



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte  
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +  
Social Care Professionals

# Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

## Optometrist

## Introduction

The Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 (HSCP Act 2005) provides for the establishment of Registration Boards, to establish and maintain registers for a range of health and social care professions. Entry onto to the register allows a person to use the title of that profession. This system of statutory registration is fundamental to the delivery of quality and accountability in the provision of professional services. The objective of the statutory registration system is to protect, guide and inform the public by ensuring that health and social care professionals are properly regulated and qualified for the job whether they work in the public or private sectors or are self-employed.

The objective of the Registration Board is to protect the public by fostering high standards of professional conduct and professional education, training and competence among registrants of that profession (HSCP Act, 2005: Section 27(1)(as amended)). To this end the Act makes provision for:

- The approval of education and training programmes (HSCP Act, 2005: Section 48)
- Monitoring the continuing suitability of education and training programmes (HSCP Act, 2005: Section 49).

Regulatory approval of a programme by a Registration Board is distinct from academic accreditation. Academic accreditation is based on the suitability of a programme for the award of a qualification. Regulatory approval is a judgment as to whether a programme associated with a given qualification consistently and effectively prepares graduate for entry into register of that profession. To receive approval a programme must demonstrate that it meets the requirements of the Registration Board. There are two types of requirements:

- Criteria for education and training programmes
  - there are two sets of criteria; core and profession specific
  - the criteria specify the requirements for the design, organisation and management of a programme to ensure that it can consistently and effectively produce graduates who meet the standards of proficiency
- Standards of proficiency
  - there is one set of standards; profession specific
  - the standards of proficiency specify the threshold skills and abilities required for entry to the register

## Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

The criteria for education and training programmes are used to ensure that a programme has a system in place to consistently and effectively produce graduates who meet the standards of proficiency for entry to the register. There are two sets of criteria; core and profession specific. This document outlines the profession specific criteria for education and training programmes which are set out in two sections:

1. Level of qualifications for entry to the register
2. Practice placements

The profession specific criteria are complemented by the core criteria which set out the Registration Board's requirements in relation to:

1. Programme admission
2. Programme management
3. Curriculum
4. Assessment strategy

Full details of the core criteria are outlined in the document *Core Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*. CORU also provides guidelines on these criteria in the document *Core Criteria for Education and Training Programmes - Guidelines for Programme Providers*.

Together, the core and profession specific criteria form the Registration Board's requirements for the way education and training programmes are designed, organised and managed.

## Standards of Proficiency

Providers must also demonstrate that those who complete the programme submitted for approval meet the standards of proficiency. The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards deemed necessary by the Registration Board for entry to the register. In the approval and monitoring of education and training, the standards of proficiency are used to ensure that graduates of an approved programme holding an approved qualification have the required skills and abilities for entry to the register.

## Approval and Monitoring of Programmes

Approved programmes are those which meet all of the Registration Board's criteria and ensure that all students who successfully complete the programme meet all of the required standards of proficiency.

A programme which meets the required criteria and standards of proficiency for entry to the register is granted approval and the qualification associated with the programme is listed on the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law as one of the entry criteria to the register. Graduates possessing an approved qualification are eligible to apply for entry to the profession's register. The programme will then be subject to monitoring.

Failure to demonstrate that the programme meets the criteria for programmes and the standards of proficiency, either during approval or subsequent monitoring, will mean that the programme is not approved. Students graduating from a non-approved programme are not eligible to apply for entry to the profession's register.

## Supporting CORU documentation

This document should be considered in conjunction with the following documentation:

- *Core Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*
- *Core Criteria for Education and Training Programmes - Guidelines for Programme Providers*
- *Standards of Proficiency for your profession*
- *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for your profession*
- *Approval and Monitoring Guide*
- *Programme Information Guidelines for Education/Training Providers*

## **1. Level of qualifications for entry to the register**

**P.C.1.** The Optical Registration Board requires that the minimum qualification level for the entry route to the register for Optometrist will be the following:

- Bachelor degree at NFQ level 8 in Optometry

## 2. Practice placements

- 2.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.
- 2.2 The programme must ensure that each student completes 1000 hours of supervised practice.
- 2.3 The number, duration and range of practice placements, and their position within the programme must reflect current practice and demands of the profession. They must be appropriate to facilitate translation of theory into practice and the achievement of the standards of proficiency.
- 2.4 The education provider will have a set of requirements for the selection of practice placements to ensure quality learning experiences for students that reflect the normal context and environment of practice. The education provider will work in partnership with the practice placement provider and have written agreements in place that clearly set out the responsibilities of all parties in ensuring that the placement supports the achievement of the standards of proficiency..
- 2.5 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring the quality of all practice placements. Students, the practice education team, placement providers and all relevant stakeholders – including service users where appropriate - must have a role in this review process including mechanisms for obtaining regular feedback.
- 2.6 Clear communication and governance structures should be in place to facilitate ongoing communication between the placement and education providers.
- 2.7 Student allocation to practice placements is based on the need to integrate theory and practice and to facilitate the student's progressive development of the standards of proficiency
- 2.8 Practice placement attendance requirements are explicit and detail mechanisms and processes in place to manage absence/non-attendance.
- 2.9 Pre-placement requirements – including academic, legal, occupational health and other requirements – and procedures for non-compliance with these requirements are clear.
- 2.10 While on placement, appropriate support, guidance and supervision is maintained with the student by the practice education team.
- 2.11 There must be a clear and explicit process in place for students to raise concerns in relation to their practice education and access appropriate supports
- 2.12 The student code of conduct - and processes for dealing with breaches of that code whilst on placement - is in place

- 2.13 The profile and roles of the practice education team should be described. Practice educators must also be registered with the appropriate registration board. *The student supervisor must have at least 3 years relevant post qualification experience and must be located in the same practice as the practice student.*
- 2.14 Students, practice placement providers and practice education teams will be fully prepared and informed of the expectations of the practice placement, including the education/training provider's student fitness-to-practise requirements.
- 2.15 Supervision policies include guidelines on how students progressively achieve independence in practice
- 2.16 Guidelines/procedures and supports are available for practice educators in managing students, including students who are in difficulty, throughout the placement
- 2.17 The education provider will make regular support and training available to the practice education team to develop their practice education skills.
- 2.18 All stakeholders must be informed about practice education assessments, their link to the standards of proficiency and the marking criteria used. The practice education team must have access to assessment tools and be trained in completing these assessments and providing feedback during the placement.
- 2.19 Mechanisms for the return of placement assessments to the education provider must be in place