

Dedication to Education:

AIA's curriculum guidelines and dedication to educational standards

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When it comes to Aromatherapy education and safety, any Aromatherapy organization would be remiss to not have any standards in place. When the AIA was newly formed there were many pieces to put into place; business plan, bylaws, budget, standard operating procedures, and the eventual creation of committees and education guidelines for Aromatherapy schools. Prior to the formation of the first Education Committee, the AIA board agreed to adopt the general outlines that had been in place for American Aromatherapy schools as established (in the 1990s) by the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy (NAHA). In addition, the AIA agreed to "grandfather" in any NAHA schools that desired to be recognized by the AIA. The adoption of these guidelines was to serve in the short-term until the AIA established our own guidelines. The "grandfathered" schools were also informed that when the new guidelines were established and adopted, they would need to reapply for recognition under the new guidelines. Many of these schools either didn't reapply or failed to meet the new guidelines.

In 2006, the AIA Education committee was formed. As an Aromatherapy organization on the move, it was a top priority for the committee to establish a comprehensive application and guidelines for evaluating Aromatherapy training. The committee consisted of Aromatherapy professionals that included Aromatherapists, a doctor, nurses, educators and a massage therapist. In addition, the members of the committee represented American and British schools of Aromatherapy. The committee began by examining how Aromatherapy was being used in a variety of settings and whether or not the guidelines were up-to-date with current use. In addition, as Aromatherapy was finding its way into more clinical settings there was concern that the existing training standards may not adequately prepare a practitioner to work in such settings. The Education Committee looked to other organizations outside the U.S. that employed Aromatherapists in clinical settings (U.K. and Australia) as it completed a review of their educational guidelines.

During this initial phase, the AIA received inquiries and complaints about various Aromatherapy schools. Given the nature of some of the complaints, including; lack of response from school proprietors and teachers, lack of current information, plagiarized texts, and poor quality materials, the Education Committee chose not to engage with all the Aromatherapy educators in writing the new guidelines.

The committee spent more than two years discussing and developing the curriculum guidelines. In this time, each level was evaluated. It was believed by the committee members that a solid foundation in Aromatherapy training required more than 30 hours of study. In addition, there needed to be a focus on specific areas of education. This then led to the format for which each level of the guidelines was developed and how schools are assessed.

The curriculum guidelines are divided into 15 categories: Applied Aromatherapy, Anatomy and Physiology, Botany, Business Skills, Carrier Oils, Chemistry, Common Pathologies of the Body, Consultation Skills and the Therapeutic Relationship, Ethics, Essential Oils (Safety), Holism,

Psychoneuroimmunology, Research, The Role of Olfaction on Human Psychology, and World History of Aromatics. Further, each category is divided into subheadings.

While the AIA requires a specific number of hours for each level of education; Foundation level (100 hrs), Professional level (200 hrs), and Advanced Practice level (400 hrs), each section within each level requires a **range** of hours and **specific** learner outcomes. So while the outline and the hours listed on the website seem somewhat generic, they are anything but. Each category has its specific requirements. So while an applying school can have more than 400 hours in their curriculum, it is possible they may only succeed in meeting the requirements for Level 1.

Success in gaining recognition doesn't end there. In order to sustain their listing, renewing schools must indicate revisions to their curriculum to show they are staying current with research and dispelling myths.

Applying Advanced Practitioner level members need to indicate a level of training that is on par with the guidelines for the Advanced Practitioner level schools. In addition, they are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education to maintain their APAIA membership. Professional members are also required to do continuing education and must submit 12 CPDs (Continuing Professional Development credits) with their membership renewal each year.

The expectations apply to not only the schools and members, but to the AIA to remain current with information and how Aromatherapy is being used. The AIA curriculum guidelines are continually under review and revised as necessary. The Review Team makes recommendations to the board based on trends found in reviewing applications for schools and Advanced Practitioner applications. It is for this reason that applying schools have one year to complete the application and submit before the application itself expires.

It is the mission of the AIA to foster high standards of safe, ethical and professional practice in the use of essential oils. AIA promotes essential oil research and has established guidelines that promote excellence in Aromatherapy education. These guidelines assure the competency of practitioners of advanced practice of Aromatherapy.