



**CIMSPA PROFESSIONAL STANDARD:  
TECHNICAL SPECIALISM**

# Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing

(FULL STANDARD)

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# CIMSPA PROFESSIONAL STANDARD: TECHNICAL SPECIALISM

## Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing

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## 1. Overview

### **Professional Standard: Technical Specialism Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing**

This Professional Standard outlines the role and scope of the technical specialism for Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing and the essential knowledge and skills that are needed to meet the requirements of the sector minimum deployment standards.

This full version of the standard is available to CIMSPA education and employer partners. It provides guidance for the development of educational products that will be endorsed by CIMSPA.

The Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing Technical Specialism covers job roles that sit within the sport and physical activity sector as part of all industries.

The CIMSPA Technical Specialism allows you to demonstrate your expertise in delivering Tai Chi specifically in a Health and Wellbeing setting.

#### **This Professional Standard: Technical Specialism can be used as follows:**

1. Combined with an occupation standard to form an education product: e.g., Occupation: Coach; Technical Specialism: Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing.
2. Combined with an occupation standard and additional specialism(s) to form an educational product: e.g., Occupation: Coach; Environmental Specialism: Working in the Community Environment; Technical Specialism: Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing.
3. As a standalone product that can be completed as continuous professional development: e.g., Delivering Tai Chi to improve Health and Wellbeing

#### **Endorsed qualification logo**

Qualifications that meet the requirements of this CIMSPA Professional Standard will display this official CIMSPA endorsement logo.



## 2. Scope of the Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing Technical Specialism

This Technical Specialism supports an individual who is specialising in delivering Tai Chi specifically in a Health and Wellbeing setting. This standard has not been designed to cover delivery of Tai Chi outside of this setting.

The standard is designed for professionals who teach, lead, and motivate groups and individuals through intentionally designed, Tai Chi based exercise classes. Instructors can provide class design and instruction according to the desired results of the participants.

Individuals that meet this standard will:

### **UNDERSTAND:**

- How to plan, deliver, and review Tai Chi classes that meet the needs of the individual(s) they are working with.

### **HAVE DEMONSTRATED:**

- The ability to plan, deliver, and review Tai Chi classes to individuals with a range of abilities.

**This Professional Standard outlines the Technical Specialism's knowledge and skills.**

### 3. Terms of Reference

A large amount of the terminology used in this discipline, (including tai chi, taiji, tai chi chuan, taijiquan, and other variants), originates from Chinese languages, with no satisfactory direct translation into English – often the terms were derived from ancient Chinese dialects and are difficult to define even in Mandarin. These terms remain the topic of much interesting discussion.

This standard does not provide standardised definitions of any nuanced terms from this discipline, including 'Tai Chi'. However, it is important to be as clear as possible about the intended meaning of any term used within this standard. Where a concept is referred to that cannot be easily represented in English, the wording is used in its original language (transliterated using either Pinyin or Wade-Giles, according to widest usage).

The term 'Tai Chi' is used throughout this document (including its title) to refer to drills and conditioning exercises from the Chinese internal martial art that is commonly referred to as 'Tai Chi Chuan' (Wade-Giles transliteration). This is not a standardised definition of 'Tai Chi'; however, it is the intended meaning of the term for this Technical Specialism.

A glossary of terms is provided in the appendix.

## 4. Summary of knowledge and skills

### Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing

Topic	Knowledge and understanding	Skills
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand and define the terms health and wellbeing in relation to Tai Chi practice.</li><li>• Understand the acknowledged benefits of regular Tai Chi practice to health and wellbeing.</li><li>• Know how to promote and support individuals' behaviour change to engage in regular Tai Chi practice.</li></ul>	
<b>Technical knowledge and skills of chosen Tai Chi style(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know how to explain the internal movements of Tai Chi, drawing on yin-yang philosophy as appropriate.</li><li>• Know how to explain the 10 essentials and 13 Shi (aka 13 postures, etc - see appendix), drawing on yin-yang philosophy as appropriate.</li><li>• Know the sequence of postures/movements of a complete Tai Chi form of chosen style.</li><li>• Know the technical components of each posture/movement within a complete Tai Chi form of chosen style.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accurately demonstrate the main internal movements of Tai Chi.</li><li>• Accurately demonstrate a complete form of chosen style.</li><li>• Demonstrate the 10 Essentials and 13 Shi in the above form.</li></ul>
<b>Plan, prepare, deliver and review Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to plan safe and inclusive sessions/ programmes of Tai Chi training tailored to the needs of a range of individuals within scope of practice.</li><li>• Know the technical requirements to deliver Tai Chi training sessions.</li><li>• How to adapt activities to meet varying individual needs during a session.</li><li>• Understand how to review safe and inclusive Tai Chi training sessions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan safe and inclusive programmes of Tai Chi training tailored to the needs of a range of individuals within scope of practice.</li><li>• Deliver Tai Chi training sessions.</li><li>• Adapt activities to meet varying individual needs during a session.</li><li>• Review the effectiveness of own performance when delivering Tai Chi training sessions.</li></ul>

## 5. Product development guidance

This section is aimed at organisations developing formal educational products mapping to this Technical Specialism. The guidance should be considered in the development of all educational products seeking CIMSPA endorsement.

The CIMSPA Professional Development Board (PDB) has agreed any of the formal educational products listed in the table below can be developed for the Technical Specialism, Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing. Where evidence that all elements of the Technical Specialism are included, CIMSPA endorsement can be sought.

<b>Educational product</b>	<b>Mapping requirements</b>	<b>Professional Standard Technical Specialism achieved on attainment?</b>
Regulated vocational qualification	Fully mapped	YES
Apprenticeship programme	Fully mapped	YES
HE programme/modules	Fully mapped	YES
CPD	Partially mapped	NO

All formal educational products which are seeking CIMSPA endorsement must be submitted to CIMSPA for endorsement and should include all elements outlined in the Technical Specialism and assessed in line with the intention of the Standard.

Education providers seeking CIMSPA endorsement for a product against this Technical Specialism are asked to consider the following:

- a) They determine and justify the level of the product they have developed, in line with regulator guidance. To ensure parity, the level for all educational products that fully map to this Technical Specialism should be the same.

The level assigned is determined by leading awarding organisations currently offering qualifications in the sector in which the role resides.

This is not a first-to-post exercise but one in which education providers are invited to submit their levelled units/full qualification for review as part of the CIMSPA endorsement process.

Once agreed by CIMSPA, all subsequent fully-mapped educational products must conform to the level set for this Technical Specialism.

Level descriptors set out the generic knowledge and skills associated with the typical holder of a qualification at a given level and it should be ensured that educational products fully mapping to this Technical Specialism are a 'best-fit' for the level assigned.

- b) Their quality assurance meets the appropriate regulator's guidance, including internal and external quality assurance, staffing requirements and assessment generation and evidence.
- c) They stipulate practical assessment must be conducted, where practically possible, in a real-world environment ideally 'on the job' or at work.

Where possible a practical end-point assessment is conducted with 'real participants'.

The use of peers for an end-point practical assessment is not deemed appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments can be applied where specific circumstances make this unviable

- d) They determine the total qualification time for the qualification/unit and outline the minimum requirements for assessment.



## 6. Learning and development requirements (LDRs)

The LDRs outline the key areas of learning and assessment that should be contained within any educational product seeking CIMSPA endorsement against a Professional Standard. There are 3 key areas of learning and development for the Technical Specialism: Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing, of which all areas are interconnected and mandatory. The key areas are:

1. Health and wellbeing.
2. Technical knowledge and skills of chosen Tai Chi style(s).
3. Plan, prepare, deliver, and review Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes.

N.B. Examples are given within the LDRs to provide an overview of the knowledge and skills most relevant to the role; it is not mandatory to assess learners against 100% of the examples provided, however, sufficient coverage to ensure occupational competence on achievement must be ensured. This will be reviewed as part of the CIMSPA endorsement process.

## 1. Health and wellbeing

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	An individual delivering Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing must:
K1.1	Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the broad definitions for health and wellbeing and in relation to Tai Chi practice.</li><li>• Know when and how to signpost individuals on, or refer to appropriate services where it is deemed beyond scope of practice.</li></ul>
K1.2	Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know about the risks of inactivity and sedentary behaviour and how Tai Chi practice can improve individuals' health and wellbeing.</li><li>• Know the acknowledged benefits (Physiological, Psychological and Sociological) of regular Tai Chi practice to health and wellbeing.</li></ul>
K1.3	Behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand types of real and perceived barriers that affect engagement and participation in practising Tai Chi in the health and wellbeing setting.</li><li>• Identify the motivations for individuals participating in Tai Chi practice in the health and wellbeing setting.</li><li>• Know how to promote and support individuals' behaviour change to engage in regular Tai Chi practice in the health and wellbeing setting.</li></ul>

## 2. Technical knowledge and skills of chosen Tai Chi style(s)

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	An individual delivering Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing must:
K2.1	Explain basic Tai Chi movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how to explain the internal movements of Tai Chi, drawing on yin-yang philosophy as appropriate.</li> </ul>
K2.2	Tai Chi technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know the '13 Shi' of Tai Chi in the context of chosen style and their martial interpretation (see appendix), applying yin-yang philosophy.</li> <li>• Know Yang ChengFu's 10 essentials (see appendix), applying yin-yang philosophy.</li> <li>• Know in detail, at least one complete empty-hands solo form of chosen style, encompassing all of the 13 Shi (see glossary/ appendix).</li> <li>• Know in detail the technical components of each individual posture/movement of a complete form of the chosen style (see appendix).</li> </ul>
Ref	Skills:	An individual delivering Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing must:
S2.1	Tai Chi technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurately demonstrate the main internal movements of Tai Chi, drawing on yin-yang philosophy.</li> <li>• Demonstrate application of Yang Cheng Fu's 10 essentials (see appendix).</li> <li>• Demonstrate accurately at least one complete empty-hands solo form of chosen style, encompassing all of the 13 Shi (see glossary/appendix).</li> </ul>

### 3. Plan, prepare, deliver, and review Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes

Ref	Knowledge and understanding:	An individual delivering Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing must:
K3.1	Plan Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand how to plan and tailor safe and inclusive Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes for a range of individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the key principles of designing a programme of Tai Chi training.</li> <li>Differences between Tai Chi training for physical fitness, physical health benefits, wellbeing, and martial skill.</li> <li>Explain a range of safe and effective Tai Chi training activities.</li> <li>Know how to select the most appropriate activities to meet the needs and goals of the participant(s).</li> <li>Provision of alternative activities/exercises/participation options.</li> <li>How to minimise any risks relevant to the programme.</li> <li>Realistic timings and sequences for sessions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
K3.2	Deliver Tai Chi training sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand how to deliver planned Tai Chi training sessions.</li> <li>Know how to provide safe and effective exercise demonstrations.</li> </ul>
K3.3	Adapt training for varying individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to adapt training to meet varying individual needs during a session.</li> </ul>
K3.4	Review Tai Chi training sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to review safe and inclusive Tai Chi training sessions with individuals, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for temporary deferral of exercise.</li> <li>Importance of verbal screening and how to conduct it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Methods of evaluating how well training programmes are meeting individual needs.</li> </ul>
Ref	Skills:	An individual delivering Tai Chi for Health and Wellbeing must:
S3.1	Plan Tai Chi training sessions/ programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply knowledge to the planning of safe and effective training programmes for a range of individuals within scope of practice, using appropriate methods.</li> <li>Show appropriate session content for Tai Chi practice.</li> </ul>
S3.2	Deliver Tai Chi training sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver safe and effective Tai Chi training sessions.</li> </ul>
S3.3	Adapt training for varying individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt training to meet varying individual needs during a session as appropriate.</li> </ul>
S3.4	Review Tai Chi training sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appraise own performance in relation to the session.</li> <li>Appraise participants' performance in relation to the session.</li> <li>Assess the appropriateness of the session content in relation to the participants and environment.</li> <li>Make changes/adaptations to future session planning based on the appraisal of own performance, participant performance and appropriateness of session content.</li> </ul>

## 7. Acknowledgements

This Standard has been produced by the Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain (TCUGB) with the kind permission and guidance from the Sport's Governing Body the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts (BCCMA) in recognition that a Professional Standard is required in the Health and Wellbeing sector.

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Gareth Wilson

# Appendix

## Glossary of terms

**Tai Chi** – This term is used throughout this document and can be interchanged with Tai Chi Chuan, Taijiquan, Taiji, t'ai chi ch'uan and any other accepted spelling.

**13 Shi** – The original Chinese name 13 “Shi” is used throughout this document to cover all accepted translations and uses, some of which are: shi san shi, 13 positions, 13 postures, 13 powers, 13 gates, 13 energies, 8 gates & 5 directions, 8 energies & 5 steps.

**Form** – this term is used in this document to refer to any acknowledged drill (ie sequence, or set), of movements (shi, positions, postures, etc).

**Instructor** – This term is used throughout this document and is interchangeable with the term “teacher”.

**Style** – there are five widely accepted styles of tai chi, each named after its ‘founder’: Chen, Yang, Sun, Wu and Hao. All share many similarities, and many people argue that they share the same origin. However, each has its own unique characteristics and emphasises a particular aspect of movement. More modern styles e.g. Peking style, Cheng Man Ching style, and 42 step form are developed from these styles, and their lineages can be traced back to one or more of the five founders.

## Notes for technical knowledge and skills of chosen Tai Chi style(s)

**13 Shi – extant in all authentic styles of tai chi:**

**8 Gates (part of the 13 Shi):**

1. Ward off (pung / peng)
2. Roll Back (lu)
3. Press (ji)
4. Push (an)
5. Pull down (tsai)
6. Split (lieh)
7. Elbow stroke (chou)
8. Shoulder stroke (kao)

**5 Steps (part of the 13 Shi):**

1. Forward Step (jin)
2. Backwards Step (tui)
3. Step to Left side (ku)
4. Step to Right side (pan)
5. Central Equilibrium (zhong ding)

**Yang Cheng Fu’s 10 essentials – application to all authentic styles of tai chi**

**1. Elevate the crown and lift the spirit,** the head should be upright so the Shen or (spirit) can reach the top of your head.

**2. Sink the chest, pluck the back.** The chest is slightly sunken so that the chi can sink to the dan-tien. The back should be lifted or plucked up to avoid promoting kyphosis and also as a way to release power (jin) through the spine. Note, sink does not mean slouch or concave.

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3. **Relax (sung) your waist**, the waist is the commander in charge of your whole body.
4. **Understand the difference between insubstantial and substantial**, this is one of the very first things you will learn in Tai Chi Chuan. If the weight is on the right leg, then the right leg is substantial and the left leg is insubstantial.
5. **Sink the shoulders and drop down the elbows**. Your shoulders should be completely relaxed; elbows move downward and stay relaxed.
6. **Use the mind (Yi) and not force (Li)**. When practicing Tai Chi Chuan your whole body relaxes. The tai chi chuan classics tell us to use (yi) the mind, and not (li) force.
7. **Coordinate the upper and lower body**. The classics tell us that “the motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, controlled by the waist and manifested through the fingers.”
8. **Internal and external coordinate**. Called the 6 harmonies: 3 Internal harmonies 1. Shen / Yi (Spirit / Mind or Intention), 2. Yi / Qi (Intention / Energy), 3. Qi / Li (Energy / Body). 3 External harmonies 1. Shoulder / Hip, 2. Elbow / Knees, 3. Hand / Foot.
9. **Continuity without breakage**. From beginning to end Tai Chi movement is continuous and not broken
10. **Seek stillness within movement**. In Tai Chi we use stillness to control movement, even though we are moving, there is still stillness.

### **Basic Technical skills of chosen style of tai chi**

- **Stances** - body weight distribution, centre of gravity, alignment of knees, height or depth of base.
- **Hand technique** – correct formation of hand relative to the style being taught.
- **Body posture** - alignment of head, back and hips, centre of gravity, weight distribution.
- **Kicks** – the role of the supporting leg, the alignment of the foot in relation to the ankle, legs and hips, balance, centre of gravity, body weight recovery.
- **Footwork** – coordinated movement of the body in relation to the placement of the feet.
- **Balance** – static and body weight transitions.
- **Movement** – accurate transfer of body weight. Forwards and backwards, left and right.
- **Waist** – coordination of body movement in relation to waist, according to chosen style.
- **Breathing** – appropriate coordination of movement and breathing.

### **Full details on technical components of each posture/movement:**

Please refer to relevant publications on specific style taught, for example Tsung Hwa Jou, Elias, L.S., Rose, S. and Wollering, L. (2001) for Chen and Yang style, Yang, C. (2005) for Yang style, Sun, L. and Cartmell, T. (2003) for Sun style, Wu, Y.-H. and MaY.-L. (1993) for Wu style, etc.

### **References**

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