



## **Aims, Definitions, and Entry Criteria**

### **Introduction:**

Given that meditation is practiced in different ways for different purposes, in order to establish criteria for entry to the association, it is necessary to establish broad categories under which meditation is commonly practiced and taught. A meditation teacher or organisation may join the association under one or more categories providing they have met the entry criteria for that category.

Because of significant diversity in meditative practices, training pathways, professional background, and organizations teaching meditation, it will be common that adjudication will be required for membership in relation to individual cases. In all cases and categories of membership, the membership committee retains absolute discretion as to granting membership, and in allowing continuation of any membership previously granted.

There will be three broad categories of membership for ATMA.

1. Therapeutic
2. Personal Development
3. Spiritual

There will be some similarities in aims and entry criteria between these categories and some differences particular to individual categories. Listed below are the definitions, aims and entry criteria for these three categories.

### **General definition of meditation:**

Meditation, in its simplest and most general definition, is ***“a mental discipline involving attention regulation.”*** Meditation can be sub-classified further according to the *process* or intended *outcome*.

- **Process:** Attention regulation can be directed to various objects such as the breath or body, a mantra, a thought or prayer, a visualisation or mental image, a physical object, a sense of being, or stillness. As well as attention regulation, the process of meditation can involve the development of cognitive changes such as concentration, non-attachment to experiences, stillness of mind, and an attitude of acceptance.

- **Outcomes:** The process of meditation is intended to bring about various outcomes such as meditative states or traits. These include undistracted awareness, transcendence of thought, oneness, cognitive changes, therapeutic effects, spiritual insight, and enlightenment. Meditation can also be identified by the physical effects it produces such as physiological, biochemical, hormonal, immunological or neurological changes.

### **Individual or Organisational membership:**

Individual teachers of meditation or organisations can become accredited members of ATMA at the discretion of the ATMA board.

- **Individual membership:** An individual teacher can become an accredited member of ATMA in one or more of the three categories listed below provided they fulfill the necessary requirements in terms of training, supervision and practice. A condition of renewal is that members satisfy the CPD requirements.
- **Organisational membership:** Organisations that teach meditation to the general public can also become an accredited provider if;
  - they teach a recognised and established form of meditation;
  - their instructors have had the required level of training and experience as defined in the criteria set out below;
  - they have sufficient ethical standards;
  - in the case of the spiritual category, the organisation is founded on an established and respected spiritual tradition.
- **Note:** an organisation can also become an accredited provider of training for meditation teachers provided they satisfy the abovementioned criteria as well as their courses satisfying the criteria laid out below.

## 1. Therapeutic Meditation

### Definition:

Therapeutic Meditation relates to the use of meditation in the healthcare setting with the primary intention of treating illness, or the management of symptoms, whether it is used as the primary therapy or as an adjunct to other therapies. The criteria are more stringent in this category because of the extra responsibilities which are associated with managing people's health-related problems.

### Aim of this category:

- To provide a formal body through which therapeutic meditation teachers can be accredited and represented collectively to Government, health fund, media and other peak bodies.
- To provide cohesive professional standards, ethics, regulations and registration facilities to equip the public with information and support.
- To raise the profile of therapeutic meditation teachers and honor the experience, expertise and complementary health benefits such teachers can offer.
- To recognise and respect different approaches and actively pursue relevant research relating to therapeutic benefits gained.

### Entry criteria for this category:

- Background qualifications as a healthcare professional recognised in Australia to the level of a bachelor degree. Such qualifications could include but are not restricted to:
  - Medicine, psychology, counseling, social work, nursing.
  - Others could be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Education, training and certification in the facilitation of therapeutic meditation from an ATMA accredited or other recognised provider of therapeutic meditation such as a university, professional college or healthcare provider such as a hospital or community organization or a recognised independent practitioner.
- In addition, minimum education and training includes the following:
  - Attendance as a participant in at least one weekend intensive meditation retreat or equivalent designed to teach participants how to teach meditation. The applicant must provide the details of the retreat which should include at least 20 hours of content which can include instruction, meditation practice and related activities.
  - A training course in how to teach therapeutic meditation, consisting of at least 30 hours duration in face-to-face instruction and 30 hours of self-directed learning (e.g. readings and assignments). Such a course would need to include:
    - Basic knowledge about the physiology and psychology of the stress and relaxation responses and of the current evidence-base

- supporting the use of meditation in therapeutic settings at a bachelor's level.
    - Basic psychology and mental health knowledge.
    - Knowledge of the therapeutic potential and limitations of meditation.
    - Knowledge of the indications and contraindications to using meditation in therapeutic settings and how to manage potentially difficult side-effects of the meditative experience.
  - Evidence of at least 20 hours' supervision, mentoring and/or facilitation experience.
    - Supervision: e.g. taking a class under the direct supervision of a recognised teacher.
    - Mentoring: e.g. receiving feedback, further instruction, or having debriefing sessions from a recognised teacher.
    - Facilitation: e.g. experience in taking classes or courses.
- At least two years regular personal practice of a form of meditation with established therapeutic benefits.
- Capability in empathic communication, motivation, facilitation and group skills are also desirable.

A 'grandfather clause' is provided for those with extensive experience as a respected teacher of therapeutic meditation. This would be taken on a case-by-case basis by the ATMA board. Applicants for the 'grandfather clause' will need to provide a description on the application form outlining their training and teaching experience.

For an individual to maintain membership of this category they will need to provide evidence of Continuing Professional Development. CPD will be reviewed each triennium. The details of this process will be further defined in the future.

## **2. Meditation for Personal Development**

### Definition:

Meditation for personal development relates to where meditation is being used to foster self-understanding, coping, capacities, performance, behaviour change, self-care skills or general wellbeing. In this case the meditation training does not have specific therapeutic goals nor is it taught within a spiritual context, and thus therapeutic effects or spiritual experiences are considered as secondary effects rather than the primary goal of the practice.

### Aim of this category:

- To provide a formal body through which meditation teachers for personal development can be accredited and represented collectively to Government, health funds, media and other peak bodies.
- To provide cohesive professional standards, ethics, regulations and registration facilities to equip the public with information and support.

- To raise the profile of meditation teachers and honor the experience, expertise and complementary health benefits such teachers can offer.
- To recognise and respect different approaches to meditation and actively pursue relevant research relating to benefits gained.

### Entry Criteria for this category

- Evidence of education, training, facilitation and certification from an accredited provider of meditation for personal development such as a college, university, professional college or healthcare provider such as a hospital or community organisation or a recognised independent practitioner providing recognised training.
- In addition, minimum education and training includes the following:
  - Attendance as a participant in at least one weekend intensive meditation retreat or equivalent designed to teach participants how to teach meditation. The applicant must provide the details of the retreat which should include at least 20 hours of content which can include instruction, meditation practice and related activities.
  - A training course in personal development meditation of at least 30 hours duration in face-to-face instruction and 30 hours of self-directed learning (e.g. readings and assignments). Such a course would need to include:
    - Evidence of knowledge of personal development potential and limitations of meditation.
    - Knowledge of the indications and contraindications to using meditation, related referral practices and how to manage potentially difficult side-effects of the meditative experience.
  - Evidence of at least 20 hours' supervision, mentoring and/or facilitation experience.
    - Supervision: e.g. taking a class under the direct supervision of a recognised teacher.
    - Mentoring: e.g. receiving feedback, further instruction, or having debriefing sessions from a recognised teacher.
    - Facilitation: e.g. experience in taking classes or courses.
- At least two years regular personal practice of a form of meditation with established benefits for personal development.
- Capability in empathic communication, motivation, facilitation and group skills are also desirable.

A 'grandfather clause' is provided for those with extensive experience as a respected teacher of personal development meditation. This would be taken on a case-by-case basis by the ATMA board. Applicants for the 'grandfather clause' will need to provide a description on the application form outlining their training and teaching experience.

For an individual to maintain membership of this category they will need to provide evidence of Continuing Professional Development. CPD will be reviewed each triennium. The details of this process will be further defined in the future.

### **3. Spiritual Meditation**

#### Definition:

Spiritual meditation refers to meditative and contemplative practices undertaken primarily for spiritual and/or religious development and insight. They may be undertaken according to the practices of one of the major religions, or within a recognised spiritual tradition, independent of a formal religious tradition. Although the technique/s may be the same as some varieties of therapeutic and personal development meditation, the aim is primarily spiritual and therapeutic or personal development goals are of secondary importance. Such aims could include, but are not limited to, Oneness with Absolute Reality, Universal Being or God, a deep experience of Self, enlightenment, or a direct experience of the nature of mind.

#### Aims of this category:

- To provide a forum for a spiritual and interfaith dialogue around the teaching and practice of meditation in a spiritual and/or religious context.
- To provide a formal body through which spiritual and religious groups teaching and practicing meditation can be accredited and represented collectively to Government, media and other peak bodies.
- To honor different spiritual and religious traditions, lineages and experiences in teaching and practicing meditation.
- To take the formal, historical or religious context of recognised religious and spiritual traditions as sufficient validity for the methods, techniques and style of teaching and practice.
- To recognise and respect differences of practice, understanding and approach.

#### Entry criteria for this category:

In many cases, spiritual traditions are embedded within recognised religions, therefore we rely on the criteria set by those religious groups for teaching meditation within that religion. In the case of recognised spiritual traditions which are not aligned to particular religious bodies then the decision about accreditation will be made including reference to the standards and criteria set by that spiritual tradition. For example, in the case of teachers of meditation in a context of Yoga, the criteria is set by an appropriate representative body for yoga teaching.

We accept that there may be individual cases with exceptions to the above. It is important to note that the membership committee will look to the authority for the relevant spiritual or religious tradition to determine if a person is appropriately qualified to teach meditation in that tradition.

#### Entry Criteria for this category

- Evidence of education, training, facilitation and certification from the recognised body representing that spiritual or religious tradition. In the case of a religious body, we refer to formal recognition as a religious group as defined by the Australian Taxation Department Ruling (described further below).
- In addition, minimum education and training includes the following:
  - Attendance as a participant in at least one weekend intensive meditation retreat or equivalent designed to teach participants how to teach meditation. The applicant must provide the details of the retreat which should include at least 20 hours of content which can include instruction, meditation practice and related activities.
  - A training course in spiritual meditation of at least 30 hours duration in face-to-face instruction and 30 hours of self-directed learning (e.g. readings and assignments). Such a course would need to include:
    - Evidence of knowledge about the uses of meditation within the spiritual context.
    - Knowledge of the indications and contraindications to using meditation, related referral practices and how to manage potentially difficult side-effects of the meditative experience.
  - Evidence of at least 20 hours' supervision, mentoring and/or facilitation experience.
    - Supervision: e.g. taking a class under the direct supervision of a recognised teacher.
    - Mentoring: e.g. receiving feedback, further instruction, or having debriefing sessions from a recognised teacher.
    - Facilitation: e.g. experience in taking classes or courses.
- At least two years regular personal practice of spiritual meditation.
- Capability in empathic communication, motivation, facilitation and group skills are also desirable.

A 'grandfather clause' is provided for those with extensive experience as a respected teacher of spiritual meditation. This would be taken on a case-by-case basis by the ATMA board. Applicants for the 'grandfather clause' will need to provide a description on the application form outlining their training and teaching experience.

## Religious institution

4. A body is an 'institution' for the purposes of both the ITAA and the FBTAA if it is an establishment, organization or association, instituted for the promotion of some object (especially one of public or general utility) that is religious, charitable, educational, etc. That definition was accepted by the High Court of Australia in *YMCA of Melbourne v. FC of T* (1926) 37 CLR 351 and later in *Stratton v. Simpson* (1970) 125 CLR 138.
5. A body is a 'religious institution' if it is instituted for religious purposes. For a body to be regarded as a religious institution:
  - (a) its objects and activities must reflect its character as a body instituted for the promotion of some religious object; and
  - (b) the beliefs and practices of the members of that body must constitute a religion.
6. The two most important factors for determining whether a particular set of beliefs and practices constitute a religion are:
  - (a) belief in a supernatural Being, Thing or Principle; and
  - (b) acceptance of canons of conduct which give effect to that belief, but which do not offend against the ordinary laws.
7. These factors were established by the High Court in *The Church of the New Faith v. Commissioner of Pay-roll Tax (Vic)* 83 ATC 4652; (1983) 14 ATR 769 (the *Scientology* case). Although other relevant criteria were discussed by the members of the Court in that case, if those two main criteria are satisfied it is likely that the body will be characterised as religious. On the other hand, if those two criteria are not satisfied it is unlikely that the body will be characterised as religious.
8. The expression 'religious institution' is not confined to the major religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; it extends also to religions less well known in Australia, such as Taoism.