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Scope of Practice in Developmental Education

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1. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform employers and other professionals of the professional roles, activities, practice settings and guiding frameworks covered by the profession of developmental education in Australia.

The Scope of Practice aims to be a description of the breadth of practice carried out within the developmental educator profession in Australia but is not intended to be an exclusive list of areas of practice.

Developmental Educators may extend their scope of practice via additional qualifications, experience or training. The extended activities are not covered by the Scope of Practice; however, these activities should not be precluded from a developmental educator's capability, providing the area of practice is within the professional competence of the developmental educator.

The Scope of Practice will be regularly reviewed to reflect current needs, knowledge and research to include new areas of activity for developmental educators in Australia.

2. Introduction

2.1 What is a Developmental Educator?

Developmental educators are disability specialists and allied health professionals who work within a human rights framework to empower people with disability across the lifespan to achieve full participation in community life. Developmental educators may specialise in any or all of the following:

- conducting functional, developmental and behavioural assessments with a strengths-based approach
- teaching functional life skills including social, communication, self-care, emotional regulation, daily living, goal setting, community access, recreation, self-advocacy and employment skills
- working alongside the person, their family and support providers to develop and implement behaviour support interventions and supports
- delivering specialist support coordination
- promoting supported decision-making, physical and emotional health and well-being, and the rights of people with disability.

Developmental educators are autonomous professionals in that their services are not prescribed or supervised by another professional. Developmental educators, however, frequently collaborate with other professionals.

Developmental educators provide services across all the following domains: advocacy, clinical services, consultation, community education, and research across the lifespan.

Developmental educators are responsible for ensuring they work within the limits of their competence and update their professional knowledge and skills as needed and required.

2.2 About the Document

The Scope of Practice has been developed in alignment with the Code of Ethics and Practice for Developmental Educators (2015) and the Standards for Developmental Educator Practice in Australia (2018). These documents describe the skills, knowledge, attitudes and ethical behaviour expected of DEAI members practising in Australia.

2.2.1 Extended Skills and Credentialing

Extended skills are emerging practice areas from new innovations, technology or research and are important for the development and growth of the profession. Extended skills are not discussed in the Scope of Practice document however this should not limit or prohibit developmental educators working in these areas subject to appropriate training, credentialing and/or endorsement by an employing body.

Credentialing is the process of validating an individual's qualifications, skills, experience, training and/or competency to perform certain procedures or service activities against a set of recognised standards.

DEAI currently has an extensive role in credentialing developmental educators at the point of graduate entry into the profession (Entry-Level). Credentialing of extended skills is NOT undertaken by DEAI. Credentialing of extended skills is typically undertaken by employing bodies.

2.3 Framework for Practice

In Australia, developmental educators are guided by a human rights-based and holistic biopsychosocial approach to practice. Developmental educators have knowledge of and utilise the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2007), and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001).

Developmental educator practice is strength-based, person-centred and culturally informed. It utilises and promotes co-design approaches and is informed by the best available evidence to meet the needs and preferences of people with a disability.

Developmental educators are philosophically grounded in disability studies. Formal education in disability studies centers on the rights of people with disability and offers a sociological understanding of disability through the social model of disability and critical perspectives on intersectional disadvantage. Disability studies is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the stories of people with disability, the historical perspectives of people with disability, the systems, and structures of oppression at play in disabled people's lives, and the responding rights and liberation movements. Disability studies employs people with disability and invokes lived experience in educating practitioners. This philosophical groundwork means that developmental educators always center people with disability as they are situated in our complex society.

3. Scope of Practice

This Scope of Practice is presented with the following structure.

1. Relationship of the Scope of Practice to DEAI

The Scope forms one of the core foundation documents for developmental educators practising in Australia. Diagram 3.1 illustrates the Scope of Practice relationship to other key DEAI documents.

2. Who developmental educators work with
3. What developmental educator practice includes
4. Why developmental educators provide services
5. Where developmental educators practice
6. How developmental educators provide services: Models of service provision

Note 1: Involvement in some areas may necessitate specialised education, training and supervision.

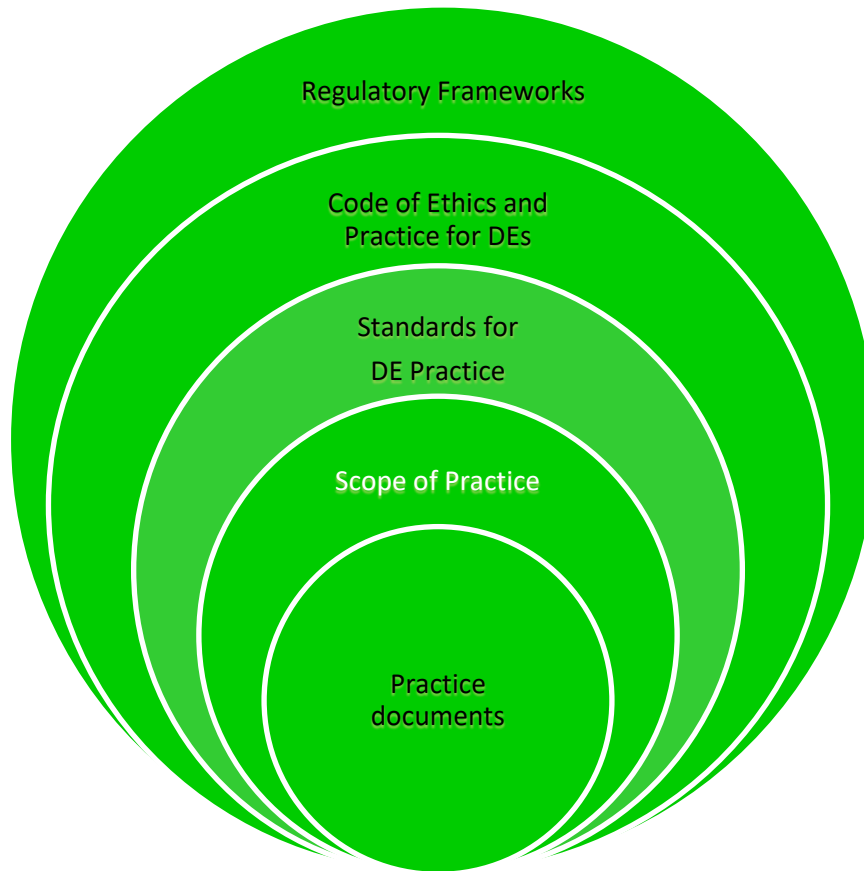
Note 2: While examples are provided, lists are not intended to be exhaustive nor exclusive

Note 3: A developmental educator does not work typically with all people or practice in all contexts listed in the document.

Note 4: It is recognised that some activities may also be undertaken by other professionals and/or in consultation with other professionals.

3.1 Scope of Practice Relationship

This diagram illustrates how the Scope of Practice fits within existing legal, ethical and professional frameworks. The Scope of Practice forms one of the key foundation documents for developmental educators practising in Australia.



3.2 Who developmental educators work with

Developmental educators work across the full lifespan with people with disability and neurodivergence of any kind including:

- Cognitive and executive functioning differences (eg problem solving, memory, impulse control, learning differences)
- Communication differences (eg receptive and/or expressive language; pragmatics and social communication skills; cognitive communication)
- Sensory processing differences
- Physical disability
- Sensory disability
- Psychosocial disability
- Co-occurring mental health and medical conditions

Developmental educators work with or alongside:

- People with disability
- Parents and families, caregivers, communication partners, friends and colleagues
- Employers
- General public/community
- Other professionals including health and allied workers, educators, therapy assistants, support workers, interpreters, cultural advisors
- Volunteers
- University students
- Developmental educator colleagues.

3.3 What developmental educators' practice includes

In Australia, a developmental educator may practice in a wide range of contexts and roles independent of other professionals, including:

- **Therapeutic Supports (ie assessment, recommendations, planning and delivery)**

Developmental Educators provide a range of therapeutic supports independently and within the Capacity Building Framework of the National Disability Insurance Scheme:

- Assessment (including functional, developmental and behavioural assessments)
- Documentation, report writing and recommendations
- Capacity building and skill development:
 - Life skills development
 - Sexuality and access to sexual development resources
 - Planning for life transitions
 - Capacity to exercise choice and control
 - Behaviour support
 - Self-regulation and coping skills
 - Communication
 - Self-advocacy and self-determination
 - Assistive technology
 - Goal setting
 - Employment support
 - Access to mainstream health care, education and community participation
 - Access to mainstream supports
 - Education/training families and teams to support participant's goals

- **Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner**

The PBS Practitioner is a defined and regulated role under The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support Rules 2018 (NDIS, 2018). A PBS Practitioner working within the NDIS must register with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and practice in accordance to the Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework (NDIS QSC, 2019).

Developmental educators graduate with knowledge and skills suitable to pursue a career as a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Practitioner. In this role, they work within a PBS framework to provide a person-centred and collaborative response to behaviour support needs of people with disability.

PBS Practitioners provide clinical behaviour support services, including:

- Functional behavioural assessment and formulation
- Functional analysis
- The development and implementation of person-centred and multi-component PBS intervention plans
- Coaching and supporting key stakeholders
- Therapeutic skill development
- Monitoring and evaluation
- PBS supervision, training and education

As stipulated in the PBS Capability Framework, it is a requirement for registered PBS Practitioners to undergo training, professional development, and ongoing supervision.

- **Specialist Support Coordinator**

Provide tailored support to NDIS participants with complex needs to:

- Implement, monitor and review NDIS support plans
- Apply knowledge of systems, complexity and intersectionality to reduce the risk and complexity
- Coordination of services/supports
- Onward referral to relevant services
- Consultation to other health or educational professionals
- Promote self-advocacy by people with a disability
- Provide advocacy on behalf of clients
- Provide advocacy via involvement in committees, working groups and boards

Developmental educators may also be engaged in **other roles** such as:

- Supervision (including DE students and colleagues)
- Managers
- Researchers
- Community educators
- Policy advisers
- Advocates (individual and systemic)
- Employment specialists

- Consultants
- Community development practitioners
- Serve as expert witness in court

Developmental educators may operate in roles that fall outside of the regulatory framework of the NDIS. For example, educational settings, local government, justice and health. When undertaking this work, they must adhere to the jurisdictional regulations and requirements for practice.

3.4 Why developmental educators provide services

Developmental educators provide a diverse range of services and supports.

Some examples of outcomes include:

- Engaging in co-design through collaboration and active engagement of people with disability in understanding, exploring and changing systems together
- Identification of environmental and personal factors that influence behaviour
- Developing skills that enhance participation and quality of life
- Reducing risks related to:
 - Isolation, exclusion, exploitation, violence and abuse
 - development of behaviours of concern
 - systemic barriers in educational and vocational environments
- Improving knowledge and understanding of disability and diversity to individuals and the wider community
- Promoting human rights, including accessibility, justice and equity
- Improving access to and participation in health, education, work, community etc

3.5 Where developmental educators practice

In Australia, developmental educators work in a private or public capacity, in various contexts. Some examples include:

- Accommodation settings (supported accommodation and independent living)
- Aged care
- Correctional institutions and justice system
- Disability services
- Early intervention services
- Education settings (childcare; preschool; primary; secondary; special schools and special education units; tertiary)
- Local, state and federal government (eg local councils; Department for Child Protection; NDIA)
- Health care and rehabilitation settings
- Not for profit organisations
- Private practice
- Employment settings

- Universities and research facilities

3.6 How developmental educators provide services: Models of service provision

Developmental education services may be delivered using varied evidence-based approaches. Developmental educators may work independently or with other professionals.

Some examples of service delivery approaches include:

- Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams
- Individual or group programs
- Use of natural contexts for assessment and intervention (i.e. home, school, work, community)
- Training volunteers and significant others as facilitators of intervention programs
- Collaborative and consultative partnerships
- Family-centred approaches
- Holistic person-centred approach (i.e. considering all aspects of the person's life and well-being)
- Preventative models of service
- Telepractice (using technology to deliver services at a distance)

4. References

Developmental Educators Australia Inc. (2015, September). *Code of Ethics and Practice for Developmental Educators*. <https://mk0deaiwebsiteh1i5se.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/DEAI-Code-of-Ethics-and-Practice-for-Developmental-Educators-Updated-Sept-2015-1.pdf>

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