

INFORMATION SHEET

PRIVATE HEALTH FUNDS & PROVIDER RECOGNITION

The following information is based on the Australian Learning Group’s interpretation of information from various industry associations regarding private health fund provider recognition criteria.



Private Health Funds & Provider Recognition Criteria

- There are over 30 private health funds in Australia
- Each private health fund sets their own provider recognition criteria, where they can change at any time
- Provider recognition criteria varies from one private health fund to another
- In order to gain provider status with a private health fund, a massage therapist is required to meet the recognition criteria set by the respective private health fund
- Private health fund provider recognition criteria are created separately to, and are independent from, the standards set by the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) which government registered training organisations (RTOs), like the Australian Learning Group (ALG), must follow and map courses against.
- Private health funds provide their provider recognition criteria directly to the industry associations, **not to the RTOs**. As such, RTOs communicate with the major massage associations for information on provider recognition criteria.
- Massage associations have instructed members to gain confirmation letters and information from RTOs for the purpose of applying for health fund provider status with certain health funds such as Medibank. Each association has requested a different format for RTOs to present this information.

Stakeholders in this issue

Private Health Funds	Set their own provider recognition criteria for massage therapists to gain provider status
Major Associations	Act as gateway to interpret provider recognition criteria and collect information from members
Registered Training Organisations	a) Provide transcripts/documentation to graduates to submit to massage associations b) Provide various education options for students to undertake
New Students/Current Students	Will have a choice to select a program that <i>currently</i> meets private health fund provider recognition criteria. However, there is no guarantee changes by health funds will not be imposed.

What are some of the provider recognition criteria imposed by private health funds?

Below are some examples of the various current criteria that private health funds have set as requirements. For details on specific private health fund criteria, students and graduates must contact a massage association.

- Duration of Qualification - Some private health funds set the criteria that graduates need to complete the Diploma of Remedial Massage on a full time basis, completed over a 12 month period, or on a part time basis completed over an 18 month period.
- Clinical Training Hours - Certain private health funds set the criteria that supervised clinical training must be done on campus and be at least 20% of the course. Other health funds have specified 200 hours of clinical and practical training.
- Campus and Home Study - Home study learning is not recognised by some health funds.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - Some private health funds may not accept RPL as course hours.

Massage Associations & Provider Recognition Criteria

It is important to note that different massage associations have interpreted the various private health fund provider recognition criteria in different ways. This has made it very challenging for ALG to advise students and graduates on matters relating to health funds. Again, it is best to check directly with the massage associations on the details of specific private health fund criteria and compare their responses.

Do the massage qualifications delivered by the ALG meet these private health fund standards?

Firstly note all of the 30 health funds are setting the own unique set of education criteria. But in considering the general set of education criteria health funds are publishing the following general advice can be given.

Mode of study - the mode of study i.e. full time classroom versus distance education can impact if a health fund accepts a qualification for provider eligibility. Generally speaking programs that are done either as full time classroom programs or module based programs with predominantly classroom based modules are meeting the standards or all health fund standards at this present time. Programs that are complete by predominantly by distance education are not being accepted by health funds.

Certificate IV in Massage Therapy - some health funds will still accept the Certificate IV in Massage Therapy qualification to apply for provider status with their organisation.

Diploma of Remedial Massage (versions HLT50307 and HLT52015) are generally meeting the requirements of all health funds, when completed in classroom programs or module based programs with predominantly classroom choice modules.

Recognition of Prior Learning Credits - most health funds accept any course credits granted to student based on RPL. However, some health funds have indicated that RPL credits may not be acceptable if this prior learning the credits were based on did not meet their standards.

We note that these are guidelines only and subject to further changes of individual health funds. Students are advised to speak with their chosen industry association for the most provider eligibility criteria from each health fund.

FAQS FOR STUDENTS

Do I need to have health fund provider status?

No. Health fund provider status is only for massage therapists who feel their intended massage practice or career requires them to offer health fund rebates to those clients with private health cover. If you feel your intended massage practice or career does not need to offer health fund rebates to this group of clients then you do not need health fund provider status.

What does the ALG recommend?

Whilst health fund rebates may attract some new clients, the School sees many graduates launch and maintain very successful careers without offering health rebates to clients. If your preferred qualification or method of study does not automatically result in health fund provider status with a particular health fund, then consider the following: *Do I need health fund rebates for clients as part of my intended massage practice or career anyway? Do I value the flexibility of study more importantly than meeting health fund training requirements? Can I start my career without health fund provider status and possibly upgrade later if I feel the need?*

If the health funds change their requirements between now and the time of my graduation, and my qualification no longer complies, what should I do?

ALG has received conflicting information from various industry associations regarding this question. As such, the status of “gap” training, i.e. returning to school to complete further clinical training, in meeting health fund requirements remains unclear. An example of this is for Medibank provider recognition criteria. Some associations have interpreted Medibank requirements as allowing graduates to return to complete “gap” training while other associations have stipulated that “gap training” will not be recognised when applying for Medibank provider status. Again, it is best to check directly with the massage associations on this matter.

What evidence do I need to apply for provider recognition?

Your association will be asking for specific letters/documentation and ALG can supply the documentation to you upon written request. Please note, different association requests this documentation in different forms.

Where can I find out more information on health fund provider status?

Industry associations (MMA, AMT, MAA) are the bodies that help massage professionals gain and maintain health fund provider numbers, saving you the work of approaching all 30+ health funds by yourself. These associations are the ones who liaise with health funds and maintain the latest health fund provider information. You are also welcome to contact the health fund providers directly about their provider recognition criteria.

Clinic Hours and Private Health Fund education conditions

It is now understood, to the best of our knowledge, that students undertaking via fulltime classroom studies with the Diploma qualification (HLT52015) that was recently implemented will be eligible to apply via the Association of Massage Therapists (AMT) to all health funds without any further ‘additional clinic hours’ beyond what is prescribed in the current structure of the course.

Transcripts for Associations

Please note the ALG Student Handbook indicates the time the School needs to issue final academic transcripts and certificates. This is for the academic transcripts and certificates for the National Qualification and precludes additional specific academic information requested by individual associations.

Whilst the school is very happy to support students joining any association of their choice and provide specific information for association membership in addition to what the school provides a student from the national qualification, students need to acknowledge this information is above and beyond the normal requirement AND

more detailed in nature. As such the timeline to compile and provide this per student is much longer than the regular turnaround time for standard academic transcripts.

As per all previous updates on these private health funds education conditions, students should note they are subject to change without notice and knowledge of the School. In addition, the School's primary focus is to ensure our qualifications and education standards meet the National Training Package requirements at ALL times. Whilst we will also attempt to monitor these additional private health fund education conditions, we never maintain that our courses meet these third party conditions nor do we choose to change our curriculum or course structure to meet these third party requirements.

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