



The International Federation of
Professional Aromatherapists

IFPA FOUNDATION AROMATHERAPY CURRICULUM PROPOSAL 2022

PLEASE NOTE THIS EXCLUDES THE FOLLOWING SUBJECT AREAS:

Anatomy, physiology, pathology, massage, first aid.

LEARNING STYLES: Need to consider that online learning is now priming over face-to-face classes.

GUIDED LEARNING (GL): Face-to-face contact and/or live virtual engagement/Tutor led forums/Tutorials/ live contact with learner. GL also includes all forms of structured learning/ assignments/ assessments/ tasks to ensure accurate learning by students/case study critique by tutors.

SELF-STUDY (SS): Additional estimated self-study hours that the students need in order to consolidate learning.

SUGGESTION FOR REQUIRED / RECOMMENDED READING: To have a required/recommended reference & resources list for schools in addition to a required/recommended reference list for students. For example, Handbook of essential oils (3rd edition, CRC Press).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN TERMINOLOGY

1. Schools and educators to avoid using the term 'neat' (use the word undiluted instead) and 'high/low dilution' (use the term high/low concentration instead).
2. Schools and educators to ensure students know the accuracy using % based on drops in formulations is imprecise and should also be shown how to measure by volume.

SECTION HEADERS

1. Current aromatherapy history & different aromatherapy styles
2. Plant science
3. Extraction methods for essential oils, aromatic extracts, and related materials
4. Essential oil chemistry
5. Aromatic pharmacology
6. Methods of use
7. Aromatherapy safety
8. Aromatherapy treatment process
9. Essential oil selection, dose and blending skills
10. Olfaction and aroma psychology
11. Essential oil profiles
12. Base profiles
13. Aromatherapy research and use of an evidence base
14. Ethics, conduct, professionalism, and legal aspects
15. Business
16. Case studies

TOPIC TO BE COVERED	LEARNING OUTCOMES	CORE AREAS TO BE INCLUDED	GUIDED LEARNING	SELF STUDY
1. CURRENT AROMATHERAPY HISTORY AND DIFFERENT AROMATHERAPY STYLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate awareness of aromatherapy evolution. • Recognise different aromatherapy styles around the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History prior to the 1800s (optional) History post-1880s until the present day. Timeline of modern aromatherapy evolution. The emergence of differing aromatherapy styles e.g., home use, veterinary, energetic, holistic, medical, clinical, phyto-aromatherapy, etc. • The place of aromatherapy within Complementary Therapies. The role of aromatherapy in modern healthcare. • The place of aromatherapy in the context of other plant medicine approaches (phytotherapy, flower essence therapy). • Current opportunities and challenges facing the aromatherapy profession. 	7	14
2. PLANT SCIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate awareness of basic plant science as it relates to aromatic and medicinal plants. • Appreciate the proximity/overlap and differences between aromatherapy and other plant therapies (herbal medicine). • Recognise issues concerning supply and demand, global market issues, and sustainability with regard to the essential oil trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Taxonomy</u>: basic botany, binomial names, synonyms, major plant families, main genera, photosynthesis. • <u>Definitions</u>: essential oil (ISO definition), aromatic extract (ISO definition), chemotype, hybrid, clone, fixed oil, hydrolat, producing organ. • Secretory/glandular structures that produce and store essential oil components. Role of essential oil components within the plant/nature. • Overview of main pathways of biosynthesis of essential oil components within the plant (terpenoid/phenylpropanoid). • Introduction to other plant constituents not present in essential oils that have bioactivity (alkaloids, tannins, polysaccharides) that are used in herbal medicine. Types of agriculture conventional/organic, wild harvesting, sustainability, plants at risk, specific pressures on plant populations. • How essential oil yield is calculated. Examples of high/low yield aromatic plants. How the price is linked to yield. • The global demand for essential oils and predicted growth 	7	14

		<p>of the aromatherapy industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria for essential oil sourcing and selection for use in aromatherapy. 		
<p>3. EXTRACTION METHODS FOR ESSENTIAL OILS, AROMATIC EXTRACTS, AND RELATED MATERIALS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline main methods of extraction for essential oils and all extracts that are commonly used in aromatherapy. Detail how the chemistry of a given species may differ according to the method of extraction. Recognise the importance of identifying the method of extraction for each product used by the therapist. 	<p>To include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydro distillation. Water and steam distillation. Steam distillation. Mechanical expression. CO2 extraction. Microwave extraction. Green/emerging technologies. Enfleurage. Hydrolat production, hydrolat composition, stability, and chemistry. How the method of extraction influences chemical composition (for example: compare and contrast the chemistry of essential oil, absolute, hydrolat, herbal tincture, and CO2 extract from the same species and same producing organ). Criteria for identification and labelling requirements for essential oils. (Lab aroma – for reference shows the chemical composition of an oil vs hydrolat, for example). 	7	14
<p>4. ESSENTIAL OIL CHEMISTRY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciate the relevance of essential oil chemistry in aromatherapy practice. Able to relate essential oil pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, and toxicology to essential oil chemistry. Link aromatic pharmacognosy to chemical composition. Able to select essential oils according to their desired effect based on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic organic chemistry as it relates to essential oils (atoms, molecules, covalent bonding, functional groups). Functional groups (not the same as functional group theory) with regard to basic structure-activity relationships, organoleptic properties & toxicology. Basic concepts of isomerism, its different forms with essential oil examples, and relevance in aromatherapy. Identification of main components commonly found in essential oils with examples of their main actions and safety information. To include (not exclusively) limonene, pinene, myrcene, p-cymene, terpinene, B-caryophyllene, chamazulene, linalool, geraniol, citronellol, borneol, nerol, thujanol, terpineol, terpinen-4-ol, bisabolol, viridiflorol, farnesol, menthol, thymol, carvacrol, eugenol, linalyl acetate, bornyl acetate, methyl salicylate, benzyl acetate, geranyl 	14	40

	<p>their total chemical composition</p>	<p>acetate, methyl chavicol, anethole, 1,8-cineole, camphor, menthone, thujone, carvone, piperitone, citral (neral & geranial), citronellal, cinnamaldehyde, bergapten.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of analytical methods and their relevance to the practitioner - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative density. Refractive index. Optical rotation. Gas Chromatography & Mass Spectrometry. Consulting a GC/MS analysis in order to guide therapeutic choices. Stability and shelf life of essential oils and related products such as fixed oils, infused oils, and hydrolats based on their chemistry and method of extraction. • Overview of main essential oil actions (aromatic pharmacognosy, pharmacodynamics) and link to essential oil chemistry. To include - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-inflammatory. Antioxidant. Antimicrobial. Analgesic. Sedative. Stimulant. Antispasmodic. 		
<p>5. AROMATIC PHARMACOLOGY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate basic awareness of the 3 core tenets of aromatic pharmacology - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pharmacodynamics 2. pharmacokinetics 3. toxicology and how they are related. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of main pharmacodynamics linked to essential oil chemistry, pharmacokinetics (absorption, distribution, metabolism, and elimination), and toxicology as they relate to essential oils. • Pharmacokinetics for each of the main routes of administration used in aromatherapy practice (topical, inhaled) and identification of factors that enhance/impede any of the pharmacokinetic steps. • Potential Drug: essential oil and Drug: herb/supplement interactions. • List of drugs with a Narrow Therapeutic Index and guidance on essential oil use for clients who are taking NTI drugs. 	<p>7</p>	<p>14</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of client types where special attention to risk factors is required (see red flags in the Aromatherapy Safety section). 		
6. METHODS OF USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate awareness of the ability to formulate safely for each method of use commonly employed in aromatherapy. To select the most appropriate administration method for the client's needs. Provide clear, appropriate, and self-care/user instructions for each method of use. Select the appropriate base choices for topical applications IFPA policy on internal use of essential oils 	<p><u>Topical</u> -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massage Compress. Theory of Cosmetic applications. Cosmetic application - dependent on the regulatory law of the applicable country. Localised therapeutic applications. Baths (full immersion, hand, foot). Buccal applications (such as gargles, mouth rinses). Poultice. Roll-on applications. Hair and nail applications. To include base choices for each application (oil, cream, gel, ointment/balm, water/hydrolat). <p><u>Inhaled</u> -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steam inhalation. Aroma-alone dry inhalation strategies such as tissue, aroma pot, aroma inhaler, aroma patch. <p><u>Environment/ambiance</u> -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diffusion – including different diffuser types and their safe use, spritzers/sprays, aromatherapy candles. Shelf life and product stability. 	22	42
7. AROMATHERAPY SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key risks to the client/customer Identify key risks to the therapist/handler of essential oils. Identify key risks to the general public/novice users. Identify key risks to the environment regarding disposal. Identify key risks to vulnerable clients (polymedicated, pregnant). Develop safe practice 	<p>Detailed description using published case examples of -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irritant contact dermatitis. Allergic contact dermatitis. Acute and chronic toxicity. Phototoxic and photosensitization reactions. How risk is related to chemistry, context, dose, and exposure. Conducting a simple risk assessment. Risks of airborne diffusion. Examples of Safety Data Sheets. Industry recommendations/standard measures to take in case of a reaction or accidental exposure. 	7	12

	<p>strategies to minimise risk. Know the action to take in case of accidental exposure or reaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the risk of exposure to oxidised oils. Awareness of the risk of using high dose or undiluted essential oil applications. Demonstrate awareness regarding the safe disposal of oils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe storage of essential oils. Local Poison Centre details. Identification of key components found in essential oils that present enhanced risk. Identification of components that are required to be noted on cosmetic labelling (See Cosmetic Regulations). Safe practice advice for practitioners. Safe practice in the therapy room. Managing an essential oil stock to minimise wastage. Manner of safe disposal of used bottles, surplus, or out-of-date oils. Flammability issues with regards to essential oils, as well as vegetable oils, linen, and items used in aromatherapy treatment rooms. Information regarding IFRA/RIFM guidance and GRAS status. Working within the scope of practice. Advice concerning ingestion of essential oils within the practitioner's scope of practice and communication with the general public. <p><u>Identifying red flags for safe practice include -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polypharmacy clients. 		
<p>8. AROMATHERAPY TREATMENT PROCESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and apply the main steps of the treatment process: consultation, selection, appropriate formulation, administration. Self-care advice and follow up. Recognise when to refer to other professionals, liaise with other healthcare professionals. Identify one's scope of practice. GDPR and record keeping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of client-centred care and the 'Individual Prescription' with regards aromatherapy. Priming realistic expectations of what aromatherapy can offer. The role of the aromatherapist in the therapeutic relationship. Focus on the therapeutic conversation/client consultation as it relates to aromatherapy and essential oils. Informed consent. The holistic approach to the inclusion of client's needs, preferences, and participation in essential oil selection and treatment approach. Ability to safely deliver appropriate aromatic care. Ability to offer appropriate self-care advice. Follow up/evaluate treatment efficacy. Documentation (? SOAP notes based). Record keeping and the importance of professional documentation – therapist notes as legal 	<p>7 Aromatherapy specific +7h general basic skills.</p>	<p>20</p>

		<p>documents. The process of referral with concrete examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of building a referral network of different practitioners. 		
<p>9. ESSENTIAL OIL SELECTION, DOSE AND BLENDING SKILLS This is in addition to any blending skills gained in association with massage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select the most appropriate essential oil and method of administration together with correct base, dose, and frequency of application according to the client's needs. • Demonstrate awareness of possible synergistic, additive, or antagonistic effects. 	<p><u>Experience of different blending styles including -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragrance blending (top, middle, base, concept). • Blending with chemistry. • Blending for emotions. • Concept of synergy, additive effects, and antagonism. • The concept of the minimum dose. • Product stability when different mediums are combined. <p><u>Dosage and frequency guidelines to include those for -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute vs chronic conditions. • Cosmetic effect. • Systemic effect. • Localised effect. • Body massage. • Facial massage. • Mood/psychological action. • Vulnerable/high-risk individuals (cancer, life limiting illness). • Children and babies. <p><u>Dispensing and measurements -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages/disadvantages of working in drops, volume, weight. • How to calculate accurate dosage. • Reproducibility. • Using relative density to be able to convert between weight and volume. • Experience of working using all measurement forms. <p><u>Selection of appropriate bases and relevant dose information -</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oily bases (oils, butters, ointments). • Aqueous bases (creams, lotions, gels, hydrolats). • Inclusion (where needed) of dispersing, emulsifying agents, preservatives). 	14	30

<p>10. OLFACTION AND AROMAPSYCHOLOGY This is in addition to the A&P learning on sense of smell.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application of prior learning (A&P) concerning olfaction and the mind-body influences of inhaled aromatic substances. 	<p><u>Review of the process of olfaction with relevance and application to practice -</u> Aroma-alone strategies. Aromatherapy and stress management. Aromapsychology/Aromachology/mood, behavioural and cognitive responses to aromas. Aroma-alone interventions combined with other therapies/modalities such as creative visualisation, progressive relaxation, hypnosis. Creating positive aroma association conditioning. Risks of negative aroma association conditioning. The importance of client engagement in selection process to prime positive outcomes.</p>	7	20
<p>11. ESSENTIAL OIL PROFILES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate knowledge and applied therapeutics of a range of essential oils and aromatic extracts commonly used in aromatherapy practice. Be able to correctly identify, indications, contra-indications, dosage guidelines, and examples of use in the aromatherapy context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory study of 40 specified essential oils from IFPA curriculum. Compulsory study of a minimum of a further 20 essential oils of choice (according to school and location worldwide). Total oils 60 (e.g., Lavandula angustifolia and Lavandula x intermedia are two separate oils within the same genus). To include typical profile information: common names, binomial name, synonyms, varieties, chemotype, producing organ, extraction method, key chemical breakdown, indications, contra-indications, use, dosage guidelines, blending guidelines, evidence, shelf-life/stability. Profile information of at least 5 aromatic extracts (absolute/resinoid/CO2 extract) following similar data as above. Creation of own essential oil monograph (suggested). Documentation of personal experience/reflective practice with 10 essential oils from the main IFPA list. 	100	200
<p>12. BASE PROFILES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate knowledge and applied therapeutics of main base types galenic forms that are commonly used in aromatherapeutic applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profiles of each base type to include binomial name, producing organ, method of extraction, relevant chemistry, stability and shelf life, indications, contra-indications, guidelines for blending with essential oils. Fixed oils (study at least 10). Butters (study at least 2). Infused oils (study at least 4). Hydrolats (study at least 5). 	14	30

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gels. • Emulsions (water in oil; oil in water). • Ointments. • Other bases (optional) such as clay, honey, alcohol. • Documentation of personal experience/reflective practice with 5 different bases. 		
13. AROMATHERAPY RESEARCH AND USE OF AN EVIDENCE BASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and demonstrate the ability to underpin aromatherapy interventions with an evidence base. • Identify and apply at least one validated outcome measure tool. • Aware of main types of aromatherapy research. • Be able to conduct a literature search. • Access reliably sourced information on essential oils. • Identify opportunities and difficulties of reproducible research in aromatherapy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the main types of research. Examples of existing research evidence in aromatherapy. • How to access reliable sources of information related to aromatherapy. Conducting aromatherapy/essential oil literature searches using main search engines. • Appraising/critiquing an aromatherapy paper. Conducting a book review. The importance of case studies and case compilations as building evidence. • Common methods and validated tools for evaluating/measuring aromatherapy outcomes. • How to direct students to PubMed/TRIP database for double-blinded studies/ Science direct. 	7	10
14. ETHICS, CONDUCT, PROFESSIONALISM AND LEGAL ASPECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of prior learning (covered elsewhere in the syllabus) with specific relation to essential oils and aromatherapy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role, scope, and limitations of the aromatherapist. • List of typical scenarios where referral is likely. • How to refer to other practitioners. • How to liaise with other professionals. • Record keeping, data protection. • Making unsubstantiated claims. • IFPA Ethics and code of conduct. • Website and product claims. • Plagiarism. • Acknowledging sources of aromatherapy/essential oil information. • Correct labelling of aromatherapy products. 	7 Aromatherapy specific +7h general ethics/professionalism etc.	20

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills – adjusting language and information according to the purpose (information for the general public, for the client, for a health care provider). 		
15. BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for a career in aromatherapy. • Recognise and explore different business opportunities related to aromatherapy/essential oils. • Recognise limitations of a foundation training and identify where further training is needed to achieve business goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of different types of aromatherapy practice/business together with the scope of practice, requirements, financial planning, and regulations. For example - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visiting. • Online/distance consultations. • Private aromatherapy clinic. • Multidisciplinary clinic. • Volunteering. • Member of an integrated medicine team. • Supplier of essential oils. • Working in an essential oil company. • Creation of an aromatherapy brand. • Creating bespoke products. • Aromatherapy consultant for companies/brands. • Associating aromatherapy with other modalities such as counselling, hypnotherapy. • Writing an aromatherapy book. • Teaching essential oil use to the general public. • Writing an aromatherapy blog/hosting a podcast. • Legal and Insurance requirements for each type of practice. • Researching aromatherapy opportunities in your area. Conflicts of interest. Creation and costing of a business plan. Specialising in a specific niche area (elderly care, pregnancy, cancer, aromapsychology). 	7 Aromatherapy specific +7h general business.	30
16. CASE STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate ability to safely follow/accompany a client through a series of documented aromatherapy treatments. • Demonstrate a level of conscious competence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation based on established case study guidelines (such as the SOAP 7 note format (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) used in healthcare settings. • Documentation of at least 60 treatment/consultation sessions. Comprise of a minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 case studies of a continuation of the same clients at least three times. Case studies need to be assessed and also feedback given to the students. 	7	200

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use reflective practice skills to demonstrate learning and personal development. 			
		TOTAL AROMATHERAPY HOURS	262	710
		ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, PATHOLOGY HOURS	65	150
		MASSAGE HOURS	60	120
		TOTAL CURRICULUM HOURS	387	980