Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board

Standards of Proficiency for Psychotherapists

Bord Chlárúcháin na gComhairleoirí agus na Síciteiripeoirí
Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board

About this Document

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. The role of CORU is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals.

CORU was set up under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended). It is made up of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the Registration Boards, one for each profession named in our Act.

This document sets out the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board's Standards of Proficiency for Psychotherapists.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

▸ Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Psychotherapists

▸ Programme Information Guidelines for Education and Training Providers

Table of Contents

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 object 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 graduates 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

▸ 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

▸ the standards of proficiency specify the threshold skills and abilities required for entry to the register

Standards of Proficiency

The Standards of Proficiency detail the skills and abilities that individuals must possess in order to enter the register. They are the threshold standards deemed necessary by the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board at the level of entry to practice. They are not standards for practice after entry to the register, rather they offer a snapshot of the standards at entry to the register.

This document sets out the standards of proficiency for psychotherapists under five domains:

1. Professional Autonomy and Accountability

2. Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking

3. Safety and Quality

4. Professional Development

5. Professional Knowledge and Skills

Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

The Criteria for Education and Training Programmes is 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. The criteria sets out the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board's requirements for the way education and training programmes are designed, organised and managed.

Approval and Monitoring of Programmes

Approved programmes are those which meet all of the Counsellors and Psychotherapists 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:

▶ Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Psychotherapists

▶ Programme Information Guidelines for Education and Training Providers

1. Professional Autonomy and Accountability

Graduates will:

1. Be able to practise safely and effectively within the legal, ethical and practice boundaries of the profession

2. Be able to identify the limits of their practice and know when to seek advice and additional expertise or refer to another professional

3. Be able to act in the best interest of service users at all times with due regard to their will and preference

4. Be aware of current guidelines and legislation relating to candour and disclosure

5. Respect and uphold the rights, dignity and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic, therapeutic and social care process

6. Be able to exercise a professional duty of care

7. Understand what is required of them by the Registration Board and be familiar with the provisions of the current Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for the profession issued by the Registration Board

8. Recognise the importance of practising in a non-discriminatory, culturally sensitive way and acknowledge and respect the differences in beliefs and cultural practices of individuals or groups

9. Understand the role of policies and systems to protect the health, safety, welfare, equality and dignity of service users, staff and volunteers

10. Understand and respect the confidentiality of service users and use information only for the purpose for which it was given

11. Understand confidentiality in the context of the team setting

12. Understand and be able to apply the limits of the concept of confidentiality particularly in relation to child protection, vulnerable adults and elder abuse

13. Be aware of current data protection, freedom of information and other legislation relevant to the profession and be able to access new and emerging legislation

14. Be able to recognise and manage the potential conflict that can arise between confidentiality and whistle-blowing

15. Be able to gain informed consent to carry out assessments or provide treatment/ interventions and document evidence that consent has been obtained

16. Be aware of current legislation and guidelines related to informed consent for individuals with lack of capacity

17. Recognise personal responsibility and professional accountability for one's actions and be able to justify professional decisions made

18. Be able to take responsibility for managing one's own workload as appropriate

19. Understand the principles of professional decision-making and be able to make informed decisions within the context of competing demands including those relating to ethical conflicts and available resources

20. Be aware of and be able to take responsibility for managing one's own health and wellbeing

2. Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking

Graduates will:

1. Be able to communicate diagnosis/assessment and/or treatment/management options in a way that can be understood by the service user

2. Be able to modify and adapt communication methods and styles, including verbal and non-verbal methods to suit the individual service users considering issues of language, culture, beliefs and health and/or social care needs

3. Recognise service users as active participants in their health and social care and be able to support service users in communicating their health and/or social care needs, choices and concerns

4. Understand the need to empower service users to manage their well-being where possible and recognise the need to provide advice to the service user on self-treatment, where appropriate

5. Be able to recognise when the services of a professional translator are required

6. Be able to produce clear, concise, accurate and objective documentation

7. Be able to apply digital literacy skills and communication technologies appropriate to the profession

8. Be aware of and comply with local/national documentation standards including, for example, terminology, signature requirements

9. Be able to express professional, informed and considered opinions to service users, health professionals and others e.g. carers, relatives in varied practice settings and contexts and within the boundaries of confidentiality

10. Understand and be able to recognise the impact of effective leadership and management on practice

11. Understand and be able to discuss the principles of effective conflict management

12. Understand the need to work in partnership with service users, their relatives/carers and other professionals in planning and evaluating goals, treatments and interventions

13. Understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team

14. Understand the role and impact of effective interdisciplinary team working in meeting service user needs and be able to effectively contribute to decision- making within a team setting

15. Understand the role of relationships with professional colleagues and other workers in service delivery and the need to create professional relationships based on mutual respect and trust

3. Safety and Quality

Graduates will:

1. Be able to gather all appropriate background information relevant to the service user's health and social care needs

2. Be able to justify the selection of and implement appropriate assessment techniques and be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment relevant to what is necessary for the safe practice of psychotherapy.

3. Be able to determine the appropriate tests/assessments required and undertake/arrange these tests

4. Be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected in the assessment process

5. Be able to demonstrate sound logical reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate problem lists, action plans and goals

6. Be able to demonstrate an evidence-informed approach to professional decision-making, adapting practice to the needs of the service user and draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgments

7. Be able to prioritise and maintain the safety of both service users and those involved in their care

8. Be able to evaluate intervention plans using appropriate tools and recognised performance/outcome measures along with service user responses to the interventions. Revise the plans as necessary and where appropriate, in conjunction with the service user

9. Understand the need to monitor, evaluate and/or audit the quality of practice and be able to critically evaluate one's own practice against evidence-based standards and implement improvements based on the findings of these audits and reviews

10. Be able to recognise important risk factors and implement risk management strategies; be able to make reasoned decisions and/or provide guidance to others to initiate, continue, modify or cease interventions, techniques or courses of action and record decisions and concerns

11. Understand the principles of quality assurance and quality improvement

12. Be able to carry out and document a risk analysis and implement effective risk management controls and strategies; be able to clearly communicate any identified risk, adverse events or near misses in line with current legislation/guidelines

13. Be able to comply with relevant and current health and safety legislation and guidelines

14. Be able to establish safe environments for practice which minimises risks to service users, those treating them and others, including the use of infection prevention and control strategies

4. Professional Development

Graduates will:

1. Be able to engage in and take responsibility for professional development

2. Understand the need to demonstrate evidence of ongoing continuing professional development and education, be aware of professional regulation requirements and understand the benefits of continuing professional development to professional practice

3. Be able to evaluate and reflect critically on own professional practice to identify learning and development needs; be able to select appropriate learning activities to achieve professional development goals and be able to integrate new knowledge and skills into professional practice

4. Understand and recognise the impact of personal values and life experience on professional practice and be able to manage this impact appropriately

5. Understand the importance of and be able to seek professional development, supervision, feedback and peer review opportunities in order to continuously improve practice

6. Understand the importance of participation in performance management activities for effective service delivery

5. Professional Knowledge and Skills

Graduates will:

1. Know, understand and apply the key concepts of the domains of knowledge which are relevant to the profession and be able to work within a framework based upon established psychotherapeutic theory and practice

2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of relevant biological sciences, human development, social and behavioural sciences and other related sciences, together with a knowledge of health and wellbeing, disease, disorder and dysfunction

3. Know and understand the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment/intervention efficacy, the research process and evidence-informed practice

4. Demonstrate skills in evidence-informed practice, including translation of theory, concepts and methods to clinical/professional practice

5. Be able to identify and understand the impact of organisational, community and societal structures, systems and culture on health and social care provision

6. Demonstrate safe and effective implementation of practical, technical and clinical skills

7. Demonstrate ability to participate in or lead clinical, academic or practice-based research

8. Know the basic principles of effective teaching and learning, mentoring and supervision

9. Work therapeutically to manage moderate to severe and complex psychological distress – including the management of co-occurring psychological issues – in order to facilitate service user insight and understanding of the personal context of their psychological distress

10. Know and be able to recognise in service user presentations the continuum of mental wellbeing from mild to severe and complex psychological distress in order to identify service user suitability for the therapeutic intervention(s) offered

11. Be able to apply knowledge of the different stages of human development and recognise and evaluate their impact on psychological functioning in service user presentations

12. Know and critically appraise the benefits, limitations and suitability of a range of psychotherapeutic frameworks

13. Apply knowledge of at least one psychotherapeutic framework in order to assess the service user presentation, conceptualise and identify moderate to severe and complex psychological distress and develop an appropriate intervention(s)

14. Critically analyse, appraise and evaluate psychotherapy and other relevant contemporary research in order to assist with the development and modification of intervention(s)

15. Be able to have awareness of DSM/ICD diagnostic frameworks in the context of a service user's mental health and psychotherapy

16. Be able to understand the impact and implications of pharmacological use on service users

17. Be able to establish and build a therapeutic relationship with a service user, within a chosen theoretical framework, recognising and managing professional and ethical boundaries

18. Be able to assess service user readiness and suitability for the intervention offered

19. Monitor and evaluate service user development and progress throughout the therapeutic process in order to modify – in collaboration with the service user – the agreed intervention(s)

20. Be able to contract and re-contract, including repairing ruptures, with the service user during the therapeutic relationship, ensuring the therapeutic aims and each person's expectations and responsibilities are clear

21. Be able to sustain a long-term therapeutic relationship that facilitates the exploration of complex psychological presentations, evaluating service user development and progress, in order to appropriately prepare the service user for and manage, safely and ethically, the conclusion of the therapeutic relationship

22. Be able to demonstrate understanding of the service user's life experience and its evolving impact on their presentation and communicate this in a non- judgemental manner

23. Be able to identify and critically evaluate how psychosocial and systemic factors may affect both the service user and the therapeutic process, and work with these in the therapeutic relationship

24. Be able to recognise and manage the dynamics of power and authority as experienced in the therapeutic relationship

25. Be able to identify and apply knowledge of intersecting psychological factors – including diversity – in service user presentations, recognising their impact on well-being, and work in an inclusive, sensitive and non-discriminatory manner

26. Be able to identify and distinguish between presentations of trauma and evaluate its impact in order to work therapeutically with service users

27. Be able to demonstrate knowledge of crisis presentations and be able to work therapeutically with people experiencing crisis

28. Be able to identify and evaluate potential risk of suicide, harm to self or others, implement a safety plan to support the service user and others and escalate as appropriate

29. Be able to recognise and manage personal emotional responses, vicarious trauma and the need to develop effective self-care strategies and burnout prevention

30. Be able to reflect on and critically analyse the factors that influence therapeutic boundaries and the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship

31. Be able to critically reflect on the presence of conscious and unconscious dynamics in the therapeutic process and manage personal involvement in, and contribution to, the process of psychotherapy

32. Be able to critically reflect on the necessity of engaging in clinical supervision to support, sustain and improve practice

33. Be able to critically reflect on the presence of conscious and unconscious dynamics in clinical supervision and manage personal involvement in, and contribution to, the process of clinical supervision

34. Be able to demonstrate skill in the technologies and communication methods required for the delivery of psychotherapy in a virtual setting and apply these therapeutically and safely while protecting service user privacy and confidentiality

35. Have a critical awareness of the need for organisation and resource management in a variety of settings, including private practice

36. Be able to write concise, accurate and relevant notes and records which articulate and justify professional formulations and decisions made

37. Be able to critically appraise local and national guidelines and policies appropriate to the profession