

The competence profile of an IATF educated aquatic allied health professional

Draft by Johan Lambeck

First version: March 22, 2012

Revision: April 19, 2025

The main lines of the competence profile

A competence profile describes all of the competences an aquatic allied health professional (AAHP) has to be able to carry out during the tasks and activities of her profession. This competence profile forms a basis for the description of the function with tasks and responsibilities in an (aquatic allied health) organization

The term competence refers to the capacity of performing certain tasks and of solving the questions or problems occurring in a process. The term forms a bridge between the tasks and activities on the one hand and the necessary expertise on the other hand.

The range of the profile

The competence profile of the AAHP describes the whole of competences the AAHP possesses to perform the tasks and activities connected to practicing the profession. The competence profile is based on the greatest common divider of tasks of AAHP's regardless of the country, specific circumstances and work settings. In reality, these circumstances and work settings have great influence on the AAHP's work. Furthermore, every AAHP will have acquired competences at a higher level and in other fields by experience and further training to what is described in the profile. The profile can therefore mainly be regarded as a common basis and as such does not cover the great variety of the competences of every AAHP in her specific work setting.

Per competence domain, the competences and all directly related aspects are described first. Subsequently, the level of the AAHP's competences at the end of her initial training/start of the profession is described per domain.

Professional roles

The competences have been organized on the basis of the three roles that the AAHP fulfils and combines in her work: *care provider, manager and developer of the profession*. The role of care provider relates to the primary process or patient treatment. The roles of manager and developer of the profession are at the service of this primary process. These are not separate roles: they are complimentary and in daily practice, they sometimes overlap in such a way that the most that can be said is that the roles and competences can be distinguished. At individual level, the extent to which each of the roles is fulfilled and the accompanying competences are addressed differs per work situation. In each role, a distinction was made in the competences, which have the character of orientation, assessing, deciding and planning and in competences whereby executing, realizing and evaluating are in the foreground. The combination of roles and categories of competences provides the following competence domains:

The AAHP as a care provider:

- screening, diagnosing, planning
- therapeutic intervention

- preventive intervention

The AAHP as a manager:

- organizing
- enterprising

The AAHP as a developer of the profession:

- research
- innovation

Professionalism

Professionalism in the AAHP's intervention is not only embedded in what she does, but also in how she does this. A professional performance is characterized by, among other things, the efficiency of the intervention, the time span within which the tasks can be fulfilled, the constant search for attuning with the patient and reliability in meeting agreements and promises.

For the sake of the clarity of the profile, the characteristic aspects of professional intervention are not pointed out every time for each competence. They are solely mentioned if extra attention is required.

Care provider

In the role of care provider, the AAHP offers professional help in the form of treatment and guidance. She also provides services in the form of advice, information, education, training and coaching. Prior to this, she gives a professional assessment of the situation in a broader sense and discusses and considers the (im) possibilities for aquatic health care with the patient (and any other people directly involved). What is characteristic for this care provision is:

- methodological work methods
- acting in correspondence with Evidence Based Clinical Practice
- focusing on increasing or preserving the patient's independence

Manager

The role of manager relates to the organization of her activities, whereby the aquatic physical therapist contributes to the functioning of the organization internally and in relation to the environment. The gauging points in that are:

- effectiveness and efficiency of the organization and work processes
- continuity of care and the coordination with third parties, such as colleagues and other care providers
- attuning of supply and demand
- positioning of the organization
- responsible enterprising in relation to high-quality care and service provision

Developer of the profession

The role of developer of the profession concerns the responsibility with regard to the preservation and/or improvement and guarantee of the quality of one's provision of care and service and making contributions to the further development of the profession. Characteristic details for this include:

- relating practice to study and relating study to practice
- systematic monitoring/registration of one's work and transparency
- focusing on guaranteeing and improving quality
- development and dissemination of new insights by means of research, education and information

Competences

Competences are specific to content and context to an important extent. Whether a person is competent in a specific situation depends on the degree to which she has the expertise and experience relevant to solving problems in the context in which these problems occur. That is why the description contains an explanation of typical and critical professional situations and results in addition to a brief, compact formulation of the competences. These professional situations are mainly intended as an illustration; the whole of problems and contexts is so varied that giving a description that does justice to all situations that occur in practice is not feasible.

The AAHP as a care provider: screening, diagnosing, planning

Competences

- The AAHP outlines the (threatening) health problems based on the request for help in a methodical way and relates these to movement and moving participation. Depending on the results of the first screening and the findings from the (physio)therapeutic evaluation, the AAHP makes decisions in consultation with the patient with regard to the treatment to be started, advice or referral.

Explanation

- Screening, diagnosing and planning comprise an orientation on the request for help, a therapeutic exploration and assessment of (threatening) health problems in relation to movement, determining the diagnosis (at ICF level) and formulating a treatment or prevention plan in consultation with the patient and in a methodical way (effective, systematic, according to a process and conscious). Where necessary, the AAHP asks or uses additional information from other professionals involved in the provision of care.
- Directives are: the request for help, possibilities for AAHP help, expectations and experiences regarding the results (evidence-based) and existing guidelines for the approach to be followed.

Specifically:

The AAHP is able to:

- screen for aquatic red flags
- assess the level of water confidence / mental adjustment, using ICF-WST or the WOTA assessment
- assess water-specific skills, using ICF-WST or the WOTA assessment
- include the weight-bearing status

The AAHP as a care provider: therapeutic interventions

Competences

- The AAHP executes the treatment plan methodically and in cooperation with the patient. She evaluates the effects of the interventions on the patient's movement and state of health periodically, and adjusts the plan, if necessary, in order to realize optimal results.

Explanation

- Therapeutic intervention comprises the execution of aquatic interventions, guidance/support of the patient, (interim) evaluation, informing the patient and reporting (to third parties), in close cooperation with the patient and in a methodical way (effective, systematic, in accordance with a process and conscious).
- Aquatic intervention is often aimed at an individual, but can also take place in groups. The cooperation with the patient intends to guide, coach and activate him with regard to the health problem.
- The AAHP constantly attunes and regularly checks how the patient experiences the problem and treatment and adjusts her interventions accordingly on that basis.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of the treatment plan are assessed in an evaluative way: have the objectives and quality been realized optimally, compared to an acceptable motivation, (material and immaterial) costs and period of time? Optimal results can vary from the full recovery of health problems up to and including adjustment to and adequate dealing with a permanent loss in function(s), to acceptance and satisfaction of the patient. The approach chosen is attuned to the therapeutic objectives.

Specifically:

The AAHP is able to properly use/choose:

- the ICF (incl the children and youth version) related goals
- relevant aspects of the neuro/exercise-physiology of aquatic therapy
- Relevant guidelines, recommendations, classifications, position statements
- Evidence Based Clinical Practice
- Dynamic Systems Model and other relevant motor control approaches
- Information from aquatic research, specifically for the methods being taught
- Clinical reasoning with goal setting and problem solving

- modes of entry and exit (manual, hoists)
- water depth in relation to treatment objectives
- specific aquatic therapy techniques
 - o Water Specific Therapy
 - o The Halliwick Ten Point Programme
 - o The Bad Ragaz Ring Method
 - o (Clinical) Ai Chi
 - o (Clinical) QiShui
 - o Aqua-Fit
 - o Applications in various diagnostic patient groups
 - o Applications in topics like fall prevention, sensory modulation, motor-cognitive gamification, training of muscle power, agility etc
- buoyancy aids and other AT equipment (obstacle course)
- patient monitoring techniques
- effective and safe handling skills
- fluidmechanical constraints for the treatment objectives

The AAHP as a manager: organizing the facility

** This area of competence is not included in IATF educational courses. For the same of completeness it has been added to this document.

Competences

- The AAHP contributes to the development and execution of choices at operational level with regard to the supply and demand of aquatic care and service aimed at improving the quality of the supply and the position of her organization.

Specifically:

The AAHP should (be able to):

- apply the safety and hygiene regulations of (therapeutic) pools
- be knowledgeable of CPR and first aid
- use proper evacuation drills
- take care of their own health
- use proper ergonomics inside and outside the water
- test water quality according to regulations
- know the chemical and microbiological water parameters
- apply cleaning and maintenance procedures
- apply acceptable standards of safety for clients, staff and the working environment
- apply a proper environmental control (humidity, light, noise)
- take care of safety equipment and it's storage

- plan the use of the pool according to economic and safety standards
- be knowledgeable with national legal and ethical legislations, guidelines, policies, procedures and protocols

The AAHP as a developer of the profession: research

Competences

- The AAHP systematically registers patient and treatment information regarding quality care and research. She participates in scientific research for the further development of professional practice and its scientific foundation.

Explanation

- Research comprises a multitude of activities, including the registration of patient and treatment information, translating practical experiences and problems to research questions, study of literature and sources, setting up a research plan, gathering, analyzing and interpreting relevant research data, the presentation and publication of results.
- The systematic registration and traditions regarding quality care and any research purposes takes place in the contexts of legislation and regulations with regard to privacy, registration and norms of what is methodically and ethically sound. Based on practical experiences and insights into the foundations of scientific research, the aquatic physical therapist can participate in research and contributes to any phase of that in a critical-constructive way. She makes the professional group's 'body of knowledge' clearly explicit, independently of interests and parties. She is able to report on the question, method and finding both verbally and in writing. He is also able to debate the contents of this with colleagues and representatives from other disciplines.

Specifically:

The AAHP should (be able to)

- use – aquatic - clinimetrics properly
- find and interpret aquatic therapy related literature
- network with colleagues about aquatic therapy research
- find aquatic therapy related websites

The AAHP as a developer of the profession: innovation

Competences

- The AAHP contributes to the development with regard to contents, profiling and social legitimization of the profession by means of the implementation of quality improvements and guaranteeing innovation processes.

Explanation

- Professional innovation takes place at three levels:
 - one's personal professional action

- work methods and professional acting in the organization
- aquatic care in the professional group as a whole
- The aquatic physical therapist determines via systematic registration, evaluation, critical self-reflection and internal viewing to what extent her professional action meets the applicable standards of professional practice. She uses actual scientific insights and guidelines for practice and takes national and international developments into account. For this purpose, she keeps informed of reformations in the theory and practice of the profession and translates new insights to and implements them in her professional action as an AAHP. She focuses on the improvement and quality in her organization together with her colleagues. She initiates and participates in meetings regarding professional content on work methods, quality of the care/service and innovative activities. She also supervises and coaches student aquatic therapists in their professional development. Additionally, the AAHP contributes to the further development and profiling of her discipline, among other things, via participating in projects, (inter)national professional associations and knowledge networks, study groups/committees in her profession and in a multi-professional context.

Specifically

The AAHP should

- Share knowledge and skills within IATF
- Represent and promote IATF