



## **Appendix C: Definitions of Terms**

COMMISSION ON MASSAGE THERAPY ACCREDITATION  
(COMTA)

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The combination of massage/esthetics education and bodywork vocabulary and accreditation vocabulary results in many instances of special usage for otherwise common terms. Definitions have been developed by COMTA after studying terms used by other accrediting bodies and the United States Department of Education. The purpose of this glossary is to provide commonly accepted definitions and to meet the needs of those affected by COMTA.

**Ability to Benefit:** Demonstration, by means of a U.S. Department of Education approved test, of the potential and capacity of the student for successful completion of the training by the institution/program. Ability to benefit, as used in COMTA standards, is intended to relate to the rules of federal financial aid.

**Accreditation:** A peer review process for recognizing educational institutions and specialized, professional institutions/programs of study that meet or exceed established educational standards. The process includes five components: 1) statement of institution/program objectives; 2) attendance at an accreditation training workshop; 3) self-study focusing on activities and accomplishments related to the institution/program's objectives; 4) an onsite visit; and 5) a determination by an independent commission that the institution or program does or does not meet the accreditation standards.

**Accreditation Actions:** Categories used by the Commission when assigning status to an applicant institution/program. The assignments are based on the extent to which an institution/program complies with the accreditation standards. *See Accreditation (as an Action); Accreditation, Continuance; Accreditation, Deferral; Accreditation, Denial; Accreditation, Probation; Accreditation, Show Cause Why Accreditation Should not be Revoked; and Accreditation, Revocation.*

**Accreditation, Adverse Actions:** Refers to the actions of Denial of Accreditation and Revocation of Accreditation. An appeal may be made by an institution/program after it has been denied accreditation or accreditation has been revoked.

**Accreditation (as an Action):** Confirmation that an institution/program meets or exceeds the accreditation standards.

**Accreditation, Continuance:** Confirmation upon re-evaluation that an accredited institution/program continues to meet or exceed the accreditation standards.

**Accreditation, Deferral:** An action taken by the Commission when an applicant institution/program is not in compliance with all of the accreditation standards, policies or procedures yet the Commission deems the institution/program to be able to meet them within a reasonable period of time without re-applying. The Commission may or may not require an additional on-site visit prior to reconsidering the institution/program for accreditation.

**Accreditation, Denial:** An action taken by the Commission when an applicant institution/program is not in compliance with the accreditation standards, policies or procedures and the Commission deems the institution/program to be unable to meet them without a substantial change in its institution/program or activities relating to its institution/program.

**Accreditation, Nationally Recognized Agency:** Although there are various designations of accrediting agencies, there is just one recognition authority nationally, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). USDE recognizes regional, state, public and private institutional accrediting agencies. The recognition criteria are the same for all agencies who are recognized by the Department of Education. Since 1992, the USDE has recognized only those accrediting agencies that intend to be gatekeepers for Federal Financial Aid or Title IV funding, or are granted a waiver from some of the recognition criteria due to their existence prior to the change in regulation enacted in 1992. Many of the agencies that have a waiver are programmatic agencies. These include regional accrediting agencies, which accredit degree granting institutions within a geographic area, career college accrediting agencies such as ACCET, ACCSC, ACICS and ABHES, and professional accrediting agencies related to Chiropractic Colleges, Acupuncture Schools and others. The professional accrediting agencies offer the programmatic review of curriculum and learning strategies as well as the institutional reviews of the other accrediting agencies. There are also programmatic agencies that are gatekeepers for Federal funds other than Title IV, such as Veteran's Benefits and those benefits are linked to Department of Education recognition for their accrediting agency.

**Accreditation, Probation:** An action taken by the Commission when an accredited institution/program is no longer in compliance with the accreditation standards or policies, and the deficiency is serious enough to jeopardize that institution/program's ability to provide quality education. This is a disciplinary action that may result in revocation. An institution/program may also be placed on probation for failure to meet any reporting deadlines or financial obligations or refusal of an institution/program to respond to or cooperate with the Commission's request for a special visit or report. Following a decision to place an institution/program on probation, the Commission will notify the school specifying the reason for the probation and the conditions and timeframes that need to be met for the school's probation to be removed. During the probationary period, the institution/program is required to change its operation to comply with accreditation standards and policies. The Commission will require a written report addressing the concerns raised in the notification of probation and may require an additional on-site visit. While the institution/program is still recognized and listed as accredited, COMTA shall notify, as appropriate, the U.S. Department of Education, state, provincial, or national regulatory authorities, and other accreditation agencies of the institution/program's status. COMTA shall also inform any member of the public, who requests such information, of an institution/program's probation status. The period of probation shall be determined by the Commission, but shall not exceed either, twelve (12) months if the institution/program is less than one (1) year in length, or eighteen (18) months, if the institution/program is one (1) year or more in length. Failure to comply with accreditation standards or policies within the probationary period shall lead to revocation of accreditation.

**Accreditation, Show Cause Why Accreditation Should not be Revoked:** Show Cause is an action taken by the Commission when the accreditation of an institution is subject to revocation. The institution will be provided in writing the alleged deficiencies and the institution is requested to "show cause" why its accreditation should not be revoked. When COMTA learns of an adverse action taken by another accrediting or regulatory agency against a COMTA accredited institution, a Show Cause action will automatically be issued to the institution by the COMTA Executive Director. A Show Cause action is not an adverse action. Rather, it is issued to an institution so the institution may come forward and provide written evidence that revocation action should not be taken. The material provided by the institution is reviewed by the Commission, which then renders a decision regarding revocation.

**Accreditation, Revocation:** An action taken by the Commission when an accredited institution/program is seriously deficient in its compliance with the accreditation standards, policies or procedures. An institution/program must surrender their accreditation certificate when accreditation is revoked.

## **Accreditation, Types of:**

**Institutional Accreditation:** The primary characteristic of institutional accreditation is an accreditation reflecting the entire institution meets the accreditation standards. An institution must be accredited institutionally by a nationally recognized accrediting agency to be eligible to apply for participation in the Title IV, Federal Financial Aid Program. Accreditation status is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for eligibility for participation in Title IV programs. Each institution must also meet specific financial, administrative and operational requirements to become eligible for Title IV funding through the U.S. Department of Education. Only those institutions that fall within COMTA's scope of accreditation as a recognized accrediting agency can be accredited institutionally. Hence, all programs offered within the school must fall within the scope of the accrediting agency.

**Programmatic Accreditation:** Programmatic Accreditation is available to programs within an institution already accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. It is granted to an institution's educational program, focusing on program content, quality, and institutional stability. Program accreditation ensures that the school's program in massage therapy or aesthetics/esthetics/skin care reaches the minimum standards set by the profession, in addition to the general institutional standards reviewed by an institutional accrediting body.

**Adjunct Faculty:** Temporary, part-time, or other auxiliary faculty of a school or college, usually with limited duties and benefits and often primarily employed outside of academia.

**Admissions Criteria, Objective:** A standard on which a judgment may be based that deals with facts not subject to personal feelings, e.g., age, high school diploma or GED, etc.

**Admissions Criteria, Subjective:** A standard on which a judgment may be based that is subject to personal feelings, e.g., quality of touch, communication skills, commitment level and has specified criteria, agreed upon within the institution or program.

**Admissions, Screening Techniques:** Methods used during the admissions procedure to determine the appropriateness of enrolling a prospective student into an institution/program of massage education, e.g., interviews, observation, standardized tests, etc. Established criteria are applied equally to all applicants and may be objective or subjective in nature. *See Admissions Criteria, Objective and Admissions Criteria, Subjective.*

**Advanced Placement:** Refers to the practice of placing a student at a specific level of training at entry without fulfilling a school's normal matriculation requirements. This is usually done based upon an applicant's previous training, education and/or experience. COMTA standards do not allow Advanced Placement without an outlined transfer of credit policy.

**Annual Report Form:** An annual form sent to all accredited institution/programs. Completing, signing and returning the annual report form is required for continuance of accreditation.

**Appeals Procedure:** Adverse accreditation actions may be appealed and will be reviewed on the grounds that the decision was arbitrary, unsupported by evidence, or not in accord with COMTA accreditation standards.

**Appropriate Changing Practices:** Are those that address such issues as modesty, professional perceptions of the public (such as not having to walk through public areas from changing stations to massage classroom/clinic), and modesty issues for students, faculty and staff. The following are suggested to support appropriate changing practices: having privacy screens, walls or changing stations in the classroom/clinic for the privacy of students and clients.

**Asynchronous:** Types of online courses that do not require students to meet online at specific times. Interaction between students and teacher occurs in different places and at different times. Typically students will still be required to meet certain deadlines. *See also Distance Education and Synchronous.*

**Attendance Records:** *See Records.*

**Audit (Financial):** *See Financial Audit*

**Auxiliary Classroom:** A classroom site, which is operated and supervised by the main campus or a branch campus to facilitate student accessibility to an institution/program. Students attending institution/programs held at auxiliary classroom sites must be enrolled at the main campus or branch campus. Application materials must be received and provisional approval granted prior to offering classes. Auxiliary Classrooms that provide at least 50% of the institution/program offered at the main campus or a branch campus must have a site visit within six (6) months of opening the location and offer 50% or more of the program of study.

**Branch:** Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers a comprehensive, on-site administrative and support services separate from the main campus, which offers the complete educational institution/program or institution/programs under the direction of the parent institution. A branch operates under the same authority and administrative policies and procedures as the accredited parent institution. Branch application materials must be received prior to opening and provisional approval must be granted. Requires a site visit within six (6) months of beginning operations.

**Certificate of Accreditation:** A document given to institution/programs that have successfully completed the institution/program accreditation process. The Certificate of Accreditation remains the property of COMTA and must be returned to COMTA if the institution/program's accreditation is revoked or voluntarily surrendered.

**Change of Control:** *See Control, Change of.*

**Change in Management:** *See Management, Change in.*

**Change of Ownership:** *See Ownership, Change of.*

**Class:** One period of instruction during which course material is taught on any given day. A course is comprised of a predetermined number of classes. *See Cohort.*

**Classroom Extension:** A classroom extension is a site operated on a temporary basis when the number of students exceeds classroom capacity at the main or branch campus. It is operated for instructional purposes and is supervised by the main campus. Enrollment of students receiving instruction at a classroom extension must take place at the main or branch campus.

**Clearly Stated:** A statement that is worded in such a way that the intent and meaning are easily understood and not subject to interpretation.

**Clinic:** A planned learning experience in which students apply and practice the knowledge and skills taught in the classroom with members of the general public. Clinic may take place on the schools instructional setting or at off-site locations. Students have the opportunity to practice the professional procedures, including but not limited to working with scheduled clients, performing intake and exit interviews, performing appropriate treatment sessions, completing session documentation, and communicating appropriately with clients and peers while professionally attired. An on-site program faculty member supervises the clinic sessions, evaluates student work and provides student support and feedback.

**Cohort:** The term refers to a group of two or more students who begin instruction together, meet together regularly, and will complete together.

**Communication Channels:** Effective mechanisms for informing all persons of matters of importance, e.g., memos, regularly scheduled meetings, circulation of meeting minutes, etc. Communication channels may be formal and informal, but must include communication both to and from management.

**Competency Based Education:** Curriculum designed on the basis of demonstrable learning outcomes, or the student's expected level of knowledge and performance as a result of instruction.

**Complaint Procedure:** A written procedure for handling internal complaints and grievances against accredited institution/programs from any relevant source, e.g., students, staff, parents. The procedure must include a specific timeframe for responses.

**Completion Standards:** Criteria students must meet to be considered complete in the course of study, e.g., all fees and tuition paid, academic requirements completed, library books returned, etc.

**Confidentiality:** Assurance that information in the student's file or any other information about a student will not be released to a third party without the prior written consent of the student. In the case of dependent students, parents or guardians have rights to access a student's educational records under the Family Education and Right to Privacy Act of 1999. (FERPA) Also, assurance that information learned during a site visit or read in a self-study report will not be disclosed to any individual or institution outside of the accreditation process.

**Conflict of Interest:** Incompatibility between personal interests and official accreditation responsibilities, e.g., an institution/program director serving as an on-site evaluator may not visit an institution/program within a shared target market area. Competing interests of an individual holding positions in more than one entity, e.g., an institution/program director who serves as a Commission member may not participate in the discussion or decision for an institution/program in a shared target market area or a Commissioner may not serve as a paid consultant to an applicant institution/program.

**Consensus:** An opinion held by all or most of the participants of a group; general agreement.

**Consultation:** Use of expert advice when revising or creating institution/programs.

**Continuing Education:** Participation in structured educational classes by educators and practitioners for the purpose of upgrading, expanding, or maintaining skills and knowledge.

**Continuing Relationships:** See *Graduate Follow-Up*.

**Control, Change of:** Refers to change in power within a non-profit institution. It is defined as, but not limited to, the following situations: 1) Change in 50% or more in the Board of Directors' voting membership over a twelve month period; 2) Board of Directors' powers of control are nullified by any management agreement; 3) Change from non-profit to profit or collective.

**Correspondence Education:** Per USDE Definition, correspondence means education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail

or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Correspondence education is not distance education and COMTA is **not** recognized to accredit correspondence education courses. *See also Distance Education.*

**Course:** A series of instruction periods or classes dealing with a subject. A series of courses make up an institution/program of study.

**Course Content Outlines:** Generally refers to the official college record of each course's content, hours/credits, objectives, pre-requisites, etc. Content Outlines are developed for each course and approved by the institution's curriculum committee. Content Outlines guide the creation of individual class syllabi to ensure consistency among instructors and sections. Though often a requirement in regionally-accredited institutions, course outlines are not a requirement for COMTA. It is sometimes called a Course Content Guide, but should not to be confused with a Topic Outline within a course syllabus. *See also Syllabus and Syllabus, Topic Outline.*

**Curriculum:** A combination of courses, which include lecture and supervised practice, that prepares an individual for entry into a field.

**Curriculum Development, Documentation of:** Printed or written documents or supporting references specific to the process of developing or revising curriculum with consideration of input from students, faculty, graduates and employers, e.g., minutes from faculty meetings discussing revision, reports from consultants with curriculum expertise, student evaluation forms, etc.

**Curriculum Development, Logical Revision of:** Ongoing review, appraisal, and revision of curricula deemed reasonable and necessary to maintain the educational goals.

**Curriculum Organization, Relevant Learning Experiences:** Learning experiences that reflect current knowledge and practice, and have a close, logical relationship with and support the educational goals.

**Curriculum Organization, Sequential Teaching:** Characterized by the manner in which it forms a regular, logical sequence of parts.

**Curriculum Organization, Systematic Teaching:** A process of orderly planning of instruction.

**Developmental Opportunities:** Opportunities for personnel (i.e., faculty and staff) to improve their instructional and technical skills.

**Distance Education:** Per USDE regulations, *distance education* means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include: (1) The internet; (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; (3) Audio conferencing; or (4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition. *See also Correspondence Education.*

**Distance Education Terms:** See Asynchronous, Hybrid, Learning Management System, Synchronous.

**Documentation:** Printed or written documents or supporting references submitted to verify or substantiate statements made in a self-study report, e.g., attendance records, articles of incorporation, memos, meetings agendas and minutes, etc. Copies of documents are collected in an exhibit book.

**Due Process:** A practice that ensures the application of clearly defined, reasonable rules to a institution/program; that provides the right to fair treatment through published standards, policies and procedures; and that provides an appeals process for adverse actions taken by the Commission.

**Educational Credential:** A diploma, certificate or degree stating that educational requirements have been met and the program of study has been satisfactorily completed.

**Educational Goals:** The intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed in the student. These are broad statements that describe the character, nature, quality, and value of instruction. The educational service the institution/program provides for its students is presented in language understood by the students enrolled. During a site visit, the team examines the extent to which an institution/program fulfills its stated goals.

**Educational Records:** Educational records are defined as any files, documents or other materials maintained by the institution which contain information directly related to the student such as, but not limited to, records of attendance and educational performance. Educational records for the purpose of disclosure to anyone other than the student do not include records made by instructional, supervisory, or administrative personnel which are considered confidential between the school personnel and the student; or records which are made by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other recognized professional made in connection with treatment of a student and not available to anyone other than providers and the student.

**Educational Performance Records:** *See Records.*

**Educational Planning:** Developing, writing, implementing, evaluating, and revising curriculum.

**Efficient Management:** Producing desired effects with minimum effort, expense or waste.

**Eligibility, Federal:** Through the United States Department of Education, the federal government certifies that educational institutions or institution/programs qualify for federal funding. Recognition of an accrediting agency by the U.S. Department of Education is one determinant in this approval process. COMTA is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

**Ethics:** The rules or principles of right conduct governing an individual or group.

**Evaluation of Personnel:** Process used to assess effectiveness of performance for management, faculty and staff.

**Evaluation of Student:** Written assessments or observation of the student's achievements of stated objectives and competencies.

**Evaluation Methods:** The means by which a performance is evaluated. For students, this may include written exams, hands-on practical tests, term papers, etc. For personnel this may include observation, written performance appraisals, etc.

**Evidence-Based:** Practices and protocols based upon evidence found in scientific research studies. *See Evidence-Informed.*

**Evidence-Informed:** The essence of an evidence-informed practice is a balance of the best research available, practitioner judgment, and client preferences. This is the type of massage practice promoted by COMTA. *See also Evidence-Based.*

**Examination, Practical Hands-On:** The evaluation of technical skills by demonstration of therapeutic techniques. Outcome of a practical test based on identified performance criteria is recorded on a form designed for that purpose. All students are tested on the same or equivalent information. *See also Records, Educational Performance.*

**Exit Interview:** An oral presentation of the findings by the visiting team at the conclusion of the on-site evaluation. May include strengths and weaknesses but no assessment of probable Commission decision.

**External Relationships:** Contacts with individuals outside of the school who have expertise in school matters, e.g., consultants, advisory board members, etc.

**Externship:** A planned learning experience with clients in which students learn how to use the knowledge and practice the massage skills taught in the classroom. The experiential learning is done away from the central instructional building, e.g., at a hospice, nursing home, etc. Preparation for externship includes classroom instruction in the skills and knowledge related to professional practice. A practitioner in a massage, bodywork or related health and wellness field supervises externship experiences. However, the supervisor is not a member of the institution or program faculty.

**Externship, On-site Manager:** An individual at the externship location who is qualified to manage, oversee or guide the student's learning activities during practical work done away from the school site. This does not have to be an individual trained in massage.

**Extra Charges:** Charges for items other than tuition, either required or optional, e.g., textbooks, massage table, linen fees, bolsters, charts, uniforms, etc.

**Faculty Member, Qualified:** One who has minimally required clinical experience and appropriate professional education in specialty areas and can demonstrate teaching competence.

**Faculty Member, Sciences, Qualified:** Instructors of the sciences possess knowledge that is broader and more advanced than the material being taught. If a program's science faculty do not meet this criterion, the program is responsible for effectively demonstrating to the Commission how its faculty members meet the intent of the standard.

**Family Education and Right to Privacy Act of 1999 (FERPA):** *See Confidentiality.*

**Field Experience:** Work done in the field to gain practical experience and knowledge through firsthand observation and/or practice consistent with the learning objectives of the program. Faculty of the program supervises fieldwork experiences.

**Field trip:** A visit for observation purposes only. Is part of an ongoing course.

**Financial Audit:** A financial statement prepared by an independent certified financial professional according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). It is the most thorough and comprehensive of the financial statements and highest level of assurance. Audits consist of gathering evidence to support financial numbers and require an opinion of the auditor on the financial solvency of the school. Audits are sufficient for COMTA accreditation and required for Title IV participation. *See also Financial Review.*

**Financial Management System:** A financial system that provides adequate information for assessing the health of the institution. This includes an annual budget, regular profit and loss statements and balance sheets prepared by an independent accountant that comply with generally accepted accounting principles. This also includes a review of financial statements for schools not involved in federal financial aid. An independent audit is required for all institutions involved in federal financial aid programs.

**Financial Review:** A financial statement prepared by an independent certified financial professional according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). It consists primarily of inquiry and analytical procedures, requiring less evidence than an Audit. It provides "limited assurance" that the financial statement comply with GAAP and no official opinion by the reviewer on the solvency of the school. Reviews are sufficient for COMTA accreditation, but not enough for Title IV participation. *See also Financial Audit.*

**Financial Stability, Reserves:** A cash reserve is money that may be utilized on short notice, i.e., investments that may be converted to cash easily and without substantial penalty. Also referred to as liquid assets.

**Full and Clear Disclosure of Tuition Policies:** *See Tuition Policies.*

**Graduating Class:** A group of one or more students who have enrolled in and completed an institution/program of 600 or more hours. *See Institution/program.*

**Graduate Follow-Up, Continuing Relationships:** On-going contact with graduates, e.g., through newsletters, alumni meetings, correspondence, surveys, etc.

**Hands-On Tests:** *See Examination, Practical Hands-On.*

**Hearing, Appeals:** A special hearing held at the request of an institution/program that has been denied accreditation or has had its accreditation revoked.

**High School Diploma – Recognized Equivalent:** Per the USDE, recognized equivalents of a high school diploma are (1) GED certificate or transcript, (2) a state certificate received by a student after the student has passed a state-authorized examination that the state recognizes as the equivalent of a high school diploma, (3) an academic transcript of a student who has successfully completed at least 60 semester credit hours at an institution of higher education, (4) if State law requires a homeschooled student to obtain a secondary school completion credential for homeschool (other than a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent), a copy of that credential, and (5) if State law does not require a homeschooled student to obtain a secondary school completion credential for homeschool (other than a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent), a transcript or the equivalent, signed by your parent or guardian, that lists the secondary school courses completed and documents the successful completion of a secondary school education in a homeschool setting. Please refer to USDE information for current updates to this definition, particularly if participating in Title IV.

**Hybrid:** A distance education course which involves some in-class, face-to-face instruction and some online requirements. The course may be taught primarily online with some regularly scheduled on-campus classroom meetings. A course is considered “hybrid” if students are earning hours or credits for the work/time devoted when not in the classroom. If credit or hours are not awarded, distance education methods may be used as supplementary tools for a regular course and do not need to be approved by COMTA. *See also Distance Education.*

**Income, Sufficient to Complete Instruction of Currently Enrolled Students:** Any financial plan that ensures students will receive refunds if the school goes out of business, e.g., cash reserves, a bond, tuition insurance, tuition recovery funds, etc.

**In-Service:** Workshops sponsored by the school and presented in-house for personnel. Topics are relevant to adult education and/or the management of post-secondary institution/programs, e.g., dealing with special learning needs of adult learners, telephone skills, etc.

**Institution/program:** *See Accreditation – types of. Programmatic and Institutional.*

**Interim Report:** A special report requested by the Commission to verify, document, or substantiate compliance with the accreditation standards in specified areas. May be used as a progress report to provide evidence that deficiencies have been corrected.

**Instructional Resources:** People and materials that can be used to plan and carry out the learning process, e.g., other teachers, counselors, consultants, library resources, books, models, charts, videotapes, etc. All resources must meet COMTA Standard 4.0.

**Insurance, General Liability:** General liability is coverage that protects the business in case of debilitating events such as illness or injury suffered by an employee or customer, or damage to the property. It covers claims arising from an insured's liability due to injury or damage during the course of business. This insurance covers four categories: bodily injury, personal injury (which includes slander or libel), property damage, and advertising injury. General liability insurance is not the same as professional liability.

**Insurance, Professional Liability:** Professional liability insurance is coverage that protects against suits that allege professional services rendered were not within the scope of "accepted practice" or were not performed when necessary, thereby resulting in injury. Professional liability insurance is not the same as general liability. Applicant institution/programs must carry professional liability insurance and must name the school, the faculty, and the students as insured. If schools/programs require students to participate in activities related to coursework that are not supervised by faculty they need to verify their coverage includes such activities. Institutions and programs are further encouraged to ensure that all the modalities taught are included in the coverage.

**Integrated Learning Experience:** An experience that is planned, supports the educational goals with relevant knowledge and skills, and is introduced at the appropriate time.

**Interviews, On-site:** Discussion sessions between on-site team members and various staff, faculty and students of the institution/program. On-site interviews are one of the primary ways evaluators gather information to verify the self-study report.

**Job Descriptions:** A description of the expected performance indicators for each role category of personnel within the organization. The description should include: performance indicators, essential skills and abilities for completing the work, reporting relationship, environmental considerations, qualifications and experience.

**Lab Class/Hours:** Instructional activities in settings for students to master the subject matter either by performing or practicing the skills being learned in lecture classes. The instructor generally supervises, assists, answers questions, etc., rather than making presentations. This can include both group instruction and individualized instruction. According to COMTA usage, Clinic is considered a lab course, but there may be other times in the curriculum where lab courses or lab hours (within a lecture course) are appropriate. *See also Lecture.*

**Learning Experience:** *See Integrated Learning Experience.*

**Learning Management System (LMS):** The technology platform through which students access online courses. A LMS generally includes software for creating and editing course content, communication tools, assessment tools, and other features for managing the course. The LMS should be appropriate to the size and scope of the distance learning program, either including large-scale platforms (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle) or it could include publisher-based or internal systems if they meet the Distance Education standards.

**Learning Methods:** The means of acquiring information or skills.

**Learning Objective:** *See Objective.*

**Learning Outcome:** *See Objective.*

**Learning Styles:** The various ways people take in information, e.g., visual, kinesthetic, auditory, etc.

**Lecture Class/Hours:** These instructional settings are defined when the subject matter is primarily delivered by the instructor or a fellow student's verbal or visual presentation rather than through the student's own active practice or experimentation ("lab"). Class instruction may include video presentations

lecture, recitation, quiz, discussion, presentations, case studies, team-based learning and seminar activities. *See also Lab.*

**Lesson Plans:** Consists of goals for the specific class, description of teaching methods and techniques, class exercises and activities, student assessment, and assignments for the next class. These are expected to be available for each class session within a course. Their development is guided by the course learning objectives and the syllabus.

**Main Campus:** The main campus serves as the primary site responsible for understanding, meeting and upholding the standards for accreditation for all locations. Comprehensive administrative services are provided by the main campus to all the training institution/programs recognized by COMTA.

**Management, Change in:** Refers to change in who has authority for making daily management decisions. It is distinct from change in ownership or control. It is defined as, but not limited to, the following situations: 1. Executive Director is replaced or 2. Executive Director significantly changes level of responsibility (e.g., sabbatical leave).

**Methods:** *See Teaching Methods.*

**Objective, Learning/Educational:** Description of performance learners should be able to exhibit, the conditions in which the performance will take place and the depth and breadth of the expected performance before they are considered competent and these may include and are not limited to cognitive, psychomotor and behavioral learning. COMTA uses the terms “learning objectives” and “educational objectives” interchangeably. Learning objectives dictate the curriculum content, instructional practices, and assessment pieces throughout a course or program. COMTA requires that there be **Programmatic Objectives** for each program within an institution (as assessed by Standard 1.2) and that there be **Course Objectives** that guide each course (as assessed by Standard 2.4).

**Observer, On-site:** An individual from another agency with a legitimate interest in the accreditation process or an individual being trained for future on-site visits who accompanies the on-site team. Observers may or may not be invited to actively participate.

**On-site Visit:** *See Site Visit.*

**Orientation:** A scheduled time for familiarizing personnel with their job responsibilities, e.g., a tour of facility, discussion of responsibilities, administration details, review of job description, etc. Also, a scheduled time for familiarizing students with school policies and procedures.

**Outcome Assessment:** Indicators of outcomes include: placement statistics, completion rates, satisfaction of employers, ability of graduates to secure licensure and success in academic performance within the school. Within the school, satisfactory progress in the academic coursework is measured through a variety of evaluation vehicles such as tests and quizzes. Following graduation, success of the graduates is measured in the ability to complete licensure requirements and secure professional work.

**Ownership, Change of:** Refers to the change in power within a proprietary institution. Change of ownership is defined as, but not limited to, the following situations: 1. Sale of the institution; 2. Transfer of controlling interest of stock of the institution or its parent corporation; 3. Merger of two or more institutions; 4. Transfer of controlling interest of stock to parent corporation; 5. Transfer of assets or liabilities of institution to parent corporation or owners or; 6. Change from profit to non-profit or collective.

**Peer Review:** One of the characteristics of the accreditation process. Participants in the process have equal professional standing with institution/program personnel.

**Peer Review Report:** A confidential written report of the findings of the site visit team. A copy is provided to the institution/program with an invitation to respond, especially for the purpose of correcting

inaccuracies in the facts reported by the team. The site visit report is also provided to the Commission as part of its decision-making process.

**Performance Standards:** The standards by which a student's performance is evaluated or measured, e.g., letter grades, percentages, points, etc. The minimum acceptable performance must be understood by all students. (For example, what constitutes a "fail"?) These standards should be congruent with the learning objectives and stated clearly in every syllabus.

**Personnel, Evaluation of:** *See Evaluation.*

**Personnel, Supervision of:** *See Supervision.*

**Placement Services:** Services to support students in connecting with or getting information about potential employers or employment opportunities. This service does not ensure job placement, but provides information and may involve coaching or advising related to job search skills.

**Plans, Operational or Short-Range:** Outline of goals reaching over short period of time, generally considered to be one year or less. Operational or short-range goals provide the action plans for strategic direction and include resource needs related to budgeting.

**Plans, Strategic Direction or Long-Range:** Outline of goals for a period of more than one year taking the future into consideration. Strategic direction takes into account various factors both internal and external to the organizational environment in light of the mission of the organization, and charts a future path for achievement of long range goals. Strategic directions are linked to resources.

**Proctored Assessment:** A proctored assessment is an exam that is administered by an individual who supervises the student while they are taking the exam. The proctor's function is to ensure the integrity and security of the exam in a secure environment.

**Program:** A postsecondary educational program offered by an institution of higher education that leads to an academic or professional degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential. Each diploma, certificate, or degree name requires its own "program" and must be accredited separately. Also see *Specialization*.

**Program Advisory Committee (PAC):** Committees created by the institution or program to provide an outside, objective opinion from a diverse selection of members. Members may include internal personnel, but must also include outside perspectives, such as non-alumni business owners, employers of graduates, other educators (perhaps outside of the profession), and lay members of the community who may provide valuable perspective on the school's curriculum, outcomes, or operations. PACs are not required to meet often, but must meet regularly.

**Progress Reports:** Evaluation of academic and practical achievements as well as attendance status of the student throughout the school term. This is done at intervals sufficient to keep the student informed and gives them the opportunity to correct areas of need before final evaluations are performed. These progress reports also determine whether the student is making satisfactory progress.

**Provisional Accreditation/Approval:** A change in status for a limited period of time in which COMTA evaluates new information which may affect the institution/program's ability to stay in compliance with COMTA standards. Provisional Accreditation/Approval begins when COMTA receives written notification of the proposed change, and ends when the institution/program receives written notification from COMTA of the transfer of accreditation/approval.

**Recognized Equivalent:** *See High School Diploma – Recognized Equivalent.*

**Records, Attendance:** Written documentation of students' presence in required classes.

**Records, Educational Performance:** Evidence of academic progress maintained through systematic documentation of practical and written test scores, written evaluations, etc.

**Records, Security:** Records are locked and secure to ensure confidentiality and to protect against loss due to theft and fire.

**Recruitment, Ethical Practices:** Conforming to professional standards of conduct.

**Recruitment, Unreliable Claims:** Statements that upon scrutiny do not prove to be valid or consistent.

**Reserves:** *See Financial Stability.*

**Review (Financial):** *See Financial Review*

**Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):** A method of measuring whether or not a student is successfully completing coursework toward graduation within the allowed timeframe. SAP policies have their roots in financial aid compliance and will vary depending on the type of program, type of institution, schedule of course offerings, and whether the program spans more than one academic year. COMTA requirements for SAP are intended to mirror the requirements for SAP policies for schools participating in financial aid programs. See publications from the U.S. Department of Education regarding financial aid program and student eligibility for more specifics: [www.ifap.ed.gov](http://www.ifap.ed.gov)

**Screening Techniques:** *See Admissions.*

**Self-Study:** The process of reviewing internal policies, procedures, resources, and external relationships. The purpose is to maintain ongoing improvement of the institution/program. Results of a self-study process are presented in a Self-Study Report. Self-study may go beyond the requirements of the accreditation process, but only information pertinent to the accreditation standards is documented in the Self-Study Report.

**Self-Study Report:** A narrative report written by institution/program personnel to substantiate compliance with the accreditation standards.

**Site Visit:** A visit to the institution/program during which the visiting team observes all components of the institution/program to verify the criteria related to the standards and the information provided in the Self-Study Report. A site visit takes approximately two (2) days for a single main campus location and an additional day for each branch or auxiliary classroom location.

**Site Visit Team:** Individuals who work as a team to gather facts about an applicant institution/program. Team members have competence in both administrative and institutional/programmatic aspects of massage education and meet the team member requirements.

**Specialization:** A sub-set of courses or requirements within a program that lead to a differing diploma, certificate, or degree. For COMTA's definition, each separate "specialization" offered is actually a different "program" and must be accredited separately. *Also see Program.*

**Standard Precautions:** Guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for reducing the risk of transmission of blood-borne and other pathogens. Standard Precautions represent the minimum infection prevention measures that apply to all patient care, regardless of suspected or confirmed infection status of the patient, in any setting where healthcare is delivered. These evidence-based practices are designed to both protect healthcare personnel and prevent the spread of infections among patients. Standard Precautions replaces earlier guidance relating to Universal Precautions and Body Substance Isolation. Standard Precautions include: 1) hand hygiene, 2) use of personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns, facemasks), depending on the anticipated exposure, 3) respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, 4) safe injection practices, and 5) safe handling of potentially

contaminated equipment or surfaces in the patient environment. See the most recent standards and guidelines issued by the CDC at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

**Standards:** The criteria used for evaluating institution/programs for accreditation purposes. Standards are also used for settling a complaint or grievance.

**Student Evaluation:** *See Evaluation.*

**Substantive Curriculum Change:** A change of over 25% to a program, a change in delivery method, or creation of a new program. See the Policy & Procedures Manual for details.

**Supervision of Personnel:** Overseeing or directing the work of staff and faculty members.

**Supervision of Students, Direct:** Faculty is physically present and immediately available for students' interaction.

**Supervision of Students:** A method of observation, which may include instruction of all phases of the institution/program by an individual who is qualified through education, practice and/or clinical experience.

**Supervisor, On-Site:** A faculty member is readily accessible to students.

**Sustaining Fee:** A yearly fee paid to COMTA to maintain accreditation status.

**Syllabus:** A syllabus guide must be developed for each course offered and must include the following: course title, course description, and clearly identifiable course learning objectives; total number of instructional hours; general class schedule; resources needed, such as required texts, equipment and supplies; evaluation methods and clear performance standards for grading; attendance and make-up policies; and a topic outline (showing schedule of classes with content addressed, including exam dates). *See also Course Content Outline and Syllabus, Topic Outline.*

**Syllabus, Topic Outline:** Accompanies the syllabus and lists class meeting schedule (specific dates or general "Class 1", etc) and specific content addressed, including quiz and exam dates. A Topic Outline is essential for student planning and learning, but is also required for COMTA to verify the Competency Chart. *See also Course Content Outline.*

**Synchronous:** A type of online course where classes have a scheduled meeting time in which students must attend virtually. Interaction between students and teacher occurs in "real time." *See also Distance Education and Asynchronous.*

**Teach-Out Agreement:** A teach-out agreement is a legally binding contract between an institution or program that may terminate and another institution that provides for the education of students enrolled by the former. In its discretion, COMTA may direct an institution or program to provide a teach-out agreement as part of its submitted teach-out plan. An institution that enters into a teach-out agreement with any other institution, either on its own or at the discretion or request of COMTA or any other agency or authority, must submit that teach-out agreement to COMTA for approval. *See also Teach-Out Plan.*

**Teach-Out Plan:** A plan which details the timing and process for closing of the COMTA-accredited institution or program. It does not necessitate the institution make public this plan or arrive at a formal agreement with another institution. It is meant to assure COMTA that the institution has a plan for the appropriate teach out of its students, should it be necessary. *See also Teach-out Agreement.*

**Teaching Devices:** Materials and teaching aids that increase the effectiveness of learning but do not themselves instruct.

**Teaching Guides:** *See Instructional Materials.*

**Teaching Methods:** The means of imparting information or skill to learners. The delivery of instruction. It is important to distinguish between teaching methods and learning methods. Teaching methods may include, but are not limited to, lecture, demonstration, discussion, role-playing and/or simulation, hands-on and other practice.

**Teaching Technique:** The ways in which the instructor establishes the relationship between the learner and the learning task.

**Topic Outline:** *See Syllabus, Topic Outline*

**Transcript:** The transcript must include, at a minimum, the program of study; the date of program entry; the date of graduation, termination or withdrawal; course names, clock hours and grades earned; and the credential conferred.

**Tuition Policies, Full and Clear Disclosure of:** Total tuition and ALL extra costs are clearly stated in promotional materials and enrollment agreements. Total costs are clearly stated in the catalog and outlined in the enrollment agreement.

**Undergraduate Proficiency for Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology:** See Faculty Member, Sciences, Qualified (*NOTE: This is an old phrase used in Standards prior to July 2017. It has been replaced.*)

**United States Department of Education:** The federal cabinet agency that publishes a list of accredited agencies and associations recognized by the Secretary of Education.

**Unreliable Claims:** *See Recruitment.*

**Workshop, Accreditation:** An intensive presentation during which institution/program personnel are taught the basics of preparing a Self-Study Report for accreditation.

**Workshop, Site Visitor:** An intensive presentation for individuals interested in becoming site visit team members.