

Position Paper on the use of titles and qualifications by members of Audiology Australia

Audiology Australia (AudA) members must adhere to the definition of “audiologist” in the Scope of Practice for audiologists when describing their profession/qualifications.

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

1. Hold a minimum of a Masters of Audiology from an Australian University (or other degree recognised as equivalent by AudA). For people educated overseas, an Application Examination must also be passed. **AND**
2. Have completed the AudA internship program in accordance with the AudA requirements for audiologists. **AND**
3. Be a current Full Member of AudA who has been awarded the certification of “Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist”.

AudA 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., Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist, audiologist
 - An audiologist who has a Professional Doctorate in Audiology and who is an Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist
- Dr John Doe, Ph.D. (Biology), Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist, audiologist
 - An audiologist who has a Doctor of Philosophy, majoring in Biology who is an Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist
- Dr Jane Doe, D.IT., Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist, audiologist
 - An audiologist who has a Professional Doctorate in Information Technology and who is an Audiology Australia Accredited Audiologist.

Rationale

Standard 5 in the Code of Conduct of AudA 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 AudA 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”

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

AudA acknowledges that in countries other than Australia, the term “audiologist” may be used to describe people with higher education degrees or professional body affiliations that differ to how they used in Australia. However, when practicing in Australia, members of AudA must use the term as defined in the Scope of Practice for audiologists 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 AudA 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 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”.

AudA 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://audiology.asn.au/Tenant/C0000013/Position%20Papers/Other%20documents/Scope%20of%20Practice%20All-in-one%2020170119.pdf>

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