



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte  
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +  
Social Care Professionals

**DRAFT**

# Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board

## Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for **Psychotherapists**

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## 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 criteria and profession specific criteria.

There are **two** profession specific criteria for education and training programmes:

- Level of qualifications for entry to the register (Criterion 1.1)
- Total Number of Practice Placement Hours (Criterion 2.2)

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

- All other elements of practice placements (Criterion 2)
- Programme admission (Criterion 3)
- Programme management (Criterion 4)
- Curriculum (Criterion 5)
- Assessment strategy (Criterion 6)

CORU 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 Psychotherapists*~~
- *Approval and Monitoring Guide*
- *Programme Information Guidelines for Education/Training Providers*

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## Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

### Criterion 1

#### Level of qualifications for entry to the register

- 1.1 The minimum level of qualification for entry to the register is Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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## Criterion 2

### Practice placements

- 2.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.
- 2.2 The programme must ensure that each student completes **500 hours**.  
A minimum of **350 of the 500 hours** must be supervised service user contact experience, of which **100 hours** is directly observed service user contact.
- 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 detailed mechanisms and processes are 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 must be described. Practice educators must also be registered with the appropriate registration board.
- 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.



### **Criterion 3 Programme Admission**

- 3.1** Clear and comprehensive information for prospective students about the programme and procedures for admission to the programme, including direct applications, must be available to ensure that prospective students can make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme. Information provided should adhere to CORU's advertising guidelines regarding the approval status of qualifications and programmes.
- 3.2** The procedures for all student admissions to the programme must ensure that the stated entry criteria are met including any criteria relating to language proficiency, health requirements, criminal records and other appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards to ensure that students can participate in all elements of the programme.
- 3.3** The admissions procedures must detail procedures for the recognition of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms at the individual and collective levels and document the evidence used to justify any programme exemptions in the context of their impact on achievement of the standards of proficiency.
- 3.4** The admissions procedures must ensure that the provider has suitable policies in relation to equal opportunities for applicants and students that meet the requirements of the most recent legislation together with an indication of how these are implemented and monitored.

## **Criterion 4**

### **Programme Management**

- 4.1** The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's plans to ensure that admitted cohorts of students will have the opportunity to complete the programme and be eligible to apply for registration.
- 4.2** The named person with direct responsibility for the design and integration of the profession-specific components of the programme must have appropriate qualifications and experience. S/he must also be registered with the appropriate registration board unless other arrangements are agreed, for example, during the transitional period.
- 4.3** The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place incorporating input from staff, students and all relevant stakeholders.
- 4.4** All staff involved in the programme delivery and assessment of students must possess relevant qualifications, expertise and knowledge for the subject matter they teach.
- 4.5** Those responsible for delivery and assessment of the core professional elements of the programme must be registered with the appropriate registration board.
- 4.6** A programme for staff—development must be in place to ensure continuing professional development relevant to their roles as educators of health and social care professionals.
- 4.7** There is a mechanism in place to communicate and foster an understanding of the practice of the profession among non-professional staff involved in the delivery of the programme.
- 4.8** There are resources to support student learning in all settings to achieve the standards of proficiency.
- 4.9** There must be academic, health, wellbeing and welfare support mechanisms in place for students, designed with their needs in mind, and responsive to feedback from those who use them.
- 4.10** The provider must identify any requirements for attendance, the procedure for monitoring attendance and the consequences of not meeting attendance requirements where relevant.
- 4.11** Where students act as service users in practical and clinical teaching, relevant protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

- 4.12** A profession-specific student code of conduct must be in place, including explicit information on processes and outcomes for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct, and fitness to practise.
- 4.13** There must be a quality assurance policy and system in place – which includes regular quality assurance audits, reviews and reports – that identifies quality issues and with clear accountability for addressing these issues.
- 4.14** There must be formal processes in place for students to raise individual and collective concerns about the programme and to provide feedback on the content and quality of the programme.
- 4.15** The programme provider must have secure mechanisms in place to manage and store student records/data and demonstrate compliance with data protection legislation.
- 4.16** The programme provider must have detailed health and safety policies, procedures and implementation processes in place, including review of these policies and demonstrate evidence of appropriate insurance.

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## **Criterion 5 Curriculum**

- 5.1** The curriculum must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency.
- 5.2** The curriculum must be guided by evidence-informed professional knowledge, relevant to current practice and the philosophy and core values associated with the profession with evidence of input from all relevant stakeholders including service users and employers.
- 5.3** The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum and achievement of standards of proficiency.
- 5.4** Where the profession normally engages in interprofessional practice to achieve service-user outcomes, the curriculum must reflect evidence of relevant inter-professional education along with addressing the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group.
- 5.5** The curriculum should be designed to facilitate the timely integration of theory and practice with regular opportunities for feedback, reflection and consolidation.
- 5.6** The curriculum must embed a culture of professionalism and make sure that students understand the implications of professional regulation including adherence to the relevant Registration Board's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

## **Criterion 6**

### **Assessment Strategy**

- 6.1** Assessments must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency.
- 6.2** Assessments must be employed that assess learning outcomes (at module and programme levels) and appropriately and effectively facilitate progression decisions and the achievement of the standards of proficiency.
- 6.3** There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure good practices are implemented in assessment including the use of formative and summative methods.
- 6.4** Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified.
- 6.5** Students must be informed about the assessments being used for their programme and be clear about requirements for progression and procedures for non-progression decisions.
- 6.6** All staff involved in the assessment of students – formative or summative – must be informed about their link to the standards of proficiency and, where appropriate, trained to facilitate these assessments.
- 6.7** All assessments must provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external-reference frameworks can be measured.
- 6.8** The assessments in both the education setting and practice placement setting should be constructively aligned to achievement of the standards of proficiency.
- 6.9** Procedures are in place for students to obtain results and feedback and to make an appeal of their results. Students and staff are informed of these procedures.

## Glossary

Act	The Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended).
Approval process	The process that leads to a decision as to whether a programme meets the criteria set for approval of education and training programmes and produces graduates who meet the standards of proficiency.
Approved programme	A specific and coherent set of educational activities designed to achieve learning objectives over a sustained period which meets the criteria for education and training programmes and standards of proficiency set by a Registration Board and has been granted approval by the Registration Board.
Approved qualification	A document that attests to a person having achieved the standard of proficiency required for registration in a designated profession, that has been approved by bye-law of the Registration Board of the profession concerned and that relates to a qualification awarded in the State.
Approved qualifications bye-law	The Approved Qualifications Bye- Law lists the qualifications approved by the Registration Board as attesting to the standards of proficiency required for registration under Section 38 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 (as amended).
Core programme team	Members of the programme team who also have responsibility for aspects of the programme design and management such as curriculum, assessment and admissions. This may be the course committee or any other group who manage these elements of the programme.
Code of professional conduct and ethics	The standards of conduct, performance and ethics to which a member of that profession must adhere throughout the course of their work
Criterion/criteria	The requirements for the design, organisation and management of an education and training programme to ensure that it can consistently and effectively produce graduates who meet the standards of proficiency.
Education provider/provider	The institution that offers an education and training programme and which control key aspects of the programme including admissions, curriculum delivery, quality management, placement management and assessment.
External contributor	A person who contributes to the curriculum of a programme but who is not employed by the education provider.
Mapping document	Template document to be completed by the education provider explaining how the programme meets the criteria and standards of proficiency.
Monitoring process	The process which determines the continuing suitability of an approved programme.
Practice placement	A period of clinical or practical experience that forms part of a programme.
Practice education team	Persons who are responsible for a student's education during the period of clinical or practical placement. This includes the practice educator on site in the placement providers.
Programme director	The named person with direct responsibility for the design and

	integration of the profession-specific components of the programme.
Programme team	The individuals responsible for the delivery and assessment of the curriculum.
Register	A register established and maintained under Section 36 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended).
Registration Board	A board established under Section 26 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended).
Review team	A group of persons who carry out the review of programmes and prepare a report to assist a Registration Board in making decisions in relation to approval and monitoring.
Service user	A person who uses or is affected by the services of registrants or students.
Standards of proficiency	The threshold skills and abilities required for entry to the register

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