



Foundational Guidelines for Music Therapy Education & Training

The guidelines that follow were updated in 2021 by the Education and Certification Commission of the World Federation of Music Therapy. They build on the previous document (Wheeler, 2001) and are the result of a series of meetings in which these guidelines were discussed.

It is important that the guidelines are considered through a lens of cultural sensitivity relevant to each country. This is an ever-evolving concept for the music therapy profession as it continues to critically evaluate the importance of context-specific and diverse needs within a global community.

The practice of music therapy requires an intensive program of study and supervised clinical training over an extended period of time. Training is to be approved by or affiliated with an institution of Higher Education (e.g. university or college) and/or the country-specific or international governmental body.

The program of study shall engage with:

- Music therapy foundations and applications: music therapy knowledge and skills
- Musical foundations: knowledge, proficiency, and adaptability in a variety of music languages, instruments, and cultural expressions
- Clinical foundations and applications: e.g. human development, physiology, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, social studies, spiritual studies, etc.

There will be foundational programs (e.g. undergraduate level, master's level, and the equivalent), leading to music therapy certification determined by the educational system of the country. These may be followed by specialized programs (e.g. BMGIM, Analytical Music Therapy, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, Neurologic Music Therapy, NICU-MT, etc.).

A **foundational program** of music therapy study shall contain:

- Active and receptive methods of music therapy
- Applications of music therapy with a wide variety of individuals and in various settings
- Different philosophical and theoretical orientations
- Ethical principles
- Research
- Existing models and approaches of music therapy practice
- Development of self-awareness
- Development of cultural-awareness
- Supervised clinical practica in a variety of settings

A **specialized program** may contain:

- Specialized music therapy approaches
 - Advanced clinical skills

The **program of study** is one which:

- Has a set curriculum addressing core music therapy competencies;
- Includes required reading;
- Is offered on a regular basis at an equivalent level to a Bachelor's or Master's degree;
- Requires that students are assessed using a range of evaluative tools commensurate with the requirements of the university, college, and/or the country-specific regulatory body; and
- Is recognized in the country by the appropriate professional organization or government agency.

The program should stipulate criteria for the selection of students. Selection should be based on an assessment of music skills, academic qualification, and suitability of personal qualities.

The format of teaching should be in-person or a blended learning approach. Blended learning includes a combination of in-person and virtual meetings as well as synchronous or a combination of synchronous and asynchronous assignments. The music therapy program should be taught by individuals who are appropriately educated and trained in music therapy. Such individuals should:

- Meet the qualification requirements set out by their respective professional association(s) (in cases where local professional association(s) exist);
- Hold current professional credentials recognised in their country; and
- Have a minimum of 3 years of clinical experience.

Similarly, clinical training should be supervised by an experienced music therapist who meets the above suggested criteria.

Programs of study may be devised at different levels such as undergraduate and graduate/postgraduate. The training institution should provide and maintain appropriate academic and technological resources.

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Notes:

This document is intended to be read as a whole and each of its constituent paragraphs should be applied with consideration to all other relevant paragraphs.

References

Wheeler, B. L. (Ed.). (2001). Proceedings: World Federation of Music Therapy Commission on Education, Training, and Accreditation Education Symposium. Washington D.C. November, 1999.

World Federation of Music Therapy (1999). *Guidelines for music therapy education and training*.

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