



International Acupuncture Association of Physiotherapists

www.iaapt.physio

President: Kerry Fung (Hong Kong)
Secretary: Susan Kohut (New Zealand)

Accreditation scheme for Advanced Acupuncture Education for Physiotherapists / Physical Therapists

Introduction

The International Acupuncture Association for Physiotherapists (IAAPT) is an official specialty group of World Physiotherapy (previously known as World Confederation for Physical Therapy) in the specialty field of Acupuncture and Dry Needling. It encompasses needling practices of Eastern and Western origins. 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 (physical therapists).

While there are acupuncture education programs for physiotherapists that exceed the basic standards, an accreditation scheme in acupuncture at an advanced level is justified. IAAPT is concerned with physiotherapy related and specific background acupuncture and / or dry needling 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 and biomedical approaches of acupuncture and dry needling.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations for training in acupuncture (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/66007/1/WHO_EDM_TRM_99.1.pdf) 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

References should be made on the documents “WHO recommendations for training in acupuncture” and other WHO documents, 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>



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

1. **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) conceptual model and / or Biomedical Acupuncture (including Dry Needling) conceptual model(s)**
2. **Surface anatomy, identification, differentiation and nomenclature of acupuncture points / description of dry needling points**
3. **Acupuncture Related Techniques (Biomedical and / or TCM)**
4. **Acupuncture indications for pathologies – clinical reasoning process and evidence-based practice**
5. **Safety and legal regulations and precautions**
6. **Clinical Placement**

Evaluation of Students Performance

Proof of competency by formal evaluation is mandatory and will assess all learning outcomes of all modules. It is recommended that formal evaluation of students is undertaken through the use of a variety of assessment tools, including, but not limited to:

Theoretical assessments

1. These might include but are not limited to written examinations, clinical case studies, oral examinations, and
2. Written report(s) of appropriate length and academic level to demonstrating the ability to evaluate literature, 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, clinic or hospital attendances, etc.



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The marking criteria for the assessment of a student's performance must be clearly outlined and structured, and also be consistent, transparent and appropriate for the learning outcomes being evaluated. Time spent in examinations is not included in the 200-hour curriculum.

Examples of curriculums are 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 set forth above.

Teaching Faculty

Faculty members may be drawn from different professional disciplines who are qualified to deliver lectures, teach practical acupuncture / dry needling, supervise practice and supervise clinical attachment or placement in acupuncture. However, at least one member of the faculty must be a qualified physiotherapist / physical therapist with current membership of their Physiotherapy (Physical Therapy) Association that is a Member Organization 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 administrative region. However, there must be an English version of the program details for the assessment of an application for accreditation submitted to IAAPT.

Online lectures are accepted practice, however, the lectures must be given in live teleconference (face to face), rather than pre-recorded. Generally, no more than 10% of the delivered information should be provided through online teaching. Practical teaching must be provided face to face to ensure quality of demonstration, practice, supervision and assessment of return demonstration.

Entrance & Graduation Requirement

The main cohort of applicants must be duly registered or recognized physiotherapists / physical therapists. 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. A **written examination** and a **practical examination** are mandatory requirements. Other forms of assessment, e.g., student presentation, clinical placement, continuous assessment of return



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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 physiotherapy / physical therapy assessment utilizing clinical reasoning (whether TCM diagnostic or Western biomedical principles including dry needling) and using acupuncture in a safe and effective manner.

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 “**Advanced Acupuncture Program for Physiotherapists 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 program 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).

Physiotherapists / Physical Therapists who have undertaken and passed the assessments may also be issued an “**Advanced Certificate of Acupuncture for Physiotherapists (Physical Therapists)**” for the accredited program. The award of IAAPT Certification to qualifying students requires demonstration of at least 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) who are Members of a World Physiotherapy Member Organization. The application for this certificate must be initiated by the Institute that offered the program. Proof of the status of being a physiotherapist / physical therapist, studentship and successful completion of the program must be included in the application. It is the obligation of the program organization to demonstrate that the physiotherapists requiring certification are members of a World Physiotherapy Member Organization.

Fees

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



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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. The 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

Module 1
The TCM conceptual model
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Module 3
Surface anatomy, identification, differentiation and nomenclature of acupuncture points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Module 5
Acupuncture indications for Physiotherapy related pathologies – clinical reasoning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety regulations by IAAPT• Indications and contra-indications of acupuncture• Basic Life Support
Indicative Contact Hours: 10 Indicative Self Directed Learning: 20

Module 7 Clinical Placement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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



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Table 1: Workload in Hours of Learning.

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)



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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

<p>Week 1 (16 hours)</p>	<p>Basic Concepts of Acupuncture</p> <p>Spectrum of Practice – Traditional, Western and Dry Needling</p> <p>Mechanism and Therapeutic Effects of Western Acupuncture (WA)</p> <p>Indications and Contraindications for Acupuncture</p> <p>Clinical Reasoning for Acupuncture in Physiotherapy</p> <p>Basic Concepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture</p> <p><i>Safety and Hygiene in Acupuncture Treatment</i></p> <p><i>Adverse and Emergency Situations in Acupuncture</i></p> <p><i>General Acupuncture Techniques</i></p>
<p>Week 2 (16 hours)</p>	<p><i>The Meridian System</i></p> <p><i>Surface Anatomy of the Meridians and Common Acupuncture Points (1)</i></p>
<p>Week 3 (16 hours)</p>	<p><i>Surface Anatomy of the Meridians and Common Acupuncture Points (2)</i></p> <p>Pain and Pain Modulation</p> <p>Acupuncture Treatment for Common Musculoskeletal Conditions</p> <p><i>Introduction to Myofascial Trigger Point Therapy and Dry Needling</i></p> <p><i>Acupuncture Related Techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Electroacupuncture</i> ● <i>Moxibustion</i> ● <i>Cupping</i> ● <i>Coining</i>



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Week 4 (16 hours)	Introduction to Acupuncture Treatment for Neurological Conditions <i>Introduction to Auricular Acupuncture (Auriculotherapy)</i> <i>Introduction to Scalp Acupuncture</i> Student Presentation & Discussion Written and Practical Examinations
2 Days (16 hours)	Clinical Placement

Module 2: Advanced Acupuncture Module

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



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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