

DEFINITIONS OF PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTIES

The following definitions describe sexology and the various specializations within. The definitions are based on interpretations of various words and titles and how they might be applied to the discipline of Sexology. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth, Revised Edition Edited by Judy Pearsall and published by the Oxford University Press in 2002 has been the reference. In addition, the definitions for 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'sexual health' developed during the Technical Advisors'

Meeting, sponsored by the World Health Organisation and ratified at the World Association for Sexual Health General Assembly in Montreal 2004 provide the foundations for all definitions and descriptions provided in this document. These definitions are included below.

Sex refers to the biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. [These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. In general use in many languages, the term sex is often used to mean "sexual activity", but for technical purposes in the context of sexuality and sexual health discussions, the above definition is preferred.]

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors.

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

Sexology: A generic term encompassing the scientific study of all aspects of sexuality.

Derivatives:

Sexological - An adjective to describe an aspect of the study of sexuality

Sexologist - A noun to describe a person who practices Sexology

Sexologists work in a wide variety of disciplines. Although there is often overlap, the following descriptions have been placed in broad, discipline areas for the sake of clarity.

Behavioural Sciences

Sexual Counsellor: A person with recognised professional qualifications in one or more of the behavioural sciences and trained specifically in the practice of sexology as it applies to the provision of advice and guidance in personal, psychological, social or spiritual aspects of sexual life.

Sexual Psychotherapist: A person with a recognised professional qualification in *behavioural or clinical sciences*, and trained specifically in the practice of sexology as it applies to the appropriate evaluation and psychotherapeutic treatment of sexual disorders.

Clinical Sciences

Sexual Medicine: That branch of medicine that specialises in all aspects of sexual health.

Sexual Health Physician: A person with recognised medical qualification and specifically trained in the practice of sexology as it applies to the provision of medical services related to sexual health

Sexual Health Surgeon: A person with recognised medical qualification and specifically trained in the practice of sexology as it applies to the provision of surgical services related to sexual health

Education & Pedagogical Sciences

Sexuality Educator: A person with recognised professional qualifications in education and trained specifically in the practice of sexology as it applies to the provision of childhood, adolescent, adult, parent education and those with special needs, in the area of sexuality.

Research Sciences

Sexological Research: Any ethical research activity, employing recognised techniques that are peer-reviewed, which involve the study of human or animal sexuality. Research is undertaken within the sexologist's disciplinary area and is therefore subject to the appropriate techniques for that discipline. Research is conducted in all areas of sexology: Basic research, Behavioural, Clinical, Educational and Socio-cultural

Socio-Cultural

Sexological Anthropologist: A person with a recognised degree in Anthropology and trained specifically in the practice of sexology as it applies to the conduct of anthropological studies.

Sexological Sociologist: A person with a recognised degree in Sociology and trained specifically in the practice of sexology as it applies to the conduct of social and cultural studies.