



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health
Social Care Professionals

Optical Registration Board

Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for **Optometrists**

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 Optical Registration Board's Criteria for Education and Training Programmes.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- › Standards of Proficiency for Optometrists
- › Programme Approval and Monitoring Processes: Information for Education Providers
- › Programme Information Guidelines for Education and Training Providers.

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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 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 (Section 48) – this allows a Registration Board to determine if it is satisfied that a programme which applies for approval is suitable for the education and training of candidates for registration in its register.
- › the **monitoring** of approved programmes (Section 49) – this allows a Registration Board to satisfy itself as to the continuing suitability of the education, training, assessment and examination and clinical training and experience provided by any education and training programme approved by the Board.

Regulatory approval of a programme by a Registration Board is distinct from academic accreditation. 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** are the set of requirements set by the Registration Board related to how a professional education and training programme is designed and managed. The criteria 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 the profession.
- › **standards of proficiency** are the threshold standards set by the Registration Board for entry to the register. The standards of proficiency provide detail on the knowledge and skills that all graduates must possess at 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 Optometrists Register. The programme will then be subject to monitoring.

If a programme is not approved, the associated qualification will not be listed on the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law.

Monitoring is a requirement of all approved programmes and is conducted not less than once every five years. Qualifications may be removed from the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law if the associated programme does not meet the Board's requirements under monitoring.

Students graduating from a programme not listed on the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law are not eligible to apply for entry to the Optometrists 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. The Optical Registration Board has set criteria in relation to:

1. Level of qualifications for entry to the register
2. Practice placements
3. Programme admissions
4. Programme management
5. Curriculum
6. Assessment strategy

These criteria form the Optical 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 for Optometrists. The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards deemed necessary by the Optical Registration Board for entry to the register. In the approval and monitoring of education and training programmes, 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 Optometrist and Dispensing Optician Register.

The standards of proficiency are detailed in a document called the *Standards of Proficiency for Optometrists*.

Submissions for Programme Approval or Monitoring

CORU offers further information on the approval and monitoring processes and guidance on the preparation of documentation and arrangements for the visit for those providers who wish to make an application for programme approval.

The *Programme Approval and Monitoring Processes Information for Education Providers* sets out details of each stage of this process.

Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

Criterion 1

Level of qualifications for entry to the register

- 1.1.** 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

Criterion 2

Practice placements

- 2.1 Practice placements are integral to the programme.
- 2.2 The programme must ensure that each student completed 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

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

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 - 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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