



Statement on Helios – The Art Therapy Academy

The Art Therapy profession is recognised and regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). In order to practice, Art Therapists require a Master's Degree in Art Therapy from an HPCSA accredited training institution or university. Art Therapists who have trained overseas are required to write an exam in order to register with the HPCSA to practice in South Africa. Any local training that is not registered and recognised by the HPCSA is illegal and undermines the integrity of the Art Therapy profession.

Individuals, including Psychologists and Occupational Therapists, who claim to practice Art Therapy without the appropriate qualifications also do so illegally and can be prosecuted.

Claims have been made to the public by an organisation called Helios that it is offering Art Therapy training. These claims are highly problematic for the following reasons:

- The training is not recognised by the HPCSA and the curriculum is in no way in-line with the Standards of Training set out by the HPCSA. In this way, the actual professional and ethical practice of Art Therapy is being misrepresented.
- The training is not being offered by a registered Art Therapist and the owner of Helios is offering training without consulting with the Arts Therapies profession or professional body, SANATO.
- The training is a correspondence course and does not offer experiential learning or group experience, which are both key elements of Art Therapy training. Training in Art Therapy is a hands-on experiential process that needs to have a qualified and registered Art Therapist to facilitate and support the learning process.
- There are serious concerns about the lack of supervision during the course.
- The way in which students are expected to interact with clients during this training is unsafe and unethical – for example, students are asked to work with clients having undergone extreme trauma for only 3 sessions.
- Students are being misled about how they will be able to practice after completing the course, since they will be unable to register as Art Therapists.
- Students are being promised that they will be able to continue further with their studies with an American-based University without confirming this with the HPCSA.

As a result of these concerns, a complaint has been laid with the HPCSA and the matter is now with the HPCSA's legal department and the SAPS.

All prospective and current students of Helios are urged to exercise caution in light of this information.

Although, there is currently no registered training for Art Therapists in the country (over the last 10 years, various unsuccessful attempts have been made to initiate a training) significant progress is being made in negotiations with a Johannesburg-based university to establish the first South African Art Therapy training. In addition, the process of establishing a MA training is a complex and long-winded process that requires many steps and processes, including University processes, HPCSA Board Education Committee processes and as a result may still take some time to be realised.

In the meantime, all those with a serious interest in pursuing a training in Art Therapy in South Africa can register themselves on the SANATO database so that they can be informed immediately that a training is to be launched.

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