



Appendix 1

Standards of Proficiency for Graduate Sports Therapists

The Society of Sports Therapists

June 2026

Introduction

These Standards of Proficiency define the threshold knowledge, skills and behaviours required for safe and effective practice as a Graduate Sports Therapist, and for eligibility for Full Membership of The Society of Sports Therapists.

They represent the minimum standard required to protect the public at the point of registration as an MSST. All registrants must continue to meet these standards, relevant to their scope of practice, throughout their professional career.

These standards should be read alongside the Society's:

- Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics
- Educational Competencies
- CPD and fitness to practise requirements

The standards are not hierarchical. All domains are equally important in ensuring safe, effective and person-centred practice.

Professionalism

Professionalism underpins these Standards of Proficiency. It extends beyond the demonstration of knowledge, skills and behaviours, reflecting an overarching ethos, mindset and commitment to excellence that defines what it means to belong to a recognised profession.

To be a professional is not to comply with standards alone. It is to internalise them and to act with integrity, accountability and purpose, not because it is required, but because it is integral to professional identity.

Professionalism is demonstrated through consistent behaviours, sound judgement and a commitment to doing what is right, even when this is not the easiest or most convenient course of action. It requires practitioners to place the welfare of patients, clients and the public at the centre of practice, while balancing the complex demands of clinical, sporting and commercial environments.

For individual practitioners, professionalism underpins credibility, trust and long-term success. It enhances employability, strengthens professional relationships, and contributes directly to sustainable, ethical and professionally credible business practice. For the profession, it is central to advancing reputation, public confidence and recognition within the wider healthcare and sport and exercise sectors.

Every interaction, decision and action taken by a member contributes to how the profession is perceived. As such, professionalism is a collective responsibility. By consistently demonstrating high standards, practitioners not only protect the public, but also elevate the status, influence and future of the profession.

These Standards of Proficiency should be understood not as a checklist for compliance, but as a framework that supports and reflects professional identity. They describe the expectations of a practitioner committed to continuous development, reflective practice and the highest standards of care.

The domains that follow articulate how this professionalism is demonstrated in practice.

Terminology

In these standards, we use the term “*patient*” to refer to any individual receiving care or services from a Graduate Sports Therapist. We recognise that practitioners work across a range of settings, including clinical practice, sport and exercise environments, and private or performance contexts.

As such, the term *patient* may be interchangeable with *client*, *athlete*, *player* or *service user*, depending on the context of practice. All standards apply equally regardless of the terminology used.

Domains of proficiency

- **Professional practice and accountability**
- **Equality, diversity and inclusive practice**
- **Communication and professional relationships**
- **Clinical assessment and reasoning**
- **Therapeutic interventions**
- **Rehabilitation and performance**
- **Risk management and emergency care**
- **Evidence-based practice, development and digital practice**

1. Professional practice and accountability

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 1.1 Practise safely and effectively within legal, ethical and professional boundaries.
- 1.2 Demonstrate responsibility and accountability for decisions, actions and omissions.
- 1.3 Recognise and practise within the limits of knowledge, skills and experience, referring when appropriate.
- 1.4 Exercise professional judgement and justify decisions using evidence and reasoning.
- 1.5 Maintain fitness to practise, including physical, mental and professional wellbeing.
- 1.6 Manage competing demands, including the tension between performance and patient welfare.
- 1.7 Practise autonomously while recognising when collaboration or escalation is required.
- 1.8 Understand and apply relevant UK legislation and professional guidance to practice.

2. Equality, diversity and inclusive practice

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 2.1 Practise in a non-discriminatory, inclusive and person-centred manner.
- 2.2 Recognise and respond to the impact of culture, identity, beliefs and lived experience on health and participation.
- 2.3 Identify and address health inequalities and barriers to access in sport and healthcare.
- 2.4 Adapt assessment and intervention to meet the needs of diverse individuals and populations.
- 2.5 Apply equality and safeguarding legislation to protect individuals and groups.
- 2.6 Demonstrate cultural competence, humility and respect in all interactions.

3. Communication and professional relationships

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 3.1 Communicate effectively with patients, clients, athletes, coaches, healthcare professionals, carers and others.
- 3.2 Use verbal, non-verbal and written communication appropriately across contexts.
- 3.3 Adapt communication to individual needs, including language, cognitive, emotional and cultural factors.
- 3.4 Establish and maintain professional relationships based on trust, respect and shared decision-making.
- 3.5 Work effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team.
- 3.6 Manage communication in complex environments, including where confidentiality and competing interests exist.
- 3.7 Obtain and record valid informed consent.
- 3.8 Use appropriate communication methods in digital and remote settings.

4. Clinical assessment and reasoning

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 4.1 Gather and synthesise relevant information through subjective and objective assessment.
- 4.2 Apply knowledge of anatomy, physiology, biomechanics and pathology to clinical reasoning.
- 4.3 Formulate clinical hypotheses, including differential diagnoses.
- 4.4 Identify red flags and recognise when referral is required.
- 4.5 Select, perform and interpret appropriate assessment techniques.
- 4.6 Use clinical reasoning to inform decision-making throughout care.
- 4.7 Consider physical, psychological and social factors in assessment.

5. Therapeutic interventions

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 5.1 Select and apply appropriate interventions safely and effectively.
- 5.2 Justify intervention choices using current evidence and clinical reasoning.
- 5.3 Understand indications, contraindications and precautions.
- 5.4 Deliver interventions competently and monitor patient response.
- 5.5 Adapt interventions in response to patient needs, preferences and outcomes.
- 5.6 Record interventions accurately and appropriately.

6. Rehabilitation and performance

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 6.1 Design and implement safe, effective and individualised rehabilitation and group-based programmes.
- 6.2 Apply principles of exercise prescription, strength and conditioning, and load management.
- 6.3 Support individuals returning to function, work, physical activity or sport.
- 6.4 Develop and apply return-to-play or return-to-activity criteria.
- 6.5 Monitor and evaluate progress and modify programmes accordingly.
- 6.6 Recognise and address the psychosocial impact of injury and rehabilitation.
- 6.7 Promote injury prevention and long-term health and performance.

7. Risk management and emergency care

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 7.1 Identify and manage risks to patient, practitioner and public safety.
- 7.2 Practise in accordance with health and safety principles and infection control measures.
- 7.3 Recognise and respond appropriately to medical emergencies.
- 7.4 Provide safe and effective prehospital emergency care within scope of practice.
- 7.5 Implement and contribute to Emergency Action Plans.
- 7.6 Safely manage and hand over patients to other healthcare professionals.
- 7.7 Maintain situational awareness in dynamic and high-risk environments.

8. Evidence-based practice, development and digital practice

A Graduate Sports Therapist must be able to:

- 8.1 Practise in an evidence-informed manner, integrating research, clinical expertise and patient values.
- 8.2 Critically appraise and apply research to practice.
- 8.3 Engage in reflective practice and continuous professional development.
- 8.4 Maintain accurate, secure and legally compliant records.
- 8.5 Use digital technologies safely and effectively.
- 8.6 Demonstrate appropriate digital literacy, including electronic records, remote consultation tools and monitoring systems.
- 8.7 Understand the ethical and professional implications of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.
- 8.8 Protect data privacy and confidentiality in accordance with legislation and best practice.

Summary

These Standards of Proficiency define the minimum threshold knowledge, skills and behaviours required for safe, effective and person-centred practice as a Graduate Sports Therapist.

They establish what a newly qualified practitioner must demonstrate at the point of registration as an MSST, ensuring the protection of the public across clinical, sporting and community settings.

The standards reflect contemporary practice by integrating evidence-based care, equality and inclusion, and digital and technological competence, alongside the demands of sport and exercise environments, including rehabilitation, performance and emergency care.

They provide a framework for professional accountability, ongoing development and high-quality care, and must be met and maintained throughout a practitioner's career, within their defined scope of practice.