



Medical Section  
School of Spiritual  
Science  
Goetheanum

Curative Education and  
Social Therapy Council

International  
Training Group

# Charter on Professional Education

## Preamble

Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy (see note p.2) are a global movement. Each of its professional education centers is embedded in a particular cultural, social and political landscape. New fields of work continue to develop and the tasks and challenges vary across local contexts. This is also reflected in the diversity of requirements for professional education programs.

Professional education in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy enables students to offer qualified help and support to persons in complex life situations, based on the understanding of the human being developed by Rudolf Steiner. According to this view each person has a spiritual essence that is unimpaired and inviolable. Developmental disorders and disabilities can occur when psychological, physical or social challenges stand in the way of an individual's self-actualization. Professional education programs in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy enable students to support people with disabilities in their self-actualization. What unites them across the world is their underlying view of the human being, which arises from anthroposophy, and the international network that endeavors to establish shared principles for professional preparation.

These shared principles include:

1. The view of individuals as agents of their own biography and the need to support people with disabilities in shaping their life spaces in ways that best support their self-actualization
2. The study of the view of disability in history, society and academic discourse and the pursuit of a deepened understanding of human development out of the perspective introduced by Rudolf Steiner

**Note:** The term *Curative Education and Social Therapy* is intended to refer to the entire field of professional endeavors that fall under the scope of the human services, social care and social and pedagogical supports for individuals in vulnerable life situations. Because of the intrinsically multidisciplinary diversity of this field and the national, regional and increasingly global contexts in which this work continues to evolve, no universally accepted and inclusive terminology is available to describe this professional field in its entirety. In its absence, the term 'Curative Education and Social Therapy' is used here in the manner in which it has established itself in common usage among anthroposophical practitioners in the field. This is not intended to suggest a terminological preference, but should be read as a placeholder for whatever terms are most appropriate within a given context of practice.

3. A profile of educational goals that supports the students' understanding of the uniqueness of each situation, their ability to intuitively shape their response to each case with the help of appropriate professional tools and methods, and their capacity to reflect on what has taken place
4. Ways of learning that enable students to acquire dialogical and creative skills on the basis of an artistic approach to theory and practical experience
5. An educational culture in which collegial cooperation that includes the students, as well as local and international networking, form the foundation for working, in accordance with a shared vision
6. Ongoing professional development through self-evaluation, intensive dialogue with other approaches and the development of a culture of research and inquiry.

This Charter articulates the foundations for professional education within this international network. It lays out the basic principles for the professional preparation of those who wish to work creatively with the anthroposophical understanding of the human being in order to support individuals with disabilities and to develop inclusive and future-oriented social forms. It replaces the *Manual – Training in Curative Education and Social Therapy* (2001) as the shared point of reference for the international collaboration in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy.

Professional preparation programs are intended to form the starting point for a viable professional biography that enables the individual practitioner to find ever-new ways of bringing impulses to life that are guided by respect for the inviolable dignity of each individual. Embedded within collegial communities of practice, practitioners will play a part in the shaping of a future society. While the professional education programs included in this international network are rooted in anthroposophical spiritual science, they also take active part in the general discourse on current developments in society, in their professional fields and in the relevant academic disciplines.

## 1. Scope of Professional Practice

Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy see as their task to help and support people with special needs in their individual development and in their pursuit of a successful and socially integrated life.

Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy also intervene creatively in the micro- and macrosocial environments. Such intervention is based on a comprehensive understanding of the conditions for human life and development and aims to contribute actively to the development of social cultures that allow for the participation, inclusion and self-determination of individuals within their networks of social relationships.

The understanding of disability as a fact of human life and living together is continuously evolving, which means that the related fields of work are also evolving. The professional interaction today focuses strongly on dialogical relationships and partnership. Individuals are to be recognized in their unique life situations and supported in finding their own way to realize their potential as active contributors to their communities and society.

From this mandate results a wide range of specific fields of work. All of these have in common that they recognize it as their task to shape life situations and support developmental processes in all phases of life and under complex conditions.

While the classical settings in educational institutions, supported living and working, and clinical and therapeutic contexts continue to be important, ever-new professional fields arise within the sphere of human services and social care in order to support people whose physical, mental and spiritual integrity is endangered in their personal and social development. Through their engagement in these fields, Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy also aim to contribute to the development of culture and society as a whole. This impulse aims to create new social forms that will be increasingly able to do justice to the whole spectrum of diverse ways of being human.

Anthroposophical professional education programs in Curative Education and Social Therapy allow students to not merely see themselves as service-providers. Their work consists in creatively shaping education, development and relationships. They advise and support persons in unique life situations and are able to discover a wide spectrum of creative possibilities, even in very vulnerable circumstances. Their professionalism consists in their knowledge of the human being, their ability to shape social-cultural environments and their capacity to co-create broader societal and political processes.

## 2. The View of Disability

It is apparent from ancient documents that various sensory, motor, physical, cognitive, emotional and social disabilities were recognized long ago and that the participation in society of people affected by them was a topic of discussion. Over the course of history, many different forms of exclusion and inclusion can be found, which have often been associated with special social roles carrying either negative or positive connotations. However, an understanding of the support needs of individuals with disabilities informed by humanistic motives and an appreciation of the potential of all human beings for development only began to emerge during the period of the Enlightenment.

A global recognition of individuals with disabilities as citizens with equal rights has been promoted particularly by the inclusion of a new concept of disability in various instruments of international collaboration. These arise from agreements established within the context of the *United Nations* (UN) and the *World Health Organization* (WHO). The World Health Organization's *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) sees disability as a phenomenon resulting from the interaction between individual health impairments and the structures of the surrounding society. The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* derives from the recognition of universal human rights the obligation to grant people with disabilities full access to all aspects of society, and at the same time provide the special protections needed for a successful life.

Since its inception in 1924, Anthroposophical Curative Education has recognized disability as an expression of what it means to be human in the universal sense. It sees the individual as a complex being engaged in a continuous dynamic process of development. The essence of each individual, the spiritual core of a person's individuality, which evolves continuously throughout

repeated earthly lives, is considered to be always intact and inviolable. In the course of their biographical pathway in the world, individuals have to deal with the resistances arising from their own psychological and physical conditions in order to carry their individual impulses into the world.

Every person is therefore, in principle, capable of development, but needs the support and help of others. Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy have a role to play wherever the help and support to meet such individual needs is not readily available due to the complexity of developmental situations or the limitations of a given social environment.

Students of anthroposophical professional education programs are encouraged to deepen their understanding of historical and current concepts of disability in all their dimensions. On the basis of this understanding, they learn to penetrate the concepts that Rudolf Steiner established in his work, and which have since been developed further in various diverse forms. In conjunction with current guiding ideas, theories and concepts, these form the foundations for an ethically sound, dialogical way of working that is based on the recognition of each person's individual needs.

### 3. Qualification Profile

#### Educational Goals

For individuals to become effective agents of their own biography, they must find the right conditions for their physical, psychological and spiritual development. This means that their needs must be recognized and the corresponding social conditions and resources must be made available and accessible. In order to meet these requirements, practitioners need to have profound and comprehensive knowledge of the needs of each individual.

Professional education programs enable students to support individuals with disabilities so that they can better work with their life circumstances at a physical, psychological and spiritual level, and more fully actualize their biographical intentions. Students learn to shape and carry encounters in a way that allows those in their care to realize their potential and find their place within the community. To this end, students learn how to understand a wide variety of life situations, how to solve problems in collaboration with the individuals they are supporting, and how to plan, execute and evaluate the steps that need to be taken. The students learn to work in interprofessional teams; they become actively involved in their organizations and gain insights into administrative tasks.

#### Knowledge, Attitudes and Capacities

Students in professional education programs do not only learn to act in accordance with acquired theoretical or empirically derived concepts and methods, but learn to develop goals for a specific course of action out of the direct human encounter. This ability for appropriate situational intervention requires presence of mind and leads to a creative-artistic mode of action.

Pedagogical and social processes stimulate developmental processes, which is why students are also encouraged to consider the question of self-development. Self-reflection, self-knowledge and self-education, the willingness to accept feedback and the ability to change, are core competences in this pro-

cess, and professional education programs have a mandate to support their development.

Professional education programs thus also foster the growth of inner attitudes. In addition to knowledge, social skills and practical capacities, these inner attitudes provide a foundation for social and pedagogical work that is anchored deeply within the individual person.

Students are encouraged to participate actively in the wider professional discourse, and to question and develop their own professional situation on a self-critical manner.

Curative educational and social therapeutic action often requires intervention in the life of another person. This raises ethical questions and problems, which must be addressed and discussed.

Professional education programs cultivate in students a sensitive awareness of the power dynamics which are present in any interaction with an individual in need of support. Students are encouraged and empowered to act in freedom on the basis of a professional ethics grounded in respect for the dignity of each individual.

#### **4. Ways of Learning**

Professional education programs help students to develop into individually responsible, well-informed and ethically reflective professionals who can act creatively in a continually changing human and social environment. For this, the learning paths themselves need to be based on a comprehensive spiritual-scientific understanding of the conditions that facilitate learning and development.

The practice of Curative Education and Social Therapy is based on a creative-artistic mode of action. In this mode, the choice of approaches as well as the goal and direction of the activity arise anew in each case out of the encounter with the other. For this reason, the artistic element plays a particularly prominent part in the cultivation of personal capacities.

In professional preparation programs in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy, each student is engaged in field-based practice under the guidance of a mentor. All field-based practical experiences are systematically reviewed, discussed, reflected and evaluated in relation to themes and concepts taught in courses. This means that theoretical concepts do not remain abstract, but become meaningful through their relationship to students' lived experience, while newly gained insight and knowledge can in turn provide the stimulus for the deepening and transformation of students' developing practical capacities and of the curriculum itself.

In order to achieve this interpenetration of action and reflection, the professional education programs needs to use a wide range of mutually complementary teaching methods such as one-to-one mentor support, dialogue, group work, self-directed study, project-based learning, presentation and skill development through practice. The elements of artistic process and practice, above all, make it possible for students to consolidate their theoretical knowledge through observation and experience, and to familiarize themselves with social processes and develop the skills to work with them. The engagement with artistic processes therefore weaves through the professional education programs,

uniting theory and practice. Theoretical and practical learning is integrated with artistic, dialogical and reflective methods in a way that allows them to enhance and complement each other.

Professional education programs offer transparent courses of study that enable students to take responsibility for their own learning. To that end, students are also encouraged to pursue a methodical path of inner development in order to deepen the professional skills they acquire.

Professional education programs make students aware of the heterogeneity and diversity of individual situations and teach them to enter into dialogue with their particular cultural environment.

## 5. Educational Culture and Landscape

Each professional education center is embedded in its regional and national educational landscape and seeks to network with other initiatives and places of practice in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy. The task of professional education centers is not limited to conveying knowledge and methods, but encompasses a comprehensive educational mandate that includes active involvement of students, mentors and practice supervisors. Field-based practice is an integral element of the educational process, requiring close cooperation among those responsible for these different aspects. This ensures that there is no gulf between theory and practice and that the interaction stimulates growth and development in both fields.

Since its inception, the anthroposophical movement for Curative Education and Social Therapy has grown into a worldwide network with more than 700 centers in over forty countries. The countries and specialized professional fields are represented in the *Curative Education and Social Therapy Council*, which is affiliated with the *Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science* at the Goetheanum in Dornach (Switzerland). The Council holds an annual meeting where representatives can share experiences and work on important issues.

The need to staff the movement's activities has led to the creation of over forty professional education centers in more than thirty countries. These centers are joined into an international network, which is represented by the *International Training Group*. They offer a broad range of professional preparation programs and programs for further and continuing education at various levels, from practice-oriented vocational courses to academic studies.

In their annual meeting, the members of the *International Training Group* focus on the further development of foundations and methods, discuss quality and research questions and initiate new projects.

The *International Training Group* has developed and implemented a procedure for the accreditation of anthroposophical professional education centers, for which this *Charter on Professional Education* serves as the conceptual and practical basis. This accreditation is based on a peer evaluation process. Its procedure and methodology have been adopted by the *International Training Group* and are implemented by an elected *Recognition Group*.

On a regular basis, the *International Training Group* conducts projects related to the development of professional education methods. Thus, for example, a *Manual – Training in Curative Education and Social Therapy* was developed

and an international *Training for Trainers* pilot program was conducted, each with the support of a European Union grant.

The on-going international exchange of experience ensures that the very diverse professional education programs are aware of each other and that they work on shared principles. Their cooperation supports the further development of differentiated cultures of professional education with a common spiritual and methodological basis. By encouraging the mutual enrichment and widening of visions among its members, the *International Training Group* also makes a contribution to social and cultural endeavors worldwide.

## 6. Research and Development

Over and above the ongoing evaluation, critical reflection and further development of teaching methods and curriculum, the professional education network also strives to expand and deepen the body of professional knowledge within the field of Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy by conducting research in dialogue with related academic and professional communities.

The understanding of anthroposophical foundations is continually deepened and consolidated through basic research, study of source materials and in-depth studies of the layered history of Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy and its applications in practice.

Current practices in professional education and of the work in the field are supported through scholarly inquiry. Quality development is based on evaluative methods of field-based research, case studies and examination of the relevant context and environmental conditions.

Independent research is encouraged and supported as a means of extending the scope of knowledge and for the development of innovative approaches. This also calls for the development of research methods that include the spiritual and spiritual-scientific dimensions of human reality in ways that are appropriate to the research topic.

As a contribution to the scientific discourse within the anthroposophical network and with other concepts in the field of human services and social care, the publication of research results in books, journals and at professional conferences is initiated and supported.

**This Charter was developed in the 2014 and 2015 conferences of the International Training Group in Kassel, Germany, and was formally adopted on April 28, 2016.**

Impressum:

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