



Hearing Aid Audiology Society of Australia

Position Statement

Audiometrists

Audiometrists are Hearing Care professionals qualified in the non-medical assessment, fitting of hearing instruments (if required), and management of communication difficulties caused by hearing loss. They provide quality hearing services to clients, and practice in a range of health care settings.

Audiometrists hold recognised qualifications from a Registered Training Organisation, developed under the standards of AQF (Australia Qualification Framework), OTEN, TAFE, or UNE (University of New England), or equivalent recognised qualification:

- Certificate IV of Audiometry (pre 2008) or
- Statement of Attainment (2010) or
- Diploma of Hearing Device Prescription and Evaluation or
- Bachelor of Audiometry or
- Overseas Equivalent Recognised Qualifications or
- Equivalent Recognised Qualifications from a RTO

A minimum period of formal study is followed by a comprehensive clinical (supervised) internship of minimum six months full time. At the end of the clinical internship a comprehensive written case study and oral examination is undertaken. If deemed competent they will be considered fully qualified to practice Audiometry independently. They are then eligible to become a full member of the Hearing Aid Audiology Society of Australia Limited 1.

Full membership of the Society entitles that member to apply for Qualified Practitioner (Audiometrist) status with the Office of Hearing Services, a government funded hearing services program for eligible persons.

HAASA - Audiometrist's Professional Body¹

Through their professional hearing body, HAASA (the Hearing Aid Audiology Society of Australia, founded in 1961 – the oldest professional body in the hearing industry) they gain professional educational development, agree to comply with a comprehensive 'Code of Conduct – incorporating 'best practice' principles; assist in formulation of policy, provide representation to industry, government, and promote the development/advancement in attaining the highest professional standards of their profession.²

¹ <http://www.haasa.org.au> – accessed March, 2014

² National Code of Conduct p.11, March 2014

HAASA is an affiliate member of the Allied Health Professions Australia (“...is the national peak body for major health professions and their representative bodies other than medical practitioners, nurses and unions. AHPA works to represent the interests of the allied health professions sector, particularly to the Federal Government; and to provide a vehicle for liaison and discussion between the professions themselves”).³

HAASA is a party to the ‘Statement of Intent’ (Close The Gap) between Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) and its Member Organisations and Affiliates.⁴⁵

HAASA Audiometrists - Objects and Purposes⁵

The object of the Society and its members – Audiometrists - is to regulate the practice of Audiometry for the purpose of ensuring the uniform delivery of high-quality care throughout Australia to the hearing impaired and in particular: -

- To support the professional development of its members in order that they will continue to deliver quality hearing services to the hearing impaired.
- To maintain, evaluate and improve the clinical competency and ethical standards relevant to the profession of Audiometry.
- To ensure qualifications and clinical standards of members meet the requirements of the Society and industry best practice.
- To ensure members abide by the effective processes that support the integrity of the Society and that of fellow members.
- To promote co-operation with members of the medical and other allied health professions.
- To improve the communication ability of the hearing impaired so as to increase their enjoyment of life.
- To ensure accurate information is disseminated to the public in regard to hearing health care.
- To provide relevant continuing education events and facilities for the members of the Society.

³ <http://www.ahpa.com.au/Home/aboutAHPA.aspx> - accessed 27 March 2014

⁴ www.iaha.com.au – accessed 27 March 2014

⁵ Associations Incorporation ACT 1985 (SA) Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia Constitution - 2013

The Role of Audiometrists

In Australia, the care and management of people with hearing loss, relevant to hearing aid dispensing has been the foundation of Hearing Aid Audiometrists for many decades.

Audiometrists are qualified to conduct:

- audiometric assessment
- provide hearing rehabilitation as it relates to dispensing and improved communication and if required, fitting of prescriptive hearing instruments
- the development of communication programs (identify client's communication needs using information from client's history and assessment) to ensure optimal benefit (by establishing realistic expectations) is gained from the device/s and rehabilitation program.

Audiometrists' knowledge, together with their skills, demonstrate empathy and a caring attitude towards the needs associated with hearing impairment and hearing impaired individuals.

Audiometrists are qualified in addition to the above skills to:

- interpret the audiometric results
- provide professional advice/hearing solutions and care
- if required, refer clients to relevant allied health professionals and medical practitioners for further assessment or opinion.

Audiometrists have an understanding of audiometric scientific equipment (not just on a technical level), but that of requiring a knowledge of the client's needs, to gather evidence-based information that is appropriate for each client, and to foster a positive attitude towards the maintenance of professional competency.

An Audiometrist within the work place, through clinical interaction, develops interpersonal skills, works effectively with culturally diverse clients and co-workers. Their in-depth training develops positive personal work priorities to acquire problem solving and communication skills to interact effectively with clients.

Audiometrists have a comprehensive career path in which to further their education through enrolling in the Diploma of Device Prescription and Evaluation or the Bachelor of Audiometry (optional but recommended). Through the Bachelor of Audiometry (UNE) this will enhance their current knowledge, and skills by providing "...a deeper understanding for the sensory and perceptual processes that underlie variations in hearing ability."⁶

⁶ Bachelor of Audiometry draft paper UNE p.2, 2013

Formal Qualifications:

Certificate IV in Audiometry (Hearing Assessment)

- Certificate IV in Hearing Assessment (pre 2008)
- Statement of Attainment (2010)

Diploma of Hearing Device Prescription and Evaluation ⁷

“Application knowledge and skills - Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters” ⁸

Graduates of a Diploma will have:

- Cognitive and communication skills to identify, analyse, synthesise and act on information from a range of sources
- Cognitive, technical and creative skills to express ideas and perspectives
- Communication skills to transfer knowledge and specialised skills to others and demonstrate understanding of knowledge

Graduates of a Diploma will demonstrate with the application of knowledge and skills:

- with depth in some areas of specialisation, in known or changing contexts
- to transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical and/or creative skills in a range of situations
- with personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations with responsibility for own outputs in relation to broad parameters for quantity and quality
- with initiative and judgment to organise the work of self and others and plan, coordinate and evaluate the work of teams within broad but generally well-defined parameters

⁷ Australian Qualification Framework Second Edition January 2013 pp.38...40

⁸ Australian Qualification Framework Second Edition January 2013 p.38

Bachelor of Audiometry (optional):⁷

- Bachelor of Audiometry will provide an understanding of the sensory and perceptual processes that form part of the foundation in hearing ability
- Acquire new knowledge and skills
- Build understanding of language for professional practice utilisation

Audiometrists and Audiologists

Audiometrists support the position of other professional bodies in ensuring that hearing care programs funded in Australia should be patient focused, irrespective of age, ethnicity, gender, hearing status, eligibility for government funded programs, or income level.⁸

Audiometrists recognise Audiologists as qualified colleagues. As allied health professionals, Audiometrists work closely with Audiologists (and in many cases are co-workers, co-owners of dispensing practices), and refer to them for professional advice, sharing health information, as required.

Audiometrists spend a minimum of six months in clinical internship (on the job) under supervision before becoming independent qualified practitioners either in the private sector or as a 'Qualified Practitioner' with the Office of Hearing Services, therefore developing a high level of 'people skills' and understanding of the client that only experience can teach.

In the field of hearing aid dispensing Audiometrists are recognised by:

- private industry
- governments
- workers compensation bodies
- private health insurers
- tertiary education providers
- consumer groups
- indigenous groups

Audiometrists are recognised not only in the private health domain but also through government funded services:

- Department of Health and Ageing - Office of Hearing Service
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- State WorkCover/WorkSafe agencies

⁷ Bachelor of Audiometry draft paper UNE p.2, 2013

⁸ Australian Association of Audiologists in Private Practice, About AAAPP p.2, 11 November 2013

Audiometrists are an important cog in ensuring the success of the governments hearing voucher program, which caters for eligible persons covering hearing assessment, rehabilitation (as outlined under the government program), and device fitting. This invaluable program has afforded many thousands of Australians with hearing solutions, which have been provided by Audiometrists.

Audiometrists do provide hearing care services that are both qualitative and quantitative.

Audiometrists provide invaluable hearing functions/facilities to regional Australia, especially to government, and private health fund clients, who are unable to travel to regional/major centres to acquire needed hearing services.

Audiometrists are subjected to rigorous audit processes to maintain strict clinical standards in regards to hearing assessment, advice, fitting of hearing devices, verification of fitting, rehabilitation programs (as they relate to hearing dispensing /communication, and after care service) The same process applies for all practitioners operating within the Office of Hearing Services Scheme.

An Audiometrist's education, training and qualifications, demonstrate that they are qualified to work independently. They have the knowledge and skills to provide the full range of hearing services (including assessment, fitting of devices, and development of rehabilitation plans as they relate to dispensing) to clients, including government eligible persons, health fund members, and private persons.

Training is not just restricted to a narrow perspective of hearing but a wider scope incorporating those skills outlined in this paper. They are funded under the government program, as they recognise both Audiometrists and Audiologists as qualified to provide hearing services under the hearing services voucher program (since 1997). Essentially under the Office of Hearing Services program for eligible persons, and hearing aid dispensing in Australia, both Audiometrists and Audiologists perform the similar job functions.

Audiometrists have clearly demonstrated, as supported by the position they hold with the government, state WorkCover bodies, the majority of health funds in Australia and community groups that they can work independently and do so as part of an allied health profession, alongside Audiologists.

Future Scope

As health care practitioners it is the opinion of HAASA, and its members, that Medicare (MBS) should recognise Audiometrists as Health Care Workers under their 'provider recognition requirement' program (Health Insurance Allied Health Services Determination 2014⁹).

We note this is the recommendation under Option 'D' of the mpconsulting review report of the hearing services program.¹⁰This would provide a greater scope

and range of opportunity for all Australians to have access to high quality hearing assessment.

Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council who are responsible for the introduction of a National Code of Conduct for health care workers (the National Code) which will provide "...minimum standards of professional conduct for any person who provides a health service which is not subject to regulation under the National Law." ¹¹ , recognise Audiologists and, Audiometrists, as Health Care Providers.

Summary

Audiometry is a proud profession, steeped in history, professional, responsible, and is, and has been, for many decades an integral part of the Australian fabric with regard to providing hearing care services (hearing aid dispensing) to the hearing impaired and the community. Audiometrists, through HAASA continue to work towards the development of their profession, to ensure that as practitioners within the hearing industry they are afforded the full recognition that their qualifications demand.

Do Audiometrists have a future? Yes, they do, as independent qualified hearing clinicians.

⁹ Health Insurance (Allied Health Services) Determination 2014 as amended

¹⁰ Review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework for hearing services, July 2012

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¹¹ National Code of Conduct for health care workers, Consultation Paper p.9, March 2014