

Yoga Australia specialisation syllabus

Yoga Therapy

The training syllabus for the Yoga Australia Yoga Therapy specialisation, a 650 hour program of study to be undertaken above a 350 hour Teacher Training that meets the requirements of the Yoga Australia curriculum.

650h

SPECIALISATION
ABOVE 350 H BASE
1000 H COMBINED

BUILDS UPON

Becoming a Yoga Professional

The Yoga Australia curriculum

Yoga Therapy is the application
of yoga practices to meet
individual health and wellbeing
needs, within a structured
relational framework.

PREPARED BY

The Yoga Therapy Committee,
Yoga Australia
Draft, for consultation

BUILDS UPON

Yoga Australia Curriculum
Becoming a Yoga Professional
2026 edition

CORRESPONDENCE

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Syllabus

650 hours

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04	Biomedical and Psychological Foundations SYSTEMS, PSYCHOLOGY, TRAUMA-INFORMED WORK	HOURS 150	09
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Total training hours
Yoga Therapy specialisation

650

A 650 hour specialisation, building upon a 350 hour Yoga Teacher Training.

For those who intend to practise

This document outlines the training syllabus for the Yoga Australia Yoga Therapy specialisation, a 650 hour minimum program of study to be undertaken by individuals who have already completed a minimum 350 hour Yoga Teacher Training that meets the requirements of the Yoga Australia curriculum. The combined 1000 hour (plus) qualification sits at the highest level of the Yoga Australia registration framework, reflecting the depth and breadth of competency expected of a Yoga Therapist working within the profession.

A growing body of clinical research supports the use of yoga for managing several common health conditions affecting millions of Australians. The NHMRC Natural Therapies Review 2024 found moderate evidence supporting yoga for anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and lower back pain. These benefits arise through the application of the philosophical framework and tools of yoga. The heart of yoga is transformation. Transformative in its primacy, thus therapeutic as well. The training standards in this syllabus are designed to preserve that depth, ensuring that graduates work within a yogic framework rather than merely borrowing its techniques.

Yoga Therapy has the potential to contribute to the nation's wellbeing through a complementary and collaborative model of care that exists alongside medical and allied health services while maintaining its own distinct scope, philosophical foundations, and methods of practice. Training grounded in the tradition from which the work draws its authority is central to the integrity and credibility of the profession. It is distinguished from protocolised 'therapeutic yoga' models, used in some clinical settings, and instead emphasises individualised practice design grounded in yogic principles, lived experience, and scope-appropriate wellbeing support.

Yoga Therapy is the application of yoga practices to meet individual health and wellbeing needs, promoting capacity and resilience. All yoga supports wellbeing, offering opportunities for improving health, transformation, and growth. Yoga Therapy is distinguished by its intentional and individualised application of these practices within a structured, professional and traditional, therapeutic framework, delivered within a defined scope of practice and often alongside broader healthcare support.

Yoga Australia formally recognised Yoga Therapy as a specialist certification in 2016, and the recent reinstatement of Yoga Therapy within the private health fund rebate scheme reflects the growing confidence in the profession's standards and its contribution to Australia's healthcare landscape.

Best Practice in Yoga Therapy is informed by years of personal practice and a deep understanding of the yogic framework. Yoga Therapy in Australia has been shaped since the 1990s by teachers trained through the Desikachar, Iyengar, Satyananda, and other lineages, whose therapeutic skill arose from sustained engagement with the tradition long before certification frameworks existed. This syllabus honours both that history and the modern professional standards that now support it.

This syllabus addresses all twelve competency areas established in the parent curriculum and provides additional depth in the application of Yoga Therapy as a non-clinical, adaptive, and person-centred discipline. Each competency identifies its alignment with the relevant curriculum competency area, confirming that Yoga Therapy training sits within the broader architecture of yoga education under Yoga Australia. The hallmarks of a profession, including specialised knowledge, autonomy, authority, and altruism, remain a compass for Yoga Therapists in Australia, and the training outlined here is designed to ensure that graduates embody them.

Training Hours

650

TOTAL CONTACT HOURS
SEVEN SECTIONS

01	Yoga Foundations		50
02	Yoga and the Mind		50
03	Health and Disease		50
04	Biomedical Foundations		150
05	Therapy Tools and Skills		170
06	Practicum		150
07	Professional Practice		30

WITHIN THE YOGA AUSTRALIA REGISTRATION FRAMEWORK

**350 hour base plus 650 hour
specialisation.**

PROVISIONAL

200

Entry level

LEVEL 1

350

Teacher training
base

LEVEL 2

500

Registered teacher

LEVEL 3 · YOGA
THERAPY

1000

350h base
+ 650h
specialisation

Yoga Foundations

01

HOURS COMPETENCIES

50 3

i. Understand Foundational Yoga Teachings and Philosophy

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 3 · YOGA FOUNDATIONS

Applied yoga philosophy, psychology, and therapy insights drawn from classical sources, including Vedic and post-Vedic texts (Upaniṣads), Sāṃkhya philosophy, the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, the Bhagavad Gītā, Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, basics of Tantra, and the Āyurveda links to yoga.

CONCEPTS AND MODELS

- Subtle elements (*tanmātra-s*), gross elements (*bhūta-s*), sensory organs (*jñānendriya-s*), organs of action (*karmendriya-s*)
- Consciousness (*puruṣa*), matter and nature (*prakṛti*)
- Five dimensions (*pañcamaya kośa-s*)
- Three qualities (*guṇa-s*: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*)
- Suffering (*duḥkha*) and liberation (*mokṣa*)

ii. Apply the *vyūha* Framework for Practice Planning

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 1 · CLASS DESIGN

PRACTICE FRAMEWORK (VYŪHA)

- Symptoms (*heya*)
- Causes (*hetu*)
- Goals (*hanā*)
- Tools (*upāya*)

iii. Understand *saṃprāpti*

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 2 · HUMAN SYSTEMS

DISEASE PROGRESSION (SAMPRĀPTI)

- Onset (*ārambha*)
- Direction (*diśā*)
- Intensity (*tivratā*)
- Duration (*kāla*)

Yoga and the Mind

02

HOURS COMPETENCIES

50 2

i. Understand the Structure and States of the Mind

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 3 · YOGA FOUNDATIONS

- Seer (*draṣṭa*), seen (*drśya*)
- The inner instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa*): intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṃkāra*), mind (*manas*), memory (*citta*)
- Activities of the mind (*citta vṛtti*), structural changes (*citta pariṇāma*), distraction and focus (*vyutthāna* and *nirodha*)
- States of mind, dull (*mudhā*), disturbed (*kṣipta*), alternating (*vikṣipta*), one-pointed (*ekāgratā*), focused (*nirodha*)
- Consciousness states, waking (*vaiśvānara*), dream (*taḥjasa*), deep sleep (*prajñā*), pure consciousness (*turīya*)
- Practice and equanimity (*abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*)
- Discernment (*viveka*)

ii. Recognise Conditions of Mental Disturbance

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 3 · YOGA FOUNDATIONS

- Afflictions (*kleśa-s*)
- Greed (*lobha*), anger (*krodha*), attachment (*moha*)
- Suffering (*duḥkha*), negative attitude (*daurmanasya*)
- Identification with mind (*sārūpyam*)
- Obstacles (*antārāya*)

Health and Disease, the Yogic Perspective

03

HOURS COMPETENCIES

50 2

i. Integrate Yoga and Āyurveda Health Concepts

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 2 · HUMAN SYSTEMS AND COMPETENCY 3 · YOGA FOUNDATIONS

BASIC PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND DISEASE

- Subtle anatomy, five sheaths (*pañcamaya kośa-s*): physical (*annamaya*), energy (*prāṇamaya*), mind (*manomaya*), intellect (*vijñānamaya*), bliss (*ānandamaya*)
- Subtle energy channels (*nāḍī-s*): left (*idā*), right (*piṅgalā*), central (*suṣumnā*)
- Energy centres (*cakra-s*): mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddha, ājñā, sahasrāra
- Life-force energies (*prāṇa-vāyu-s*): prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna, samāna
- Disturbance of life-force energy (*prāṇa prakopa*)
- Three bio-energetic forces (*tri-doṣa*): vāta, pitta, kapha
- Three qualities (*tri-guṇa*): sattva, rajas, tamas
- Constitution and imbalance (*prakṛti / vikṛti*)
- Undigested food and emotions (*amā*), internal fires (*agni*)
- Sun (*sūrya*), moon (*candra*)
- Expansion (*bhṛmhaṇa*), contraction (*laṅghana*)

ii. In-Depth Knowledge of Categorising Illness

- Pathogenesis (*samprāpti*), direction, intensity, onset, duration, and their influence on healing and disease management
- Setting priorities, short-term pacification (*śamana*) and long-term purification and strengthening (*śodhana*)

Biomedical and Psychological Foundations

04

HOURS COMPETENCIES RUNS ACROSS
150 7 pages 09 · 10

i. Explain Human Systems

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 2 · HUMAN SYSTEMS

- Major body systems and interrelations relevant to Yoga Therapy: musculoskeletal, respiratory, nervous, endocrine, reproductive, cardiovascular, lymphatic, digestive, and sensory; mechanisms, homeostasis, histology, physiology, and applied aspects
- Integrate traditional yogic physiology (*prāṇa*, *nāḍī-s*, *kośa-s*, *doṣa-s*) with modern biomedical understanding, for a comprehensive, evidence-informed framework
- Biomechanics and movement, applied biomechanics, joint kinematics, muscle function, postural stability, breath-movement integration, injury prevention; assessment and alignment analysis and body reading within *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, and therapeutic sequencing; adaptations for musculoskeletal issues, mobility limitations, and chronic pain
- Common pathologies and illness aetiologies and prognoses relevant to Yoga Therapy

ii. Apply Additional Biomedical Knowledge

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 2 AND 4 · HUMAN SYSTEMS, BUSINESS AND LEGAL

- Drugs and surgery basics
- Medical terminology
- Researching current health information relevant to Yoga Therapy

iii. Understand Psychology and Mental Health

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 2 · HUMAN SYSTEMS

- Common conditions, from distress to psychiatric disorders, their symptoms, and common approaches and interventions relevant to Yoga Therapy
- Psychological concepts: mood, cognition, behaviour, personality, and their importance to health and wellbeing
- Overview of key psychological models, cognitive-behavioural, humanistic, psychodynamic, positive psychology
- Mapping yoga concepts to modern psychology: mindfulness, self-regulation, stress response, emotional resilience

cont.

Counselling, the Body–Mind, and Trauma–Informed Work

iv. Yogic Counselling Frameworks

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION

- Introduction to yogic counselling principles, self-awareness, contemplative self-inquiry (*ātma vicāra*), mindfulness, and equanimity (*vairāgya*)
- Techniques for supporting clients in identifying habitual patterns, emotional triggers, and behavioural responses (*svādhyāya*)
- Integrating *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, meditation, *bandhas*, and *mudrās* as tools for emotional regulation
- Use of reflective questioning and dialogue based on yogic philosophy (*kośa* mapping, *guṇas*, and *prāṇic* flow)

v. Body–Mind Integration

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 6 · TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES, AND COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION

- Interaction of body, breath, mind, intellect, and emotions; practical techniques for cultivating awareness, reducing reactivity, and building resilience
- Breath-based and somatic interventions for emotional release (for example *prāṇāyāma* for calming the nervous system)
- Safe strategies for managing emotional and physiological events within an individual or class context

vi. Trauma–Informed Yoga Approaches

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION AND COMPETENCY 10 · SCOPE OF PRACTICE

- Understanding trauma, fight, flight, freeze, and fawn responses
- Recognising signs of trauma in students and clients
- Adapting practices to avoid triggering, choice, consent, grounding, pacing, and non-judgemental observation
- Tools for supporting post-traumatic regulation, mindful breathing, gentle movement, resourcing, and safe space creation

Yoga Therapy Tools and Skills

05

HOURS COMPETENCIES

170 3

i. Apply Yoga Tools Therapeutically

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 6 · TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES

THE RANGE OF PRACTICES AND THEIR POTENTIAL THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS

- *yama* and *niyama*
- *āsana*
- *prāṇāyāma*
- Meditation: sense-withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), absorption (*dhyāna*), union (*samādhi*)
- Locks and bonds (*bandha*)
- Recitation (*mantra*)
- Visualisation (*bhāvanā*)
- Ritualistic placement of energy (*nyāsa*)
- Symbolic gesture or seal (*mudrā*)
- Yogic lifestyle and diet (*vihāra*)
- Cleansing kriyas (*śatkarma*), theory and safe, supervised practice modules
- Contraindications and precautions to the use of these tools

ii. Maintain the Therapeutic Alliance

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 5 · TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION

- In-depth knowledge of, and observed capacity for, well-developed communication skills, listening, presence, directive and non-directive dialogue
- Demonstrated ability to recognise, adjust, and adapt to specific client needs in the evolving therapeutic relationship; objective assessment with measurable parameters and tools
- Demonstrated ability to recognise and manage the subtle dynamics inherent in the therapist and client relationship
- In-depth knowledge of the scope of practice of Yoga Therapy and how to assess the need for referral

iii. Educate Clients and Groups

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 5 · TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION

- Implement effective teaching methods, adapt to unique learning styles, provide supportive and effective feedback, acknowledge progress, and cope with unique difficulties and successes
- Transmit the value of self-awareness and self-responsibility throughout the therapeutic process
- Develop and adjust appropriate practice strategies to the individual student
- Translate practicum preparation (clinical observation, role play, case study) into effective practicum delivery
- Design, implement, and evaluate group programs
- Familiarity with group dynamics, communication skills, time management, priorities and boundaries, and techniques to address individual needs within a group

Practicum

06

HOURS COMPETENCIES

150

3

i. Provide Intake and Assessment

COURSE PROVIDER TO MENTOR OR SUPERVISE, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SYLLABUS. ALIGNS WITH COMPETENCY 1 · CLASS DESIGN AND COMPETENCY 5 · TEACHING METHODOLOGY

- Conduct intake and assess the client, including history, and assessment using tools relevant to the Yoga Therapist across physical, energetic, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions
- Identify client goals, expectations, and aspirations
- Integrate intake, evaluation, and observation to develop a working assessment of the client's condition, limitations, and potential
- Determine which aspects of the client's conditions and goals might be addressed
- Triage priorities and set both short- and long-term goals with the client
- Apply knowledge of pacification (*śamana*), purification (*śodhana*), and expansion (*bīṛmhaṇa*) strategies
- Apply knowledge of strategies that address common disorders and pathologies of the major human systems and common mental health conditions
- Choose and prioritise the use of yoga tools and techniques, including selecting, sequencing, adapting, and modifying practices appropriate to individual or group settings

ii. Deliver and Adapt Sessions

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 5 · TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND COMPETENCY 6 · TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES

- Teach or deliver appropriate practices for individuals and groups, taking into consideration the assessment of their conditions, limitations, and possibilities
- Facilitate the client's experience of the practice, including instruction, demonstration, and education using multimodal strategies (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic), with supportive strategies for active participation and continued practice between sessions

iii. Maintain the Therapeutic Relationship, and Review

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION AND COMPETENCY 8 · REVIEW PERFORMANCE

- Initiate and develop the therapeutic alliance by fostering trust, establishing an appropriate therapeutic environment through privacy, confidentiality, and safety
- Demonstrate effective, client-centred communication based upon respect for individual, familial, cultural, social, ethnic, and religious factors
- Provide follow-up, including gathering client feedback, re-assessing and refining practice, addressing new and changing conditions, goals, and aspirations
- Provide appropriate support at the completion of the therapeutic engagement

Professional Practice

07

HOURS COMPETENCIES

30 3

i. Understand Ethics and Legal Responsibilities

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 9 · ETHICS AND COMPETENCY 4 · BUSINESS AND LEGAL

Yoga ethics, health codes, scope of practice, law, regulation, record-keeping, planning, and financial basics.

- Yoga practices and methods for self-inquiry related to establishing, practising, and maintaining ethical principles
- Generally accepted ethical principles of healthcare codes of conduct alongside yoga's ethical principles
- Apply ethical principles and related concepts from the yoga tradition to professional interactions and relationships
- Scope of practice of Yoga Therapy, and the demonstrated ability to discern the need for referral to other modalities
- The extent of one's own individual training, skills, and evolving experience, and the importance of practising within such parameters
- Current relevant local, state, and national laws and regulations impacting Yoga Therapy; state and federal codes of conduct for non-registered health practitioners
- Business practices relevant to Yoga Therapy, including record-keeping, planning, and financial management

ii. Develop Professional Relationships

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 12 · CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROFESSION AND COMPETENCY 7 · COMMUNICATION

Referral networks, and collaboration with clinicians, peers, and supervisors.

- Other healthcare fields and their potential role in and relevance to Yoga Therapy
- How to develop and maintain ongoing collaborative relationships
- Principles of appropriate communication and referral pathways with allied and medical health practitioners, and organisations, within scope-appropriate yoga therapy practice

iii. Commit to Ongoing Growth

ALIGNS WITH CURRICULUM COMPETENCY 8 · REVIEW PERFORMANCE AND COMPETENCY 11 · PERSONAL PRACTICE

Ongoing practice, supervision, CPD planning, and mentorship.

- The fundamental value of ongoing personal practice, long-term mentorship, and skills maintenance and development through continuing education
- When and how to seek advice and support for case consultation, educational advancement, and personal practice

Specialised Knowledge, Autonomy, Authority, and Altruism.

These remain the compass for Yoga Therapists in Australia, and the training outlined here is designed to ensure that graduates embody them.

This draft is circulated for consultation among members, training providers, and the broader Yoga Therapy community. Feedback is welcomed through the Yoga Australia office before the final version is issued.