

British Acupuncture Accreditation Board

A Brief Guide to Accreditation

2020 edition



Ensuring Excellence In Acupuncture Education

Introduction

This brief guide describes the work of the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) (also referred to as “the Board” in this document) and provides a summary of its values, standards and processes for the professional education of acupuncturists. Full details of the BAAB’s work and its documents can be accessed online via **our website**.

Course providers intending to seek accreditation with the BAAB are advised to consult the Accreditation Handbook, which can be accessed online via **our website**.

The British Acupuncture Accreditation Board

The BAAB fosters and monitors high educational and professional standards for accredited acupuncture course providers, so that the general public can be assured that graduates from BAAB-accredited programmes are knowledgeable, reflective, competent and safe acupuncture practitioners.

The focus of the Board’s work is the accreditation of higher education programmes leading to a professional qualification in acupuncture on behalf of the **British Acupuncture Council** (BAcC). Graduates from BAAB-accredited courses are eligible for membership of the BAcC.

The BAAB is an independent organisation and gains transparent, rigorous and comprehensive accreditation processes through seeking feedback from partner organisations, maintaining parity with higher education and through ongoing self-critical review.

The BAAB believes that it is through the accreditation and approval of teaching programmes, that our profession demonstrates its maturity, its capacity for effective self-regulation and its public accountability.

Objectives of the BAAB

- (1) To ensure and foster high standards of professional education through the development of appropriate criteria and guidelines;
- (2) To assure the general public, the higher education community and other agencies or organisations that a course provider has clearly defined and appropriate aims, including those providing for the safety and competence of its graduates
- (3) To ensure each provider is resourced to meet its stated aims, and can attain these aims;
- (4) To encourage institutional self-improvement through continuous reflective and critical self-evaluation made explicit in the annual monitoring process and through periodic re-accreditation events
- (5) To provide support and assistance to new and developing course providers and programmes, and to work in partnership with accredited course providers;
- (6) To ensure students are kept well-informed, are listened to, and treated with respect and fairness;

- (7) To encourage diversity, experimentation and innovation within the boundaries of accepted standards and guidelines of academic quality, including the Quality Assurance Agency's **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications**.

Membership of the Board

The Board has an independent Chair who is not an acupuncturist, and its members include:

- representatives of the acupuncture profession who are members of the BAAC;
- representatives of course providers accredited by the Board;
- specialists in higher education;
- representatives from the health professions;
- lay members reflecting the public interest.

The Board is responsible for all the final decisions about accreditation and for maintaining the integrity and accountability of the BAAB's work. Board members rely on the detailed work of the Accreditation Committee members who scrutinise documents and applications from course providers and make recommendations to the Board on accreditation. The Committee is made up of experienced educationalists and acupuncturists with a range of skills relevant to acupuncture, higher education and professional standards.

British Acupuncture Council (BAAC)

The BAAC is the membership body for career practitioners of professional traditional acupuncture. It is globally recognised and is a leading member of the **European Traditional Chinese Medicine Association** (ETCMA). The BAAC is a member-led organisation, governed by an elected Governing Board and driven by a specialist staff team. Member services include business/legal support, marketing templates, forums and social media communities. Their London office has full-time staff providing advice on marketing, safe practice, legal and Continuing Professional Development matters. The BAAC hosts an annual conference and a research symposium, provides a peer-reviewed journal (European Journal of Oriental Medicine), a monthly news bulletin, and a members' magazine (Acu) four times a year. Membership includes gold standard insurance, legal protection and expert advice from a specialist staff team.

The BAAC provides guidance for the BAAB, the accredited courses and for those seeking accreditation by means of its curriculum document, the Standards of Education and Training for Acupuncture (SETA), which includes the essential hours, educational level and learning outcomes of qualifying programmes, along with the Standards of Practice for Acupuncture (SPA), Codes of Professional Conduct, Safe Practice and a Clinical Self-Audit.

The BAAC was one of the first organisations to become a **Professional Standards Authority** (PSA) Accredited Register. The **Accredited Register** scheme is designed to recognise that an accredited organisation maintains high standards of training, safe practice and professional conduct where the operational sector is not covered by statutory regulation.

BAAB-accredited programmes

To be accredited by the BAAB, a programme must offer a final award which is at least at Level 6 on the **Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications** published by the **Quality Assurance Agency** (QAA).

The primary focus is a thorough grounding in Chinese medicine theory and practice, together with biomedical sciences, to provide an integrated understanding of both traditional eastern and modern western approaches to healthcare.

The curriculum also includes interpersonal skills and communications, and develops a self-reflective approach to making professional judgements and acting ethically for the best interest of patients. Gaining familiarity with research methodologies, literature review and a critical understanding of the evidence base for acupuncture contribute to students' research literacy and a final dissertation.

The knowledge and skills gained in the classroom are supported and developed in over 400 hours of supervised clinical work with patients. The final 200 hours are spent taking increasing responsibility for the personal management of patients through all aspects of the treatment encounter. This builds confidence for new graduates to move into independent practice.

With an additional focus on the skills for setting up and running a practice, BAAB-accredited programmes offer graduates the best opportunity to succeed in becoming a professional acupuncturist.

Principles for Acupuncture Education

The Board expects all course providers to ensure that their curriculum is informed in every aspect by these principles, which state that acupuncture education aims to be:

- **student-focused:** making programmes accessible, attractive, and challenging in terms of both personal and professional development, whilst recognising the individuality of students and making use of the unique contribution that their wealth of experience and talent may bring to the learning situation;
- **practice-led:** rooted in the artistry and skills of acupuncture as an empirical and practical professional activity informed by theory and creative of theory, and recognising that, as acupuncture is a practice-based profession, acupuncture teachers will normally remain engaged in practice;
- **patient-centred:** developing practitioners who constantly strive to improve the care of their patients through reflective practice, and who can demonstrate that they are safe, competent, ethical and effective. They need also to be aware of the limits to their competence and when to refer to other healthcare professionals;
- **appropriate:** preparing practitioners who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and commitment to continuing professional development necessary to function confidently, competently, respectfully and with sensitivity, in independent, collaborative and inter-professional settings;
- **responsive:** capable of adapting to changing healthcare needs and perceptions and to the evolving criteria and expectations of the profession, making full use of research findings to inform curriculum design, delivery and evaluation;
- **collaborative:** creating opportunities for shared learning with other healthcare professions, recognising a common purpose in the wider community;

- **equitable:** providing equality of opportunity in all institutional policies and practices;
- **effective:** achieving the highest standards, whilst making the most efficient use of resources, recognising that there needs to be a sufficient number of students to ensure peer support and to provide a collegiate experience, and that an appropriate teacher/student ratio for practical classes should normally be maintained;
- **accountable:** open to scrutiny and explicable in professional terms;
- **critically self-aware and academically rigorous:** in accordance with other Higher Education programmes offering a final award threshold at Level 6, being aware not only of developments within acupuncture itself, but also of the place of acupuncture in relation to other disciplines and in relation to society at large.

BAAB Standards of Education and Training for Acupuncture Programmes (SETAPs)

The accreditation process is underpinned by the six areas of the SETAP which set out what course providers must do to prepare students for professional practice. The SETAP describe the required standards of education and training programmes that providers must meet to achieve and maintain accreditation status. Learners who successfully complete programmes which meet the standards will be eligible to apply for membership of the British Acupuncture Council.

Detailed guidance for each SETAP is provided in the BAAB Accreditation Handbook available on the [BAAB website](#).

SETAP 1: Level of qualification required for Accreditation

- 1.1 BAAB-accredited course providers must offer a final award threshold at Level 6 (typically in England, this equates to a Bachelor's degree with Honours), or at Level 7 (Post-Graduate Diploma or Master's degree).
- 1.2 The award must contain the word 'acupuncture' in the title
- 1.3 Acupuncture programmes with concurrent awards

SETAP 2: Programme admissions

- 2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the course provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme
- 2.2 The admissions procedures must include evidence of a good command of read, written and spoken English
- 2.3 The admissions procedures must include criminal convictions checks
- 2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements

- 2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and / or professional entry standards
- 2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including recognition of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms
- 2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

SETAP 3: Programme management and resources

- 3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the course provider's mission and overall business plan
- 3.2 The programme must be effectively managed, including clinic provision, financial planning and resources and student fees
- 3.3 The programme must be effectively governed
- 3.4 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place relating to the course provider's mission and philosophy
- 3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver an effective programme
- 3.6 There must be a named person with overall responsibility for the programme who should be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements have been agreed with the Board, is also a member of the BAAC
- 3.7 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge
- 3.8 A staffing strategy needs to be in place outlining the recruitment, appointment, induction, promotion, retention and development of appropriately qualified staff
- 3.9 The resources and facilities used to support student and staff learning in all settings must be effectively used and support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme
- 3.10 There must be adequate and accessible facilities to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings
- 3.11 A system of academic and pastoral student support must be in place
- 3.12 A student complaints process must be in place
- 3.13 There must be a policy that sets out the relationship and the boundaries between students and their teachers and clinical supervisors
- 3.14 Where students participate as patients or 'models' for clinical activities in clinical skills teaching appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent
- 3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the course provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place
- 3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

- 3.17 Adequate health and safety provision, including sufficient First Aid provision, must be in place.

SETAP 4: Curriculum standards

- 4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the expectations of the BAAC
- 4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in any curriculum guidance from the profession
- 4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum
- 4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice
- 4.5 The curriculum must ensure that students understand the BAAC's standards of conduct, performance, ethics and safety, and their impact on practice.
- 4.6 The programme provision must support and develop autonomous, reflective practitioners.
- 4.7 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must encourage scholarly approaches to practice and encourage evidence-based practice.
- 4.8 When there is inter-professional learning as part of an acupuncture course, the profession-specific values, skills, and knowledge of each professional group must be adequately addressed.
- 4.9 Online, blended and distance learning
- 4.10 Post-Graduate Diploma/MSc in Acupuncture

SETAP 5: Clinical practice standards

- 5.1 Clinical practice must be central and integral to the entire programme
- 5.2 The distribution of clinical learning hours throughout the programme must be consistent with the learning outcomes at the relevant stage of learning
- 5.3 The clinical practice setting must provide a safe and supportive environment
- 5.4 An effective system must be in place to monitor and approve all environments in which students undertake clinical practice, both on- and off-campus
- 5.5 Teaching clinics external to the course provider must meet Board expectations
- 5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in clinical learning settings.
- 5.7 Clinical supervisors must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience
- 5.8 There must be ongoing collaboration and communication between clinical supervisors, teachers and managers who are responsible for developing the curriculum
- 5.9 Students, as well as clinical supervisors and their managers, must be fully prepared for clinical learning

- 5.10 Learning, teaching and supervision must encourage safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct
- 5.11 Learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of patients, students and colleagues must be in place throughout clinical learning environments

SETAP 6: Assessment standards

- 6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that students achieve the expectations of the BAcC Standards of Education and Training for Acupuncture (SETA)
- 6.2 All assessments must provide a rigorous process by which compliance with external frameworks can be measured
- 6.3 Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both theory and practice
- 6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes and skills required to practise safely, ethically and effectively
- 6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise
- 6.6 There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in assessment
- 6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for programme awards.
 - 6.7.1 Student progression and achievement
 - 6.7.2 Programme awards
 - 6.7.3 Aegrotat awards
 - 6.7.4 Right of appeal for students on academic decisions
 - 6.7.5 External examiners

The Accreditation Process

Any course provider may seek accreditation with the BAAB, as long as it offers a professional programme in acupuncture with a threshold award at Level 6 or above, and expects to be able to demonstrate compliance with the Board's SETAP. The Board provides an extensive quality assurance process for course providers, and works with them developmentally throughout the preparation phases for accreditation, annual monitoring and re-accreditation.

All programmes offered for the purpose of educating an acupuncture practitioner for entry into the acupuncture profession must also comply with the British Acupuncture Council's documentation and values. Course providers should therefore be familiar with the:

- BAAB **Accreditation Handbook**
- BAcC **Standards of Education and Training for Acupuncture** (SETA)

- BAcC **Standards of Practice for Acupuncture** (SPA)
- BAcC **Code of Professional Conduct**
- BAcC **Code of Safe Practice** and **Institutional Clinical Self-Audit** (ICSA)

Stages of Accreditation

STAGE 1: THE NEW PROGRAMME PROPOSAL (NPP)

The first stage for accreditation is the submission of a New Programme Proposal (NPP). Potential course providers will be introduced to the Board's Lead Accreditation Officer who will answer any queries, provide support and ensure that the course provider understands:

- the threshold standards expected
- the resources required to run a programme
- the process of working towards full accreditation
- the costs involved.

Once the NPP is accepted, the course provider will be allocated an Accreditation Officer, and may advertise the fact that they are 'in a formal relationship with the Board' and that their 'programme is being developed to meet the requirements of the Board and is subject to accreditation by the Board'.

All programmes in a formal relationship with the BAAB are expected to submit an **Annual Monitoring Audit Form** (AMAF). This provides a regular evaluation and review of a programme and assures that the SETAPs are being met. At the NPP stage, the AMAF demonstrates that the programme is developing appropriately.

If a programme is already running, graduates of that programme will not be eligible for membership of the BAcC at this stage. Graduates wishing to become members of BAcC may apply for membership through the independent route, until the programme has achieved full accreditation. Annual fees are payable to the Board once the course provider's NPP has been accepted by the Board.

STAGE 2: APPROVAL FOR DEVELOPMENT TO FULL ACCREDITATION

The next formal stage is Approval for Development to Full Accreditation. An application for this is normally expected between one and two years after the acceptance of the NPP.

During this time, the course provider is expected to develop its programme in a systematic, reflective and self-critical fashion, taking account of the BAAB's requirements as set out in the Accreditation Handbook, and the expectations of the **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications** (England) Level 6 (Bachelor's degree with Honours) courses, or Level 7 (Master's degree).

This stage requires the submission of detailed documentation demonstrating that the course provider is likely to meet the standards. Full details are set out in the BAAB Accreditation Handbook and include:

- a justification for the development of the programme and confidence in sustainable recruitment of students
- a description of the underlying philosophy of the course provider and the programme, and how this supports the Board's principles and values

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS > **Stages of Accreditation 3**

- a clear strategic and business plan outlining the intended development, the resources to support the programme, including staff, the development of a viable teaching clinic, and the development of any online learning system
- a description of the planned management of the programme, including resource, curriculum and clinic management structures, staffing, student and patient input, and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the programme
- an outline of the whole planned curriculum, together with detailed unit/ module/ subject descriptions for the first two years

Once the documentation is approved, a one day visit to the course provider is arranged. The visit is undertaken by a Visiting Panel, supported by the course provider's Accreditation Officer. The Panel includes professional acupuncturists experienced in education, and educationalists. Their report on the visit is scrutinised by the Accreditation Committee (AC), who make a recommendation to the Board. The final decision on the acceptance for Approval for Development to Full Accreditation lies with the Board.

STAGE 3: APPLICATION FOR FULL ACCREDITATION

Course providers with Approval for Development to Full Accreditation are expected to continue with institutional and programme development, and to submit for Full Accreditation within three years. Normally there will be at least one academic year between Approval for Development and Full Accreditation.

The timing for Full Accreditation is based on the need for the course provider to demonstrate that the programme meets the SETAP. Course providers will therefore normally submit once their first cohort on the approved for development programme has completed two years of the programme and:

- there is external examiner's feedback on the standard of at least the first year of assessed work
- the teaching clinic has been fully operational for at least a year
- the first cohort of students has commenced its 'management of patients' clinical experience at least two months prior to the Accreditation Visit.

The primary document required for Full Accreditation is the Critical Course Review (CCR). This is a reflective and self-critical overview of the developments and issues included in the AMAFs, and provides assurance that the course is ready for Full Accreditation. A range of supporting documents are also submitted. The application is subject to approval from the Accreditation Committee before a Full Accreditation Visit goes ahead.

The Full Accreditation Visit will normally extend over three days and will include observation of:

- classroom teaching, and any teaching delivered via an online learning system;
- observation of clinical teaching and supervision;
- student work and its assessment;
- scrutiny of other documents.

The Panel will expect to discuss all aspects of the programme with:

- students and teachers;
- clinical supervisors;

- relevant administrative staff;
- managers, including the trustees or governors of independent course providers, and whichever senior officers have responsibility for resources and quality management in universities.

The Accreditation Visiting Panel will follow up issues identified by the Accreditation Committee, and may also pursue other issues that arise from discussions, observations or any other aspect of their Visit. Their report on the visit includes conditions, recommendations and commendations, including an overall recommendation on whether Full Accreditation status is achieved. Visit reports are scrutinised by the Committee, who make a recommendation to the Board. The Board is responsible for the final approval of accreditation. Conditions may have to be met before Full Accreditation is achieved.

On receiving Full Accreditation, all subsequent graduates are eligible for membership of the BAAC.

Maintaining Accreditation

Accreditation is maintained through

- the **Annual Monitoring Audit Form** (AMAF);
- dialogue with the course provider's Accreditation Officer, demonstrating continuing development of the accredited programme to meet the **SETAPs**;
- demonstrating robust and critically reflective management of the programme through periodic Re-Accreditation;
- submitting institutional fees to the Board.

Endnote

This summary of the work and values of the BAAB is based on the interactive online edition of the BAAB's Accreditation Handbook 2020, available through the **BAAB office**. The Handbook is updated annually in response to self-critical review, feedback from our partner organisations, the professional body and to changes in UK Higher Education.

The Board regularly consults with its members, with the **British Acupuncture Council** (BAAC), accredited course providers and other stakeholders; and maintains currency with higher education and other health professions in order to ensure that, through its standards and procedures, acupuncture continues to develop as a profession commensurate with other health professions in the UK.



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