



The British Association of **Dramatherapists**

Curriculum Guidance for the pre-registration education and training of Dramatherapists

May 2023

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1) Foreword

Approval of courses

BADth provides an essential professional advisory role to the HCPC. This curriculum guidance aims to explain the BADth guidelines for the content, delivery, and quality assurance of training programmes whose graduates are eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC.

Aims and purpose of the curriculum guidance

The original curriculum guidance was produced through a process of consultation between members of the training sub-committee and the executive committee of BADth. It was originally written by the training sub-committee in 2011, consisting of representatives of all the UK dramatherapy training programmes and other representatives from the professional body.

The current document is intended as guidance for the HCPC, and other statutory bodies involved in validation, revalidation, quality assurance and review of dramatherapy training programmes.

The document lays out the core elements that should be included in all dramatherapy training programmes.

The document identifies the conditions for the delivery of dramatherapy training programmes including curriculum content, staffing, environment, equipment, safety, ethics, inclusion, equality, and diversity.

The document aims to provide a reference point for the following:

- Existing and future academic institutions, and professional educators involved in the training of dramatherapists
- To ensure that training programmes enable students to meet and maintain HCPC Standards of Proficiency
- Placement providers
- Therapists and supervisors of dramatherapy students
- Dramatherapy students
- Prospective employers.

BADth Training Sub Committee

August 2022

Henri Seebohm

Kate Smith

Stavroulla Demetriou

Stephanie Turner

Richard Hougham

2) The role and scope of practice

Dramatherapy has as its focus the intentional use of healing aspects of drama and theatre as the therapeutic process. It is a method of working and playing that uses action methods to facilitate creativity, imagination, learning, insight, and growth.

Clients referred to a dramatherapist do not need to have previous experience or skill in acting, theatre, or drama. Dramatherapists support clients to find the most suitable medium for them to engage in either group or individual therapy.

Dramatherapy is a form of psychological therapy/psychotherapy in which the arts are utilised within the therapeutic relationship. Dramatherapists are both artists and clinicians and draw on their trainings in theatre/drama and therapy to create methods to engage clients in effecting psychological, emotional, and social changes. The therapy gives equal validity to body and mind within the dramatic context; stories, myths, playtexts, puppetry, masks and improvisation are examples of the range of artistic interventions a dramatherapist may employ. These will enable the client to explore difficult and painful life experiences through an indirect approach.

Dramatherapists work in a wide variety of settings, including:

- NHS
- Education
- Mental health
- General health and social care settings
- Prisons
- The voluntary sector

'Dramatherapist' is a title protected by British law, so all dramatherapists must be registered with the HCPC. They must abide by the BADth code of ethics, in conjunction with the following HCPC publications: *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics, Fitness to Practise, CPD requirements and Standards of Proficiency – Arts Therapists*.

3) Applying to train as a dramatherapist

All training programmes are at Masters Level. Programmes welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The successful completion of an HCPC approved programme allows graduates to apply for registration as an arts therapist with the HCPC. Arts therapist (drama) is a protected title, so registration with the HCPC is legally required to practice as a dramatherapist. The entry criteria to the programmes include:

- an initial degree in drama or related humanities area
- a related subject in psychological health or appropriately related professional qualification
- the equivalent of one year's full-time experience of working with people with additional needs
- experience in the facilitation of practical drama work
- demonstration of a mature attitude

- psychological resilience
- good interpersonal skills

Members of the dramatherapy staff team short list and interview applicants. This includes a practical group workshop to assess engagement with the art form of drama, and interpersonal skills. Applicants with no Bachelor level degree or equivalent qualification will be required to complete a written task to demonstrate sufficient academic ability.

Clinical Supervision

The principle aims of supervision are to protect client safety and to reflect on and develop the dramatherapist's practice. The supervisee remains responsible and accountable for their clinical work. The role of the supervisor is to support the dramatherapist to develop their clinical practice, and to ensure the welfare of the client through the supervision process. As a requirement of the course, students must attend regular clinical supervision when working therapeutically. A distinction is made between clinical and managerial supervision.

Supervision should include a combination of individual and group supervision. Clinical supervision should be undertaken with a dramatherapist from the BADth register of supervisors. Clinical supervision should normally be face to face. Clinical supervisors contribute to the assessment of the student.

Students should receive weekly supervision for every two days of clinical practice. This may include individual and/or group supervision.

Application, admissions, and induction procedures

This section looks at the process of applying for a dramatherapy programme and admissions procedures. The admissions procedure will include:

- A detailed application form where the applicant is required to outline and provide supporting evidence of relevant experience, (such as examples of practice), educational and professional qualifications and a personal statement of their suitability and motivation to train as a dramatherapist
- Appropriate professional and character references
- A formal interview and a practical workshop to assess the applicant's suitability to train as a dramatherapist
- The opportunity, where appropriate, for online interviews e.g., international applications
- Original certificates of educational and professional qualifications
- IELTS Level 7 proficiency in English is required for applicants where English is an additional language
- Disclosure of criminal convictions: Self-declaration is required on the application form. This must be confirmed by an enhanced DBS check (prior to enrolment) and before the start of clinical placements. In Scotland, this is the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme.
- Applicants are requested to provide information about any disability, mental health or learning needs in accordance with the training provider equal opportunities guidance
- Students are required to take part in experiential work throughout their training.

4) Management, staffing, and resources of Dramatherapy programmes

Management

The programme must have a secure place in the academic institution and/or education provider's business plan and provision.

- Academic institutions must consult fully with programme leaders regarding any changes at institutional level that might affect course delivery or provision
- Effective management of the programme will be monitored through peer review, senior management, institutional review, annual monitoring, and student feedback
- Training institutions must be able to demonstrate that the staff student ratio sufficiently resources the programme to meet the needs of the HCPC's approval process of the standards of proficiency and the standards for education and training for safe practice. This must be no less than an equivalent resource of 1:12 in relation to FTE

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/arts-therapists>

- Specific time should be allocated for the administrative and managerial functions of programme leadership as distinct from academic duties, placement co-ordination, admissions procedures, and research
- It is the responsibility of the training institution to support its staff to fulfil their continuous professional development (CPD) as stated by the HCPC within the timeframe of the contracted post requirements
- It is essential for the training institution to support the professional supervision requirements of the dramatherapy staff
- Allocation of resources should acknowledge the psychodynamic nature of the training and the degree of pastoral support associated with a training in a psychological therapy. Each student must have regular meetings with a personal tutor whose task is to monitor the trainee's progress and personal development in all aspects of the training.

Staffing

- There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of the Register. BADth membership is required for members to be included in the BADth Training Sub-Committee
- Staffing resources for postgraduate Dramatherapy training must provide appropriately qualified and experienced staff and visiting lecturer staff, to deliver each specialist area of the curriculum
- The staff/student ratio for programmes should be no more than 12:1 FTE
- Student year cohorts should not exceed 20 students
- Training institutions must provide substantial administrative support for both academic and clinical aspects of the training
- There should be a sufficient mixture of academic and clinical expertise in the staff team

- Teaching staff must include Dramatherapists with extensive experience in the profession, capable of undertaking the management of student placements, tutorial responsibility, training groups and workshops, lecturing and contributing to the direction of the course and its relationship with the profession
- It is important that there is a strong profile of visiting lecturers, bringing specialist practice and research to the delivery of the curriculum
- Training institutions should work towards staff reflecting and representing diverse communities, working towards a model of inclusivity in the profile of teaching staff
- Appropriate support staff within the institutions should be available to meet student learning and pastoral needs, including identified needs of students with disabilities and different learning needs

Resources

Training institutions must provide:

- Appropriate and adequate accommodation for office use for tutors and support staff, as well as staff and student common rooms
- Accommodation for discussion groups, lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, and performances with technical support. The dramatherapy studio spaces must be of appropriate size, good for movement, (with suitable flooring) and where possible, soundproofed for confidentiality. Spaces should be consistently available on the relevant teaching days and planned in good time for programme delivery
- Physical resources must be of a standard to meet current Health and Safety Regulations at all times. This must also be so for any off-site premises used for any aspect of the training
- Adequate storage facilities for course materials
- Adequate provision for storing confidential records in accordance with data protection
- The course must have sufficient materials suitable for the practice of dramatherapy such as musical instruments, masks, small world objects, art materials, puppets, fabrics etc.
- Suitably resourced library(ies) (preferably on-site or access thereto) containing up-to-date appropriate dramatherapy texts, supporting literature and sufficient e-learning provision. Provision should be made for sufficient reprographic facilities to support the programme needs plus audio, video and (where appropriate) editing facilities should be available
- A student handbook and placement handbook
- Access to IT facilities to support student learning and communication. Assessment of students' IT needs will be made, and necessary resources established
- Access to student learning support services

5) Curriculum Guidance

Teaching and learning strategies

- Courses in dramatherapy must span at least two years full-time or three years part-time. An academic year is defined as a minimum of 1000 hours or 30 weeks of timetabled workshops, seminars, and lectures.
- Teaching and learning strategies must include written, performed, oral, individual and group work as well as research, artistic and clinical elements
- A high proportion of the course work must be experiential in nature, with an emphasis on learning and developing appropriate artistic, therapeutic, and clinical skills. A high proportion of experiential learning is essential in order to cultivate combined skills in these areas
- Small group work, which allows for reflective and embodied practice should be included in the programme
- Practical/clinical elements must be integrated with the academic/theoretical elements
- Students should have an awareness of the practice of the other arts therapies and related disciplines
- All delivery will be face to face in order to teach and assess core skill sets of a dramatherapist. Where online delivery is used, this should not replace in person teaching. In exceptional circumstances, such as a global pandemic, alternative modes of delivery will be discussed and agreed by teaching teams within their institution and in consultation with the Training Sub-Committee/BADth.
- Course tutors must remain up to date with developments in related disciplines (Governmental, AHP, HEE, HE) through an awareness of clinical and arts-based practices, literature, policy, and research.

Curriculum framework

Each of the HCPC approved programmes create a curriculum framework informed by QAA benchmark standards at level 7 and, HCPC standards of education and training and standards of proficiency.

Each training programme has its own philosophy and model of dramatherapy, detailed on the university website.

Summary of components common to all Masters Dramatherapy programmes

- Experience and competence in a range of drama, movement and theatre skills, approaches and techniques including performance work
- Understanding and awareness of relevant psychological, psychotherapeutic theories, principles, and practices
- Understanding of the intersectionality of artistic, scholarly, and philosophical influences on dramatherapy theory and practice
- Clinical dramatherapy placements with managerial and clinical supervision
- Formative and summative assessment of experiential, practical and written work
- Personal therapy for the duration of the training

- Knowledge of research methodologies, research skills and evidence-based practice
- Curriculum content and pedagogy which develops reflective practice, praxis, and assessment of an integration of theory and practice
- Knowledge of related therapies such as art, music, dance/movement, and play

This section looks at curriculum delivery under the following headings:

- Theory
- Dramatherapy skills
- Clinical placements
- Personal therapy requirements during training

Theory.

Students must gain relevant understanding of the theory and philosophy of Dramatherapy:

Drama & Theatre Drawing from different genres, and the core concepts of ritual, embodiment, aesthetic and dramatic distancing, performance, dramatic projection, witnessing and role.

Drama and Play

Developmental perspectives of creativity, imagination and play including personal and projected play, potential space, Embodiment, Projection, Role, metaphor, and symbolisation.

Arts Therapies

Theories from art psychotherapy, music therapy, dance movement psychotherapy and play therapy.

Psychotherapy perspectives and psychodynamic understanding

Theories of the unconscious, theories of the therapeutic relationship, the management of group process, unconscious processes including transference & countertransference and developmental perspectives. Critical approaches to diagnosis and psychological disorders.

Ideas from related disciplines

These will include psychology, psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, psychotherapy, and medical approaches.

Context

Cultural, social, political, economic & ethical issues as they affect Dramatherapy practice. Intersectionality including equal opportunities, race, age, gender, disability, religion/beliefs, sex and sexual orientation, neurodiversity, social class, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership Understanding of organisational and institutional dynamics through a systemic lens.

Research

Understanding of critical perspectives including qualitative and quantitative research methods, literature review and analytic processes, an understanding of the relevance of historical, current, and ongoing research into the development of good practice.

Practice

Students must gain substantial practical experience underpinned by relevant theories. Within the integrity of the individual course's approach to dramatherapy, the curriculum must include the following:

Drama and theatre skills

Including:

- storytelling
- storymaking
- devising
- improvisation
- enactment
- expressive movement
- embodiment
- voice work
- script work
- performance
- role
- aesthetics of space

Dramatherapy core processes

An understanding of different styles and genres, including embodiment, aesthetic distancing, dramatic projection, active witnessing, role-play and personification, life-drama connection and transformation, spontaneous play, and improvisation.

Facilitation skills in dramatherapy

Including:

- Use of dramatherapy skills in working with individuals and groups
- The containment and management of processes and boundaries
- Identifying and understanding differences between facilitating group and individual dramatherapy
- Practical experience of individual and group work as participant and facilitator including an understanding of transferential processes and group dynamics
- Practical experience in the art forms central to dramatherapy
- An understanding of intersectionality of cultural, social, political, economic & ethical issues as they affect facilitation of individual and group processes

Contexts and clinical applications

Placements are a core part of the student learning. Teaching and learning on the application of dramatherapy in specific settings with particular client groups including, but not limited to:

- Children/adolescents in education
- CAMHS and social care settings
- Adult mental health
- Bereavement services
- Care settings
- Forensics
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Older adults

Preparation for clinical practice

This will include an understanding of:

- Safeguarding procedures
- Role within a multi-disciplinary team
- Risk management including health and safety
- Care management and treatment plans

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- Ethical issues, consent, and codes of ethics
- Note taking and record keeping
- Referral systems
- Assessment and evaluation methods
- Clinical team structures
- Systemic issues and institutional dynamics
- Cultural awareness and working with difference
- Policy frameworks and legislation

6) Personal Therapy requirements during training

Each student must be in personal therapy for the duration of the programme.

Personal therapy is an extra-curricular mandatory requirement. All student dramatherapists will undertake a minimum of 70 sessions of weekly personal therapy during the 2-year programme, which includes a minimum of 30 sessions of group dramatherapy. It is the responsibility of the course provider to monitor the number of therapy sessions.

Group dramatherapy

The 30 sessions of group dramatherapy should be ongoing and with the same group. It should be facilitated by a dramatherapist with at least three years full-time equivalent post-qualifying experience, and substantial experience of working with groups. A group dramatherapy session should be either two hours or one and a half hours depending on group size.

Individual therapy

A minimum of 40 sessions shall be in individual dramatherapy/arts therapies/psychotherapy facilitated by a fully qualified and registered therapist who has at least five years full-time equivalent (FTE) post-qualifying experience. This experience should include substantial clinical practice working with adults.

7) Placements

Placements are a central part of dramatherapy training, working with clients in a variety of settings and form the basis for the assessment of students' practice as Dramatherapists. The course provider must approve all placements prior to commencement and must cover as wide an experience of client groups as possible.

All students must complete a minimum of 100 clinical sessions of dramatherapy practice over the two years. A clinical session may include an assessment and individual or group dramatherapy. A clinical session does **not** include MDT meetings, review meetings, staff meetings or supervision. Each placement should be for an agreed period of weekly continuous practice.

The dramatherapy placement should be integrated, as far as possible, into the overall service provision of the provider.

All placement providers should include:

- a comprehensive induction, including health and safety and safeguarding procedures
- regular management supervision
- induction in referral systems, handover procedures/practices and report writing
- training in skills/knowledges relevant to the specific setting and client group
- an appropriate space for dramatherapy practice

Placement handbook

All programmes should provide placement documentation for students, clinical supervisors and placement managers that will include the following:

- A contextual outline of how placement practice sits within the overall structure and pedagogy of the training programme
- details of the timing of placement work within the academic year
- the placement learning outcomes
- expectations of students' professional conduct on placement
- an outline of procedures where there is cause for concern
- details of placement assessment procedures
- details of insurance
- details of the placement contract

Placement contract

There should be a contract between course provider and placement provider. There will be a named professional placement manager who will sign the contract on behalf of the placement provider. Some contracts will include the clinical supervisor and the student.

The contract will outline the agreement between the relevant parties and the terms and expectations of the placement.

Annual training initiatives will be offered to placement providers and supervisors.

8) Assessment

Students are expected to attend all units and/or modules of the course. Attendance must be a minimum of 80% in order to pass.

Students must demonstrate the ability to work at level 7, to integrate the vocational and academic aspects of the course and integrate the theory and practise of Dramatherapy in order to demonstrate fitness to practice as a Dramatherapist.

Assessment methods that measure the learning outcomes and skills required to practise safely and effectively must be employed. Assessment schemes will include both formative and summative assessment of student work. Assessment criteria must be allied to HCPC standards of proficiency, standards of education and training and QAA benchmarks.

Different methods will be used to assess experiential work, clinical practice and scholarship, including:

- Written assignments (case studies, research, critical and reflective essays, reports, reflective journal entries, extended essays and dissertations);
- Presentations
- Tutorials and vivas
- Facilitation of individual(s) and group(s) of peers in the training context
- Dramatic performance
- Observation of clinical practice skills
- Clinical practice reports
- Feedback from clinical supervisors and placement managers
- Self, peer, and tutor assessment

Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for:

- student progression and achievement within the programme
- awards which do not provide eligibility for inclusion onto the Register

These guidance notes are produced by the British Association of Dramatherapists to inform and accompany the Standards of Education and Training (SETS) of the HCPC.

Further information about training can be obtained from the websites of individual training organisations (appendix 2) and from the British Association of Dramatherapists at www.badth.org.uk

Appendix 1: Glossary of Abbreviations and acronyms

HCPC Health and Care Professions Council

BADth The British Association of Dramatherapists

CPD Continuing professional development

EBP Evidence based practice

NHS National Health Service

SET HCPC standards of education and training

SOP HCPC standards of proficiency

QAA Quality Assurance Agency for Higher education

Appendix 2: The role of the professional and statutory bodies in the education and training of Dramatherapists

The British Association of Dramatherapists

BADth is the professional body that represents dramatherapists and through its executive and sub-committees, advises and develops policy and guidelines for the practice of Dramatherapy.

BADth has designed a core curriculum framework informed by the Standards of Education and Training and Standards of Proficiency required for registration with the HCPC. It provides the Code of Ethics for the practice of Dramatherapy. It has an essential professional advisory role to the HCPC, which accredits training courses www.badth.org.uk

Health and Care Professions Council

The HCPC is the statutory body in the UK under which Dramatherapists are registered and licensed to practise. The HCPC is a regulatory body that protects the public. It holds a register of approved health professionals who meet their standards as laid down in the Standards of education and training (SET) and Standards of Proficiency (SOP)

The HCPC approves training courses in educational institutions, which meet their standards. However, each individual graduate must apply for registration and demonstrate that they meet the required standards.

Higher education institutions must comply with the HCPC standards and demonstrate how they can achieve this in approval and revalidation of programmes.

Quality Assurance Agency

The Quality assurance agency is responsible for ensuring standards in teaching and learning appropriate to the level of qualification. The QAA has laid out its standards in benchmarking statements for higher degrees.

Appendix 3 Information on training programmes

Queen Margaret University

MSc Dramatherapy

Contact person: Stephanie Turner

sturner@gmu.ac.uk

Queen Margaret University Way
Musselburgh
EH21 6UU

0131 474 0000

www.qmu.ac.uk

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

MA Drama and Movement Therapy

Contact person: Richard Hougham

richard.hougham@cssd.ac.uk

64 Eton Avenue,
London,
NW3 3HY

Telephone Number: 020 7559 3915

www.cssd.ac.uk

University of Derby

MA Dramatherapy

Contact person: [Kate](#) Smith

k.smith2@derby.ac.uk

Mackworth Road
Derby
DE22 3BL

01332 594198

www.derby.ac.uk

University of Roehampton

School of Psychology

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MA Dramatherapy

Contact person: Henri Seebohm

h.seebohm@roehampton.ac.uk

Roehampton University,
Whitelands College,
Hollybourne Avenue
London
SW15 4JD

020 8392 3807

www.roehampton.ac.uk

Anglia Ruskin University

MA Dramatherapy

Cambridge School of Creative Industries

Contact person: Stavroulla Demetriou

stavroulla.demetriou@aru.ac.uk

East Road
Cambridge
CB1 1PT

Tel 01223696122

www.aru.ac.uk