

6 May 2024

## ECU to become first WA university to offer osteopathy course

Edith Cowan University (ECU) will become Western Australia's first osteopathy educator, and one of only four nationally, with the School of Medical and Health Sciences offering a Bachelor of Medical Science (Osteopathy).

Osteopaths are registered healthcare practitioners, and the profession was one of the first ten health professions registered when the Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency was established.

Osteopaths provide direct manual therapy interventions, including exercise prescription and lifestyle advice to improve movement, reduce pain, and manage or treat a range of physical impairments.

Osteopathy treatment is recognised by the Department of Health Medicare program, the Department of Veteran's Affairs and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

ECU will seek accreditation from the Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council, with a plan to offer the 3.5-year Bachelors' degree in the first semester of 2026, and a four-year Honours degree to high performing students.

Executive dean for the School of Medical and Health Sciences [Professor Moira Sim](#), said the ECU course is structured to ensure students can apply broad knowledge and theory of osteopathy in a range of clinical and practical situations, and to think critically to analyse and interpret skeletomuscular conditions and factors which would impact treatment.

"Osteopathy is the second fastest growing registered health professional in Australia and Western Australia has the strongest workforce need," Professor Sim said.

Industry body Osteopathy Australia has commended ECU's decision to offer an accredited course.

"Integrating osteopathy into the health sciences curriculum at ECU comes at a critical time, aligning with the rising demand for osteopathic services amidst national healthcare shortages. ECU's proven dedication to delivering comprehensive and exceptional education assures me that the osteopathy program will significantly contribute to the expansion of knowledge, the advancement of evidence-based practice, and the future development of the osteopathic healthcare profession," said CEO Antony Nicholas.

"This initiative not only promises to bolster the workforce but also to enhance the quality and scope of osteopathic care."

Nicholas hopes that osteopaths being trained at ECU alongside other health professions such as occupational therapy and exercise physiology, would break down barriers and increase understanding of the valuable role the profession can offer consumers and the healthcare system.

"ECU offers an exciting range of post-graduate education that will be invaluable for many osteopaths as they plan, develop and grow in their careers," he added.

### A growing demand

As of late 2023, Australia is home to over 3,500 osteopaths, translating to around 11 professionals for every 100,000 people. Osteopathy, proportionally, is the second fastest growing health professions within the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency scheme with the number of osteopaths in Australia growing by 31.7% over the five years between 2017/18 and 2021/22.

However, around 60% of all osteopaths are located in Victoria, significantly more than anywhere else in the country.

Nicholas noted that numerous health practices and organisations across Western Australia have highlighted significant challenges in recruiting osteopaths, a concern underscored by the modest increase of only eight practitioners in the local workforce over the past five years.

“The introduction of the first osteopathy course in Western Australia presents a myriad opportunity for workforce development, enhanced education models, career advancement, additional postgraduate study options, an expansion in local osteopathic research, and enhancing the awareness and profile of osteopathy.

“This is especially important given its status as one of the smaller allied health professions in Western Australia. This initiative marks a pivotal step towards addressing recruitment challenges and fostering growth of the osteopathic field in the region.”

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**Media contact:** Esmarie Iannucci, 08 6304 3080 or 0405 774 465  
[e.iannucci@ecu.edu.au](mailto:e.iannucci@ecu.edu.au)

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