# Accreditation scheme for ADVANCED Acupuncture Education for Physical Therapists / Physiotherapists

**Introduction**

IAAPT is the Acupuncture and Dry Needling Sub-group of World Physiotherapy. It encompasses needling practices of Eastern and Western origin. It has developed a Basic Accreditation programme for acupuncture and dry needling education. This provides benchmarked education in acupuncture and or dry needling to physiotherapists. Many international acupuncture education programs exceed the Basic standards, hence an advanced accreditation scheme in acupuncture, is required. IAAPT is a physiotherapist-based group, with a physiotherapy related specific background knowledge and scope of practice. It is important for IAAPT to preserve both basic scientific knowledge background and scope of practice in physiotherapy and combine them with the aspects of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and biomedical approaches of acupuncture and dry needling.

According to the WHO recommendations for training in acupuncture (<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/66007/1/WHO_EDM_TRM_99.1.pdf>) pages 5 & 6, health care personnel should receive a program of hours that “vary according to application envisaged”. However, it states that physicians would need no less than 200 hours to use acupuncture as an adjunct technique to their practice. An acupuncture training program as an adjunct therapy for physiotherapists would require similar number of training hours and content material with individuals with a conventional medical background.

**Contents or Modules**

Reference should be made of the documents “WHO recommendations for training in acupuncture” and other document of WHO, e.g.

1. WHO benchmarks for the practice of acupuncture (2021) <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978-92-4-001688-0>
2. Standard acupuncture nomenclature: a brief explanation of 361 classical acupuncture point names and their multilingual comparative list <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9290611057>
3. WHO traditional medicine strategy: 2014-2023 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241506096>

An advanced program of acupuncture for physiotherapists should include the following contents or modules:

1. **The TCM conceptual model and / or the biomedical acupuncture conceptual model**
2. **Surface anatomy, identification, differentiation and nomenclature of acupuncture points**
3. **Acupuncture related techniques (Biomedical and TCM, for example, cupping)**
4. **Acupuncture indications for other pathologies – clinical reasoning process and evidence-based practice**
5. **Safety regulations and precautions**
6. **Clinical Placement**

**Evaluation of Students Performance**

Proof of competency by formal evaluation should be mandatory and should aim to assess all learning outcomes of all the separate modules. It is recommended that formal evaluation of students is undertaken through the use of a variety of assessment tools, including:

**Theoretical assessments**

1. These might include but are not limited to written examinations, clinical case puzzles, oral examinations and
2. Written reports of appropriate length and academic level demonstrating the participant’s ability to evaluate literature, export results and apply evidence-based approaches in clinical practice (case study presentations, critical analysis of the literature, narrative or systematic review, research trials, etc.)

**Practical examinations of manual skills**

These might include but are not limited to practical skills examination, Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) etc.

**Clinical examination and treatment of patients**

These might include but are not limited to oral / practical demonstration on patients, use of acupuncture in supervised environment with all safety standards, hospital attendances, etc.

The marking criteria for the assessment of a student’s performance should be clearly outlined and structured, and also consistent, transparent and appropriate for the learning outcomes being evaluated.

N.B. Time spent in clinical examination is not included in the 200-hour curriculum.

An example of curriculum is attached in the Appendix, which program organizers may refer to. However, program organizers have the freedom to formulate their own curriculum with different emphasis but fulfilling all criteria stated above.

**Teaching Faculty**

Faculty members may be drawn from different professional disciplines who are qualified to deliver lectures, teach practical acupuncture needling, supervise practice and supervise clinical attachment or placement in acupuncture. However, at least one member of the faculty must be a qualified physical therapist/physiotherapist with current membership/registration with their physical therapy/physiotherapy association. The physical therapy/physiotherapy association must be a member of World Physiotherapy.

**Medium of Instruction**

The medium of instruction may be in any local language or dialect that is suitable for the participants according to the needs of different countries or areas. However, there must be an English version of the programme details for the assessment of an application for accreditation submitted to IAAPT.

Online lectures are accepted practice, the lecture must be given face to face, rather than recorded. No more than 10% of the delivered information should be provided through online teaching.

**Entrance & Graduation Requirement**

The main cohort of applicants must be duly registered/licensed/members of their physical therapy/physiotherapy association. Other relevant medical and health care professionals may enroll in the program according to local requirements. Education for these participants is not recognized as IAAPT accredited.

The program must assess students to ensure adequacy of knowledge and safe needling practice. Both **written examination** and **practical examination** are mandatory requirements. Other forms of assessment, e.g., student presentation, clinical placement, continuous assessment of return demonstration, etc. may also be included in the evaluation of student performance. The assessments should ensure that the student can utilize acupuncture (and/or dry needling) based on sound physical therapy/physiotherapy assessment utilizing clinical reasoning (whether TCM diagnostic or Western biomedical principles) and using acupuncture in a safe and effective manner.

Award of IAAPT Certification to qualifying physical therapy/physiotherapy students requires demonstration of 200 contact hours of education and supervision and the passing of all written and practical examinations, and, if applicable, other forms of assessment (e.g., presentation, continuous assessment and clinical placement).

N.B. The physical therapists/physiotherapists must be registered/members of the relevant member organisation of World Physiotherapy.

**Certification issued by IAAPT**

Upon successful accreditation of the program, IAAPT will issue a “**Certificate of Accreditation**” to the school, association or authority (the institution) holding the education program. The certificate is valid for 4-years and it is expected that the institution continuing to run the program should apply for an updated accreditation from IAAPT within the 4-year cycle. The institution may use the phrase “**Accredited by the International Acupuncture Association of Physical Therapists, an Official Sub-group of the World Physiotherapy**” or its abbreviated or local equivalent to describe the programme they offered while the certificate of accreditation is valid. The institution should inform the IAAPT if there is any change in their curriculum (not timetable).

A certificate to the Physical therapy / physiotherapy students who have undertaken and passed the assessments and are registered/member physiotherapists in a World Physiotherapy Member Organisation, may also be issued a “Certificate of Acupuncture for Physical Therapists (Physiotherapists)” for the accredited program. The application for this certificate must be initiated by the Institute that offered the program. Proof of the studentship, successful completion of the program, and the physiotherapists current registration with a World Physiotherapy Member Organisation must be included in the application. Certification for students cannot be provided by IAAPT if students are not physical therapists/physiotherapists currently registered/members of a World Physiotherapy Member Organisation.

**Fees**

* Application for Accreditation of the Program: GBP500
* Application for issuance of Certificate of Acupuncture for Physical Therapists (Physiotherapists) for individual students: GBP20 per each certificate

**Application Procedure**

Fill out relevant forms and submit it via email to contact@iaapt.physio or by mail to GPO Box 4310, Hong Kong (Attention: Kerry Fung).

All fees should be paid to the account of IAAPT via Bank Transfer or PayPal.

Invoice will be advised in due course.

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**Appendix – Examples of advanced acupuncture curriculum**

**Important Note: These examples are included as samples to invite further development and elaboration of curricula for advanced education programs of acupuncture for physiotherapists / physical therapists. It is not intended to be binding and curriculum with similar contents does not guarantee successful accreditation by IAAPT. Program organizers and institutions should have the freedom to design their curricula according to the guidelines set out in this document.**

**Example 1**

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| **Module 1**  **The TCM conceptual model** |
| * Introduction to TCM – the 5 elements concept * Introducing and presenting the Meridian system * TCM diagnostics * Zang – Fu organs theory * Bi and Wei syndromes * Homeostasis in TCM * Pattern differentiation according to the theory of Eight principles, the theory of Qi, Blood, Essence and Fluid, the theory of Organ system, and the theory of meridians and collaterals. * Ability to analyse and synthesize clinical data to determine appropriate pattern differentiation and establish therapeutic principles accordingly. |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 40**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 80** |

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| **Module 2**  **The Biomedical Acupuncture conceptual model** |
| * Local effect of acupuncture * Distal effect of acupuncture (Segmental and General or Homeostatic) * Pain: Assessment and management with acupuncture * Anti-inflammatory effect of acupuncture * Psycho-neuro-immunology and acupuncture * Placebo and Nocebo effect * Autonomic regulation of acupuncture |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 60**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 120** |

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| **Module 3**  **Surface anatomy, identification, differentiation and nomenclature of acupuncture points** |
| * Anatomy and physiology of the acupuncture points * Acupuncture points: recognition and characteristics of all 361 classical points and 48 extraordinary points * Surface and surgical anatomy, localisation |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 20**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 40** |

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| **Module 4**  **Acupuncture related techniques (TCM and Biomedical)** |
| * Dry needling Technique - Theory and Practice. * Electro-acupuncture, Laser acupuncture * Auricular acupuncture: The Nogier approach * Intramuscular Stimulation * Minimal acupuncture * Moxibustion * Microsystems in Acupuncture ( including but not limited to Scalp and Auricular acupuncture) * Needling manipulations including reinforcing and reducing |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 60**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 120** |

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| **Module 5**  Acupuncture indications for Physiotherapy related pathologies – clinical reasoning process |
| * Clinical Reasoning basics * Acupuncture in Musculoskeletal pathologies * Acupuncture in Neurological conditions (CNS and PNS) * Acupuncture in Rheumatology * Acupuncture in Sports * Acupuncture in Cephalalgia * Acupuncture in Chronic Pain syndromes * Acupuncture in TMJ pain and dysfunction * Ability to achieve an appropriate diagnosis and a reasonable assessment from a conventional medical perspective. * Ability to interpret the best evidence of acupuncture practice. * Ability to apply the current knowledge of acupuncture research. |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 60**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 120** |

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| **Module 6**  **Safety regulations and precautions** |
| * Safety regulations by IAAPT * Indications and contra-indications of acupuncture * Basic Life Support |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 10**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 20** |

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| **Module 7**  **Clinical Placement** |
| * Ability to make an informed decision on acupuncture treatment based on comprehensive analysis of the patient’s condition * Ability to locate all classical and extraordinary acupoints according to international acupuncture nomenclature * Ability to achieve an appropriate diagnosis and a reasonable assessment from a conventional medical and/or from a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective * Ability to perform comprehensive needling manipulations for a variety of diseases * Ability to apply microsystems acupuncture and special acupuncture techniques |
| **Indicative Contact Hours: 50**  **Indicative Self Directed Learning: 50** |

**Table 1: Workload in Hours of Learning.**

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| **Module** | **Contact Hours** | **Self-Directed Study (Hours)** |
| **Module 1** | **40** | **80** |
| **Module 2** | **60** | **120** |
| **Module 3** | **20** | **40** |
| **Module 4** | **60** | **120** |
| **Module 5** | **60** | **120** |
| **Module 6** | **10** | **20** |
| **Module 7** | **50** | **50** |
| **TOTAL** | **300** | **550** |
| **TOTAL WORKLOAD** | | **850 (Hours)** |

**Example 2**

A program integrating a basic module (fulfilling the basic education criteria), an advanced module and a clinical practicum

Module 1: Basic Acupuncture Module

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| Week 1  (16 hours) | Basic Concepts of Acupuncture  Spectrum of Practice – Traditional, Western and Dry Needling  Mechanism and Therapeutic Effects of Western Acupuncture (WA)  Indications and Contraindications for Acupuncture  Clinical Reasoning for Acupuncture in Physiotherapy  Basic Concepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture  *Safety and Hygiene in Acupuncture Treatment*  *Adverse and Emergency Situations in Acupuncture*  *General Acupuncture Techniques* |
| Week 2  (16 hours) | *The Meridian System*  *Surface Anatomy of the Meridians and Common Acupuncture Points (1)* |
| Week 3  (16 hours) | *Surface Anatomy of the Meridians and Common Acupuncture Points (2)*  Pain and Pain Modulation  Acupuncture Treatment for Common Musculoskeletal Conditions  *Introduction to Myofascial Trigger Point Therapy and Dry Needling*  *Acupuncture Related Techniques:*   * *Electroacupuncture* * *Moxibustion* * *Cupping* * *Coining* |
| Week 4  (16 hours) | Introduction to Acupuncture Treatment for Neurological Conditions  *Introduction to Auricular Acupuncture (Auriculotherapy)*  *Introduction to Scalp Acupuncture*  Student Presentation & Discussion  Written and Practical Examinations |
| 2 Days  (16 hours) | Clinical Placement |

Module 2: Advanced Acupuncture Module

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| **Week** | **Topic** |
| 1  (16 hours) | Acupuncture Therapeutics: The therapeutic effects and principles of acupuncture |
| Acupuncture Methods: history, development, filiform needle acupuncture, disinfection |
| Acupuncture methods: acupuncture, deqi, tonification and reduction |
| Acupuncture Therapeutics: TCM diagnosis principles, Acupoint Prescription |
| Acupuncture therapeutics: stroke, paralysis, bi syndromes, wry neck, frozen shoulder, lumbar pain |
| 2  (16 hours) | Tuina technique (1). |
| 3  (16 hours) | Tuina technique (2). |
| 4  (16 hours) | Acupuncture Therapeutics: cold, cough, wheezing, dyspnea, vomiting, stomach ache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, palpitations, insomnia, depression, epilepsy, seizures, headache, facial paralysis, dizziness, ophthalmology & ENT, dermatology |
| Acupuncture & Moxibustion: Moxibustion |
| 5  (16 hours) | Acupuncture methods: scalp acupuncture, auriculotherapy, abdominal acupuncture |
| 6  (16 hours) | Acupuncture methods: blood-letting acupuncture, dermal acupuncture, intradermal acupuncture, floating acupuncture, electroacupuncture |
| Acupuncture Therapeutics: menstrual irregularities, dysmenorrhea, amenorrhea, gynecology, pediatric convulsions, infantile colic, cerebral palsy, spermatorrhoea, impotence, premature ejaculation, male infertility, emergencies (fever, spasms, convulsions, collapse, severe pain). |
| 7  (16 hours) | Acupuncture & Moxibustion method: cupping method, gua sha method |
| 8  (16 hours) | Adverse reactions in acupuncture, first aid (including basic life support). |
| Student Presentation: Acupuncture in Physiotherapy |
| 9  (16 hours) | Western Medical Acupuncture |
| Clinical Reasoning and Evidence Based Practice of Acupuncture |
| Preparation for Module 3 Practicum |
| Anatomical Approach in Acupuncture; Segmental Acupuncture |
| 10  (16 hours) | Myofascial Trigger Point Therapy  Dry Needling |
| Written examination, acupuncture & moxibustion method and tuina manipulation practice test |

Module 3: Clinical Practicum

5 days of clinical practice in a Physiotherapy Clinic, TCM Hospital or Acupuncture Clinic. (40 hours)

Contact hours of the program: Module 1: 80, Module 2: 160, Module 3: 40

Total contact hours: 280