



## ACCREDITATION APPLICATION PACK FOR TRAINING PROVIDERS

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## **Background to Sports Massage in the UK**

The provision of sports massage/soft tissue therapy is an established and key element of the service provided to athletes and the general public suffering soft tissue injuries in the UK. Traditionally physiotherapists provided this service however since the mid 1990s, the trend within the NHS away from massage due to increasing emphasis on academic aspects of the physiotherapy curriculum resulted in a reduction in the physiotherapists' training and use of massage techniques. This reduction created a niche for a new breed of professional specialising in sports massage, trained to work as an independent practitioner.

### **Private Training Providers**

During the mid 1990s there was an increase in the number of private training schools setting up and running sports massage courses. A number of these courses also established their own graduate societies providing insurance and other services to their students after they had completed their initial course. As there were no defined and nationally agreed standards in sports massage, these providers created and ran their courses to their own set of standards.

### **Government Funded Vocational Training**

In 1999 Sports Therapy National Occupational Standards (NOS) were launched to provide structure for those wishing to work as Sports Therapists at a technician level. These were developed to support an employment model whereby sports therapists would work under the supervision of qualified doctors and physiotherapists in club settings. Sports massage units were included as part of these Sports Therapy standards titled D520, 521 and 522. Skills for Health now have responsibility for massage and retitled the NOS, CNH20, CNH21 and CNH22

The SMA cooperated with Awarding Organisations in 2009/10 to develop a suite of sports massage qualifications at Levels 3, 4 and 5 which mapped to the above National Occupational Standards. The qualifications were approved by OFQUAL and included on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), now known as the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The qualifications are offered by VTCT\*, ITEC\*, Active IQ and YMCA (\*Level 5 is only offered through these two Awarding Organisations). All three qualifications conducted to the SMA's minimum time standards are approved for membership of the SMA.

In November 2018 the SMA worked with Skills for Health and developed specific sports massage NOS known as CNH27 - Provide Sports Massage Therapy to Clients. It is anticipated that all future qualifications written by awarding organisations will base the content and assessment of their courses on these industry standards. In the current qualification suite, Level 5 qualifications cover these criteria; it is anticipated that new qualifications will cover these criteria at Level 4.



## **The Role of the SMA**

The Sports Massage Association (SMA) was founded in 2001 and launched at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester as the independent body for sports massage in the UK. This move was supported by key employers in elite sport (UK Sport, Home Country Institutes, National Governing Bodies), related medical professions as well as independent training providers and government education agencies.

Part of the role of the SMA is to accredit providers of sports massage courses against its 'Core Standards', which now equate to CNH27 NOS, and graduates of accredited or accepted courses are then eligible to join the SMA at the level of their qualification (unless fast tracked) and be entered onto the National Register of Sports Massage/Soft Tissue Therapists. To remain on the Register members are required to maintain their professional indemnity insurance and complete 30 hours Continuing Professional Development (CPD) every year.

The Register is widely used by members of the public and other related health professionals to find therapists who have proven their competence and continue to meet the professional standard of practice required.

## **How Accepted is the Sports Massage Association Standard?**

The standards were created at the request of the elite sporting agencies and other related health professions in the UK and as such there was an immediate buy-in to the standards. Since 2012 all UK major games (Commonwealth and Olympic) support service teams have included sports massage therapists to work alongside physiotherapists and doctors and being an SMA member was a stipulation of this role. National Governing Body jobs also stipulate SMA membership as a job requirement as well as local job opportunities such as working alongside physiotherapists and osteopaths in local clinics.

There will now be distinct education choices for aspirant Sports Massage therapists; the private school route, the College of Further Education and University route. Private schools and universities continue to have the choice of delivering bespoke, externally verified courses, but can also fully correlate their qualifications with the latest NOS and meet the SMA's quality assurance standards in order to become accredited by us.

## **Sports Massage Association Accredited Provider Benefits**

Accredited providers are afforded the following benefits:

### **Recognition**

Your details are held on our accredited provider list and advertised on the SMA website. As an accredited provider you are recognised in the industry as providing training which is at least equivalent to the National Occupational Standards and Level 4 or 5 qualification on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RCF).



On graduation your students are eligible to join the SMA as Graduate members. Graduate membership gives all full member benefits, costs £50.00 and is offered for the first membership year in recognition of the difficulties that can be encountered when setting up a new practice. The Graduate membership application is to be completed within 6 months of the date on the graduation certificate. After this period normal membership application criteria applies. Further, the SMA's satisfaction with accredited courses means there is no specific requirement for a student to submit evidence of CPD or practice hours until one year after the certified date of their qualification.

## **Marketing of your Courses/Awards**

The accredited provider list is displayed on our website and also sent to enquirers wishing to enter the profession.

We actively support the promotion of you as an accredited provider free of charge including CPD courses you may offer that are considered suitable for our members.

## **Involvement in Shaping the Future of the Profession**

As an accredited provider you will, as appropriate, be involved in and consulted on a range of SMA development initiatives.

## **Other Tangible Benefits**

Access to a competitive insurance policy for students on your courses to obtain cost-effective protection through Balens insurance providers.

## **Accredited Provider / Award Application Process**

The application process is split into three phases:

The initial assessment phase is designed to enable an assessment of the key areas of eligibility of the course without the provider having to complete a lengthy application or pay an accreditation fee. The cost of this phase is £100.00 and is offset against the first accreditation visit (see below).

Once this is approved, we will then move to the second phase full assessment. This phase includes the payment of the assessment fees to cover the costs of this part of the process.

The accreditation visit fee is £500.00 (minus £100 paid for initial assessment) and includes for attendance by the SMA board member responsible for quality assurance. It is useful if the first visit allows for observation of the final assessments of a cohort of students in order to assess the hands-on skills of the students and the quality/standardisation of assessment by assessors. If this is not an option a further visit may be required for which out of pocket expenses will be charged at cost.



Each provider is re-assessed annually on the anniversary of the initial accreditation. Every three years this process will be in person with the annual re-accreditation being a paper exercise to ensure currency on our behalf. The fee for this will be offset if the university pays 'en masse' for their student registrations at the beginning of each educational year. If the university chooses for the students to enroll individually, then the paper annual accreditation will cost £100 and the tri-annual visit will cost £400 (including expenses). However, if there are a minimum 20 students per year enrolling with the SMA then the annual reassessment fee will be waived. The student membership fee is £30 per year including insurance.

For providers with more than one location and subject to individual cases the SMA may agree to re-assess one centre annually.

We aim to complete the whole process as quickly as possible and target timeframes are detailed below; however, we cannot guarantee these times due to issues such as the availability of assessors, course timetables and general liaison with the provider during the process.

During the accreditation process course providers will have to satisfactorily demonstrate that their course satisfies SMA requirements in terms of:

- Course Content.
- Assessment Quality Assurance.
- Core Standards.
- Education Standards.

## **1.0 Initial Assessment Phase**

Initial discussion between SMA and provider. Telephone conversation and/or meeting to outline the application process and sports massage training standards in the UK.

The training provider receives the Application document and completes the initial assessment phase application form submitting the form to the SMA with the payment of £100.00. This is an initial filtering process to determine the eligibility of a course(s).

The application is assessed by the SMA and a report is sent to the provider. The target time for returning the report is 1-3 weeks from receipt of the assessment phase application form.

With the SMA's confirmation that the provider's application is accepted in principle, subject to satisfaction with the full assessment phase visit, the invoice for the full assessment phase visit will be issued and a visit date arranged.

Please contact [Yvonne@thesma.org](mailto:Yvonne@thesma.org) to discuss further or for the application form.