

## ATVSRG Regulatory Documents

## A Guide to the Documents

The ATVSRG regulatory package contains eight documents, four of which form the National Occupational Standards (NOS). They are all listed below together with a few words of explanation and guidance about reading them. Apart from the NOS, the documents are still in draft form and will not be completed until the Professional Associations (PAs) have finished consulting with their members.

These documents have been over eight years in the making. Because of the internal politics of the profession, we haven't always been able to direct our energies fully into co-operatively preparing the profession for regulation. In fact we have spent quite a lot of our time arguing with one another. However, we have learned much, not least how to work together over the period (with the guidance of wise and diplomatic lay chairs, most recently Diane Grayston) and this is the fruit of that shared endeavour.

We hope the documents are fairly self-explanatory. It should be noted that they are constitutive documents i.e. they establish policies and rules for the regulation of the profession. There is limited scope, therefore, in the documents themselves for explaining the background and thinking that underlies them. So we have produced this guide to reading them. It sketches in some of the background, and summarises briefly what each policy is likely to mean to most teachers and training courses in the short to medium term.

This guide does not attempt to explain the general background to regulation. This information is available elsewhere, including the ATVSRG<sup>1</sup> website. The guide focuses on the specific policies ATVSRG has developed to meet regulatory requirements.

For the sake of brevity and consistency we have adopted certain terminology and standard abbreviations throughout the documents. For the most part these are either self-explanatory or explained in the text. However, one in particular merits mention here: we have adopted, for the sake of this process, the name *Alexander Technique Teaching (ATT)* for our professional activity. The main purpose of this is to distinguish between the Technique itself, which our students and pupils learn and apply for themselves, and the practice of teaching it. It has proved important for us to continually remind people that we are an educational profession and our technique is what we *teach to* others, not what we *practice on* them.

These documents may look overwhelming at first sight, but in fact they articulate what most competent Alexander teachers and training courses are, to a very large extent, already doing. The main driving force of this process is not to require the existing profession to change radically, but to formalise and standardise what we already do, so as to set a baseline for new people wanting to come into the profession, and to enable us to exclude from the register those who claim to teach the AT but lack adequate training and skill.

This is not to say that regulation will mean no change at all to the status quo. There is already public pressure for teachers and trainers alike to become more publicly accountable, and the consequent introduction of approved regulation will require the development of existing practices and even the creation of new ones. However, we are starting from a very high baseline, and the requirements are designed to enable and allow ourselves to adjust gradually, with a minimum of disruption.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.atvsrg.org.uk/regulation.htm>

These are policy documents: they do not go into great detail about the exact processes by which the policies will be implemented. They will no doubt raise important questions about the actual processes involved. Your ATVSRG representatives will welcome any comments and feedback, both positive and negative, which will help us to improve these policies and their presentation.

## I Applications for Registration

This document outlines the way in which teachers can become eligible for registration. It does not explain the actual process by which we apply for registration, but the requirements that we have to meet in order to register.

By far the majority of the present profession will be eligible for standard registration, which will mean little more than completing a form with your training details and sending a (modest!) cheque. However, we also have an obligation to make it possible for as many existing members of the profession as possible to register. This is why there are provisions here for the (relatively few) teachers working in the UK who do not belong to, or have not qualified from a training course approved by, a recognised Professional Association (PA) to have their applications fairly considered.

## II Continuing Professional Development

All registered professionals in all professions are required to do Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The thinking on CPD has matured considerably in recent years and there is nowadays a strong emphasis not on clocking up hours or points but on identifying the many things professionals can do, many of which they are probably already doing informally, which genuinely help to develop their professional skills and abilities.

CPD need not be onerous, and need not be a mere time-wasting bureaucracy. It can be a valuable way to ensure for yourself that you are continuing to develop as a teacher, through keeping a record of some of the ways in which you do that, and engaging in what is known as 'reflective practice'. Although ATVSRG has not set any hours or points requirement for CPD, our recommendation is that you should think in terms of committing about half an hour a week to doing and recording CPD activities.

## III Accreditation of Training Courses

In the long term, by far the most efficient way to manage registration is for the regulator to accredit (i.e. recognise and approve) training courses. Trainees qualifying from accredited training courses will then normally be able to register simply by completing the necessary forms and paying their registration fee.

Since the CNHC will be regulating a number of quite mature professions with many training courses subject to approval processes by Professional Associations, its aim is to build on the strengths of the existing systems, rather than seeking to replace them.

For existing ATT training courses which choose to participate, this will mean that accreditation will take place over a period of three years from the opening of the ATT register. In many cases this will involve little more than a formalisation of the approval processes they already have in place with their PA; although it may involve developing existing policies and practices and even creating some new ones.

A certain balance has to be struck here between recognising what is already in place and avoiding undue disruption and paperwork on the one hand, and meeting the requirements for public accountability which the outside world expects of us and that are a normal part of being in a regulated profession.

The actual processes of accreditation will have to be worked out in practice in dialogue between the ATT Profession Specific Board (PSB) of the CNHC, the Professional Associations, and the individual training courses. There is every reason to hope that this will be a constructive process which enhances the self-responsibility of the profession just as it does its public status.

#### IV APEL Assessment criteria

APEL stands for *Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning*. It refers to the fact that when a profession comes into regulation, it may well have practitioners from a wide range of unorthodox training backgrounds, or who have been out of practice for some years, or who trained overseas etc.. It is necessary to make it possible for anyone who has been teaching the Alexander Technique to be able to apply for registration, and for the regulator to take into account what people may have already achieved even without formal or recognised qualifications. APEL is the process for doing that. It will usually involve applicants demonstrating their teaching skills in front of a panel of assessors. This document sets out the criteria which applicants will need to meet. An APEL applicant may be required to complete further training in order to be eligible for registration.

#### V-IX National Occupational Standards

It is a requirement for joining the CNHC that a profession has National Occupational Standards (NOS). NOS are drawn up, and owned by, what is called a Sector Skills Council, which is a government funded body. Our Sector Skills Council is called Skills for Health; although we have also adopted one standard from the Lifelong Learning UK Sector Skills Council (LLUK).

No area of our activity in the regulatory programme has been more beset with arcane terminology and bureaucracy than the development of NOS. This is because the overall government aim is to have standards expressed in as consistent a form as possible across all the skills sectors – and they cover practically every industry and service in the economy. It is also because the rules and practices that Skills for Health are required to implement have constantly changed; we had to undergo a root and branch review of our NOS almost as soon as we had completed them.

To add to the complexity, since we are being regulated within the healthcare sector, we have had to work with generic standards which are often expressed in terms alien to us. We put a great deal of effort into explaining how distinctive our work is, being essentially educational in nature and not treatment based. Skills for Health have been extremely co-operative and supportive over this, and together we have worked hard to create generic standards for the whole Complementary and Natural Healthcare sector which are expressed in sufficiently neutral terms for them to be useful for us. Moreover, we are permitted to 'contextualise' these generic standards, to make them more obviously relevant to ATT and it is these contextualised standards which appear here as NOS 1 and NOS 2.

V is a general Principles of Good Practice document which integrates with the CNHC Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics for Registrants.

VI & VII NOS 1 and 2 are the generic standards for the sector, contextualised for our own use. These concern establishing clients' needs and requirements and agreeing a plan of action with them

VIII NOS 3 is our own 'discipline-specific' standard which concerns the actual process of teaching the Technique.

IX NOS 4 (LLUK 2) is a generic teaching standard which we have been permitted to import and incorporate in our own NOS. (This remains a draft document and subject to change by LLUK.)

It is important to read these documents in the right spirit. Part of the interest and challenge in creating them has been exploring how we can express our own distinctive approach in a standard language which operates across all employment sectors. For instance, instead of talking about 'pupils' or 'students' we have to talk about 'learners'. Looks odd, but you get used to it eventually. Also, there is a requirement that each standard has to be expressed in terms of 'outcomes' rather than processes, so that 'teach the pupil...' has to become 'enable the learner to learn...' (Honestly!).

But underneath all this, the NOS do express, albeit in a rather schematic, and sometimes rather obvious form, what minimum skills and knowledge someone needs to be regarded as a competent Alexander Technique teacher. Any candidate for registration, any prospective training provider and any awarding body that wants to offer an Alexander Technique teaching qualification will have to demonstrate that what they do or offer meets these standards, in addition, of course, to the other regulatory requirements.

### The CNHC Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics for Registrants

The CNHC Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics for Registrants (*Code of Conduct*) is not an ATVSRG document. It was produced entirely independently and without consultation. This is unfortunate because the Code of Conduct, as it stands, does not initially make comfortable reading for Alexander Teachers. Although CNHC have in general gone to some considerable effort to find forms of wording which accommodate our educational basis, their scrutiny has slipped in some cases, and the word 'patients' appears predominantly on the first page, in place of an agreed form of wording: 'patients, clients, or users' which appears elsewhere in the document. CNHC have acknowledged and apologised for this and it will be changed when the Code is reviewed in 2010.

More troubling to some Alexander Technique teachers at first sight is the section on keeping records. This does, at first, look onerous to us, and we have been in discussions with CNHC about it. The Code requires that each registrant keep complete records which are signed and dated. For a profession in which many of us probably keep hardly any records at all other than a diary entry, this might seem impossibly demanding, and may be a major deterrent to registering.

However, things are by no means so bad as they might seem. Firstly, though, it must be said that, if you don't already keep some sort of records, you are going to have to start if you want to be registered. It is one of the prices to pay for being registered that you have to be publicly accountable.

But this doesn't have to be an onerous requirement; it is likely that, after the first lesson, you would generally be able to complete a lesson record for regulatory purposes in 2 minutes or less. Occasionally, you may want to write more, and if you do so for the purpose of helping to develop your teaching you are into the area of 'reflective practice', and this would count as a CPD activity.

Secondly, it might be said that keeping records should anyway be a part of responsible teaching. If you don't keep records already, you may well find that beginning to do so brings an added dimension to your work. (And there are occasions when records might serve in your defence or help a pupil win a case against another party.)

ATVSRG has prepared a short guide to record keeping called *The Two-minute Record* which you may find useful.

Your ATVSRG representatives will welcome any feedback about these documents. The documents, although substantially complete, are still in draft form and, apart from the NOS documents, are open to amendment as the process progresses. Happy reading.