

## Massage School Admissions

### Criteria & Policies for Success

Your admissions team plays an important role in your school's business. Let's explore the goals and realities of the admissions process, along with ideas for ensuring consistent adherence to admissions criteria.

#### The Goal

The ultimate goal of the massage school admissions process is to enroll students who are constructive contributors to a functional school culture, who benefit from and complete the program, and who will represent the school and the massage profession positively after graduation.

#### The Reality

Most schools' business success must be balanced with finding ideal students for the program. Ultimately, a school will fail if it can't meet its enrollment goals. Schools often admit students whose life obstacles make their ability to succeed in the program questionable. Schools must walk a precarious line between finding the best students and ensuring there are enough "seats in seats" to survive—let alone thrive. One way to ensure this balance is to write good policies and procedures, clarify admissions criteria, and provide training to help admissions representatives apply said criteria consistently. →



## Announcing ABMP's Online Education Center

ABMP is pleased to bring your graduates high-quality interactive online continuing education approved by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) and state boards (where required). ABMP partnered with Human Kinetics, a leader in online education, to develop interactive, engaging courses, many of which include audio, video, and dynamic features that bring the materials to life. ABMP member schools can log on to ABMP.com for a free course preview.



## Written Policies Work

Good written policies provide guidelines for dealing with situations that come up while trying to enroll students. Policies should provide guidance on laws and accreditation; accurate representation of the massage school and potential massage careers; massage regulations; and clear admissions criteria.

In one situation, an admissions representative learned that a prospective student had epilepsy, but did not want this information shared with teachers or classmates. The admissions representative spent personal time researching the laws about what she should withhold, based on student confidentiality rights, and what she should disclose, based on the needs of teachers and other students. This process revealed that the school did not have strong written policies about student confidentiality. Ensure that your school develops written policies and guidelines about student confidentiality, equal opportunity, reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, and conflicts of interest regarding financial aid information (which most often applies to accredited schools only).

Accurate representation of the massage school experience and about massage as a career is also important. Schools should provide current information about career opportunities; salary expectations (some accreditation agencies only allow admissions to provide ranges); cost of attendance (including fees and recommended study aids); academic challenges; and the amount of time students should study outside of classes.

Schools should note any conflicts with personal philosophy or religion. In one school, a group of students refused to take tai chi classes required as part of the body mechanics course because they believed the practice violated their religious beliefs. To solve this problem, admissions reps moved to alerting students to the tai chi component during the admissions process and required a signed document that each student could and would participate in classes.

**ABMP School members can learn more about admissions issues by viewing the pre-recorded webinar, "Best Practices in Massage School Admissions," in the "School Owners and Administrators" section of ABMP.com.**

Prospective students need to be aware of massage regulations in the state(s) where they seek to practice. In many regulated states, graduates must undergo a background check and sign an affidavit, in addition to passing a licensing exam, and they must meet other criteria (such as a jurisprudence exam). If the graduate has a former misdemeanor, felony, or sexual charge, he or she may not be granted massage credentials. Graduates who are unable to qualify for massage credentials after attending a massage program may be able to make a case against the school that they were misled regarding their ability to benefit from the program.

## Apply Criteria Consistently

Criteria used to make admissions decisions must be the same for everyone. Standard massage school admissions criteria include that students must be at least 18; hold a high school diploma or GED; complete an application form; and pay a fee. Many schools adopt additional policies to help weed out poor candidates. If your school is accredited, you may find that additional policies are considered discriminating and not allowed.

Think about how many obstacles you create to enrollment. If your process is more difficult than at the massage school down the street, you might lose students to the competitor. Additional admissions criteria may include letters of recommendation; a physical examination; receipt of a massage provided by a professional therapist; attendance at a pre-program massage workshop; an academic assessment test; and/or a personal interview. Admissions representatives likely need training and guidance in order to apply admissions criteria consistently. There have been a number of claims made against schools by enrolled students who were subjected to additional admissions steps that were not required of all other enrollees.

While an admissions rep may have concerns that a particular student is not a good fit for the school (even when that student has met the school's admissions criteria), creating additional criteria the student must meet, with the goal of dissuading the student from attending the program, could lead to a discrimination suit against the school. Well-defined and evenly-applied guidelines will help schools stay on a smooth track during the admission and enrollment process. ❌



# The Hiring Process

## Find the Right Talent for Your School

Have you ever hired a massage instructor because she was a good massage therapist, only to learn that she couldn't convey concepts in a lecture? Maybe you've hired a person with advanced credentials to teach your anatomy courses and later realized that he couldn't make the material accessible and fun for your students.

Probably every administrator has made a poor hiring choice and has been stuck with an instructor who couldn't create a meaningful learning environment where students thrive. The faculty at your school must be able to understand, deliver, and facilitate the content of your curriculum in an engaging, energetic, and student-focused manner to ensure your school's success. Having a process in place to hire dedicated and capable massage instructors reduces costly turnover and ensures your education department remains strong.



### Develop a Structured Hiring Process

Put together a recruitment committee to develop a structured hiring process for identifying the right instructors for your school. Committees might be composed of the education director, a lead instructor, an administrator from a different department, and even a top student. During all recruiting efforts, use the process your committee develops; this will save time and ensure candidates receive fair, unbiased, and unemotional review.

Your school's process should identify people who truly like to teach and have a passion for massage, and who demonstrate enough personal flexibility that they will work compassionately with your students. One way to do this is to construct an ideal massage instructor profile and align it to your school's concept of good customer service. The profile should include key qualifications, traits, characteristics, and the experience you are looking for in an educator. Create a point value for all of the items included in the final profile and use it to grade candidates. Profile items might include:



1. Has three years of massage practice experience (20 points).
2. Has taught for two years in massage or in a related field (15 points).
3. Is a dynamic presenter (20 points).
4. Uses a structured demonstration format (15 points).
5. Demonstrates a positive attitude (15 points).

### Interviews

Develop interview questions that present real-life student issues; include questions that help you gauge a candidate's problem-solving capacity, ability to resolve conflicts, and empathy and flexibility for students' issues. Break interviews into three segments.

- 1. Phone.** Conduct phone interviews to ensure candidates meet your key requirements in terms of qualifications, experience, and general teaching philosophy.
- 2. Face to face.** In-person interviews from a smaller candidate pool help you gather information about a candidate's traits, characteristics, and match with the culture of your school.
- 3. A final review.** Final interviews provide candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their content delivery skills.

Asking final candidates to prepare and present a lesson to your hiring committee is an essential component of getting the right person for your school. If you have a highly developed curriculum with comprehensive lesson plans, you can determine how well the instructor was able to follow instructions and bring the materials to life. If you expect teachers to write their own lesson plans from predetermined learning objectives, you can evaluate the candidate's ability to create interactive and engaging materials. ✖

### Have you visited [ABMP.com](http://ABMP.com) lately?

On [ABMP.com](http://ABMP.com), you'll find a wide range of resources developed for school owners, administrators, and instructors. Sign up for a webinar or watch an archived webinar on how to use your school member resources; access the Student Success Curriculum and additional tools that can be implemented in your classrooms; and find strategic planning tools, accreditation information, and much more.

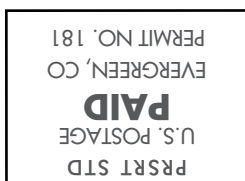
# ABMP's 14th Annual School Issues Forum

ABMP is delighted to present its 14th annual School Issues Forum in Alexandria, Virginia, on April 22–24, 2010. The School Issues Forum has long been an event where massage school owners, directors, and key members of the massage community can exchange ideas, network, inspire, and learn from each other about issues they determine.

Building on the excitement created by ABMP's live regional instructor trainings titled "Teachers On the Front Lines: Tools to Support Your Students," ABMP is offering an Instructor Training Program at the 2010 School Issues Forum. The Instructor Training Program provides skill building in fundamentals of adult education as it relates to massage. While topics are different than those taught in the "Teachers on the Front Lines" workshop, the goal is the same: to support massage instructors and thereby support massage education for thriving schools and professionals.



To find out more about "Teachers on the Front Lines" or the School Issues Forum, and to register, visit [ABMP.com](http://ABMP.com) or contact Kathy Laskye ([kathy@abmp.com](mailto:kathy@abmp.com) or 800-458-2267, ext. 649). ☒



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