



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Social Workers Registration Board Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers

About this Document

CORU is a multi-profession 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 Social Workers Registration Board Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- > Social Workers Registration Board Criteria for Education and Training Programmes
- > Programme Approval and Monitoring Processes: Information for Education Providers
- > Programme Information Guidelines for Education and Training Providers

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

The Health and Social Care Professionals Council is subject to the Freedom of Information and its records are subject to requests under the Freedom of Information Act, 2004.

Any personal data received by CORU will be used for the purpose of programme approval and monitoring and shared with those involved in these processes.

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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 graduates for entry onto the 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

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 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 the Social Workers Registration Board 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 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. 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.

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:

- › *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Social Workers*
- › *Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Social Workers - Guidelines for Programme Providers*
- › *Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers*
- › *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for your profession*
- › *Approval and Monitoring Guide*
- › *Programme Information Guidelines for Education/Training Provider*

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 the importance of maintaining accurate up to date documentation
8. 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
9. 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
10. Understand the role of policies and systems to protect the health, safety, welfare, equality and dignity of service users, staff and volunteers
11. Understand and respect the confidentiality of service users and use information only for the purpose for which it was given
12. Understand the limits of confidentiality in the context of a variety of team settings
13. Understand and be able to apply the limits of the concept of confidentiality particularly in relation to child protection, vulnerable adults and elder abuse
14. 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
15. Be able to recognise and manage the potential conflict that can arise between confidentiality and whistle-blowing
16. Be able to gain informed consent to carry out assessments or provide treatment/interventions and document evidence that consent has been obtained
17. Be aware of current legislation and guidelines related to informed consent, for individuals with lack of capacity
18. Recognise personal responsibility and professional accountability for one's actions and be able to justify professional decisions made
19. Be able to take responsibility for managing one's own workload
20. 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
21. 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 including non-voluntary service users
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 and importance of effective leadership and management on practice
11. Understand and be able to discuss the importance of effective conflict management
12. Understand the need to work in partnership with service users, their relatives/carers, guardians and other professionals in planning and evaluating goals, treatments and interventions and be aware of the concepts of power and authority in relationships with service users
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
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 have knowledge of critical engagement 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

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 take responsibility and 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 for individuals, groups and communities
2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of social work theory, methods and skills, social policy and social research, including consideration in a global context
3. Have a critical understanding of sociology, psychology, human growth and development, health, law, economics and political science
4. Critically understand the importance of effective supervisory frameworks and be able to actively participate in same.
5. Critically understand and be able to apply principles of social justice in one's work including being able to appropriately challenge negative discrimination and unjust policies and practices.
6. Demonstrate a critical understanding of cultural competence; and work towards social inclusion
7. Critically understand and apply a human rights based approach
8. Critically understand the legislative basis of actions within a service
9. Demonstrate an awareness and critical understanding of how social work practice is influenced by regulations, national guidelines and standards, findings of inquiries, investigations, associated reports; issues and trends in public and policy development; and be able to access new and emerging information which affects social work practice
10. Critically understand the role and purpose of relationship based practice, including the importance of planning the withdrawal of services
11. Be able to maintain professional boundaries with service users within a variety of social work settings and be able to identify and manage any associated challenges
12. Critically understand and apply the principles of partnership, participation and power sharing within the social work context.
13. Be able to evaluate the effect of their own characteristics, values and practice on interactions with service users and be able to critically reflect on this to improve practice
14. Critically understand the concepts and frameworks that underpin a range of individual counselling theory and skills; theory and practice of working with children and families; community work theory and practice and group work theory and practice
15. Recognise the role of advocacy in promoting the needs and interests of service users; be able to advocate on the behalf of service users
16. Critically understand the capacity of system-level change to improve outcomes, access to care, and delivery of services, particularly for marginalised groups
17. Recognise that service users have the right to self-determination including to take risks
18. Be able to conduct risk management planning with service users to maximise their own safety, safety of others and societal safety across the lifespan in a variety of contexts
19. Critically understand the role of ethics in the use of digital and social media including maintaining confidentiality and professionalism

20. Be able to write concise, accurate reports which articulate and justify professional decisions made
21. Know and critically understand the principles, ethics and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment/intervention efficacy, the research process and evidence-informed practice
22. Demonstrate skills in evidence-informed practice, including translation of theory, concepts and methods to professional practice
23. Demonstrate safe and effective implementation of practical, technical and clinical skills
24. Be able to identify and critically understand the impact of organisational, governmental, community and societal structures, systems and culture on health and social care
25. Demonstrate ability to participate in clinical, academic or practice-based research
26. Know the basic principles of effective teaching and learning, mentoring and supervision
27. Be able to communicate in English at a standard equivalent to C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Glossary of Terms

Act

The Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005(as amended)

Appeal

An application for reconsideration of a decision regarding approval of a programme.

Approval

The status granted to a programme that meets the criteria set by the Registration Board for approval of education and training programmes.

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.

Assessment Team

An assessment team, selected from the Panel of Assessors, to carry out the approval process for an education and training programme.

Award

An award which is conferred or granted by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence.

Biennial monitoring

A biennial process where a provider confirms that the approved programme continues to meet the criteria for approval.

Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics

This is a statement of the standards which registrants sign up to and agree to abide by in order to remain on the register.

Council

The Health and Social Care Professionals Council, established under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 (as amended).

Criterion

A principle or standard that an education and training programme is judged by.

Curriculum

A structured plan to provide specific learning to support students' knowledge, skills, behaviours and associated learning experiences. The learning plan is generally organised as a sequence of modules. The curriculum includes the syllabus, teaching guides, an assessment plan and necessary learning resources.

Designated profession

A health or social care profession that is designated under Section 4(1) or Section 4(2) of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005.

Education Provider (Provider)

The institution that provides, organises and delivers an education and training programme.

Framework

The broad structure within which Registration Boards will operate in relation to the approval and monitoring of education and training programmes.

Food service institution

Food service institution refers to an environment where clients are nutritionally dependent.

Indicators

The means by which a provider shows how a programme satisfies the criteria for approval.

Mapping document

Template document to be completed by the education provider.

Major change

A change to a programme of study that significantly alters the way the programme meets the criteria for approval of education and training programmes and therefore how the students will attain the standards of proficiency. Not all changes to a programme are major changes.

Monitoring

The process of ensuring the continuing suitability of approved education and training programmes.

National Framework of Qualifications

The single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards.

Panel of Assessors

A panel appointed by a Registration Board comprising academics, practitioners, employers and service users.

Practice placement

A period of clinical or practical experience that forms part of an approved programme.

Practice educator

A person who is responsible for a student's education during the period of clinical or practical placement.

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, including those dealing with practice placement education in dietetics.

Practice placement provider

The organisation that provides a period of clinical or practical experience for a student.

Profession specific proficiencies

Proficiencies added by a Registration Board related to a named profession.

Programme

The academic teaching, practice placements, assessment, qualification and other services provided by the education provider, which together forms the programme for approval purposes.

Quality assurance procedures

Formal procedures that are in place in an institution for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training provided by the institution.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Refers to recognition of learning that has taken place prior to entering a programme. Such prior learning may have been acquired through formal, non-formal or informal routes.

Register

A register established and maintained under Section 36 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005.

Registrant

In relation to a designated profession this means an individual whose name is currently on the register of members for that profession.

Registration Board

A board established under Section 26 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005.

Self-study

The process whereby a provider of a programme examines and documents to a Registration Board how that programme meets the criteria for approval of programmes.

Service user

Anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants or students.

Standards of Proficiency

These are the standards required of graduates for the safe and effective practise of the professions regulated by the Council. They are the minimum standards necessary to protect the public.

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