

MASSAGE INDUSTRY GUIDE

TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE MASSAGE INDUSTRY, AND
THE DIFFERENT QUALIFICATIONS.

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU ENROL IN A COURSE, AND
HOW TO JOIN THE INDUSTRY AFTER GRADUATION.

RTO 31896



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SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING MASSAGE THERAPY

In this section you will find:

1. What is Massage Therapy?
2. What are the types and specialisations within Massage Therapy?
3. History of Massage Therapy
4. A snapshot of the Massage Industry

WHAT IS MASSAGE THERAPY?

Massage therapy is the practice of hands-on manipulation of the body's soft tissue, such as muscles, skin, tendons and ligaments. The general goal of a massage is to improve the wellbeing and/or health of the client. One of the biggest proven benefits of massage is the feeling of relaxation and calm, during and after a treatment. This can have considerable effects on the brain, and the body's ability to produce hormones and neurotransmitters that reduce stress and improve mood. This can have knock-on effects in improving sleep quality, immune function, mental state, as well as physical and emotional energy levels.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MASSAGE

RELAXATION MASSAGE



Relaxation massage is also known as 'Western' or 'Swedish' massage, and is one of the most popular forms of massage in Australia. This technique is designed to promote relaxation and improve blood circulation.

The minimum qualification level recommended to perform this treatment type is the **HLT42015 Certificate IV in Massage Therapy**.

REMEDIAL MASSAGE



Remedial Massage is the objective assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of the signs, symptoms and causes of biomechanical dysfunction or injury. The therapist uses specific mobilisation techniques, in order to restore normal health and function of the client.

The minimum qualification level recommended to perform this treatment type is the **HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage**.

SPORTS MASSAGE



Sports massage is an application of massage, not a particular massage technique. The type of technique or treatment applied is dependent on the situation (e.g. pre, during or post training, game or event); the type of injury and condition of the athlete; and the assessment results and/or goal established by the client and the remedial massage therapist. Sport massage is a blend of techniques that aim to enhance performance and help overworked muscles recover quickly.

The minimum qualification level recommended to perform this treatment type is the **HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage**. Strength & conditioning, advanced first aid, and sports trainer qualifications (all of which are available in Q Academy's Remedial Sports Therapy Program), are not necessary, but strongly encouraged for someone wanting to specialise in Sports Therapy.

MYOTHERAPY



Involves the assessment and treatment of soft tissue pain, injury and dysfunction affecting movement and mobility. Myotherapy is applied to restore and maintain the health and function of the soft tissue structure (muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia) of the human body with a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice.

The minimum qualification level recommended to perform this treatment type is the **22316VIC Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy**.

ALTERNATIVE



There are many other styles or techniques of massage such as shiatsu, Thai, reflexology, aromatherapy, ayurvedic, tui na, hot stone, deep tissue, pregnancy and baby, lymphatic or MLD, Bowen therapy, Alexander technique and the list goes on.

These techniques may be included in some of the courses listed above, or as standalone short courses. These modalities may have their own perspectives, philosophies and theories, with only some (not all), supported by modern medicine and science.

HISTORY OF MASSAGE

In the late 1800's and early 1900's massage was often used under the direction of GPs, with massage therapists receiving their training or industry inductions from medical practitioners. Massage was often considered "an integral part of the after-treatment of traumatic injuries of greater or less extent." (BMJ, 1884, p 425)

In 1906, due to the increased recognition of massage benefits, the Australian Massage Association (AMA) was formed by a small group of massage therapist from Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia to help protect the general public from untrained and unqualified practitioners. The AMA developed a membership program and educational standards, which aimed to ensure high-quality therapy treatments for the public.

The association members were trained rather than educated and worked under the guidance of Doctors in public hospitals with minimal independence. This soon developed into Swedish massage, which as well as hands-on massage techniques, incorporated hydrotherapy and basic exercise or gymnastics. As massage gained popularity as an adjunct to medical treatments there was an emergence of many new styles, techniques, modalities. As therapists gained independence, more techniques were created and adopted from eastern modalities.

Today, while the original Australian Massage Association has grown and changed its name, new associations have also emerged that continue to champion the same goals of creating an industry that protects the general public; provision of appropriate training and qualification recognition; ongoing support and representation of therapists; and the development of codes of conduct and industry guidelines. While considerable progress towards these goals has already been made, opportunities for improvement still remains.

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

Massage therapy training is now delivered primarily through Nationally Recognised Training Organisations (RTOs), who structure their courses around the Vocational Education Training (VET) health training package. These VET qualifications are regulated by the Australian Skills and Qualification Authority (ASQA) and the Australian Governments' Department of Education and Training.

It is important to note that not all RTOs offer Nationally Recognised Qualifications. The training provider can include (and exclude) elements in a course that they deem to be relevant or necessary. So if a Nationally Recognised Qualification is important to you and your career goals, we recommend that you check this with the training provider before enrolling. For more information on this, please see section 3 below.

Massage therapy appears to have a promising future as a recognised complementary therapy to modern medicine. As we see our population living longer, and with a greater emphasis on active lifestyles and wellbeing, more people are turning to massage therapies to help relax, unwind, assist with injury rehabilitation, and to manage the symptoms of many chronic and incurable diseases. The emergence of qualifications such as the Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy and a Bachelor of Myotherapy, it shows the demand for course to better understanding the human condition and how to best prevent, manage and rehabilitate the person.

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SECTION TWO: THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

In this section you will find:

1. What is Allied Health?
2. What are Complementary Therapies?
3. What are Alternative Therapies?

WHAT IS ALLIED HEALTH?

Allied health is an umbrella term with no universally accepted definition. Different Governments, Government departments, health service providers, health insurers and education providers include different professions under the title 'allied health'. While this may be the case, there is still general agreement on some basic principles. These are that allied health professionals are health professionals that are not part of the medical, dental or nursing professions. They are University-qualified practitioners with specialised expertise in preventing, diagnosing and treating a range of conditions and illnesses. Allied health practitioners often work within a multidisciplinary health team to provide specialised support for different patient needs.

An allied health profession is one which has:

- A direct patient care role and may have application to broader public health outcomes
- A national professional organisation with a code of ethics/conduct and clearly defined membership requirements
- University health sciences courses (not medical, dental or nursing) at AQF Level 7 or higher, accredited by their relevant national accreditation body
- Clearly articulated national entry level competency standards and assessment procedures
- A defined core scope of practice
- Robust and enforceable regulatory mechanisms

Furthermore, the profession must consist of allied health professionals who:

- Are autonomous practitioners
- Practice in an evidence-based paradigm, using an internationally recognised body of knowledge to protect, restore and maintain optimal physical, sensory, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural function
- May utilise or supervise assistants, technicians and support workers

While relaxation and remedial massage qualifications fall outside some of the definitions, they also meet many of the definitions of an allied health professional. Myotherapy and Musculoskeletal Therapies also meet many of these definitions and are bridging the gap between allied and complementary health services.

WHAT IS COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY?

Complementary therapy is known by many different terms, such as alternative therapy, alternative medicine, holistic therapy and traditional medicine. A wide range of treatments exists under the umbrella term of 'complementary therapy', which makes it difficult to offer a blanket definition. Complementary therapies are ones used alongside conventional medical treatments.

Some therapies or modalities are based on principles that are not recognised by conventional medicine, but have an established evidence base and may have evidence which supports their application for a limited number of health conditions. Conventional medicine is based on rigorous science and evaluation. While this has not been the case for complementary therapies, in more recent times there has been a move to apply science to better understand how many complementary therapies work.

These days patients don't have to choose between conventional medicine and complementary therapies, as they can often work well alongside each other. Some diseases or conditions may also be contraindicated (not recommended as they may cause greater harm), so it is important that all discussions with health professionals are honest and open.

WHAT IS ALTERNATIVE THERAPY?

Alternative therapies are treatments that are used in place of conventional medicines or treatments. While these practices are commonly sought-after, they generally may not be recognised by the medical community as standard or conventional medical approaches. The following services are largely considered by the Queensland Government to be alternative therapies:

Acupuncture: involves inserting fine needles into points on the skin to stimulate body systems

Alexander technique: deals with bad habits of posture and movement through verbal instructions and gentle physical guidance to relieve tension

Aromatherapy: uses essential oils to relieve the symptoms of headaches, insomnia, stress and digestive problems

Chiropractic: involves physical realignment of joints, lower back, neck, knees and shoulders

Herbal medicine: uses herbal plants to treat disease and enhance wellbeing

Homeopathy: is based on the idea that the body can heal itself. It involves taking highly diluted substances to trigger the body's healing response

Naturopathy: uses natural and gentle therapeutic techniques, such as diet, exercise, herbal supplements and lifestyle changes, to promote improved health.

Osteopathy: involves soft tissue body work to promote mobility and restore the body's balance

Reiki: is a form of treatment that uses non-invasive, gentle touch

Yoga: is a physical practice that combines gentle exercise with breath control and meditation

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SECTION THREE: BEFORE YOU ENROL IN A COURSE

In this section you will find:

1. Considerations before you start studying
2. Selecting a Course & Qualification
3. Accredited Qualifications

IS MASSAGE RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you are considering joining the massage industry, but want to get a better understanding of what this entails - why not get a massage from a qualified practitioner and have a chat?

There are also plenty of introductory courses to give you a taste of what applying massage techniques can be like, which you can practice on friends and family. Q Academy, for example, runs an Introduction to Massage short course, as well as an online Nationally Accredited or General Interest Swedish Massage short course - which can be credited towards a Nationally Accredited qualification. This is a great option for anyone with an interest in massage.

Massage of any form is also a reasonably physical job. As a massage therapist you should expect to be on your feet for the majority of your working hours, constantly moving about the massage table. Q Academy will encourage a progressive introduction of skills and techniques, as well as gradually building up physical capacity for massage while you learn. We also make it a priority to teach you how to care for yourself as a therapist, to ensure you have a long and rewarding career, but it is important to note that massage can be a physically demanding job.

Please also be mindful that despite some common misconceptions, becoming a qualified massage therapist is not an easy accomplishment. You will be expected to be dedicated to your studies, both inside and out of the classroom. Complex subject areas are likely to be covered, and you may be required to demonstrate and apply your understanding of high-level theoretical and practical practices.

SELECTING A QUALIFICATION

Once you have decided that a career in massage is right for you and your career goals, the next step is to decide on the course and training provider that is right for you. If you are looking for a viable career option, regardless where you choose to study in Australia, Q Academy strongly encourages that you obtain a Nationally Recognised Qualification.

Please be aware that some training organisations may include terms such as 'certificate' in their course name. However, if the course does not include the course code as outlined in the current training package - it is not a Nationally Recognised Qualification.

The benefit of completing a Nationally Recognised Qualification means that your qualification is recognised Australia-wide, and should you decide to continue with further tertiary or University-level study, you will be eligible for credits or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Crucially, it can also be a requirement for Association membership, and your ability to offer health fund rebates.

SELECTING A COURSE

As an important step, we encourage you to consider what your ideal career outcome is, what type of service you might wish to specialise in, or where you would like to work. Once you have a career path in mind, you will be in a better place to explore course options to help you get there.

If you were leaning towards working in a beauty salon or a day spa, offering relaxation and therapeutic treatments - the HLT42015 Certificate IV in Massage Therapy course would be a good entry point.

If you want to work with people to assist with the management of pain and injury rehabilitation, as either as a solo therapist or in a multi-modality clinic alongside physiotherapists, chiropractors and other health professionals - we would recommend the HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage qualification.

If you want to work with sporting teams or athletes, providing strength & conditioning and injury management and prevention, we would recommend working towards obtaining a qualification as a Myotherapist or a Remedial Sports Therapist.

Once you have decided on the course that you wish to study, we recommend that you visit the Government's myskills.gov.au website. It is a directory of all Australian VET courses and training providers. Type in the course code that you're interested in studying, and see which Registered Training Organisations (RTO) in your area offers that course.

It is important to note that generally, no two courses are the same. Nationally Recognised Qualifications with the same course code will contain a shared group of core subjects (units of competency). However, the individual Registered Training Organisation (RTO) can select the subjects, content and elective units to include in their course. They can also alter the duration and delivery methods of the course. This means that while two courses may share the same course code, they may not include identical course content.

Within the massage therapies, common elective units may include strength & conditioning, aromatherapy and nutrition & diet. It is important that you do your research, and ask questions, so you can select the course that includes elective units that align with your personal goals and interests.

ACCREDITED QUALIFICATION

According to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), a VET Accredited Qualification is one that "...has been assessed by ASQA as compliant with the Standards for VET Accredited Courses 2012 and the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF)". This accreditation is a formal confirmation that the course:

- Is Nationally Recognised
- Meets an established industry, enterprise, educational, legislative or community need
- Provides appropriate competency outcomes and a satisfactory basis for assessment
- Meets national quality assurance requirements
- Is aligned appropriately to the AQF where it leads to a qualification

This means that the courses that are offered and prescribed at a standard set by ASQA must keep to that standard, in order to be a complaint RTO. If an RTO is non-compliant, then that RTO is at risk of ASQA's penalties.

Q Academy provides the following Nationally Recognised Qualifications:

HLT42015 Certificate IV in Massage Therapy
HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage
SIS30813 Certificate III in Sports Trainer
22316VIC Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy

QUALIFICATION LEVELS

The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework. The AQF was introduced in 1995 to underpin the national system of qualifications in Australia encompassing higher education, vocational education and training and schools. The following is a visual representation of the different levels of study:



4 SECTION FOUR: ONCE YOU ARE QUALIFIED

In this section you will find:

1. Joining an Association
2. Getting Insurance
3. Private Provider Numbers

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

Once you have received your qualification, it is strongly recommended that you join an Association. Q Academy can recommend the following:

1. Association of Massage Therapists (AMT)
2. Massage & Myotherapy Australia (MMA)
3. Australian Natural Therapies Association (ANTA)

Associations are the primary regulators in the massage industry, who set the code of conduct and professional recommendations for their members. They consult with Government organisations and other professional organisations on the behalf of Massage Therapists to increase recognition of massage as a complimentary and allied service.

Association membership is also a requirement in order to offer provide health fund rebates to clients with private healthcare cover. Associations also offer support and guidance to therapists, to keep them up-to-date with industry changes and regulations, assist with employment advice and limited legal advice, and can offer therapists discounts on insurance.

Please check the membership requirements for the Association you intend to apply, but it is likely that you will need to provide the following:

- Record of Results for the HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage (minimum qualification level)
- Current First Aid
- Current Insurance

Once you have successfully secured membership, your Association will apply on your behalf to some of the major Health Funds for your unique provider numbers. For certain Health Funds you may have to apply directly to them for your provider numbers.

In order to maintain your Association membership, you will need to satisfy several requirements. The first of which is your dedication to 'continued professional education' (CPE) or 'continued professional development' (CPD). Each year you will need to accumulate CPE/CPD points, to show that you are furthering your professional skills through ongoing training, education, and supporting communities or charities. Each Association will have slightly different requirements in regards to CPE/CPD points, but is likely to include criteria such as attending short courses, volunteering for charity or community events, as well as reading or writing research papers or case studies for publishing. You will also need to maintain current First Aid and insurance.

Thanks to Q Academy's Re-sit & Refresh service, graduates will be able to update their First Aid, for free...for life* which could save you hundreds over your career. Q Academy also offers a range of online and on-campus short courses that can be used towards earning your CPE/CPD points.

INSURANCE

As a massage therapist it is highly recommended that you have professional insurance that covers the following:

- Professional indemnity insurance, to protect against legal costs and claims for damages to third parties arising from an act, omission or breach of professional duty in the course of your business.
- Public Liability insurance covers you for claims made against you by a third party arising from injury or property damage from any premise you work from.
- Product Liability insurance covers you for claims made against you by a third party arising from the sale or supply of a product that causes financial loss or injury.

If you choose to work as an employee or contractor you will be required to have these insurances, and to keep them up to date. Your Association can also recommend an insurer for you as a therapist - and oftentimes your membership status will allow you to receive a discount on the insurance fees.

PROVIDER NUMBERS

Your Association will also prove very beneficial when applying for Private Health Fund Provider Numbers. The Associations can communicate and consult with the Private Health Funds such as Medibank, HCF and BUPA to enable therapists to offer client rebates for massage treatments.

To be eligible to obtain private provider numbers, you will need to have obtained an accredited qualification that is at least the Diploma level or higher:

- HLT52015 Diploma of Remedial Massage
- 22316VIC Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy
- Bachelor of Myotherapy or Musculoskeletal Therapy

As well as the minimum qualification level, you may also have to meet some of the following requirements set by the Health Funds or private health insurers. These requirements may be: the length of the course, such as running for a full academic year (for the Diploma level qualification); as well as a certain number of contact hours or supervised training hours on campus; and even specific knowledge requirements. Some Health Funds may require you to complete at least 80% of your training on-campus, in order to be eligible for Medibank Private and HCF Provider Numbers.

The requirements may vary slightly between the different health funds, so it is important you discuss with your preferred association, to ensure your course and qualifications meet the requirements of the Health Funds you wish to obtain Private Provider Numbers with.

Once you have been issued your Provider Numbers, you will be able to offer rebates to eligible clients. This means that clients with Private Health Insurance will get some of the treatment cost covered by their Private Health Insurer. The ability to provide health rebates is highly sought after by many multi-modality clinics and clients alike. It is definitely worth considering when selecting a course, as it can lead to additional job opportunities and increase the number of clients that choose your service. For any further questions around provider numbers and how to apply, we recommend that you consult your Association for the latest information.

OFFERING REBATES

In 2017, the Australian Government Department of Health began a review into private health fund rebates and the effectiveness of the many therapies previously covered under the rebate system. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) was tasked with reviewing scientific literature examining the effectiveness and, where available, the safety and cost effectiveness of 17 natural therapies. These reviews were conducted in line with NHMRC's approach to assessing evidence. The NHMRC reviews were undertaken for the specific purpose of informing the Australian Government's Natural Therapies Review.

The review was undertaken to ensure that taxpayer funds are spent appropriately and are not directed at therapies that do not demonstrate evidence of clinical efficacy.

As a result of the review, from the 1st of April 2019, the following natural therapies will be removed from the definition of private health insurance general treatment, and will no longer be eligible to receive rebates: Alexander technique, aromatherapy, Bowen therapy, Buteyko, Feldenkrais, herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, kinesiology, naturopathy, Pilates, reflexology, Rolfing, shiatsu, tai chi, and yoga.

IN SUMMARY

Massage therapy is a rewarding and flexible profession, that you can use as your sole income or supplement it with other complementary qualifications. You could build up your clinic and employ other therapists, or you can work part-time for additional income while you manage home or family life, or while you study at University. There are many populations which rely on massage, and many areas for you to specialise in and make your own. Whatever you decide, before you join the industry, make sure you ask plenty of questions, do your homework, and find the right provider for your education.