



ATMS

Australian Traditional-
Medicine Society



White Paper 4

The Educational Framework for Natural
Medicine Professions in Australia

What ATMS Members Need to Know

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Executive Summary

Education in natural medicine is the foundation of safe, ethical, and credible practice. In Australia, all qualifications are structured within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and overseen by national regulators: the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) for vocational education and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) for higher education.



Annie Gibbins
Chief Executive Officer.

This paper explains how these systems operate, how they apply to natural medicine professions, and what ATMS members need to know to ensure their qualifications are valid, recognised, and accurately represented. It also clarifies the role of Advanced Practitioner Programs recognised by the ATMS in modalities where no AQF-accredited courses are currently delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or TEQSA-approved providers.

The framework is supported by the ATMS's Professional Capability Standards, which safeguard educational quality across both accredited qualifications and non-RTO programs.



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1. Introduction

Australia's natural medicine practitioners come from a wide range of educational backgrounds. Some have completed formal AQF qualifications at Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor, or postgraduate level. Others have undertaken structured non-RTO Advanced Practitioner Programs, assessed by the ATMS against our professional capability standards.

Regardless of pathway, ATMS members must ensure their qualifications are valid, accurately described, and aligned with national standards. This protects both practitioners and the public, while supporting the profession's credibility with health funds, regulators, and the wider community.



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2. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It establishes the levels of learning (from Certificate I through to Doctoral degrees) and defines what knowledge and skills are required at each level.

- **Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications** – Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma – must be delivered by ASQA-registered RTOs.
- **Higher Education qualifications** – Bachelor degrees, Graduate Certificates, Masters – must be delivered by TEQSA-registered providers.

Key point for ATMS members: Only providers regulated by ASQA or TEQSA are authorised to issue AQF qualifications.

📖 **Reference:** [Australian Qualifications Framework](#)



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3. Regulatory Bodies

3.1 Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

ASQA regulates the quality of training delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). It ensures:

- Course content aligns with national training packages.
- RTOs meet compliance standards under the Standards for RTOs 2025.
- The 2025 Standards for RTO's which came into effect on 1 July 2025 are made up of these 3 components:
 - Outcome Standards (legislation): Outcome-focused requirements that support the delivery of nationally consistent and high-quality training that leads to quality outcomes for students, industry, employers, and the Australian community.
 - Compliance requirements (legislation): Administrative requirements (including the Fit and Proper Person Requirements and NRT Logo Conditions of Use Policy) that support integrity in the VET sector.
 - Credential Policy (TGA): An enforceable policy that operates alongside the Standards and outlines the credentials required for delivering training and assessments and undertaking validation of assessments.
- Only RTOs may issue qualifications with protected titles such as Certificate IV, Diploma, or Advanced Diploma.

📖 Reference: [ASQA](#)



3.2 Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

TEQSA regulates universities and higher education providers. It ensures that Bachelor and postgraduate qualifications meet national higher education standards.

📖 Reference: [TEQSA](#)





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4. Advanced Practitioner Programs

Some natural medicine modalities do not currently have AQF-aligned programs delivered through RTOs or higher education institutions. To ensure these professions can continue to develop and maintain high standards, the ATMS recognises Advanced Practitioner Programs delivered by non-RTO providers.

These programs:

- Are not AQF qualifications.
- Are assessed by the ATMS against our Professional Capabilities and meet the Core Educational Capabilities set by ATMS and benchmarked internationally for each specific modality.
- Provide an alternative route to the ATMS membership where no AQF course exists.

Examples of colleges recognised by the ATMS via a structured evidence-based process include:

- Nature Care College
- Switch on Health
- RMDY Academy of Homeopathy (the only current structured program for homeopathy).

 Reference: [ATMS Colleges & Courses](#)



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5. Compliance Warning: Protected Titles and Penalties

Only ASQA-registered RTOs may issue AQF qualifications such as Certificate IV, Diploma, or Advanced Diploma.

- Non-RTOs must never use these protected titles in advertising or on completion documents.
- Each unlawful qualification issued can attract penalties of up to \$37,560 for an individual or \$187,800 for a corporation under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (ss. 106–111).
- Penalties are applied per qualification issued.

The ATMS strenuously checks that all affiliated RTO and higher education providers are current with ASQA and TEQSA requirements. Non-RTO providers are rigorously assessed against the ATMS's Professional Capability Standards before being recognised.

 Reference:

[National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011](#)
[National Training Register](#)



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6. Case Examples

6.1 ASQA Enforcement

In 2022, ASQA cancelled the registration of several RTOs delivering health-related training after audits revealed systemic non-compliance, including unqualified trainers and inaccurate course documentation. Students were left unable to complete their qualifications, highlighting the importance of verifying provider registration before enrolling.

📖 Reference: [ASQA Decisions](#)

6.2 TEQSA Enforcement

TEQSA has imposed conditions on higher education providers where quality assurance processes failed, requiring them to strengthen governance and academic oversight. Such actions demonstrate that TEQSA actively intervenes when standards are at risk.

📖 Reference: [TEQSA Regulatory Decisions](#)



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7. Implications for ATMS Members

For the ATMS members, the educational framework has direct implications:

- Eligibility for membership: Only qualifications recognised by the ATMS are accepted.
- Health fund recognition: Most health funds require qualifications from ASQA or TEQSA providers, or ATMS-recognised Advanced Practitioner Programs.
- Advertising: Members must represent their qualifications accurately. Using protected AQF titles without holding a valid qualification is unlawful.
- Risk management: Enrolling in non-accredited programs without ATMS recognition can result in wasted time, financial loss, and ineligibility for membership.



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8. Member Checklist

Before enrolling in or advertising any qualification:

- ✓ Confirm the provider is an ASQA-registered RTO or TEQSA-approved higher education provider.
- ✓ If enrolling in a non-RTO program, check it is an ATMS-recognised Advanced Practitioner Program.
- ✓ Never use protected titles such as Diploma unless issued by an RTO.
- ✓ Display qualifications honestly in clinic materials and advertising.
- ✓ Maintain Continuing Professional Education (CPE) to keep membership valid.
- ✓ Contact ATMS Member Services if unsure.



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9. Conclusion

The educational framework for natural medicine in Australia combines national qualification standards, strict regulator oversight, and the ATMS's own professional capability checks. By following this framework, ATMS members can be confident that their qualifications are valid, their professional standing is secure, and the public's trust is maintained.

Our vision is a healthcare system where every qualified traditional medicine practitioner, whether self-regulated or registered, is respected, accountable, and empowered to deliver safe, high-quality care.” — Annie Gibbins, CEO, ATMS

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10. About ATMS

The Australian Traditional-Medicine Society (ATMS) is the leading professional association for natural medicine practitioners in Australia. Founded in 1984, the ATMS has been at the forefront of advocating for, supporting, and promoting high standards in natural healthcare for over 40 years. Our members include accredited practitioners, students, and industry professionals committed to delivering safe, effective, and evidence-informed natural medicine.

As a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation, the ATMS is dedicated to ensuring professionalism, ethical practice, and continued education within the natural medicine industry. We engage with government bodies, regulatory agencies, and industry partners to advance the recognition of natural medicine and advocate for policies that support our members and the wider community.

The ATMS exists to:

- Promote natural medicine as a vital part of Australia's healthcare system.
- Represent practitioners at all levels of government, industry, and regulation.
- Support members by providing education, professional development, and advocacy.
- Encourage the highest standards of professionalism and ethical practice.



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We believe in freedom of choice in healthcare and work to ensure that natural medicine remains accessible, recognised, and respected.

OUR VALUES

Integrity

- We build trust through responsible action.
- We embrace freedom of choice and respect diversity in healthcare.

Excellence

- We strive for the highest standards in practice, education, and research.
- We continuously adapt, learn, and grow to meet the evolving needs of our members.

Leadership

- We advocate, collaborate, and engage with government and industry stakeholders.
- We aspire to lead through innovation, research, and professional support.

Passion

- We believe in the power of natural medicine to improve lives.
- We honour traditional principles while embracing evidence-informed practice.

Member-Focused

- We prioritise the growth, success, and recognition of our members.
- Our members are at the heart of everything we do.



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References

- Australian Qualifications Framework: <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>
- ASQA: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/>
- ATMS Colleges & Courses: <https://www.atms.com.au/colleges-courses/>
- ATMS Continuing Professional Education Policy: <https://www.atms.com.au/education-training/atms-cpe-policy/>
- National Training Register: <https://training.gov.au/>
- TEQSA: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/>



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