations now require natural therapy practitioners to:

- Have skills to exercise critical thinking and problem solving
- Have skills to critically review and analyse information and knowledge
- Have the knowledge and ability to act independently
- Be able to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts

The above attributes are typically found in Bachelor Degree programs.

ANTA supports and is working to achieve registration of natural therapists under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) as administered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Registration of natural therapists will ultimately lead to Bachelor Degree as the minimum qualification for registration purposes. ANTA also supports the AHPRA inclusive grand-parenting process to allow all practitioners including those who do not possess qualifications at Bachelor Degree level to be registered in the NRAS.

ANTA supports the alignment of natural therapy qualifications to Bachelor Degree AQF level 7, however, any re-alignment must include adequate and reasonable provisions to allow course providers sufficient time to develop and implement qualifications at Bachelor Degree level.



Any re-alignment to Bachelor Degree must also include adequate and reasonable provisions to allow sufficient time for teach out of Advanced Diploma qualification programs for both part time and full-time students.

In accordance with commitments to the profession, colleges, students and graduates, ANTA will continue to accept graduates of Advanced Diploma courses recognised by ANTA as members of ANTA until teach out of Advanced Diploma's and re-alignment to Bachelor Degree (AQF level 7) is completed.

Any future re-alignment of natural therapy qualifications to Bachelor Degree will not affect the standing or recognition of any practitioner members or student members of ANTA who do not have qualifications at Bachelor Degree level.

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