AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Specialisation Training Program Educational Philosophy

Refreshed STP is grounded in adult-learning principles and is based on the understanding that expert competence develops through sustained reflexive practice, purposeful learning conversations with facilitators and peers, and participation in a community of practice. Learning is viewed as a progressive process in which registrars strengthen their competence, confidence, reflexive judgement and professional identity as emerging specialist physiotherapists.

AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

ACP Specialisation Training Program (STP)

Educational Philosophy for the Refreshed STP

The Australian College of Physiotherapists (ACP) Specialisation Training Program (STP) exists to develop physiotherapy specialists who can practise confidently in complex environments and contribute meaningfully to the profession and the broader health system.

A specialist physiotherapist is recognised as a master clinician who manages complex and/or critical presentations, provides expert clinical review and referral, demonstrates initiative within their practice area, contributes to mentoring, teaching or research, and is acknowledged by peers as a leading practitioner in the field. Specialist practice requires expert-level competence characterised by ethical decision-making, advanced clinical reasoning, evaluative judgement, professional accountability, and the ability to collaborate effectively in uncertain and evolving situations.

The STP supports registrars to develop expert-level competencies across all seven roles of the APA Physiotherapy Competence Framework. These capabilities are built progressively through experience in workplace practice, reflexive engagement with clinical situations, and judgement refined over time through exposure to increasing practice complexity.

The program is grounded in adult-learning principles and is based on the understanding that expert competence develops through sustained reflexive practice, purposeful learning conversations with facilitators and peers, and participation in a community of practice. Learning is viewed as a progressive process in which registrars strengthen their competence, confidence, reflexive judgement and professional identity as emerging specialist physiotherapists.

Educational Principles

Patient Safety, Consumer-Centred Care and Public Protection

Protection of the public and the delivery of safe, high-quality physiotherapy care underpin all aspects of the STP. Registrars are supported to develop advanced clinical judgement and professional accountability to manage complex presentations and clinical uncertainty. Care is consumer-centred and grounded in shared decision-making, with individual values and contexts informing clinical reasoning and care planning.

Alignment with the APA Physiotherapy Competence Framework

The STP is aligned with the APA Physiotherapy Competence Framework, with graduates expected to demonstrate expert-level (milestone 4) practice across all seven roles of the Framework. Learning outcomes, educational activities and assessment processes are intentionally structured to support progression from Milestone 3 to Milestone 4 and to ensure graduates meet the expectations of specialist physiotherapy practice.

Practice-Based Learning and Development of Expertise

The STP recognises registrars as experienced practitioners and adult learners. Learning is embedded in workplace settings and supported through facilitated activities, feedback and reflection. Over time, registrars reflexively engage with increasingly complex cases, consolidating expertise through deliberate practice and facilitated learning.

Assessment for Learning and Progression

Assessment plays a central role in supporting learning and informing progression within the STP. Whole of program assessment for learning underpins the STP. Multi-modal assessment, including direct observation of practice and structured feedback foster a growth mindset. Decisions about progression are guided by shared performance expectations and processes that promote fairness, consistency and transparency.

Learning Environments

The ACP facilitators purposefully support registrars through mentoring, observation, feedback and feedforward, building on expertise while maintaining patient safety. The STP promotes learning environments that are psychologically safe and encourage challenge, reflection and growth.

Evidence-Informed and Scholarly Practice

Specialist physiotherapy practice is underpinned by ongoing engagement with evidence. Registrars critically appraise and apply research to practice and contribute to practice evidence through reflexive inquiry and scholarly activity.

Leadership, Education and Systems Contribution

The STP prepares registrars to contribute beyond individual workplace encounters. Registrars demonstrate leadership, contribute to service development and support the education of peers, consumers and the broader workforce. They advocate for evidence-informed practice and mobilisation of resources to improve the health and well-being of their clients, communities, broader populations and systems of care.

Ethical Practice, Professionalism and Wellbeing

Ethical conduct and professionalism are foundational to specialist training. The STP promotes a supportive and respectful learning environment and recognises wellbeing as essential to safe and sustainable practice. Bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated.

Cultural Safety, Equity and Inclusion

The STP is committed to cultural safety and equity for registrars and the communities they serve. Respect and cultural safety are embedded across learning, teaching and assessment, with registrars supported to reflect on power, bias and the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Australia's First Nations population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are valued and inform the design, delivery and continuous improvement of specialist training.

Collaborative Practice

Specialist training emphasises effective collaboration within multidisciplinary teams. Registrars develop advanced communication skills and professional behaviours that support coordinated, person-centred care across settings.

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

The STP is supported by robust governance and quality assurance processes. Ongoing evaluation, benchmarking and stakeholder feedback, including registrar input, inform continuous improvement and ensure the program remains aligned with accreditation standards and contemporary specialist practice.

Version Control and Document Review

Version	Date	Brief explanation of revision
v1.0	10/12/2025	Initial draft by H Suri with revisions from L Remedios drawing upon: - educational philosophies of other medical and allied health colleges -contemporary educational literature - input from a brainstorming session with selected APA Education Team Members to ensure alignment with the salient features of the Refreshed STP
v2.0	Jan 2026	Revisions made by E Webber to improve alignment with the other medical colleges. Revised version opened for feedback from the ACER consultant and members of the STP Refresh Advisory Panel and working parties. Draft and feedback discussed at STP Refresh Advisory Panel meeting in March 2026.
v3.0	Apr 2026	Revisions made in response to all feedback and revised version circulated to the STP Refresh Advisory Panel for Endorsement. Approved by College Council, 30 April 2026.