

Complementary Medicine

Complementary and Alternative Medicine is the collective term used for a variety of skills and therapies. This is becoming a popular area for study and work opportunities with a variety of courses available for each discipline. These are available as professional recognised qualifications, degrees and interest-only courses for family and friends.

Checklist: Why study Complementary Medicine in the United Kingdom?

- Many of the major disciplines operating in the UK have regulatory bodies that validate courses and oversee the conduct of practitioners
- There is a wide variety of courses at all levels, from certificates and diplomas to postgraduate degrees and doctorates
- You can study most disciplines full time, part time or just evenings and weekends
- You can choose to study at a specialist private college or at an adult education, college of further education or university
- Our ability in spoken English will benefit greatly from being surrounded by English speakers, giving you a choice of countries in which to work
- **Note:** National occupational standards are being created and you will need to confirm that registration and insurance are available after the successful completion of your course.
- Complementary Medicine is currently working towards voluntary regulation and therefore it is important to ensure that any professional training course is meeting the regulatory requirements.

1 What can I study?

This information sheet concentrates on the most commonly used therapies available within either the UK's National Health Service or in private practice. These are: acupuncture, aromatherapy, chiropractic, homeopathy, hypnotherapy, massage, osteopathy and reflexology. It also gives details of medical herbalism, a Complementary Medicine discipline with the UK, though this is less frequently offered by the NHS.

The table below briefly summarises each of the complementary therapies, their regulatory bodies and the sort of qualifications you would be able to gain.

Complementary therapy	Regulatory body	Studying to qualify	Postgraduate
<p>Acupuncture:</p> <p>A therapy based on the Eastern philosophy of belief in the flow of energy (Qi) along fourteen main circuits (meridians).</p> <p>The acupuncturist's job is to restore the balance between the meridians by piercing the skin at appropriate points.</p>	<p>Acupuncture is currently moving towards statutory regulation. This is being taken forward by a Steering Group which is considering both herbal medicine and acupuncture. Individual working groups dealing with acupuncture (Western, Eastern and auricular), traditional Chinese medicine and herbal medicine (Eastern and Western) report to this Steering Group.</p>	<p>Many short courses at non-degree level do not offer qualifications. However, you can study to become a Licentiate in Acupuncture through a number of courses at degree level. It is important that these courses also offer adequate supervised practice. Shorter courses are also available for those who practise auricular acupuncture only.</p>	<p>Many registered doctors and physiotherapists practise acupuncture as well as their normal medical work. They may not have undertaken the full acupuncture training, and may have specialised in using acupuncture techniques for pain relief.</p>
<p>Aromatherapy:</p> <p>The use of essential oils in massage, inhalation and compresses. These are individually blended for an individual at a specific moment in their life and not pre-blended.</p>	<p>Most aromatherapy organisations take part in the Aromatherapy Consortium and are working towards voluntary self-regulation. From 1 December 2006, the Aromatherapy Council will function to provide the register of approved practices/practitioners.</p>	<p>There are many courses available. Ensure that the course is recognised to enable registration with the Aromatherapy Council. This means that it meets national occupational standards and you will then be able to practise safely.</p>	<p>Postgraduate courses are available. Ensure that the final qualification is recognised by the Aromatherapy Council.</p>
<p>Reflexology:</p> <p>The use of specific pressure on the reflex points on the sole of the foot or palm of the hand.</p>	<p>Most reflexology organisations are part of the Reflexology Forum and are working towards voluntary self-regulation.</p>	<p>There are many courses available. Ensure that the course is recognised to enable registration with the Reflexology Forum. This means that it meets national occupational standard and you will then be able to practise safely.</p>	<p>Postgraduate courses are available. Ensure that the final qualification is recognised by the Reflexology Forum.</p>
<p>Massage</p> <p>The manipulation of soft tissue and muscles on the body using the hands. There is a variety of techniques, including therapeutic, holistic, sports and remedial.</p>	<p>Most massage organisations are part of the General Council for Massage Therapy and are working towards voluntary self-regulation.</p>	<p>There are many courses available. Ensure that the course is recognised to enable registration with the General Council for Massage. This means that it meets the national occupational standards and you will then be able to practise safely.</p>	<p>Postgraduate courses are available. Ensure that the final qualification is recognised by the General Massage Council.</p>
<p>Chiropractic:</p> <p>Chiropractic is a health profession concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of</p>	<p>Chiropractors are statutory regulated. The profession is regulated by the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) and anyone describing themselves as a chiropractor has to register with</p>	<p>There are a number of institutions whose chiropractic courses are recognised by the GCC. They offer degree courses with a variety of attendance</p>	<p>Some institutions provide courses leading to postgraduate awards, including higher degrees. It is important that any chiropractic programme is recognised by the General Chiropractic Council to</p>



<p>mechanical movements, particularly generating from the spine. There is an emphasis on manual treatments, including spinal manipulation or adjustment. X-rays may be taken to assist the clinical diagnosis.</p>	<p>the GCC. It is a criminal offence to describe oneself as any sort of chiropractor without being registered.</p>	<p>options.</p>	<p>ensure compliance with the regulatory process.</p>
<p>Osteopathy: This is a system of manipulating the bones and other tissues to relieve pain and tension. A lot of treatment is concerned with manipulation of the spine, joints and soft tissues.</p>	<p>Osteopaths are statutory regulated. By law, you must register with the General Osteopathic Council (GOC) before you can practice in the UK. Your qualification must come from an accredited provider to be recognised by the GOC.</p>	<p>There are a number of institutions whose osteopathy courses are recognised by the General Osteopathic Council. These are degree courses with a variety of attendance options – mainly part or full -time. Some are a combination of the two.</p>	<p>Some institutions provide courses leading to postgraduate awards, including higher degrees. It is important that any chiropractic programme is recognised by the General Osteopathic Council to ensure compliance with the regulatory process.</p>
<p>Homeopathy: The treatment of disease by using minute amounts of substances from plant, mineral and animal sources. There are many different ways to use the remedies with the classical (single remedy) being the most common in the UK. It is closely followed by homeotoxicology which is more widely available on the continent. Diagnostic systems offering a complex system (several different remedies) are widely available in the UK.</p>	<p>Homeopathy is moving towards voluntary regulation and national occupation standards have been developed by the Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths (CORH).</p>	<p>There is a wide variety of courses in homeopathy, however courses must now reflect the national occupational standards and can be checked by referring to the CORH website www.corh.org.uk</p>	<p>Postgraduate courses in homeopathy are taught at five centres in the UK and students are encouraged to sit the specialist examinations that lead to the Faculty of Homeopathy's qualifications: LFHom, MFHom, VetMFHom (for veterinary surgeons) and DFHom (for dentists and pharmacists).</p>
<p>Hypnotherapy: The use of hypnosis to treat a range of disorders.</p>	<p>There are a number of different bodies that support hypnotherapy. Whilst there is currently no single professional registration body, there are discussions taking place on the regulation of practise. There are, however, organisations that may set standards and hold registers of practitioners. The United Kingdom Confederation of Hypnotherapy Organisations covers many of them.</p>	<p>There are no standard qualifications. Training is very varied and can consist of as little as a brief correspondence course, or as much as a course with stringent requirements for a medical or other academic degree and a sound professional background. The British Register of Complementary Practitioners (Hypnotherapy</p>	<p>There are a number of short course offered at post graduate level for health professionals. These are used to reduce anxiety rather than a more formal treatment method. Universities do not offer any postgraduate courses.</p>



	.	Division) has listings of qualified and insured practitioners that are available to enquirers and who work under the Institute for Complementary Medicine approved code of ethics.	
<p>Herbalism:</p> <p>The use of plant-based remedies to treat a range of conditions. These are normally ingested following a prescription from a fully qualified herbalist.</p>	<p>Herbalism is currently moving towards statutory regulation. This is being taken forward by a Steering Group which is considering both herbal medicine and acupuncture. Individual working groups dealing with acupuncture (Western, Eastern and auricular), traditional Chinese medicine and herbal medicine (Eastern and Western) report to the Steering Groups.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Courses usually lead to a BSc degree in herbal medicine. Eastern herbal medicine is often taught alongside acupuncture to degree level as it has the same diagnosis technique and is based on Traditional Chinese medicine philosophy.</p>	<p>Postgraduate training is already available for both Western and Eastern herbal medicine and will become more formalised once the statutory regulation is in place.</p>

Checklist: Choosing the right course

- Always check first, in the countries in which you want to work, the qualifications they ask for in order to practise as a complementary therapist or practitioner in any of the disciplines. ‘Therapist’ usually refers to a beautician whilst ‘practitioner’ refers to someone who undertakes complementary medicine diagnoses – relevant to their discipline - and gives appropriate treatment.
- Decide whether you want to study the subject as an interest, perhaps while you improve your English, or as a profession – this will affect the level and length of course you take.
- If you want to study a discipline taught only through accredited colleges, begin your search with the regulatory body of that discipline (e.g. the General Osteopathy Council) or a multi-disciplinary body like the Institute for Complementary Medicine.

2 Entrance

It is not possible to generalise about entrance requirements. If you want to take a degree in complementary medicine, you will be expected to have the same standard of academic achievement as for other science degrees (refer to *Choosing your degree course and institution* in this series). Check the UCAS website for information about entry requirements. Most institutions will require you to attend an interview. You should check with individual institutions.

Some postgraduate courses, especially those at specialist schools rather than universities, are aimed at practising therapists. Again, you should check with the institution for specific entrance requirements.



3 How can I register as a professional?

Some therapies have formal, legal registration and others do not. Refer to the table above ('What can I study?').

Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

UK degrees are recognised all over the world. But some institutions award their own qualifications, which may not be recognised in some countries. It is vital that you check with the relevant governing bodies in the countries in which you want to work.

How can I ensure my teacher is suitably qualified and experienced?

Ask for details from the awarding body for their requirement for registered teachers. Also, at interview it is quite acceptable to ask how long the tutor has been qualified in the discipline you wish to study.

4 Next steps

Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 You should carefully consider whether you want to train as a practitioner in a therapy that is not universally recognised and which may not be adequately regulated or controlled.
- 2 You should contact potential employers in the countries in which you want to work, to find out the qualifications they require.
- 3 Start looking for courses with the regulatory bodies (if there is one for your subject) – they have lists of accredited colleges for their subjects.
- 4 Look at the British Council website www.educationuk.org



5 Where can I find more information?

British Council education information

Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

P O Box 28
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ
Telephone +44 (0) 870 1122211
Fax +44 (0) 1242 544961
Email enquiries@ucas.ac.uk
Website www.ucas.com

EducationUK Scotland

Website www.educationukscotland.org

Wales International Consortium

Website www.walesinternationalconsortium.com

Acupuncture

British Acupuncture Council

63 Jeddo Road
London W12 9HQ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 8735 0400
Fax +44 (0) 20 8735 0404
Email info@acupuncture.org.uk
Website www.acupuncture.org.uk

British Register of Complementary Practitioners - Oriental Medicine Division

P O Box 194
London SE16 7QZ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7237 5165
Fax +44 (0) 20 7237 5175
Website: www.i-c-m.org.uk

Chiropractic

General Chiropractic Council

44 Wicklow Street
London WC1X 9HL
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7713 5155
Fax +44 (0) 20 7713 5844
Email enquiries@gcc-uk.org
Website www.gcc-uk.org

Homeopathy

Faculty of Homeopathy

(British Homeopathic Association)
Hahnemann House
29 Park Street West
Luton LU1 3BE
Telephone +44 (0) 870 444 3950
Fax +44 (0) 870 444 3960
Website www.trusthomeopathy.org

British Register of Complementary Practitioners- Homeopathic Division

P O Box 194
London SE16 7QZ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7237 5165
Fax +44 (0) 20 7237 5175
Website: www.i-c-m.org.uk

Society of Homeopaths

11 Brookfield
Duncan Close
Moulton Park
Northampton NH3 6WL
Telephone +44 (0) 845 450 6611
Fax +44 (0) 845 450 6622
Email info@homeopathy-soh.org
Website www.homeopathy-soh.com

Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths

Secretariat
Mr Peter Mitchell
11 Wingle Tye Road
Burgess Hill
West Sussex RH15 9HR
Telephone +44 (0) 144 423 9494
Email admin@corh.org.uk
Website www.corh.org.uk

Medical Herbalism

National Institute of Medical Herbalists

56 Longbrook Street
Exeter
Devon EX4 6AH
Telephone +44 (0) 1392 426022
Fax +44 (0) 1392 498963
Email nimh@ukexeter.freeserve.co.uk
Website www.nimh.org.uk

Osteopathy

General Osteopathic Council

776 Tower Bridge Road
London SW1 3LU
Telephone +44 (0) 7357 6655
Fax +44 (0) 7357 0011
Email info@osteopathy.org.uk
Website www.osteopathy.org.uk



Hypnotherapy

British Register of Complementary Practitioners- Hypnotherapy Division

PO Box 194
London SE16 7QZ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7237 5165
Fax +44 (0) 20 7237 5175
Website www.i-c-m.org.uk

National Register of Hypnotherapists and Psychotherapists (NRHP)

Suite B
12 Cross Street
Nelson
Lancashire BB9 7EN
Telephone +44 (0) 1282 716 839
Fax +44 (0) 1282 698 633
Email nrhp@btconnect.com
Website www.nrhp.co.uk

British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnotherapists (BSMDH)

National Office Secretary
28 Dale Park Gardens
Cookridge
Leeds LS16 7PT
Telephone/Fax +44 (0) 70 0056 0309
Telephone +44 (0) 1282 716 839
Fax +44 (0) 1282 698 633
Email nrhp@btconnect.com
website www.bsmdh.org

Reflexology

The Reflexology Forum
Dalton House
60 Windsor Avenue
London
SW19 2RR
0800 037 0130
<http://www.reflexologyforum.org>

Massage

General Council for Massage Therapy
27 Old Gloucester Street
London
WC1N 3XX
Tel: 0870 8504452
Email: gcmt@btconnect.com
<http://www.gcmt.org.uk/>

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy Council

PO Box 6522
Desborough
Northants NN14 2YX
Telephone/Fax +44 (0) 870 774 3477
info@aromatherapycouncil.co.uk
<http://www.aromatherapycouncil.co.uk>

General

British Register of Complementary Practitioners

22 Divisions
PO Box 194
London SE16 7QZ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7237 5165
Fax +44 (0) 20 7237 5175
Website: www.i-c-m.org.uk

<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/comps.php> for competencies in Complementary Medicine

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