

Curriculum for a STAT-Approved Teacher Training Courses

The 'F. Matthias Alexander Technique' (Alexander Technique)

(I) PREAMBLE

A STAT-approved teacher training course offers training in acquiring the knowledge and skills – including personal skills – necessary for the delivery of lessons in the Alexander Technique to members of the public in a safe, effective and ethical manner. The key elements do not readily lend themselves to modular-based learning. All the essentials of the discipline are usually presented from the outset and revisited at successively higher levels of skill and understanding.

(1) Explaining the Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique is a way of working to prevent harmful or unwanted habits in the way we use ourselves in carrying out our daily activities. It involves a process of *re-education*; restoring the actual (pre-) conditions of use and functioning that have been previously experienced and subsequently lost [UCL Mouritz, p.145].

It is based on the principles of intentional (voluntary) *inhibition* and volitional thinking (*direction*) to 'lengthen in stature'. By giving due attention to these 'means whereby', individuals may raise the standard of their general use and functioning in a continuing process of personal growth and development.

(2) On Teaching the Alexander Technique

The change in manner of use, which is central in the Alexander Technique, is a subtle and complex shift requiring change to processes that operate subconsciously. The teacher must be able to explain the meaning of verbal instruction through skilful hands-on communication to bring about integrated readjustments so that pupils may gain a more accurate kinaesthetic experience and learn to apply the Technique independently for themselves.

In order to facilitate this new experience reliably in others, teachers of the Alexander Technique need to engage in a process of ongoing change in themselves by which they progressively assimilate the Alexander principles into their own lives. This gives them the quality in their own use that they need to communicate new proprioceptive information to others.

A commitment to taking sufficient time for this process is of the essence, and the nature of the teacher training is that trainees work continuously to improve their own quality of use in order to gain sufficient skill and understanding to help others to do the same.

(3) On STAT Teacher Training

Great emphasis is placed on the development of the trainee teacher's own use as this is regarded as the cornerstone of effective teaching. Throughout his working life, Alexander adopted various hands-on teaching procedures that over the years have proved particularly effective at conveying a sense of the teacher's own quality of use whilst teaching. While innovation will continue, STAT teacher training retains this heritage of 'classic' procedures that can be drawn on as required.

(II) OVERALL AIM OF THE COURSE

The aim of the course is to produce competent teachers of the Alexander Technique who:

- (1) embody the principles of the Alexander Technique in their teaching and in their own lives;
- (2) have the necessary skills, understanding, standard of use and confidence to be able to teach others how to put the Alexander Technique into practice in their daily life.

The course offers an intensive, practical exploration into the understanding and application of the principles of the Alexander Technique outlined in F.M. Alexander's four books. It is structured to engage the trainee in a process of personal growth; to improve the quality of their own manner of use (i.e. look after themselves) and to refine skills necessary to teach the Alexander Technique to others.

(III) CORE PRINCIPLES

The Core Principles define the Alexander Technique. (See Appendix 1 for Glossary)

- 1) Manner of use affects quality of functioning
- 2) The individual functions as a psycho-physical unity
- 3) That Thinking affects Use ((Directing, giving Orders or 'projecting messages from the brain to the [physiological] mechanism and in conducting the energy necessary to the use of these mechanisms' *UOS*, p35fn.)
- 4) That practising Inhibition allows time and space for us to become aware of, and prevent, harmful or unwanted Habit patterns
- 5) That our tendency to End-gain is linked with our Habits and obscures the Means-whereby we may attain our ends consciously
- 6) That paying attention to the rebalancing of the neck-head-back relationship (the Primary Control) facilitates a new pattern whereby we may learn to use ourselves with more awareness and less effort
- 7) That our sensory perceptions are likely to be faulty and associated with old habit patterns - they can be enjoyed but are not to be trusted – ever.

Note that this list is not exhaustive but it identifies the key principles that together make the Alexander Technique distinct from other methods, disciplines or approaches to personal health, growth and development.

The basis of the course teaches how these Principles are put into practice and taught to others. Key terms and concepts are listed in the Glossary in Appendices.

(IV) COURSE OUTCOMES

On completion of the course, graduates should demonstrate an ongoing commitment to continuing personal growth and development through applying the Alexander Technique in daily activities and as a foundation of their teaching skills.

Skills:

A qualified teacher should be able to:

- 1) demonstrate a level of use and awareness consistent with embodiment of Alexander Technique principles in his/her own life;
- 2) demonstrate proficiency in the Teaching Skills listed in Appendix III;
- 3) teach using appropriate teaching procedures;
- 4) explore and develop the application of the AT principles in everyday activities.

Knowledge:

A qualified teacher should:

- 1) understand the principles of the Alexander Technique outlined in F M Alexander's four books and be able to explain and demonstrate the seminal concepts and terms;
- 2) demonstrate an overall knowledge of F M Alexander's writings and selected writings from the wider Alexander Technique literature;
- 3) demonstrate a practical knowledge of human anatomy and physiology relevant to the teaching of the Alexander Technique.

Teaching Role:

A qualified teacher should be able to:

- 1) explain the relevance of Alexander lessons with respect to the pupil's expectations, aptitude and ability;
- 2) use each lesson as an opportunity to evaluate the pupil's current state of use and conduct the lesson appropriately in response. Encourage the pupil to maintain a lively interest in exploring the ideas between lessons;

- 3) assess the changing use of the pupil, seek regular feedback, discuss progress of lessons with pupil, review and agree on the optimal frequency and number of lessons;
- 4) demonstrate awareness of commonly encountered medical conditions and advise pupils to consult their medical advisor regarding any health concerns they may have; demonstrate awareness of red flag symptoms;
- 5) recognise the scope and limitations of his/her competence and when it is appropriate to refuse to give lessons, seek the help of a colleague, or to refer on to other professionals;
- 6) communicate with empathy and professionalism.

Practice:

A qualified teacher should have:

- 1) experience of teaching members of the public;
- 2) knowledge of how to give introductory talks, workshops and group lessons;
- 3) clear guidelines for setting up and running a teaching practice;
- 4) an understanding of, and undertaken to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct and Professional Competence and other STAT policies.

(V) ASSESSMENT [Currently under review]

Continuous assessment by Head of Training and other teachers.

Assessment is made on the basis of the trainees' ongoing assimilation of the work. This will be evidenced by the improving standard of their own use and their improving ability to teach in a variety of appropriate and effective ways, including hands-on.

Heads of Training are encouraged to involve individuals who are external to the course in the assessment of their trainees as this provides fresh perspectives on the work and is a means of sharing good practice across schools.

STAT Council provides for an experienced and qualified Moderator to visit each school to discuss the progress of the student with the Head of Training and student.

All trainees are moderated in their sixth and ninth terms:

The sixth term moderation focuses on the trainee's ability to work on himself/ herself while putting hands on a pupil whilst the ninth term moderation focuses on the trainee's ability to give a lesson.

Graduates will be awarded a STAT Certificate and membership of STAT.

(VI) COURSE STRUCTURE [Currently under review.]

- at least three years
- minimum 1600 class hours

Each school is free to choose whether to run its classes over 4 or 5 days in each week.

Training weeks will be between 12 and 20 hours of classes with each day consisting between 3 and 4 hours of classes.

Class hours are apportioned 80–20% between practical and theoretical components, consistent over the three years of study.

Notional study outside of class [e.g.'s reading, preparing written assignments and class presentations, reflective diary, application of AT to daily life] to be equivalent to 800 hours over not less than 3 years, bringing notional learning time to a minimum of 2400 hours [or requirement for the appropriate accredited rating in higher education].

(VII) ENTRY CRITERIA

Each school will have its own application process. Selection is based on an aptitude for learning the AT, an interest in growth and development through applying the principles of the AT and possessing the necessary social [interpersonal] skills. These attributes are demonstrated through the application form and at interview which may include a consultation lesson.

STAT recommends that applicants are aged 20 years or over, (school leavers not normally accepted) and that they will be expected to have studied the AT and had sufficient lessons (recommended 30 lessons) to appreciate the amount of time and commitment necessary for training. These criteria may be varied at the Head of Training's discretion.

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APPENDIX I

Glossary of Terms

TO BE WORKED ON.

The following terms and concepts are basic to an understanding of the literature on the Alexander Technique

- Inhibition
 - Direction
 - Primary Control
 - Faulty Sensory Appreciation
 - Non-Doing
 - Withholding (inhibitory) and Giving ('volitional') Consent
 - 'Thinking in Activity'
 - Psychophysical Unity
 - Manner of Use
 - Good Use
 - Misuse/Poor Use
 - General Functioning
 - End-gaining
 - Means-whereby
 - Positions of Mechanical Advantage
 - Antagonistic Muscular Action
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APPENDIX II

Guidelines - elements of the course

(1) **Core Principles**

An in-depth study, both practical and theoretical, of the principles which define the Alexander Technique. (See Appendix I for Glossary of Terms).

(2) **Trainee's Own Use**

- Working to the 'Alexander principles' and applying the Technique in special procedures and familiar activities for continuing improvement in the trainee's own use and awareness.
- Continuous application of AT principles within the context of the course activities as well as in their own lives beyond the course classes.

(3) **Teaching Skills**

(1) Developing a sensitive and skilful use of the hands in order to:

- listen and guide;
- communicate a quality of use;
- impart reliable experience of inhibition and direction;
- convey experiential understanding of the primary control.

(2) Observing/Effecting Change by:

- developing comprehensive observational skills (visual, aural, tactile and otherwise) to evaluate the changing state of a pupil;
- selecting from a repertoire of teaching skills the most appropriate for a pupil's stage of understanding and ability;
- developing ability to work towards a well-co-ordinated neck/head/back relationship in the pupil in order to restore proper working of primary control.

(3) Ability to fulfil the teaching role:

- bringing a pupil to the stage where he/she is able to continue the work of applying the principles of the Alexander Technique independently.

(4) Proficiency in the primary teaching skill:

- instructing a pupil how to inhibit immediate reaction to a stimulus and how to direct the primary control of their use in order to effect positive change.

This is supported by the following processes:

- Identifying a pupil's habitual patterns of use - being able to detect a pupil's particular idiosyncrasies in the way they use themselves, and determining in what way these patterns of use are interfering with the primary neck/head/back relationship.
- Refining a pupil's awareness in action; being able to teach a pupil how to be "present", mindful of non-doing and of maintaining directions while staying attentive to the activity in process.
- Re-educating a pupil's kinaesthetic awareness - being able to impart new proprioceptive experiences to a pupil which give accurate sensory meaning to the directions being learned.
- Teaching a pupil how to utilise the directive power of his/her thinking to guide and control manner of use

(4) Classical Procedures

Certain teaching procedures employed by FM Alexander and first-generation teachers have through practice proved to have a useful role in teaching the Technique. They involve what Alexander referred to as "positions of mechanical advantage" (see glossary).

Practical work should explore how we move, work, think, breathe and have our being according to the above Principles, with the Head of Trainings devising actions, activities and all manner of ways and means of making these principles manifest, through the practice of linking verbal instruction with precise and meaningful hands-on experience. It is important to stress the necessity for continuous, on-going work on oneself, both for teachers and students.

The following list is for illustrative purposes only:

- (i) Chair work
- (ii) Table work
- (iii) Monkey
- (iv) Hands on back of chair
- (v) Whispered 'Ah'
- (vi) Walking
- (vii) Lunge
- (viii) Wall work
- (ix) Squatting
- (x) Going up on the toes
- (xi) Moving forwards and backwards from the hips while sitting

(5) Application Work

Consolidating the work on the self through the practice of applying the AT principles to familiar, everyday activities, either individually, or working in pairs or in small groups.

(6) Teaching and Learning Methods (at the discretion of the Head of Training)

- daily one-to-one turns (mini-lessons). Consistent and regular practical work is a crucial requirement of the course
- daily led discussion/lecture
- daily directed activities
- regular and frequent teaching practice/learning in small groups
- study in various formats (talks, self-study, discussion groups)
- keeping a written reflective learning diary
- written assignments
- presentations
- supervised teaching in third year.

(7) Study of Alexander's books and other writings

Understanding the theory, philosophy, principles, practical application and teaching of the Technique through the reading and study of Alexander's writings, in particular his four books; and supplementary reading of relevant publications such as:

- publications by those who trained with FM, i.e. Marjory Barlow, Wilfred Barlow, Goddard Binkley, Walter Carrington, , Patrick Macdonald, George Trevelyan, Lulie Westfeldt; and with AR, i.e. Frank Pierce Jones;
- publications on the history of the Technique, the life of Alexander, accounts from his pupils;
- contemporary works written by Alexander Technique teachers – selection according to choice by Head of Training.

(8) Anatomy and Physiology

- (i) A study of structural, surface and functional (applied) anatomy and physiology sufficient to provide a working knowledge of the functioning of the human body in relation to movement and behaviour, and to include breathing and vocal mechanisms;

- (ii) An awareness of common medical conditions which are likely to be encountered and advice regarding teaching approach;
- (iii) Awareness of red flag symptoms.

(9) Teaching Experience

- (i) Experience in third year of training of giving one-to-one lessons to members of the public under insurance approved supervision.
- (ii) How to conduct the following:
 - a first lesson
 - an introductory workshop
 - an introductory talk
 - a group lesson.

(10) Professionalism and Ethics

- Knowledge and compliance with STAT's Code of Professional Conduct and Professional Competence and its policies relating to good practice.
- Understanding that the Technique is essentially a method for prevention of habitual misuse patterns.
- Knowing to advise prospective pupils with existing medical conditions to consult their medical adviser about health concerns.
- Knowing the scope and limitations of one's competence; when it is appropriate to refuse to give lessons or to refer on to other professionals.
- Being clear that AT teachers are not trained to diagnose nor to treat specific medical conditions and that their role is essentially an educational one.

(11) Setting up and Running a Practice [Possible 'STAT module']

Recommendations and provision of links to website literature in relation to:

- Setting up a practice – i.e. premises, public liability and professional indemnity insurance, health and safety, marketing and publicity, compliance with regulatory guidance;
- Running a practice – i.e. practice administration, financial management, risk assessment, knowledge of procedures relating to consent, confidentiality, record keeping.

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APPENDIX III

Detailed Teaching Skills (to add reference to ATVSG document)

A. Own use

The teacher should be able to:

- (i) Develop own use and attend to it so that it continues as a reliable foundation for teaching and helping others.
- (ii) Be aware of stimuli to act from the external environment and from the self.
- (iii) Inhibit the immediate response at the moment when a stimulus to act or react is received.
- (iv) (While refusing to react), give the primary directions to allow the neck to be free in order to let the head released 'forward and upward', the back to lengthen and widen and the knees to go forward and away.
- (v) Recognise the essential nature of primary directions and that the directions flow into each other continuously.
- (vi) (In order to carry out the intended action), maintain primary directions throughout the desired act, or to stop and reconsider, making a conscious decision to abandon the end, or carry on to complete the original end or choose some other objective.
- (vii) Maintain primary directions in stillness and during the initiation of thoughts leading to movement and during movement.
- (viii) Maintain primary directions while communicating vocally, visually and through hand contact.
- (ix) Exhibit the manifestation of primary directions 'all at once, one after the other' through:
 - resilient elastic supportive muscle tonus,
 - vocal resonance,
 - visual alertness,
 - spatial awareness,
 - deftness of touch,
 - continuous self-observation.
- (x) Appreciate and establish psychophysical calm and that attitude of mind necessary for employing the Alexander Technique, (i.e. an attitude of open, quiet observation of self and surroundings avoiding irrelevant emotional involvement and minimal attachment to opinions or outcomes).
- (xi) Recognise and let go of continued self-imposed (additional) voluntary muscular activity within the supporting musculature.

- (xii) Attend to central and peripheral fields of vision.
- (xiii) Employ inhibition and direction successfully in situations of gradually increasing challenge, in stillness, during the initiation of thoughts leading to movement and during movement in a variety of activities, and in combinations of activities.
- (xiv) Maintain directions during voice and vocal production such as in speaking, reading aloud, conversation, reciting.
- (xv) Attend to the dynamic poise of the head and neck in relation to the rest of the body and demonstrate freedom from and reduction in inappropriate, self-imposed tension in the neck muscles.

B. Visual observation skills

The teacher should be able to:

- (i) Attend to input from the central and peripheral fields of vision.
- (ii) Observe the pupil's use unobtrusively, either directly or by the use of mirrors, without disconcerting the pupil.
- (iii) Observe his/her own use, directly or by the use of mirrors, without disconcerting the pupil.
- (iv) Integrate visual input with input from other senses.

C. Listening skills

The teacher should be able to:

- (i) Observe and recognise a variety of sound indicators of a pupil's manner of use and quality of functioning (including: joint clicks, coughs, breathing, vocal resonance/volume/tone - in fact, everything about the pupil that can be heard).
- (ii) Listen to the pupil's own story: the content and the manner in which it is told.
- (iii) Observe (by listening), and recognise in what a pupil says and does, sounds that can indicate an end-gaining attitude (e.g. inappropriate speed or effort, fear, anxiety, anticipation and over-eagerness).
- (iv) Listen with interest and empathy to what a pupil says, and what he/she does not say, without being reactive.
- (v) Develop the ability to inhibit ones own reactions to stimuli of an increasing range and intensity in order to be able to remain open and 'on receive' (receptive).
- (vi) Communicate the quality of ones thinking, attention and use through personal interactions, including listening (auditory) skills.
- (vii) Employ listening skills in order to foster good rapport and clarity in communication with the pupil.

- (viii) Attend to external and his/her own internal stimuli whilst teaching, and develop a capacity for withholding consent to react to these stimuli solely on the basis of preconceived ideas or habits of thought and action.
- (ix) Attend to his/her own quality of thinking and feelings, and recognise when end-gaining, mind-wandering, concentrating or relaxing etc. tend to intrude and detract from the quality of attention given to a pupil.
- (x) Remain open to the flow of interaction with a pupil and respond appropriately by drawing on a wide range of possibilities at one's disposal.
- (xi) Allow pupils the opportunity to express themselves (verbally, through their manner of use, structure, functioning etc.).
- (xii) (Through his/her quality of attention), create a climate that promotes learning: safe, unconditional, and empathetic.

D. Hands-on skills

The teacher should be able to:

- (i) Make specialised hand contact with pupil, directly and through clothing, and so attend to changing conditions within the pupil, and the direction of change.
- (ii) Make and maintain a steady, supple ('non-doing') contact with the pupil that is open, responsive and receptive.
- (iii) Maintain independence of balance, i.e. not lean on the pupil.
- (iv) Maintain own use and clarity of thought without creating a barrier between him/herself and the pupil.
- (v) Attend to sensory input arising from the specialised hand contact, and so observe changing muscle tone, focus of attention, intention, attitude, presence, anxiety, balance, understanding and quality of use of the pupil.
- (vi) Recognise and interpret the changing sensory input, relating it to particular features of the pupil's use.
- (vii) Recognise particular transient patterns of use and offer inferences about causes.
- (viii) Compare sensory input received by the two hands and the relationship between them.
- (ix) Include him or herself and the pupil in the field of attention, directing attention back and forth between the two.
- (x) Guide the pupil through movement, attending to his/her balance without being forceful or controlling and without losing attention to any of the above.

- (xi) Employ the hands with good use in order to receive information about the pupil's use and to convey the quality of the teacher's own use as well as any specific directions.
- (xii) Contact, hold, support, stimulate and guide/move the pupil in various classical and other ways, all in accordance with the principles of the AT, respecting the functional/psychophysical integrity of each pupil, recognising and respecting individual variations in joint anatomy and physical limitations, so avoiding imposition of a standard routine.
- (xiii) (By these means) provide beneficial stimuli, sensory feedback and graded challenges such that the pupil's vigilance, interest, proprioceptive awareness, neuro-muscular co-ordination, postural reflex activity and understanding are enhanced.
- (xiv) Help pupils learn to recognise and inhibit unwanted mental and neuromuscular patterns that interfere with good use and functioning.
- (xv) Help pupils learn to employ inhibition and directions and projection of intention with increasing skill in a variety of situations.
- (xvi) Help pupils learn to become aware of the improvements that follow.
- (xvii) Help pupils learn to become more self-observant in daily life and able to improve their own use.

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