

GREEK ATHLETIC THERAPY ASSOCIATION (GATA)



GATA ACCREDITATION POLICY HANDBOOK

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1. The purpose and functioning of GATA

1.1 Introduction

The Greek Athletic Therapy Association (GATA) was formed in 2018. It is the professional body responsible for the promotion, regulation and continued education of Certified Athletic Therapists (CATs) in Greece. GATA is member of the World Federation of Athletic Therapy (WFATT).

GATA has three main functions; it holds the register and acts as the professional association, as well as the accrediting body. Hence, GATA ensures that the education and training of CATs in Greece is delivered at an appropriate level to ensure that those completing academic undergraduate programmes achieve a standard of competency to practise as autonomous practitioners.

The primary role of GATA, as an accrediting body, is to accredit high quality training programmes that promote best athletic therapy practice and ensure that CATs are safe and competent to practise, whilst taking into account informed views of service needs.

A Certified Athletic Therapist (CAT) is a graduate level autonomous healthcare practitioner, who is trained solely in Sports and Exercise Medicine, specialising in clinical assessment, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of neuromusculoskeletal injuries and illnesses. Additionally, they emphasise on the design, prescription and implementation of exercise programmes in both health and disease.

1.2 Purpose of the GATA Accreditation Handbook

This handbook has been published to assist all those involved in the provision of high quality, outcome-based, athletic therapy education during the development, delivery and review of their academic programmes.

In particular, it may be of benefit to the following:

- Academic staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) developing and delivering athletic therapy academic programmes

- Those clinical departments which are, or intend to be, associated with the clinical practice placement component of athletic therapy academic programmes
- Those individuals who act as accreditors at accreditation events

1.3 Functions and responsibilities of the GATA Research and Education Committee

The GATA Education and Research Committee (ERC) is responsible for implementing GATA policy as led by the articles of association and decided by GATA Board of Directors (BoD).

GATA ERC normally meets two times a year to, amongst other education and research responsibilities and activities, review, discuss and further the provision of athletic therapy education in Greece and to facilitate the accreditation process of those programmes seeking GATA accreditation or re-accreditation.

GATA ERC is responsible for the following functions, with regards to the accreditation process:

- To ensure, via a co-ordinated programme of monitoring, that standards of education and training in athletic therapy are being set, maintained and enhanced
- To establish a co-ordinated approach to setting, maintaining and enhancing standards of education and training in athletic therapy, ensuring that the standards are and remain approved by GATA BoD
- To maintain records of all GATA ERC meetings and any working groups it might establish from time to time
- To operate within the financial budget as agreed and set by GATA BoD
- To provide regular reports to GATA BoD of the activities and outcomes of activities undertaken by GATA ERC
- To facilitate GATA accreditation process, by appointing accreditors who guide the programme team of the institution seeking GATA accreditation

In carrying out the above functions and in accordance with GATA's policy, GATA ERC will:

- Publish a handbook on accreditation, setting out the criteria for the accreditation of academic programmes; and procedures and mechanisms for review and monitoring of academic programmes, following approval by GATA BoD
- Maintain a register of trained and approved accreditors
- Maintain a directory of academic programmes which are accredited by GATA, contingent upon on-going payment of the relevant fees and upon engagement with the periodic monitoring process
- Train and appoint accreditors to undertake the evaluation of academic programmes to be accredited and to receive their reports.
- Organise a training update day annually which all accreditors should attend at least once every three years. These interactive meetings are designed primarily to provide a means of direct communication between the athletic therapy education and GATA.
- Undertake an annual monitoring review of accredited academic programmes and collate the data for appropriate dissemination
- Keep its activity under review and report back through the GATA ERC Chair to GATA BoD

1.4 GATA Accreditors

Accreditors must be CAT and registered with GATA as full graduate members, who are nominated by the GATA ERC Chair and Vice-Chair, following approval by GATA BoD. GATA maintains a list of approved accreditors along with details relating to their areas of speciality.

2. The accreditation process

2.1 Introduction

This chapter goes through the full accreditation process from applying for accreditation through to achieving accreditation and renewal. Chapter 3 covers the detail of what is needed within a programme to achieve successful accreditation. Chapter 4 provides guidance to accreditors in evaluating a programme for accreditation and directs attention to areas where programmes have previously failed or had conditions imposed upon them.

GATA accredit Athletic Therapy programmes for a period of two to five years. Accreditation year begins on September 1st and continues until August 31st of the expiration year.

The approval for accreditation after an event is granted by GATA BoD, based on the accreditors' report. Hence, academic institutions are advised to take into account the timing of GATA BoD meetings when selecting a date for the accreditation or re-accreditation event. The schedule of these meetings is available on the GATA website.

GATA, in fulfilment of its obligations to monitor and maintain standards, will require all academic institutions to review the programme annually according to their own quality and standards procedures.

2.2 Accreditation fees

GATA fees cover professional and administrative charges in relation to accreditation and ongoing review. Accreditation is subject to the following fees:

- An initial one-off fee the first time a new institution engages with GATA
- Payment of an annual fee for the programme to be maintained on the public GATA Directory of Accredited Academic Programmes (DAAP)
- Payment of the accreditors' expenses (e.g. travel and accommodation) incurred whilst attending accreditation/re-accreditation events and interim reviews

The current fees may be found on the GATA website.

2.3 Summary of the accreditation process

Institutions which propose to develop a new academic programme, make substantive changes to an approved programme, or review an accredited programme will be expected to contact GATA twelve (12) months prior to the intended accreditation or review date. The flowchart and timeline of events are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1, respectively.

Figure 1. GATA Accreditation flowchart

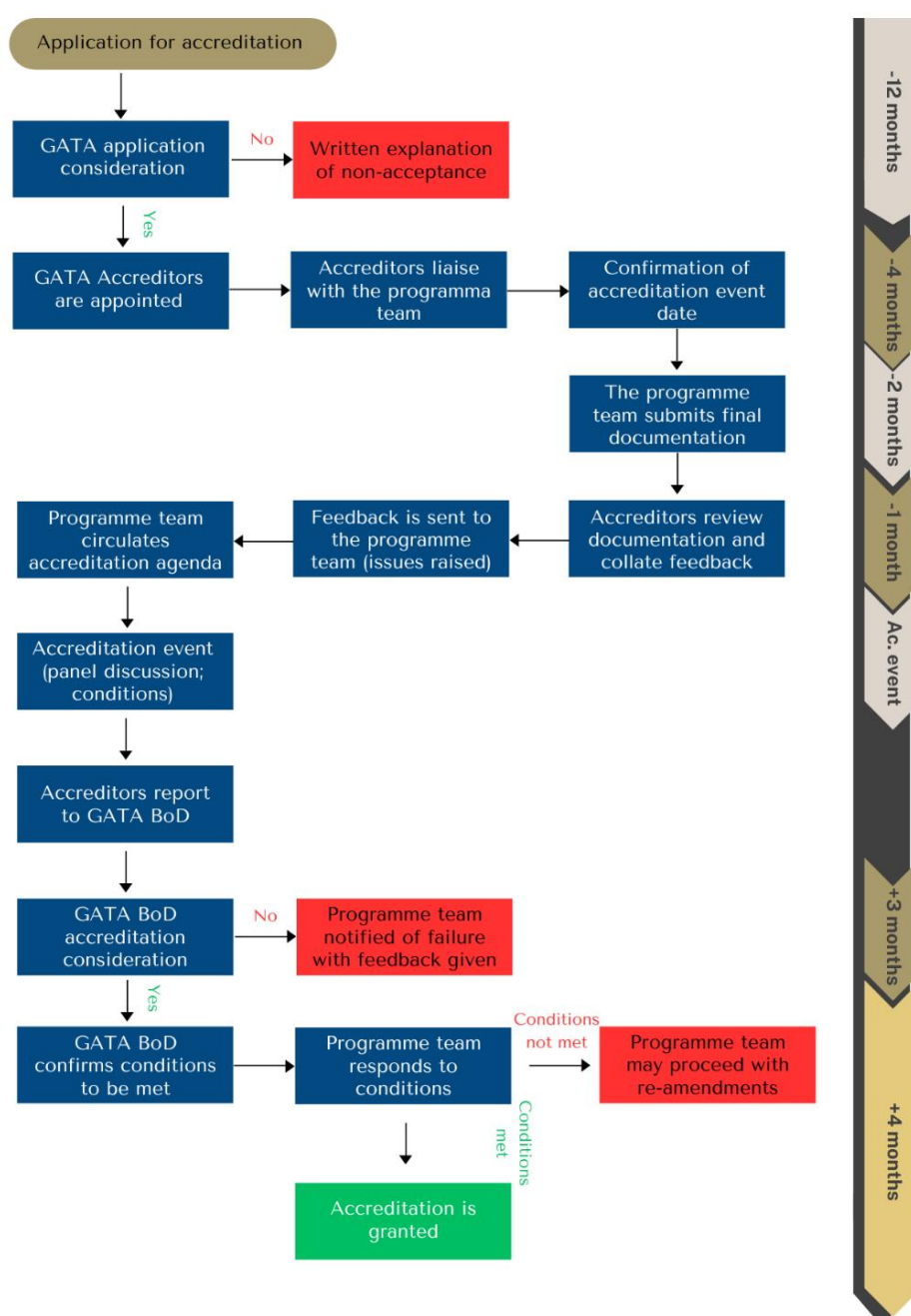


Table 1. Timeline of actions required for an accreditation

Time	Action
12 months prior to anticipated event	<p>The institution communicates its intention to pursue accreditation by completing the GATA accreditation application form available on the GATA website. The form is accessible in either a printable format or an online form. If the printable format is used, kindly submit the completed and scanned application form to accreditation@athletictherapy.org.gr</p> <p>GATA ERC appoints two accreditors, subject to approval by GATA BoD, to manage the accreditation process with the institution. In cases where the application deviates from GATA policy or fails to meet the criteria for an athletic therapy programme, the application will be declined, accompanied by a written explanation of non-acceptance.</p>
4 months prior to anticipated event	The accreditors collaborate with the programme team, which subsequently confirms the accreditation event date with GATA, following mutual agreement.
2 months prior to event	The programme team submits the final program/accreditation documentation to the accreditors through an electronic copy.
1 month prior to event	The accreditors thoroughly examine the documentation, compile feedback, and highlight any issues, all of which are communicated to the program team ahead of the accreditation event. The programme team may be requested to furnish evidence,

	<p>respond to any additional relevant inquiries, or address concerns raised by the accreditors in preparation for the accreditation event.</p> <p>The programme team creates and disseminates the accreditation agenda for the day of the event. A sample accreditation agenda, along with the essential GATA mandatory requirements, is included in this document for reference.</p>
Accreditation Event	<p>Attended by two GATA accreditors, and the institution's programme team, Head of Division/Dean of School, Quality Assurance Officer, and Head of Education.</p>
Within 1 week after event	<p>The institution submits meeting minutes to the accreditors, outlining major issues and other points discussed during the accreditation event.</p> <p>The meeting minutes are sent to GATA BoD for consideration along with the accreditor's report and their recommendation on the accreditation length/duration (when appropriate) ranging from 2 to 5 years.</p>
1-2 months after event	<p>GATA BoD reviews the meeting minutes from the accreditation event and the accreditor's report for consideration. In the case of rejection, the programme team will be notified with feedback provided. If a provisional accreditation is assigned, GATA BoD confirms the conditions that must be met by the institution and/or programme team.</p>

	<p>These conditions are then sent to them for review and subsequent action.</p> <p>Within four weeks of receiving the conditions documentation, the programme team addresses the conditions and submits documentation, including the respective responses to GATA accreditors.</p>
No later than 3 months after the event - Final outcome	<p>The accreditors assess the conditions documentation submitted by the programme team and report their findings to GATA BoD. If the conditions are approved, the institution is granted accreditation for a GATA-accredited programme in athletic therapy.</p> <p>In the event of rejection, a written explanation along with feedback will be provided to the programme team. They can then proceed with amending the documentation for reconsideration.</p>

NOTE: Failure to comply with this timetable may result in delays to accreditation.

2.4 Application for GATA Accreditation

Twelve (12) months before an accreditation/re-accreditation event is anticipated/due, the Institution needs to apply to GATA, using the appropriate form (either printable or online), to indicate that they wish to seek accreditation for their programme. The current forms are available on the GATA website.

If GATA accepts the application, GATA accreditors will be appointed to manage the accreditation. Where the application is not accepted, an explanation will be provided

to the applicant. In this situation, GATA may be able to provide advice to enable the programme team to re-configure the course to meet GATA criteria for entry into the accreditation process (see Chapter 3). While it is not in the interests of the programme or GATA to allow a proposal to remain unaccredited, GATA retains the right not to proceed with consideration of submissions that are deemed unsuitable (e.g. inadequate clinical placement range; programme title and modules/content etc.)

2.5 Appointment and role of GATA accreditors

GATA ERC will inform the programme team of the names and contact details of the two accreditors as soon as possible after their appointment.

IMPORTANT: Further correspondence relating to the accreditation application should be directed to the accreditors, not to GATA BoD or ERC.

2.5.1 The GATA Lead Accreditor

The Lead Accreditor will be familiar with educational and training procedures and will have extensive experience of the GATA accreditation process. The Lead Accreditor is responsible for ensuring that all GATA procedures are implemented and will:

- ensure familiarity with GATA, institution and programme documentation relevant to the event
- request additional documentation from the Institution or programme team
- ensure all accreditors have received and reviewed the documents and reports
- request and receive a critical review from all accreditors
- have input to and approve the final accreditation/re-accreditation event agenda
- provide feedback to the programme team, ahead of the event, regarding any questions or concerns;
- receive all questions to GATA posed by the Institution and programme team prior to, and at the event, and delegate them where appropriate
- provide feedback to the programme team/institution after the event and monitor implementation of conditions
- provide a written report on the event at the next GATA meeting

The Lead Accreditor will normally act as an advisor to the programme team, and will contact the programme team and the other accreditors as early as possible following appointment. The Lead Accreditor may advise the team on matters and aspects of the programme content which relate to GATA accreditation. Any specific matter on which the programme team require advice should be raised when submitting the application form.

2.5.2 The GATA Co-Accreditor

Co-Accreditors are normally experienced CATs and can be either from an academic or a clinical background. They have, together with the Lead Accreditor, a joint responsibility for ensuring that all GATA procedures are implemented. GATA normally appoints a maximum of two representatives from the list of nominated accreditors to act with the Lead Accreditor to examine the programme documentation prior to the event.

The expertise of each appointed Co-Accreditor normally reflects the content of the clinical- specific modules offered for accreditation and complements that of the Lead Accreditor. One of the Co-Accreditors, together with the Lead Accreditor, will serve on the joint panel at the accreditation event. The Co-Accreditor will:

- ensure familiarity with the GATA documentation relevant to the event
- liaise with the Lead Accreditor on event agenda items and ensure that all of the documents and reports have been received
- submit a critical review on the documentation to the Lead Accreditor no less than four weeks prior to the event
- attend the event if requested and participate in discussions as delegated by the Lead Accreditor
- liaise with the Lead Accreditor regarding the post-event documentation

2.5.3 The GATA Shadow Accreditor

To ensure a continuing supply of suitably trained accreditors, newly appointed accreditors will be appointed to shadow GATA procedures during a specific accreditation/re-accreditation process. They will contribute to every stage of the

process apart from participating in the actual event discussions. This is to ensure quality of the procedures. A Shadow Accreditor will normally participate in a minimum of two events prior to being selected for a Co-Accreditor role.

2.6 Documentation required

For all documentation listed below, GATA accreditors should be supplied with an electronic version.

2.6.1 Documentation required for a new programme for an accreditation event

GATA recognises that each Institution will have its own method and style of presenting the relevant information, defined by local practice, for a programme accreditation/re-accreditation event. GATA will require copies of all relevant programme documentation in an electronic format that must be supplied two months prior to the accreditation event to facilitate the process for the accreditors. In the event of additional documentation being needed, the Lead Accreditor will make direct contact with the Institution or programme team.

GATA reserves the right to return any documentation to the Programme Director that is not fit for the purpose of providing information for the accreditation/re-accreditation event, which may as a result delay the accreditation of the programme.

In reviewing the programme documentation, and in discussion with the Programme Director, GATA is able to provide advice to help the programme team fine tune the documentation prior to the accreditation event so as to avoid unnecessary failure at the event. Such advice would usually relate to the learning and clinical placement aspects of the course, as they affect the programme outcomes assessed by GATA. This would normally be directed through the Lead Accreditor and may follow advice from the GATA ERC or BoD.

Mandatory requirements which need to be included and/or specified in a GATA-accredited documentation are as follow:

- Academic rationale and overview

- Course specification
- Module descriptors
- Module assessments
- Mapping to learning outcomes
- Practice placement handbook
- Evidence of appointment of two faculty members on the programme team who are CATs and registered with GATA as graduate full members
- Evidence that the Programme Director appointed is a CAT, registered with GATA as a graduate full member
- Evidence of a range of clinical placement providers in place for the practice placement modules
- Evidence that the External Examiner appointed to the programme holds an equivalent CAT credential registered with an allied athletic therapy association, member of the WFATT

The programme content that GATA accreditors will particularly focus on to accredit the programme for GATA accreditation are indicated in the GATA Educational Framework document.

[2.7 The accreditation event](#)

GATA recognises that there is no common pattern for accreditation/re-accreditation events; however, a consensus is likely to be reached over the agenda, discussion points, conditions and recommendations, and the event report. GATA will seek to work with institutions during the process to ensure that a successful and timely outcome is achieved.

A draft copy of the accreditation event agenda should be circulated prior to the event for comment and agreement. An illustrative agenda is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Sample agenda: GATA accreditation event activities

Time	Activity
9.00am – 9:30am	<p>Private meeting of the Institution Senior Management, programme team and GATA panel to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree themes for discussion, areas to be addressed, allocate roles and responsibilities.
9.30am – 11:00am	<p>GATA panel meeting with the LSBU Senior Management and programme team to discuss the proposed programme</p> <p>This meeting allows the panel and professional bodies to discuss issues with those responsible for the resourcing and financing of the courses as well as with those responsible for the day-to-day management and delivery of the courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale and market • Staffing and physical resources • Recruitment, admissions and marketing • Teaching, learning and assessment • Course content (including modules) • Interprofessional learning • Employability • Professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs) • Technology enhanced learning (TEL) • Management and quality assurance arrangements (including external examination boards, course monitoring, student feedback, etc.) • Student support • Equality and diversity
11.00am – 11:30am	Tour of the facilities

	A brief tour to familiarise accreditors with the classroom, laboratory, and other facilities used by students during didactic and/or supervised practice components of the programme
11.30am – 11:45am	Break
11:45am – 12:15pm	<p>Private meeting of the Institution panel.</p> <p>Private Meeting of the GATA panel.</p> <p>This meeting allows the Institution and GATA panel to separately discuss issues arising from the accreditation event and to identify the outcome</p>
12:15pm – 12:45pm	<p>Joint Institution and GATA private meeting.</p> <p>This meeting allows the Institution and GATA panel to jointly discuss their conditions and recommendations.</p>

The event is generally an opportunity for the programme team to offer evidence in support of the curriculum, delivery and assessments to a panel of experts.

On the day of the accreditation event panel members normally comprise members from the Institution, such as the programme team, Head of Division/Dean of School, Quality Assurance Officer, and Head of Education. along with the GATA accreditors and members of other external bodies. A secretariat to minute proceedings is normally arranged by the Institution.

Institutions are advised that GATA may require individual sessions with the programme team or Institution faculty and other smaller group meetings which may include interviews with other staff, including practice educators and managers, and with students (past or present) where appropriate.

GATA may also request visits to:

- Specific buildings and facilities associated with the programme (e.g. skills laboratories, student resource centres)
- Clinical placements (e.g. in-house rehabilitation clinic) where appropriate

There will normally be a plenary session of the accreditation panel at the end of the event at which the commendations, conditions and recommendations will be made clear to the programme team, including the dates and mechanisms by which these will be met. The decision regarding accreditation and re-accreditation taken by the GATA accreditors at the event is a recommendation only. **The GATA representatives who attend the accreditation event are not empowered to give an immediate decision regarding formal accreditation of the programme by GATA. The accreditors will report to GATA ERC and subsequently to GATA BoD, where formal decision will be made.**

[2.8 Feedback and recommendation by accreditors to GATA BoD](#)

Following the accreditation event, it is the responsibility of the Institution to produce a written report of the proceedings stating the outcome of the meeting, including the conditions and recommendations where applicable, and to circulate this to all of the members of the panel.

The GATA Lead Accreditor will submit to GATA BoD an independent report, on a specific pro-forma. This report, along with the accreditors' recommendation for the duration of accreditation (ranging from 2 to 5 years), will be presented for consideration and action by GATA BoD at its next meeting. This report will also be sent to the programme team.

GATA BoD will review the report of the Lead Accreditor at its next meeting, at which time it will formally agree the outcome of the accreditation.

Following a decision by GATA BoD, and after all conditions have been met, a letter detailing the accreditation outcome is sent to the Programme Director. Following successful accreditation, a final definitive set of programme documentation, suitably

amended if necessary, must be forwarded to GATA accreditors. This should be in electronic format.

2.9 GATA approval and length of accreditation

GATA BoD review of an application for GATA accreditation/re-accreditation results in one of the following decisions:

- **Full accreditation** is assigned when the application package and site visitation results are such that the programme meets standards for programme accreditation. The accreditation will be for an agreed period of time between 2 to 5 years, following the accreditors' recommendation. It is subject to annual programme monitoring and payment of GATA fees. The programme will be entered onto the public GATA DAAP.
- **Provisional accreditation** is assigned when conditions must be met as those arose during the accreditation event. The programme is not considered accredited until the conditions are met and a formal letter states full accreditation of the respective programme by GATA.
- **Unsuccessful accreditation** will result where, following the accreditation event, the programme fails to meet the GATA criteria for accreditation. Where appropriate, GATA will work with the institution in an advisory capacity to enable the programme course to be resubmitted to GATA for accreditation.
- **Suspension of accreditation** is assigned when an institution either a) does not submit their annual monitoring report by the end of the academic year, or b) does not remain compliant with the standards for programme accreditation.
Note: Students attending a programme under suspension are not eligible to apply to become a member of GATA. Students who have commenced their academic programme in an accredited institution for which the suspension designation is then later assigned, may remain student members of GATA until graduation from the said programme. No leave of absence can incur during their studies to satisfy this leniency. No new students will be granted membership until the suspension of accreditation has been rectified.
- **Withdrawal of accreditation** may be:
 - requested by an institution

- assigned to an institution that remains suspended for 3 consecutive months

When accreditation is withdrawn, the institution's athletic therapy Programme Director, Dean of School or designate are provided with the following information:

- a clear statement of each deficiency in the programme's relative compliance with the standards of programme accreditation, and
- notification that application for accreditation would be as a new applicant

Note: Students attending a programme under withdrawal are not eligible to apply to become a member of GATA. Students who have commenced their academic programme in an accredited institution for which the withdrawal designation is then later assigned, may remain student members of GATA until graduation from the said programme. No leave of absence can incur during their studies to satisfy this leniency.

2.10 Summary list for entry/retention onto the public GATA DAAP

- Successful accreditation or re-accreditation
- Receipt of relevant programme documentation
- Meeting any future conditions set or interim reviews required
- Receipt of satisfactory Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (see Chapter 6)
- Payment of the annual fees and all accreditors' expenses

3. GATA Accreditation policy

3.1 Introduction

A GATA accredited programme is required to meet certain standards as set out by the GATA ERC, with approval from GATA BoD. The following policy details the requirements of all GATA accredited academic programmes.

There are seven areas of particular importance which programme teams will need to consider in order to secure GATA accreditation:

- programme learning material
- programme and module learning outcomes
- theoretical and clinical assessments
- academic and clinical teaching teams
- academic learning environment
- clinical practice placements
- quality assurance procedures

The contents of this section are appropriate for both accreditation and re-accreditation. GATA will expect information relating to the above areas to be embedded appropriately throughout the programme documentation and used as a basis for discussion at the accreditation event.

3.2 Institutional standing, degree level, and programme title

The following criteria must be met:

- a) The programme must be housed in an appropriate HEI. The HEI needs to have formal accreditation of its third level status such as a university, college, technological university or institute of technology.
- b) The degree should be at Level 6 honours degree or higher according to the Greek National Qualification Framework (NQF), which is equivalent to Level 6 according to the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- c) Athletic therapy must be in the title of the accredited programme and should be a primary feature in the title.

3.3 Teaching and administration faculty

- a) Two (2) faculty members on the programme team who are CATs and registered with GATA as graduate full members, must be teaching on the programme's clinical core athletic therapy modules. The core clinical athletic therapy modules are modules which include prevention, clinical assessment, treatment, rehabilitation and emergency care of neuromusculoskeletal injuries and illnesses.
- b) The Programme Director must be a CAT, registered with GATA as a graduate full member.
- c) Appropriately qualified faculty must deliver core clinical athletic therapy modules (i.e. Certified Athletic Therapists, physiotherapists, sport and exercise medicine physicians and other medical/allied healthcare professionals) who are registered with their respective national professional/governing body.
- d) Faculty teaching core clinical athletic therapy modules must provide proof of familiarisation of their knowledge of the GATA Scope of Practice, GATA Code of Ethics, and GATA Educational Framework.
- e) Proof of professional indemnity insurance for all core clinical athletic therapy faculty must be provided.
- f) A designated Practice Placement Lead is required. It is desirable that this person is a CAT, registered with GATA as graduate full member. The designated Practice Placement Lead should not also act as Programme Director.
- g) Evidence that the External Examiner appointed to the programme holds an equivalent CAT credential registered with an allied athletic therapy association, member of the WFATT.

3.4 Resources

- a) Clinical resources should be available for all core clinical athletic therapy modules. These resources should reflect student numbers and the current GATA Scope of Practice. Resources will be reviewed during the GATA site visit.

3.5 Additional requirements

- a) All programmes must include and ensure students are certified as Cardiac First Responders and Emergency First Responders upon completing a first-aid training course that adheres to both national and international guidelines on first aid and emergency care, and includes both written and practical exams to assess the students' competency. Please refer to the GATA Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Qualification Policy for more information.
- b) To maintain a standardised experience and knowledge of a CAT, Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is not permitted against any GATA course modules, unless from an alternative GATA accredited programme.
- c) Students must maintain an attendance level above 70% in each module through the completion of their course to be eligible for graduate membership with GATA. Failure to maintain this attendance requirement must be indicated as part of the Programme Director's annual submission to the GATA ERC of safe and competent graduates.
- d) GATA also recommends that the staff:student ratio does not exceed 1:16 and requires that this ratio does not exceed 1:20 in any practical or seminar-based sessions, with the exception of theoretical lead lectures.
- e) To help ensure clarity and protect service users, programme exit awards, other than the final award, must be named appropriately to indicate the limitations in scope of practice of students and should not include 'athletic therapy' within those interim award names.
- f) Practical classes and opportunities for practice and feedback are an integral component of an athletic therapy programme. All core clinical athletic therapy modules (prevention, clinical assessment, treatment, rehabilitation and emergency care of neuromusculoskeletal injuries and illnesses) must include practical classes to enable the students to demonstrate acquisition of clinical skills.
- g) A capstone clinical examination must be included within the programme. This capstone clinical examination must reflect the scope of practice of an athletic therapist across all domains and must be completed in the final year of the programme.

4. Guidance notes for accreditors and accreditation event panel members

4.1 Aims

The primary aims of GATA are to secure for students a high-quality educational experience and to ensure that, on completion of a pathway of learning, they are able to meet the GATA Educational Competencies and become competent to practice as CATs within GATA Scope of Practice. It also aims to stimulate curriculum development by empowering staff to evaluate their provision through the external peer review process.

4.2 Objectives

The accreditation process must ensure that:

- athletic therapy and rehabilitation programmes meet the requirements for the relevant award and that the standards are appropriate to that award
- the student learning experiences are of a standard appropriate and relevant to their needs and aspirations
- resources available both in the academic and clinical environments, including staffing and equipment, within which the programme is delivered are appropriate and satisfactory
- standards and quality of teaching in the relevant subject areas are maintained and, wherever possible, enhanced
- standards and quality of the overall provision are maintained and, wherever possible, enhanced

These brief notes are provided for guidance purposes only for GATA accreditors, programme teams and other staff at the Institutions or Faculties. They are not exhaustive and it should be recognised that a wider range of issues may lead to further probing at accreditation events to satisfy the GATA criteria for a successful outcome.

Included in these notes are a small number of outline questions identified in *italics* that might be used as introductions to the discussions at an event. They can also be used as a checklist prompt for accreditors during the documentation review stage.

4.3 The programme

Please note that if this is a re-validation, any interim changes to the programme from the previous validation should be documented and specifically referred to at the re-validation.

4.3.1 Rationale

The philosophy and rationale are appropriate for the programme outline.

Sample question

- *How does the rationale for programme development meet the needs of the athletic therapy and rehabilitation profession and service development/delivery?*

4.3.2 Aims and outcomes

The aims are related to the purpose of the programme. The objectives are related to the capabilities and competencies the students will be expected to demonstrate on successful completion.

Example Questions

- *How will the students achieve the programme/module learning outcomes?*
- *How will the students evidence these outcomes in the study that they undertake?*

4.3.3 Admission policy

The criteria for admission in relation to the learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessments, including where necessary consideration of issues relating to equal opportunities, international applications, are likely to be the main points for discussion. In particular, the course documentation should clearly specify:

- The minimum qualifications for the course, including Greek language assessment for foreign students
- The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) conditions
- The pre-requisites and co-requisites for each module
- Whether pre-entry experience in a clinical setting is required/desirable

Example Questions

- *How is the student intake compatible with the Admissions Policy?*
- *What is the attrition rate for the programme and has it altered since the last review? (re-validation)*
- *What has been the trend in pass rates and is this satisfactory? (re-validation)*
- *How are clinical placements chosen and assessed as being fit-for-purpose?*

4.3.4 Structure

The programme structure must include a rationale for the chosen approaches to learning and information on how it might integrate with other similar programmes (e.g. modular structure, shared learning, blended learning, web-based delivery) for the benefit of students and the athletic therapy and rehabilitation service.

It is strongly recommended that the whole programme is diagrammatically mapped out to show all the pathways that are available.

The content of each module should be clearly defined, particularly in relation to any clinical components. Content relating to ergonomics and repetitive strain injury risk management must be included where appropriate.

Example Questions

- *Does each module title reflect the scope of practice and the target recruitment group?*
- *Is there parity of content and assessment between individual modules?*
- *Have the learning outcomes for each module been mapped against the GATA educational competencies?*

4.3.5 Learning and teaching strategy

Issues may be discussed in relation to:

- The relevance of the programme content to its aims and outcomes, and the appropriateness of the sequence and progression of content
- The learning and teaching strategies proposed
- Aspects of learning delivery
- The feasibility of any proposals for interprofessional learning

- The provision for clinical education and how this will be integrated into the learning model
- Proposals for the dissertation or written project, including the approval of chosen topics and the arrangements for supervision

Example Questions

- *How is the learning strategy appropriate for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes?*
- *To what extent do lectures and other forms of tutor-led presentations stimulate learning? Can it be identified in the documentation?*
- *How are students encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?*
- *How does the programme team respond positively to student feedback?*

4.3.6 Academic assessment strategy

The rationale for assessment and the proposed strategy, including the assessment schedule, will be thoroughly reviewed. Specimen examples, along with the assessment and marking criteria, will be reviewed to give the panel an appreciation of the appropriateness of the strategy and whether they are valid assessments to demonstrate successful completion of the learning outcomes. GATA recommends that these examples are provided as part of the original documentation pack. Information on the regulations for unsuccessful students and the support mechanisms for further study should also be provided.

Example Questions

- *Do the assessment criteria adequately assess all the learning outcomes for the module / programme?*
- *How does the assessment scheme match the learning outcomes of the clinical modules?*
- *Are the assessment regulations clearly and unambiguously drafted, including provision for the re-assessment of students where appropriate?*
- *What are the arrangements for the involvement of External Examiners in the assessment process?*

- *What are the arrangements for second or double marking by internal examiners and/or internal moderation across subjects?*
- *What is the assessment loading and, is there a balance of submissions across the learning period?*

4.3.7 Student support and resources

Staff to student ratios will be explored and there must be at least the minimum number of appropriately qualified staff to ensure that student learning is not compromised (GATA recommends that the staff:student ratio does not exceed 1:16 and requires that this ratio does not exceed 1:20 in any practical or seminar-based sessions, with the exception of theoretical lead lectures). This applies equally to academic, clinical and support staff. The quality of the staff, both academic and clinical, is also crucial. The programme team will also need to demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). Institutions and faculties must have policies for staff development and research to support the teaching.

The physical resources that are available to sustain students on the programme will need to be specified. This will include clinical equipment, skills laboratories, library services and IT provision.

Consideration will need to be given to:

- The appropriateness of the accommodation available
- The existence of related programmes and whether there is or will be competition for resources
- The suitability of common teaching, if proposed
- The opportunities for students to mix with other students and to engage in group activities
- The arrangements for clinical education
- Opportunities for students to visit other clinical departments
- The processes for obtaining student feedback and how is it used

- The arrangements for students to communicate and share their experiences and have the feeling of being part of a group e.g. through a Blackboard discussion forum or via social media

Example Questions

- *Are there enough CATs and qualified healthcare staff at the Institution or faculty to support the student numbers expected on the programme?*
- *What are the arrangements for visiting student clinical placements?*
- *Is there evidence of on-going professional development at the clinical placements?*

4.3.8 Programme management

GATA will need to consider the overall workload for both students and staff. The arrangements for operational management and monitoring of the programme, including the provision for student representation and tutorial guidance will also be reviewed by GATA.

Example Questions

- *What system is in place for the programme team to receive student feedback?*
- *What strategies are in place to ensure that students are achieving their learning goals on a regular basis?*
- *How is overall programme feedback obtained from previous students who have successfully completed? (re-validation)*
- *What support is there for students who live remotely from the Institution or Faculty base?*
- *How does the programme take advantage of the services of the library, skills laboratory and IT department?*
- *What training and support mechanisms are in place for practice educators?*
- *How do the CPD activities of the tutors actively underpin the programme?*
- *How do the tutors from a variety of backgrounds form a balanced and cohesive team?*
- *How do the tutors support one another?*
- *What support is available for the programme team?*

5. Changes to an accredited programme

Where changes to a programme are desired, an application form for GATA approval of changes should be submitted to the GATA ERC. This is available on the GATA website. These applications will be considered by the GATA Committee and will be either approved by the Committee or will have accreditors assigned to look at the application in more detail. In the case of minor amendments an email may be sent to GATA ERC Chair for information and/or advice.

GATA recommends that where a **major change** is required, such as:

- a re-design on clinical placements
- the substitution of an entire assessment
- the addition of new curriculum material
- an entire new module
- a re-modelling of the delivery pattern such as
 - blended learning
 - learning delivered at another educational or training site
- new programme leader
- external examiner appointments

GATA must be informed as soon as possible. A decision made concerning a visit or request for additional, explanatory documentation will be taken by the most recent Lead Accreditor or other appropriate person.

Information that may be required for a review of major changes may include:

- relevant background information that has led to the substantive changes (institutional plans, service changes or new provision, professional policy) including a written rationale for the changes
- details of the proposal for change which may include information related to the syllabus, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategy, resources, curriculum vitae

Where such changes are relatively **minor**, such as:

- timetabling issues

- university calendar modifications
- changes to university regulations
- amalgamation of educational Schools or Faculties

these should be incorporated into the programme documentation immediately and identified clearly in the next GATA monitoring exercise, as outlined in the chapter 6. They must also be referred to specifically at the next re-accreditation event.

6. Programme monitoring

5.1 Introduction

GATA believes that Annual Programme Monitoring and Review reports (APMRs) act as a valuable source of qualitative and quantitative information regarding the design, development, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. This evidence complements the factual information available through definitive programme documentation. APMR data may be used by GATA to provide an overview of standards being achieved, changing patterns of curricular provision and innovative practices.

5.2 Annual report

Each September, institutions are invited to send an annual report of their programme's recruitment, achievements and challenges to GATA using an electronic form. The GATA ERC reviews the returns in the autumn semester and compiles an overall annual report for discussion at the spring GATA committee meeting. The GATA ERC Chair will contact individual institutions if any clarity or additional APMR information is required.

GATA reserves the right to nominate a representative to visit institutions or course faculties to fulfil its monitoring role. Each institution will ultimately receive a letter from the GATA ERC Chair regarding the satisfactory nature of their APMR report. Receipt and approval of the APMR report will be necessary for retention on the public GATA DAAP.



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