

Position Paper on the use of titles and qualifications by members of ACAud

Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) members must adhere to the definitions of “audiologist” and “audiometrist” in the Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists when describing their profession/qualifications.

To describe their profession/qualifications as an “audiologist” an ACAud member must:

1. Hold a minimum of a Masters of Audiology from an Australian University (or other degree recognised as equivalent by ACAud). For people educated overseas, an Application Examination must also be passed. **AND**
2. Have completed the ACAud internship program (or other program/work experience recognised as equivalent by ACAud¹) in accordance with the ACAud requirements for audiologists. **AND**
3. Be a current Full/Ordinary Audiologist Member of ACAud who has been awarded the Hearing Rehabilitation Specialist (HRS) and Diagnostic Rehabilitation Specialist (DRS) competencies.

To describe their profession/qualifications as an “audiometrist”, an ACAud member must:

1. Hold a minimum of a Diploma of Audiometry from an Australian TAFE (or other qualification recognised as equivalent by ACAud). For people educated overseas, an Application Examination must also be passed. **AND**
2. Have completed the ACAud internship program (or other program/work experience recognised as equivalent by ACAud¹) in accordance with the ACAud requirements for audiometrists. **AND**
3. Be a current Full/Ordinary Member of ACAud who has been awarded the Hearing Rehabilitation Specialist (HRS) competencies.

ACAud members who are entitled to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr” must specify in their post-nominals (after their name) the degree and area of study that allows them to use this title to avoid confusion with qualified medical practitioners and other health practitioners entitled to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr”.

For example:

- Dr Jane Doe, Au.D., MACAud, audiologist
 - Professional Doctorate in Audiology who is a Full Audiologist Member of ACAud
- Dr John Doe, Ph.D. (Biology), MACAud, audiometrist
 - Doctor of Philosophy, majoring in Biology who is a Full Audiometrist Member of ACAud
- Dr Jane Doe, D.IT., MACAud, audiologist
 - Professional Doctorate in Information Technology who is a Full Audiologist Member of ACAud

¹ For example, applicants for ACAud Full/Ordinary membership who hold current clinical certification with another professional body that ACAud determines is equivalent may not need to complete the ACAud internship program.

Rationale

Standard 4 in the Code of Conduct of the ACAud requires that **members must not misinform their clients as to their scope of practice, qualifications and competencies**. In particular:

5.1 *Members must not engage in any form of misinformation or misrepresentation in relation to the:*

- a. *Hearing services or devices they provide.*
- b. *Qualifications, industry experience, training or professional affiliations they have.*

5.2 *Without limiting subclause 5.1:*

- a. *Members must not use their possession of a particular qualification to mislead or deceive clients as to their competence in a field of practice or ability to provide services.*
- b. *Members must provide truthful information as to their qualifications, industry experience, training and professional affiliations.*

Similarly, if ACAud members misinform their clients as to their qualifications, training or professional affiliations they may also be in breach of the National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers, which applies to health professionals including audiologists and audiometrists. Section 9 provides that health care workers are not to misinform their clients. Sections 9(1) and (2) state:

1. *A health care worker must not engage in any form of misinformation or misrepresentation in relation to the products or services he or she provides or the qualifications, training or professional affiliations he or she holds.*
2. *Without limiting subclause (1):*
 - a. *a health care worker must not use his or her possession of a particular qualification to mislead or deceive clients or the public as to his or her competence in a field of practice or ability to provide treatment*
 - b. *a health care worker must provide truthful information as to his or her qualifications, training or professional affiliations.*

Avoiding misinformation and a breach of the Code of Conduct when using the terms “audiologist” and “audiometrist”

The Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists of the ACAud defines “audiologists” and “audiometrists” in terms of the qualifications and Australian professional body requirements that must be met.

ACAud acknowledges that in countries other than Australia, the terms “audiologist” and “audiometrist” may be used to describe people with higher education degrees or professional body affiliations that differ to the Australian ones. However, when practicing in Australia, members of ACAud must use the terms as defined in the Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists in order to avoid misinforming and misrepresenting their qualifications, training and professional affiliations. This will ensure that funding bodies, clients and other members of the public are not confused or misled as to an individual’s scope of practice, qualifications and competencies.

Avoiding misinformation and a breach of the Code of Conduct when using the title “Dr”

In written materials (such as correspondence or in promotional materials), members of ACAud must specify in their post-nominals (after their name) the qualification(s) that allow them to use the title “Dr” in order to avoid confusion with medical practitioners or other health practitioners entitled to use the title of “Dr”.

In speech, it is equally important not to intentionally or unintentionally mislead clients, funding bodies and members of the public by ambiguous use of the term “Dr”. The clinical settings that many audiologists and audiometrists work in may lead clients and other members of the public to believe that someone who introduces themselves as “Dr Doe” is a medical practitioner or other health practitioner entitled to use the title of “Dr”.

ACAud members should therefore strive to describe their qualifications in plain English, for example by saying “I am Dr Doe, I am an audiologist with a Ph.D. in childhood development”.

References

Audiology Australia and Australian College of Audiology, 2021. *Code of conduct for audiologists and audiometrists*. <https://auderc.org.au/code-of-conduct/>

Audiology Australia, Australian College of Audiology and Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia, 2016. *Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists*. <https://www.acaud.com.au/about-us/scope-of-practice>

Council of Australian Governments, 2015 *National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers* (2015). <https://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/NationalCodeOfConductForHealthCareWorkers>

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