



AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
YOGA THERAPISTS  
Leadership • Education • Integrative Medicine

## Australasian Association of Yoga Therapists

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### Scope of Practice

(Created in November 2015; amended in July 2021)

#### *An AAYT Certificated Yoga Therapist C-AAYT*

- Membership as an AAYT Certificated Yoga Therapist must meet the 2020 AAYT Education and Practice Standards.
- Members must adhere to the Scope of Practice as part of the AAYT 'Education and Practice' Standards reflecting the IAYT Accreditation Standards.
- Is an experienced Yoga Teacher certified by an AAYT accredited Yoga Therapy Training Provider, after having qualified in successfully completing a minimum of 650 hours (including 180 hours of practicum) in Yoga Therapy education and training over a minimum period of two years. Completing an AAYT accredited training program signifies that a graduate has met all the competencies within the AAYT Standards, and has specialised skills, knowledge and experience in the application of Yoga within a therapeutic context.
- Draws from the 'Principles of Yoga' and the full range of Yoga practices, bio-medical knowledge and assessment skills to establish a professional relationship with the client. Together, the therapist and client will develop a self-empowering therapeutic program appropriate to the client's needs.
- Is recognised by AAYT as having undertaken accredited or recognised Yoga Therapy training, beyond a yoga teaching qualification and is committed to professional ethics, guidelines and codes relating to the practice of Yoga Therapy in Australia and/or Australasia.
- Furthermore, a certificated or C-AAYT Yoga Therapist adheres to all National, State and local legislative requirements of their country, state or territory including having necessary checks (such as police checks and Work Health and Safety (WHS) precautions to avoid spread of disease, such as SARS or Covid 19, particularly if working with vulnerable populations or in government subsidised venues such as hospitals.

#### *Resumption of Practice*

Should there have been a discontinuation of practice due to ill-health, maternity leave, holiday, an issue in relation to a grievance, or other reasons lasting more than 12 (twelve) months, the Yoga Therapist is to inform the AAYT of such occurrence within that period and until such discontinuation is concluded. Application for Resumption of Practice will then be deliberated by AAYT pending citing of Professional Continuous Development, First Aid, CPR, and insurance certificates.

#### *Touch*

To be only given after informed consent and then documented. It is to be socially and culturally sensitive and to be applied within therapeutic ethical guidelines with a policy of no harm. The therapist and client are to honour the position of trust and acknowledge and allow for the power disparity in the relationship. Though this consent applies to physical touch. It is important to

recognise that the policy of no harm and adherence to ethics is carried out in the other modes of “touching” our clients – speech – eye contact – gesture – body language-props. *See more on this issue p.8.*

• *A C-AAYT Yoga Therapist - may pursue any activity that falls within the Scope of Practice*

Currently, in Australia, Yoga Therapist Certification is based on verification of initial recognition of training qualifications by an accredited/or recognised provider and Approved Professional Development (APD) of competencies through professional bodies, recognised by the Australasian Association of Yoga Therapists (AAYT).

Additionally, the renewal of First Aid, CPR, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance must be current at all times and is a critical component of membership and certification. Evidence of same must be provided.

Some Yoga Therapists will hold additional qualifications that complement the Scope of Yoga Therapy practice, which will permit such practitioners an extended Scope of Practice, for example being a qualified Psychologist, Physiotherapist, Social Worker, Doctor, Naturopath etc. Such extended scope is beyond normal Yoga Therapy practice and is to be regulated by the scope and codes of the professional registering body of other such disciplines. A Yoga Therapist's Duty of Care is to ensure the safety of a client at all times and to refer to a more specialised therapist or medical practitioner when the client presents with symptoms outside the expertise of the therapist. In more recent times duty of care also applies to control of infection, use of mask and gloves where deemed necessary in risk reduction, to inhibit unnecessary spread of disease and to protect both client and therapist.

AAYT certificated, or C-AAYT yoga therapists are expected to understand the **‘power differential’** between clients and therapists and to avoid the misuse and/or abuse of power for any type of exploitation or suppression. AAYT holds the right to withdraw AAYT Certification from any member or AAYT Accreditation from any Training Provider who does not confirm totally to these principles.

*YOGA THERAPY may occur in the following settings:*

- **Individualised Yoga Therapy consultations** that occur in a **one-on-one** setting, (taking into account respect for personal distance).
- **Note:** In such circumstances where the client is a child/or a member of a vulnerable population (as defined by the current legislation in that country, state or territory), a parent/guardian must be present. Alternatively a parent/guardian may provide written permission.
- A Yoga Therapist will only palpate the spine through clothing with the consent of the client and with appropriate WHS/hygiene considerations.

Following a one-on-one Assessment, Yoga Therapy may also take the following forms particularly as the therapeutic value of the *sangha* (group) becomes more widely understood and supported by evidence-based research:

- **Specialist groups**, such as *Yoga for people with breast cancer* and *Yoga for post-traumatic stress syndrome*. In such settings, with small numbers, the Yoga Therapist recognises that, while there are similarities within the group, individual differences need

to be taken into account and that a “one size fits all” approach is not Yoga Therapy. In such situations, individual assessment will occur prior to class entry and be monitored and reviewed throughout the sessional period

- **A group therapeutic yoga class** consisting of people with a variety of illnesses and/or conditions. Again, individual modifications will be given, and individual assessment must be provided prior to class entry.

In the following sections AAYT has outlined a Yoga Therapist's SCOPE of PRACTICE, what they are and are not qualified to do as Yoga Therapists. For example, under the training *Standards*, a Yoga Therapist's accredited training will include at least 30 hours of exposure to psychological conditions. This however does **not** qualify a Yoga Therapist to take the place of a qualified Psychiatrist, Psychologist or specialised Social Worker. Rather the training may allow a Yoga Therapist to identify an issue needing to be referred on to fully specialised workers in an allied field. At best, a qualified Yoga Therapist with no other qualifications may complement a specialised professional in their field.

The Scope of Practice forms an excellent guide to provide clients and members of the general public with an outline of what a Yoga Therapist can and cannot do, without having other specialised qualifications.

AAYT also has simple brochures to explain what a Yoga Therapist does and the qualifications attained over five years minimal training.

<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is qualified to work from a holistic yoga framework of health to:</i></p>	<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is NOT qualified to:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work within the Scope of a Yoga Therapy qualification with a variety of health conditions impacted by the alignment of the Body, Mind and Spirit.</li> <li>• Offer an integrated set of practices aligned to the needs of the individual and according to yoga models of health such as, but not confined to, the <i>pancamaya kosha</i> (dimensions of the human system) the <i>tri-guna</i> (fundamental forces of nature); and Cakras.</li> <li>• Include yoga practices such as <i>asana</i> (postures), <i>pranayama</i> (breath-work), relaxation, meditation, <i>mudra</i> (energetic gestures and seals), <i>banda</i> (energy locks), <i>mantra</i> (sacred sounds), <i>bhavana</i> (imagery), <i>sankalpa</i> (affirmation/intention), yogic lifestyle and nutritional advice according to a Yoga Therapy framework, education in yoga philosophy, and other practices steeped in the yoga tradition and for which the therapist has received appropriate competency training, and Certification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with clients presenting with issues outside the therapists' areas of competence</li> <li>• Advertise themselves as a medical practitioner</li> </ul>
<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is qualified to:</i></p>	<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is NOT qualified to:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an appropriate understanding of health and health systems</li> <li>• Have insight into and an understanding of different diseases, the effects of medications, and contraindications, which helps to inform what is recommended as a suitable practice for each individual</li> <li>• Provide timely review and modification of the practice to refine its impact</li> <li>• Be informed by diagnosis provided by other health professionals qualified to do so</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnose a medical condition</li> <li>• Make false claims about yoga's therapeutic and healing capacities</li> <li>• Advise about ceasing prescribed medication.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Have a basic understanding of different treatments and procedures from a variety of sources, or, can identify and source credible and relevant information, as required</li> <li>•Have a basic understanding of health reports from various sources</li> <li>•Have a basic understanding of transference and countertransference.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is qualified to liaise with other health professionals to:</i></p>	<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is NOT qualified to:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Receive and provide referrals from and to other appropriate healthcare providers</li> <li>•Be part of a multi-disciplinary team when appropriate</li> <li>•Engage with medical or allied health professionals (as appropriate) and use best practice referral/ feedback processes to optimise client health and wellbeing outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise about other health treatment modalities other than referring clients to appropriate personnel or services</li> <li>• Request diagnostic tests or procedures unless suitably qualified</li> <li>• Interpret raw diagnostic test results</li> <li>• Prescribe medication, nutritional supplements or herbs from Western or traditional medical methods such as Chinese medicine or Ayurveda, unless suitably qualified</li> <li>• Perform any invasive procedures</li> <li>• Judge or make recommendations about any other form of advice or treatment from another healthcare professional*.</li> </ul>
<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is qualified to provide assessment and treatment by:</i></p>	<p><i>A Yoga Therapist is NOT qualified to:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Assessing each individual client according to a holistic procedure from a Yoga Therapy framework, including qualitative and quantitative assessment tools and maintaining records according to statutory requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform physical adjustments**, manipulations or massage, unless suitably qualified</li> <li>• Undertake individual or group psychological counselling, unless suitably qualified</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Using the assessment process to identify any risk factors or contraindications to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the Yoga Therapy intervention and to then develop an appropriate treatment without fostering dependency</li> <li>•Developing a treatment plan and/or providing advice within a Yoga Therapy framework with appropriate follow-up procedures and review at regular intervals, while maintaining records according to statutory requirements</li> <li>•Using practices of yoga within their Yoga Therapy training which are shown to be safe and effective, to support the client and help that client manage their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing</li> <li>•Providing suitable modifications of practices appropriate to each individual client</li> <li>•Making physical adjustments** to postures only by verbal instruction or gentle touch to the area of the body that needs a change, but only after permission has been sought and given</li> <li>•Providing clear goals for each Yoga Therapy session</li> <li>•Providing clear instructions for any home-practice that is given, with appropriate feedback mechanisms</li> <li>•Providing a program that suits the individual client's needs, learning style and access to resources, such as time and equipment.</li> <li>•Providing clear processes for client feedback</li> <li>•Providing guidance for lifestyle changes to create improved wellbeing; this may include basic nutritional recommendations according to a yoga nutrition framework as provided in Yoga Therapy training</li> <li>•Using basic methods of touch to guide a movement or to suggest how a client can change their position.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend specific lifestyle changes outside a Yoga Therapy framework or give dietary advice beyond the yoga nutrition framework, unless suitably qualified.</li> </ul>
<p><i>As part of their professional practice, a Yoga Therapist is required to:</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Have successfully completed Certificated postgraduate training in Yoga Therapy, recognised by a professional association that has clear membership standards consistent</li> </ul>	

with worldwide Yoga Therapy practice, such as AAYT and IAYT

- Maintain all qualifications and continuing professional development (APD) requirements
- Maintain membership registration with their professional body
- Be familiar with current yoga evidence-based research
- Maintain confidentiality
- Maintain professional practice by having respectful, clear communication; by following the ethical standards of relevant Yoga Therapist/Yoga Teacher organisations and by displaying their qualifications in a suitably visible location
- Adhere to all legal, regulatory and business issues relating to the administration of a professional practice, including basic protection and WHS requirements for Covid 19
- Hold the required documentation for working with minors if applicable in their work.
- Have parents or guardians present when providing Yoga Therapy for minors or other vulnerable groups, unless written permission has been given if applicable in their work
- Hold the required documentation for working with vulnerable people if applicable in their work
- Hold the required documentation (such as Police Checks, First Aid and CPR) for working in Government subsidised facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages etc if applicable in their work.

### **Scope of Practice:**

AAYT has chosen to use a wide, principle-based Scope of Practice to describe the **purpose, values and boundaries** of a Certificated C-AAYT Yoga Therapist rather than include a specific list of tasks. It is recognised that a C-AAYT Yoga Therapist will apply their individual skills and knowledge, drawing on both traditional and innovative practices while remaining aware of new innovations and treatment trends within the healthcare environment whilst adhering to all legislative requirements of

Allied health care workers such as holding relevant documents for working with children, other vulnerable community members or government subsidised facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages etc when applicable in their work. This approach ensures that the Scope of Practice for Yoga Therapy will continue to be relevant in a continually changing healthcare system and that beneficial outcomes will be obtained for each individual seeking the services of a fully qualified or AAYT- Certificated Yoga Therapist.

\*At times the Yoga Therapist may be offering ***complementary options*** which provide the client with new possibilities and practices than those offered by the medical practitioner, enabling the client to make an informed choice, without the Yoga Therapist transgressing into the decision-making of the medical practitioner.

\*\***Adjustment** - In Yoga Therapy it may be necessary to guide the client into improved alignment of the physical body. This may be given through instruction or asking the individual to feel the area of incorrect alignment. At times, it may require the therapist to modify the client's physical alignment by gently guiding the required change through touch, which will only occur after permission has been sought and given in a safe environment without any abuse of power, or transgression of health and safety considerations.