



AATA UNDERGRADUATE PRE-ART THERAPY EDUCATION GUIDELINES

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Introduction

The American Art Therapy Association's (AATA) *Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines* have been developed to provide a resource for art therapy educators teaching in a range of art therapy courses and programs. Currently, undergraduate art therapy education in the U.S. is offered at institutions in a range of formats including single course, certificate, associate's, and bachelor's degree programs in pre-art therapy or art therapy. The *Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines* are intended to support this range of courses and programs. "Pre-art therapy" will be used throughout this document to clearly delineate it from graduate studies in art therapy.

Guidelines in this document grew out of a need to ensure relevance and ethical practice in the development and delivery of undergraduate pre-art therapy education as a service to the profession, the membership, and the public. Guidelines are essential to prospective undergraduate students who choose to study art therapy in preparation for graduate admission or appropriate entry level human service positions, to art therapists who desire to develop or teach undergraduate pre-art therapy courses, and to institutions that seek to provide academically sound undergraduate pre-art therapy course offerings.

Whether students take one introductory pre-art therapy course or complete a robust major, undergraduate coursework may be the entry point for students starting the career path to becoming a credentialed art therapist. These guidelines provide educators information to develop, deliver, and strengthen undergraduate pre-art therapy education. These guidelines are intended to provide direction in the construction and delivery of relevant and rigorous undergraduate pre-art therapy education that can be practically implemented within a range of curriculum and assessment models.

Definition of Acronyms

The following acronyms for professional organizations and art therapy credentials are used throughout this document. Accompanying definitions are provided.

AATA

The [American Art Therapy Association](#) (AATA) is a non-profit professional membership organization that supports the development of the art therapy profession. They hold an annual professional conference and provide continuing education opportunities for registered, credentialed, and licensed art therapists in the U.S. The AATA publishes *Art Therapy*, a peer-reviewed journal and advocates for the profession and art therapists through public policy work.

ACATE

The [Accreditation Council for Art Therapy Education](#) (ACATE) is a committee on accreditation under the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) that regularly reviews and revises the *Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation of Educational*

Programs in Art Therapy. These are standards for graduate level art therapy programs. The ACATE performs this task in collaboration with the CAAHEP, the AATA, and the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB).

ATCB

The [Art Therapy Credentials Board](#) (ATCB) is the credentialing body for art therapists in the U.S. They set standards for competent practice for the various levels of professional art therapy designation: provisional art therapist, registered art therapist, board certified art therapist, art therapy certified supervisor. This organization administers the national art therapy exam which is required for board certification.

ATCB Credentials

- **ATR-P:** Art Therapist Registered-Provisional designates an art therapist with a Master's degree in art therapy who is working toward their registration by completing supervised art therapy clinical hours.
- **ATR:** Art Therapist Registered is an art therapist who has completed graduate studies and their post-graduate supervised clinical hours.
- **ATR-BC:** Art Therapist Registered-Board Certified refers to an art therapist who has completed the requirements for the ATR and has passed the national Board Certification exam.
- **ATCS:** Art Therapy Certified Supervisor designates an art therapist who has completed specific training in art therapy clinical supervision and has completed required supervision hours for ATR-Ps who have become ATRs.

CAAHEP

The [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs](#) (CAAHEP) is a non-profit agency that oversees accreditation for myriad health education programs including art therapy. They set standards for quality assurance in postsecondary education programs and work with committees of accreditation (including ACATE). “The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, the Accreditation Council for Art Therapy Education, and the American Art Therapy Association and Art Therapy Credentials Board cooperate to establish, maintain and promote appropriate standards of quality for educational programs in art therapy...” (CAAHEP, 2024, p. 1).

NASAD

The [National Association of Schools of Art and Design](#) (NASAD) provides accreditation for pre-art therapy programs housed within departments of art and/or design. NASAD is a member-based non-profit organization designated by the US Department of Education as the agency responsible for the development of educational standards and accreditation of all art/design related programs. Not all art/design programs are members of NASAD.

NOAH

[The National Organization for Arts in Health \(NOAH\)](#) is a member organization representing a range of arts-based providers within the health care industry. These span the clinical creative and expressive arts therapies, artists in residence, arts program administrators and artists addressing broader public health needs. They are a mission-based nonprofit organization that seeks to advance and promote the broad field of arts in health through partnerships, research, and education. Their credential, “NOAH Essentials of Art in Health Certificate” is in development.

Underlying Principles of the AATA Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines

The AATA *Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines* are aligned with the purpose, mission, values, strategic plan, and ethics of the American Art Therapy Association, Inc. They are based on a commitment to ensuring relevant, ethical education for undergraduate students who seek foundational knowledge in the field in preparation for application to graduate study or positions appropriate to an undergraduate level of training.

Mission Statement of the American Art Therapy Association

To advance art therapy as a regulated mental health profession and build a community that supports art therapists throughout their careers (AATA, 2021).

Values Statement of the American Art Therapy Association

The American Art Therapy Association is committed to the following core values:

- We believe art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.
- We advocate for the dignity, self-worth, well-being, and creative potential of all people as well as in the development and provision of art therapy to the public.
- We affirm a commitment to inclusivity; we embrace all people and honor each individual's race; ethnicity; religious or spiritual beliefs; national origin; ancestry; age; abilities; sexual orientation; gender; gender identity; gender expression; socioeconomic, marital, immigration, or military status; political views; and new cultural identities as they emerge.
- We maintain a commitment to strengthening AATA's cultural proficiency, awareness, and attunement and welcome art therapists of diverse identities and backgrounds to join our membership, staff, and to serve on our Board of Directors.
- We endeavor to be an inclusive learning-centered organization that respects and incorporates the perspectives and contributions of our members, thereby integrating the needs and viewpoints of diverse communities into the design and implementation of our strategic plan.

- We uphold social justice and sustainability through inclusion, awareness, practice, and affirmation that all people deserve equal economic, environmental, healthcare, political and social rights, and opportunities.
- We maintain awareness of the social and environmental consequences of human actions on communities, ecosystems, and associations and strive to advance a sustainable and just society (AATA, 2017).

The Art Therapy Profession and Distinction Between Art Facilitation

Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that uses art-based methods to meet personal and relational treatment goals. Art therapists use multiple theoretical approaches in case conceptualization. Art therapists provide services in diverse clinical and community spaces including, but not limited to individual, couple, family, and group work. Art therapists function independently or as part of interdisciplinary teams, complementing and informing the work of medical, mental health, and allied health professionals (CAAHEP, 2024, p. 2).

The distinction between pre-professional and professional levels of practice is unclear to the public, especially in places that do not regulate practice through art therapy licenses. Indeed, there is overlap between the two levels, as some credentialed art therapists provide wellness-focused art activities in non-clinical settings (Lambert, Lee, & Sonke, 2023; Schwartz et al., 2019).

Ethically, non-credentialed art facilitators do not provide clinical care for mental conditions. Practice literature further illuminates these differences and provides clear definitions (Lambert, Lee, & Sonke, 2023; Schwartz et al., 2023; Pate, Rastogi, & Daiello, 2022; Van Lith & Spooner, 2018; Potash et al., 2016). Essential to the practice of art therapy is the engagement of a credentialed art therapist. However, beneficial art experiences can also be effectively facilitated to non-clinical populations by undergraduate prepared providers. Several systematic literature reviews acknowledge that “participatory arts-based activities,” facilitated by trained non-clinical arts practitioners, can provide effective care (Fancourt & Finn, 2019; O’Donnell et al., 2022; Peters et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2023). For example, Lambert, Lee, & Sonke (2023, p. 74) distinguish creative and expressive arts therapists from other arts in health care providers such as “artists in residence,” “healthcare arts administrators,” and “arts in public health coordinators.” NOAH (2018, p.10) notes that “artists in healthcare focus mainly on enhancing patient experience, improving the healthcare environment, and caring for caregivers.” Art therapists have been training non-clinicians to responsibly use art activities for several generations, and pre-professional art therapy education is positioned to recommend best practices for such facilitators or paraprofessionals in non-clinical settings (Kalmanowitz & Potash, 2010).

Relationship of Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines to Master’s Education Guidelines

Currently, there are no guidelines or standards for undergraduate art therapy education specifically from the art therapy field. Based on many requests from art therapy educators and need for guidance, the AATA Undergraduate Education Committee developed the *Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines* building on the previous work of former committee members of a Task Force who developed draft guidelines in 2016 (Denning et al. 2024; Schwartz et al., 2019).

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program (CAAHEP) provides [*Standards and Guideline for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Art Therapy*](#) on the Master's level (2024). These guidelines have been referenced when developing the *Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education Guidelines*; however, careful consideration was placed on outlining the appropriate level of guidance for the undergraduate level of study.

While these guidelines were refined with feedback from the ACATE, the branch of CAAHEP that develops graduate art therapy education guidelines, they are not endorsed by the ACATE.

Based on the content and format of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Art Therapy*, the AATA Undergraduate Education Committee and previous Task Force identified areas of commonality and continuity between the two documents (CAAHEP, 2024). They also conceptualized foundational and advanced levelled tiers to distinguish between undergraduate and graduate art therapy education. These developmental, sequential tiers differentiated between non-clinical and clinical Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which are presented later in the guidelines. The resulting Guidelines include resources for admission to a CAAHEP accredited Master's level art therapy education programs and articulate guidelines for institutional support, faculty and staff.

Scope and Limitations of Undergraduate Pre-Art Therapy Education

Currently, art therapy education in the United States spans a continuum from undergraduate to doctorate education. These guidelines recognize that the Master's degree is the standard level of education for professional training of art therapists and is required to obtain professional practice credentials. Art therapy in psychotherapeutic assessment, diagnosis, intervention and treatment is neither appropriate nor ethical at the undergraduate level and is not included in these learning outcomes or competencies.

While undergraduate students are not credentialed practitioners, these guidelines are informed by the ethical standards of the profession (the AATA's *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists* and The ATCB *Code Governing Standards of Practice, Eligibility for and Regulation of Credentials, and Disciplinary Procedures*) to ensure appropriate boundaries and safe, ethical engagement during educational activities (AATA, 2013; ATCB, 2025).

In defining student learning outcomes, faculty and staff roles, and institutional supports, these guidelines aim to safeguard faculty, students, and the community participants they serve, preventing them from engaging in learning activities that would extend beyond the scope of undergraduate level practice.

Section I. Institutional Environment and Support

I. A. Accreditation and Approval

1. The institution in which the undergraduate pre-art therapy program is offered must be accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.
2. The [NASAD](#) provides accreditation for pre-art therapy programs housed within departments of art and/or design. Accreditation is optional, but provides the public with assurance of current, high-quality art and/or design educational programming.

I. B. Promotional Materials

1. Promotional materials:
 - a. Are displayed on the institution's website;
 - b. Are clear, unambiguous, accurate, and describe the current program; and
 - c. State that a Master's degree is the minimum required to practice art therapy, and include state-specific practice credentials which may be more rigorous.
2. Promotional materials are recommended to include:
 - a. Institutional accreditations;
 - b. The academic unit, mission, and objectives;
 - c. Admission requirements;
 - d. Matriculation requirements;
 - e. Degree requirements;
 - f. The specific degree;
 - g. Instructional methods; and
 - h. Financial opportunities.

I. C. Financial Support

1. The institution provides budgeted financial support for the pre-art therapy program that is at minimum equal to other similar units in the institution.
2. Sufficient financial resources are provided by the institution for the program to carry out its programmatic and related activities.
3. Financial support is adequate to guarantee the stability and longevity of the program, as well as ensuring a high-quality delivery system for maintenance of effective teaching and related educational venues.

I. D. Faculty and Student Support

1. The institution supports the faculty's professional development in venues such as conference attendance, scholarship, research, clinical practice, creative pursuits, professional organization membership and leadership services, editorships, etc.
2. The institution supports students' training through vehicles such as scholarships, work-study, assistantships, and other means equivalent to other similar programs in the institution.
3. Personal counseling or therapy is available to students, but following ethical guidelines, therapists or counselors are neither faculty members nor students within the same academic unit.
4. Support for both faculty and students is equivalent to other types of support offered to similar units within the institution.

I. E. Technical Support, Facilities, and Equipment

1. Technical support includes the following:
 - a. Computers with related hardware and software are available to faculty and students to support teaching and learning;
 - b. Installation of audio-visual equipment in classrooms or available on request to support teaching and learning; and
 - c. Assistance with online course design, implementation, and development.
2. Offices, confidential meeting spaces, and/or conference rooms are available to faculty and support staff and provide the following:
 - a. Assignment to space equivalent to other similar units within the institution;
 - b. Technology that supports teaching and learning, advisement, confidential consultation, and the faculty's related activities;
 - c. A designated art therapy office for the program director that is equivalent to other similar units within the institution;
 - d. Designated space for administrative and staff equivalent to other similar units within the institution;
 - e. Equipment such as furniture and art supplies in the program director's and administrative offices to support programmatic needs, equivalent to other similar units within the institution; and
 - f. Designated space for the display of student artwork.
3. A library provides the following:
 - a. Access to books, professional journals, audio-visual, and other materials to support teaching and learning, and art therapy research and related topics;
 - b. Availability to faculty and students during all sessions.

4. Classrooms, seminar rooms, and art studios are available to faculty and students, and provide the following:
 - a. Space that is appropriate for teaching and learning in small and large groups;
 - b. Art studios equipped to support teaching and learning about art materials, the creative process, and the principles of art facilitation; and
 - c. Art studios are accessible to faculty and students outside of scheduled classes upon request.

I. F. Administrative and Staff Support

1. Administrative support is assigned to the art therapy program and/or clerical staff who work directly with the art therapy program director and/or faculty and equivalent to other similar units within the institution.
2. Student records, forms, and institutional data are available to faculty as needed for advisement, program development, and related duties to ensure the continuous delivery of the pre-art therapy program.
3. Faculty supervisors, faculty, and support staff meet on a regular basis with administration, as stipulated in written policies and procedures for the unit.

Section II. Faculty and Staff

This section was developed to provide recommendations for undergraduate pre-art therapy education faculty and staff. *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Art Therapy* (CAAHEP, 2024) were referred to and modified to align with undergraduate level education. Unlike graduate art therapy programs which may be accredited and provide education in the specialized field of art therapy, undergraduate education in art therapy may be housed within a range of departments or programs, such as art, psychology, or human services, and may be composed of faculty and staff outside the art therapy profession. These factors were instrumental in developing these guidelines for faculty and staff.

II. A. Coordinator/Director

Responsibilities:

1. Ensure program effectiveness, including outcomes, organization, administration, continuous review, and curriculum planning and development;
2. Develop criteria for selection of and evaluate appropriate field placements and/or experiential settings to provide service learning experience for students (Denning et al., 2024);
3. Ensure that all students have faculty and/or academic advisors;
4. Ensure achievement of the program's goals and outcomes; and
5. Coordinate and consult with the art therapy faculty regarding specialized knowledge, skills, and experience with the field.

Qualifications:

1. Possess a minimum of a Master's degree.

II. B. Art Therapy Faculty

Responsibilities:

1. Provide instruction in art therapy curriculum content;
2. Make timely assessments of students' progress in achieving acceptable course requirements;
3. Refer to ethical codes and carefully consider sensitive materials and the potential impact on students. If any students are adversely affected, they should be referred to appropriate campus support resources.
4. Evaluate and develop program curriculum as required; and
5. Provide oversight of students during field placements, document and assess student performance throughout and upon completion of the field placement.

Qualifications:

1. Possess the minimum of a Master's degree, a national or international registration, certification and/or license in the field of art therapy. This includes a "provisional" national registration in the field of art therapy. If a credentialed art therapist is unavailable, credentialed allied professionals may be considered when in consultation with a credentialed art therapist.
2. Be effective in teaching and knowledgeable in subject matter as documented by appropriate professional credential(s)/certification(s), education, and experience in the designated content area.
3. Pre-Art Therapy Coursework:
 - a. NASAD standards indicate: "Courses in the theory and practice of art therapy and field experiences must be taught or overseen by instructors who are ATR credentialed art therapists" (NASAD, 2024, p.141).
 - b. Alternatively, institutions without access to art therapy credentialed faculty could avoid the terms "art therapy" or "pre-art therapy" in their course or program titles, but instead use terms such as "arts in health," "community art," or "art for public health/wellness."

II. C. Field Placement Coordinator

Responsibilities:

1. Provide oversight of the field placement experience; including placement; documentation and evaluation of student performance and progress;
2. Establish field placement affiliation agreements with appropriate settings;
3. Assure that supervision agreements are prepared for each student to define the roles and responsibilities of on-site supervisors (see Section VI.E. 3), coordinator and/or art therapy faculty, and students during the field placement;
4. Ensure field placement sites and on-site supervisors are adhering to field placement affiliation agreements, supervision agreements, and ethical principles in human services fields; and
5. Facilitate student placements for field placement experiences.

Qualifications:

1. The field placement coordinator must possess knowledge of the program's curriculum, expectations, requirements and evaluation procedures for students.
2. The field placement coordinator position may be fulfilled by the program director, faculty member(s) or other qualified designee.

Section III. Program Development and Administration

III. A. Program Support

1. The pre-art therapy program is included in the institution's listing of undergraduate academic program offerings.
2. If undergraduate pre-art therapy education involves more than one academic program, all programs are listed. Their responsibilities and subsequent relationships to the pre-art therapy program are discussed and documented.

III. B. Program Requirements

1. Undergraduate pre-art therapy programs including majors, minors, and certificates require semester or quarter credit hours of approved undergraduate level coursework, as determined by the institution.
2. All pre-art therapy courses required by the institution must be taught or overseen by instructors who meet the qualifications outlined in Section II.
3. The pre-art therapy program will ensure that the institution's promotional materials list the specific degree (see Section I. B).

III. C. Program Mission

1. The mission of the program is aligned with the mission of the school and institution.
2. The pre-art therapy program will have clearly specified guidelines and ongoing review, in an effort to have an inclusive and positive academic community. There will be an ongoing endeavor to recruit, enroll, and retain a group of diverse students.

III. D. Program Outcomes

1. The institution will put in place measurable program outcomes that align with the mission to the standards set by the academic institution. The institution will determine the methods of instruction for the curriculum and will define its own means of ongoing self-evaluation in compliance with the statements of competencies that each student must attain to complete the program and graduate.
2. It is the responsibility of the institution to educate students to be well informed about the field of art therapy, to prepare them for pre-professional employment, and to meet the requirements for admission to graduate art therapy programs.

III. E. Considerations for Admissions

1. Admission to the institution shall be determined according to policies established by the institution.
2. Each student admitted to the school will have submitted all documents consistent with what

is required by the institution.

III. F. Advising

1. The institution provides undergraduate pre-art therapy students with an advisor/s who follow academic advising practices, consistent with institution and departmental policies. The advising process may include: identifying academic and career goals; approving course selection, registration, add/drop/withdrawal, change of major, etc. processes; monitoring progress toward degree completion; developing and overseeing remediation and academic improvement plans; promoting and referring students to appropriate specialized staff such as disability services, tutors, librarians, campus counselors, financial aid, etc.; maintaining advising files with up-to-date information; and mentoring regarding pre-professional career or graduate school paths.
2. The advisor/s discusses assessments used by the institution to ensure monitoring of student progress and the potential for successful completion of undergraduate coursework and/or program.

Section IV. Coursework and Preparation for Graduate Studies in Art Therapy

IV. A. General Recommendations

This section includes general recommendations from various resources about foundational psychology and visual art coursework that supports the pre-art therapy learning outcomes and are common prerequisites needed for Master's level art therapy programs. There are no national standards that require specific courses or number of credits. Educators and students are recommended to refer to the resources in this section, the SLO's within this document, graduate program websites, and published articles on UG art therapy education to determine coursework that supports students in entry level human services and preparation for graduate studies. Each institution will develop required and elective coursework for pre-art therapy education based on their resources, program size, and goals.

IV. B. Prerequisites Master's Education in Art Therapy

For those students wanting to pursue graduate studies in art therapy, requirements for admission to Master's programs can be identified on individual program's websites. Additionally, [AATA](#) and [CAAHEP](#) provide resources to search Master's education programs where admissions criteria can be reviewed. *CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Art Therapy*, [Appendix B](#) (2024, p. 13) provides information on prior coursework or competencies needed to prepare students for Master's level study in art therapy.

IV. C. NASAD Guidelines

The [\(NASAD\) Handbook \(2024, pp. 140-141\)](#) identifies guidelines and requirements for pre-art therapy education. These standards outline curricular structure, recommendations for general studies, and essential competencies, experiences, and opportunities. Additionally, their standards include language about field experiences. Advisors and students should consider these NASAD standards along with specific graduate program, state and licensure requirements applicable to the student's career goals.

Section V. Student Learning Outcomes

This section is designed to identify pre-art therapy student learning outcomes (SLOs) and related competencies. It is organized around seven major areas:

- A. History and Theory of Art Therapy
- B. Media and Methods
- C. Visual Art and Creative Processes
- D. Cultural Diversity and Social Justice
- E. Communication
- F. Community Art Facilitation
- G. Professional Development

As with other sections of the Guidelines, these SLOs are aspirational and not compulsory. They do not refer to course titles or required courses. Programs may combine content into a single course or distribute content over multiple courses as they develop curriculum that addresses program mission, goals, and outcomes. It is the responsibility of the institution with input from faculty to determine how the content areas are embedded in courses throughout the curriculum.

SLOs are divided into three domains: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes. They provide a foundation for positions commensurate with undergraduates' skill level and preparation for graduate studies. The Knowledge Domain is based in cognition where knowledge is retrieved from long-term memory; understanding determines "the meaning of instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communication" (Krathwohl, 2002, p. 214). Skills, from the Psychomotor Domain, consist of "carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation. ...It includes executing and implementing" (p. 25). Attitudes, from the Affective domain, "are the feelings, values, appreciations, motivations, or priorities of [the] discipline or profession [we] want to stimulate in [our] students" (Miller-Young, 2018, p. 33).

The SLOs are designed to aptly prepare students for pre-professional employment and graduate education in art therapy and allied fields. The SLOs within each of the three domains are numbered for easy reference. While they each align with their respective content areas, they are not intended to be developmentally sequential, nor are they interdependent.

Research on optimal pre-art therapy SLOs and competencies is ongoing. These SLOs are based on current literature, industry-specific foundational art therapy educational goals, and undergraduate level competencies in allied professions (Elmendorf, 2022; Pate, Rastogi & Daiello, 2022; Peters et al., 2024; Schwartz et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2023). To remain current and relevant, periodic revisions are expected.

V. A. History and Theory of Art Therapy

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify major people, events, theories, and scientific principles that contributed to the development of the field of art therapy and its expansion in

contemporary settings.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. State the origins, theories, and scientific basis of art therapy as a discipline.	1. Research and trace the history and theories of art therapy from beginnings to current times.	1. Contextualize the need for various approaches to art therapy based on the culture within which they were developed.
2. Identify and differentiate among theoretical approaches to art therapy and state the major art therapist who developed and promoted the approach.	2. Describe and differentiate among various approaches to art therapy within contemporary art therapy settings (medical, mental health, community, social justice).	
3. Identify and distinguish diverse ranges and stages of human development as shown in artwork, based on several theoretical models that describe physical, emotional, social, and creative growth.		
4. Analyze the impact of culture on art therapy and related theories.		

V. B. Media and Methods

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the qualities, characteristics, and methods of using art materials as they are applied with participants.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Identify the physical and psychological properties, psychological effects, safety precautions, and proper care of art materials.	1. Demonstrate competence with a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials.	1. Respect the impact of art materials and media as the foundation for implementing art experiences for wellness.
2. Distinguish the successful adaptation of art processes, media and methods to meet the needs of participants who demonstrate a range of strengths and challenges.	2. Differentiate between effective and ineffective application of art media and materials in a variety of settings.	2. Attend to physical, emotional, cognitive, cultural and ethical factors in selecting and offering materials and media to various populations.
3. Apply neurological, psychosocial, and other art therapy theories to the	3. Design and implement adapted art experiences according to the strengths and	3. Follow ethical guidelines when displaying participant artwork.

selection and use of a variety of 2-D and 3-D materials and processes.	challenges of various participant populations.	
4. Evaluate the potential use of art materials and media within a variety of settings, available space, storage and funding.	4. Adapt the use of materials and media to conform to available space, facilities and funding.	4. Be flexible and creative with materials and media in serving the needs of participants and the potential limits of the setting.

V. C. Visual Art and Creative Processes

Students will demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that are congruent with the profession in their approach to creating, viewing, and responding to their own artwork and their understanding and experience of artwork created by others.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Describe influential concepts in the histories, theories, principles, and skills of visual art as they are applied in art facilitation.	1. Apply the elements of design, principles of art, and foundational skills in a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional art.	1. Recognize and value diverse forms of visual expression and the broad symbolic potential within images.
2. Describe a conceptual model of the creative process as an innate human capacity.	2. Demonstrate proficiency beyond the foundations level in at least one visual art medium.	2. Be aware of the influence of one's own worldview on understanding another's artwork and refrain from making assumptions or formulating interpretations.
3. Recognize that symbolism within expressive visual art is dependent upon multiple variables of culture, context, intent and individual experience.	3. Purposefully and effectively use art media, skills and techniques for self-expression in their own artwork.	3. Value the personal significance of the creative art process along with the final image.

4. Synthesize knowledge of visual art, creative process, human development and multicultural perspectives to recognize and articulate how art contributes to the development of intellectual, spiritual and emotional awareness in oneself and others.	4. Demonstrate readiness for advanced education and further professional development through faculty evaluation of their art portfolio.	4. With cultural humility, reflect upon the individual, societal, and collective expressive content of their own artwork and artwork created by others.
	5. Select and apply written, oral, art and other nonverbal forms of reflection with their own artwork based on their potential to contribute to awareness of and insight into one's psychological growth and development.	5. Follow ethical guidelines when discussing the artwork of others.

V. D. Cultural Diversity and Social Justice

Students will demonstrate an ongoing commitment to developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are culturally aware, protect human dignity, and support social justice.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Discuss ways art therapy concepts manifest within different cultural groups and potential application of these principles across settings.	1. Identify how components of intersectional identity, such as ethnicity, culture, gender, abilities, biases, history are expressed and understood by oneself and others.	1. With cultural humility, engage in reflection on the individual, societal, and collective expressive content of their own artwork and artwork by others.
2. Recognize one's own intersectional identity, such as ethnicity, culture, gender, abilities, biases, history, and explain how this awareness impacts one's interaction with others.	2. Research and discuss sociopolitical movements, cultural appropriation, history, values, biases, and beliefs.	2. Accept that culture, ethnicity, gender identity, and intersectionality influence one's own identity, abilities, and history, thereby displaying greater self-regulation and sensitivity to others' unique experiences.

3. Identify sociopolitical movements, history, economics, values, bias and beliefs that impact one's experiences living within communities.	3. Design art experiences that are inclusive and culturally sensitive.	3. Honor the influence of sociopolitical movements, history, economics, values, bias, and beliefs on oneself and those one encounters in class or in the community.
4. Describe the influence of language, religion, and culture on an individual's sense of identity, way of relating, and their approach to art making.		4. Support inclusive and culturally sensitive creative expression.
		5. Remain sensitive to multicultural differences in communication styles and skills.

V. E. Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively and professionally communicate and interact with peers, supervisors, and participants in a variety of academic and community settings.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Apply writing academic conventions appropriate for professional and general purposes.	1. Adhere to academic writing conventions as delineated by the current edition of the American Psychological Association's Publication Manual.	1. Value flexibility in communication to promote mutual understanding and respect.
2. Choose effective methods for using visual aids to convey concepts in presentations for various purposes and audiences.	2. Employ effective oral communication skills appropriate for audiences in community art and professional settings (one-to-one, group, and professional presentation).	2. Identify and remain sensitive to multicultural differences in communication styles and skills.
3. Recognize the principles and practice of effective oral communication.	3. Demonstrate proficient observational and active listening skills.	3. Articulate one's own communication strengths and weaknesses and strive for continuous improvement of skills.

4. Comprehend the elements and nuances of nonverbal communication through art.	4. a. Use and encourage the use of art materials as an alternative means of expression. 4. b. Employ effective nonverbal communication skills including physical presence, voice, images, and body language.	4. Recognize the benefits and limitations of digital art and communication.
	5. Demonstrate proficiency with digital communication tools.	

V. F. Community Art Facilitation

Students will demonstrate group leadership skills necessary to effectively facilitate creative art experiences for a wide range of participants and purposes in a range of community settings, while establishing and maintaining effective supervisory, professional peer and community participant relationships. The application of art therapy assessment, diagnosis and psychotherapeutic interventions and treatment in clinical settings is neither appropriate nor ethical for undergraduate students.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Identify types of art experiences offered in a variety of community settings. Distinguish between art facilitation, group art therapy, art education, art as therapy, and art psychotherapy.	1. Integrate knowledge of the purpose and goals of groups, interests, needs and characteristics of participants when designing arts experiences.	1. Seek out supervisory and peer feedback while supporting the development of peers.
2. Identify and evaluate leadership, environmental, cultural, community, and interpersonal factors that influence participant engagement in creative processes.	2. Recommend and establish conditions that promote a safe and effective art making environment.	2. Respect the rights of participants by adhering to ethical guidelines.
3. Explain advantages and disadvantages of art processes for specific groups of participants.	3. Demonstrate characteristics, skills and functions of an effective art activity group leader including adjusting art processes to benefit specific groups of participants.	3. Respect the limits of one's own skills and training.

4. Identify characteristics of professional relationships, and roles of student leaders and supervisors.	4. Facilitate culturally responsive group practices, including informed approaches for designing and facilitating diverse art experiences.	4. Establish positive helping relationships with individuals and groups within a community setting.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of basic helping skills, effective social interaction, and collaborative processes.	5. Examine one's own role of personal responsibility in establishing and maintaining effective professional relationships.	5. Incorporate feedback from supervisors and peers into facilitation and leadership practices.
6. Identify methods, venues, formats, risks and benefits to exhibiting art.	6. Evaluate the effectiveness of art media and methods used in individual and group goal-directed art experiences.	6. Reflect upon intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for the behavior of self and others.

V. G. Professional Development

Students will make informed decisions regarding their pursuit of scholarship, continuing educational experiences, workforce opportunities, and advanced degree programs.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1. Identify relevant agency, state and national regulations that govern the responsibilities and limitations of helping professionals in the workforce.	1. Effectively communicate ethical guidelines that apply to undergraduate students in education and field work settings.	1. Value, consult and adhere to ethical guidelines.
2. Summarize the purpose and scope of the American Art Therapy Association Ethical Principles for Art Therapists.	2. Access professional literature specific to the field of art therapy.	2. Seek supervision from faculty and agency staff regarding their roles in education, field experience and related settings.
3. Describe the education, training and credentials required for professional practice as an art therapist within one's own state.	3. Identify the characteristics of peer-reviewed and evidence-based research in art therapy and related fields.	3. Value and participate in professional resources provided by the professional organizations and associations.

4. Describe the education continuum in art therapy, including the academic degrees and any external professional credentials associated with each one.	4. Critically read art therapy and related research and evaluate it through a written report.	
5. Know the requirements and general process for application to accredited or accreditation-eligible Master's degree programs in art therapy or related fields.		
6. Know the qualifications and skills associated with appropriate entry level positions in the workforce.		

Section VI. Field Placement

VI. A. Defining Experiences and Terms

As stated previously, pre-art therapy education aims to prepare students to enter the workforce as valuable entry-level human-services providers. This preparation includes helping others make art within a supervised setting. These experiences support the development of students' critical thinking skills, self-reflection skills, awareness of the limits of their training, and their potential for successful work with vulnerable populations. These opportunities are termed Field Placement as an umbrella term for the purposes of these guidelines. Field Placement may also be referred to as practicum, capstone, internship, and service learning dependent upon one's institution.

VI. B. Foundation/Rationale/Purpose

1. In order to develop practical skills, it is recommended that each student successfully complete a supervised Field Placement working as an assistant to a qualified Site Supervisor. The Field Placement is a culmination of course work and personal development in the integration of academic and practical skills. These experiences emphasize the development of communication and leadership skills required to facilitate art experiences in community settings.
2. A Field Placement may be considered a major determinant of the student's future effectiveness in their career and higher education pursuits. As such, it is recommended that students be provided opportunities for high quality learning experiences within sites that prioritize participants receiving appropriate care and beneficial art engagement.
3. During Field Placement students should receive both placement-based Site Supervision or oversight and program- or institution-led group Faculty Supervision (as defined in Section VI. C. 3 and 4).
4. Students should be covered by applicable professional liability insurance policies held by the college while enrolled in their Field Placement.
5. The field placement agencies and the program should expect to share responsibility for the student's learning process and evaluation.
6. Supervision Agreements or Learning Contracts for each student are recommended in support of all parties defining the roles and responsibilities of the Site Supervisor, the program or institution's Coordinator, Faculty Supervisor, and the student during the Field Placement.
7. The program should provide some measure of orientation and consultation for Site Supervisors via the program's Field Placement Coordinator or institutional, career-development staff/faculty. Where possible, programs might further consider providing professional development opportunities for Site Supervisors.
8. Remediation policies should be clearly stated and understood by all parties, consistent with institutional policies.

VI. C. Field Placement Experience

1. Students should complete a supervised pre-art therapy Field Placement involving observation and appropriate, facilitation-framed practice in preparation for career and advanced level education toward career entry.
2. Field Placement should provide ample opportunity for students to directly interact with participants and practice community art facilitation skills. Direct interactions should occur over an extended time period to meet students' learning needs supported by consistent oversight from the placement's identified Site Supervisor and with guidance from the program's Faculty Supervisor.
3. Throughout the Field Placement, students should receive weekly oversight or task supervision provided by the placement's identified Site Supervisor in regular consultation with the program or institution's Coordinator and/or Faculty Supervisor in accordance with the supervision or learning contract. The Site Supervisor should be available to the student for direct consultation at all times while the student is on-site. The student should expect to receive regular, ongoing oral feedback regarding their performance.
4. College classroom (group) Faculty Supervision should be provided weekly. In order to provide sufficient supervision of students, the ratio of students to Faculty Supervision should be lower than the typical academic course size to ensure adequate support and supervision is provided to the student.
5. Student performance should also be more formally documented and evaluated at the midterm and at the completion of each Field Placement.

VI. D. Field Placement Settings

Undergraduate Field Placement settings most commonly include: community arts programs and museums; community-based mental health and wellness settings; organizations serving older adults; individuals with disabilities, or youth; and medical or rehabilitation facilities (Denning et al., 2024; Schwartz et al., 2019). It should be noted that students should not engage in clinical roles or roles that could be construed as delivering therapeutic services. It is further recommended that students be informed of the criteria used for selection of Field Placement sites. Field Placement sites may be evaluated based on the guidelines described in Section VII. D.

VI. E. Student Activities

Student activities in Field Placement may vary depending on the site. Activities within the pre-art therapy Field Placement should include a period of adequate orientation, opportunities for the student to observe, regular meetings with an on-site supervisor, and opportunities to practice skills associated with hands-on art facilitation. Goals of student-led art facilitation should focus on artistic engagement, wellness, socialization, or community building. Student activities should not include direct clinical assessment, treatment, or the practice of art therapy.

VI.E. Supervisor Qualifications and Responsibilities

1. Programs are encouraged to identify a **Field Placement Coordinator**. The Coordinator

oversees the program or institution's Field Placement. The Field Placement Coordinator may be the Program Director, a faculty or staff member, or other qualified designee, for example, an institution's career development center faculty/staff. It is essential that the Coordinator understand the program's expectations and intended outcomes for students. For a full description of Field Placement Coordinator responsibilities and qualifications refer to section II.C.

2. *Where possible*, the **Faculty Supervisor** assigned to instruct the college classroom (group) supervision should be a faculty member who is a credential holder with the ATCB, Inc. Recognizing that this may not always be possible, particularly within smaller programs or institutions, it is further recommended that the Faculty Supervisor be a masters degree trained allied, human-services oriented professional. *Where possible*, it is also recommended that the Faculty Supervisor hold supervisor level credentialing. The responsibilities of the Faculty Supervisor may include:
 - a. Maintaining ongoing, regular communication with the Site Supervisor;
 - b. Visiting the field site to observe the student's performance and ensure the learning objectives are being met;
 - c. Communicating site-visit findings with the Field Placement Coordinator;
 - d. Providing in-class supervision;
 - e. Delivering course didactic content;
 - f. Meeting with students for individual supervision as needed; and
 - g. Issuing the student's grade.
3. The **Site Supervisor** should be a qualified program specialist with expertise in their discipline and appropriate credentialing at the bachelor's level or above. The Site Supervisor's responsibilities may include:
 - a. Ensuring that the student's learning needs are being met in accordance with the Supervision Agreement or Learning Contract;
 - b. Providing ongoing oral and prescribed written feedback to the student at midterm and placement completion;
 - c. Communicating with the Faculty Supervisor to report upon the student's performance; and
 - d. Participating in Field Placement orientation and ongoing professional development activities that may be offered by the program.

VI.F. Supervisory Course Loads

1. Faculty should be compensated at a rate equal to those in other similar units in the Institution.
2. Faculty loads for group supervision should be equitable with and compensated at the rate used by related programs in the institution.
3. Supervisory capacity should be sufficient to achieve the goals and outcomes of the program and should be reviewed periodically to ensure effective supervisory resources.

Section VII. Evaluation

VII. A. Student Evaluation

1. Students are regularly assessed according to department or instructional unit requirements and practices. Areas of assessment should include academic performance, leadership and facilitator skills, and professional development readiness for further study in the field or workforce entry. Records are maintained for each student as required by department or instructional unit practices.
2. Academic advising practices include regular assessment of student progress toward completion of program curriculum.
3. Student learning outcomes or competencies, as listed on all program syllabi, are assessed in each course through a variety of modes, such as formative and summative evaluations which may include written papers, oral presentations, role-play, designing and engaging in experiential learning, and the creation of artwork that relates to course objectives.
4. Student field placements have specific evaluation methods. On-site and faculty supervisors evaluate students' development of competencies on a regular, scheduled basis and utilize written documentation of competencies to improve student performance.

VII. B. Program Evaluation

1. Program faculty and leadership conduct regular, systematic evaluation of the program and all of its components (mission, goals, curriculum, learning objectives, admissions, instructional methods, and experiential learning opportunities).
2. Follow up evaluations of program components are completed regularly with graduating students, and field placement Site Supervisors, to assess program effectiveness and need for modifications.
3. There is evidence that data from the above listed evaluations are utilized to make changes and improvements to the program.

VII. C. Faculty Evaluation

1. Programs demonstrate that faculty members are regularly evaluated by students and by the Program Coordinator/Director/or Designated Faculty Evaluator.
2. Information from evaluations is used to provide feedback to faculty members.
3. Faculty syllabi are reviewed by the Program Coordinator/Director and the school's Curriculum Committee to ensure that: a. instructional content is based on school and program student competencies, and b. syllabi include clearly written course descriptions, course objectives, methods of evaluation, topic outlines, and course schedules.

VII. D. Field Placement Setting Evaluation

1. There is regular evaluation of the all field placement sites, including, but not limited to:

suitability, safety, and mission of the facility; level of supervision and mentoring provided; and opportunities for direct, hands-on work with participants.

2. Students are given opportunities to provide direct and/or confidential evaluation and feedback regarding their site experience.
3. Information from the evaluative practices above may be communicated to Site Supervisors in an effort to improve or modify field experience opportunities. Feedback should remain confidential when possible and protections put in place to prevent retaliation on students.

Guidelines Working Group and Task Force Members

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The Committee extends their gratitude to the previous Undergraduate Task Force Members who provided the foundation and framework, and some key language for these guidelines:

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AATA's Undergraduate Education Committee presented these guidelines to AATA's Board for approval in 2025. However, its development has had a long journey.

In 1996, AATA published brief recommendations for undergraduate educational programs in a newsletter. Years later, the AATA Undergraduate Education Subcommittee revisited this topic and began editing Draft 2 of the Bachelor's Education Guidelines in development from the previous Undergraduate Education Task Force (2016).

Members of the AATA Undergraduate Education Committee, the Professional Affairs Committee, the membership, the public, and the AATA Board provided valuable feedback over the course of a year and a half as Draft 5 was further edited by a working group within the subcommittee then finally approved in August 2025 by the AATA Board.

This was a true collaborative effort resulting in a resource for educators, students, members, and the public.

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