



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Physiotherapists
Registration
Board

Physiotherapists Registration Board

Standards of Competence for Referral for
Radiological Diagnostic Procedures

Bord Clárchúcháin na bhFisiteiripeoirí
Physiotherapists Registration Board

About the Physiotherapists Registration Board

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 the statutory registration of health and social care professionals.

CORU was established under the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*. It is made up of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and Registration Boards, each of which manages the registration of members of the profession or professions it has responsibility for.

The Physiotherapists Registration Board was established in May 2014. The Physiotherapists Register was opened on 30 September 2016 and the titles 'physiotherapist' and 'physical therapist' became legally protected titles on 30 September 2018.

The Physiotherapists Registration Board has the statutory responsibility for:

- ▶ establishing and maintaining the Register of Physiotherapists;
- ▶ assessing, approving and monitoring education and training programmes awarded in the State for entry onto the Physiotherapists Register;
- ▶ assessing and recognising qualifications gained outside the State in order to determine whether they meet Irish threshold requirements; and
- ▶ establishing the Code of Conduct of Professional Conduct and Ethics to which all registered physiotherapists and physical therapists must adhere.

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

In July 2023, the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, announced a policy decision to enable physiotherapists to refer for diagnostic radiological procedures that involve exposure to ionising radiation.

Extensive and detailed legislative requirements are in operation concerning the exposure to ionising radiation for the safety and protection of service users, practitioners and the public more generally. The European Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom Basic Safety Standards (BSS) establishes the basic safety standards for protection against the dangers arising from exposure to medical ionising radiation. These requirements were transposed into Irish Law by two separate statutory instruments:

- ▶ Statutory Instrument 30/2019: Radiological Protection Act 1991 (Ionising Radiation) Regulations 2019 which details requirements around protections for workers and the public, establishing responsibility with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring (ORM); and
- ▶ Statutory Instrument 256/2018: Basic Safety Standards for Protection Against Dangers Arising from Medical Exposure to Ionising Radiation which details requirements around protections for patients and gives responsibility for this to the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

In establishing the role of physiotherapist referrer which will involve the exposure to ionising radiation, there is particular concern around ensuring public protection. As such, the designation of appropriately trained physiotherapists to act as referrers requires regulatory oversight to set the standard of competence for the practice of referring. This is the responsibility of the Physiotherapists Registration Board.

Standards of Proficiency and Physiotherapist Referral

The *Standards of Proficiency for Physiotherapists* – set by the Physiotherapists Registration Board – articulate the threshold level knowledge, skills and professional behaviours required for entry into practice as a physiotherapist in Ireland. Education and Training Programmes, in designing their physiotherapy programmes for which they are seeking the Registration Board’s approval, must ensure that all graduates meet the Standards in order to enter onto the register. The Standards are also used to assess qualifications awarded outside the State presented by international applicants. This ensures that all those seeking registration to practise physiotherapy meet the same threshold standards of proficiency.

A copy of the *Standards of Proficiency for Physiotherapists* is available [here](#).

The *Standards of Proficiency* are not used as standards of practice after entry to the register. Rather, they set the requirements for threshold entry onto the register.

Having reviewed its *Standards of Proficiency*, the Physiotherapists Registration Board determined that the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours required of physiotherapists to act as referrers were not part of the threshold standards for entry into general physiotherapy practice. As such, for practitioners to act as referrers they must undertake **additional education and training**.

To this end, and to ensure physiotherapists are trained and have the competence to act as a referrer, the Physiotherapists Registration Board has set its education and training requirements for physiotherapist referral for radiological procedures. There are two types of requirements:

- ▶ *Standards of Competence for Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures:* these articulate the knowledge, skills and behaviours that a registrant must demonstrate on completion of an education and training programme specific to the practice of physiotherapist referral for radiological diagnostic procedures; and
- ▶ *Requirements for Education and Training Providers offering Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures Education and Training Programmes:* these identify the curriculum, assessment and quality assurance requirements an education provider must meet with regard to how its physiotherapist referral for radiological diagnostic procedures education and training programme is designed and managed to ensure that all graduates meet the *Standards of Competence*.

Both the *Standards of Competence* and *Requirements for Education and Training Providers* are kept under review by the Physiotherapists Registration Board to ensure their continued suitability and appropriateness in setting the threshold standard for entry into practice as a physiotherapist referrer for procedures involving exposure to ionising radiation. Any changes proposed to the *Standards* and/or *Requirements* will be subject to a public stakeholder consultation process and following any changes that are approved by the Physiotherapists Registration Board, education providers will be given a sufficient period of time to align education and training programmes to any changes.

This document sets out the *Standards of Competence for Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures*.

Standards of Competence

In setting the threshold level of knowledge, skill and professional behaviours required for practice as a physiotherapist referrer for procedures involving exposure to ionising radiation, the Registration Board recognised that entry to such practice will only be available to **currently registered physiotherapists**.

Therefore, individuals being trained for physiotherapist referrals have already demonstrated achievement of the *Standards of Proficiency*. In addition, as registered professionals they are also subject to the *Physiotherapists Registration Board's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*. This sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics which a member of the register must adhere to throughout the course of their work. The *Code* is a statutory document by which all registrants must observe and comply with and is available to access [here](#).

The *Standards of Competence* detailed in this document identify the **additional areas of knowledge and skill** required of physiotherapists who are seeking to become physiotherapist referrers. The knowledge and skill areas already articulated in the *Standards of Proficiency* and the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics* are not restated in this document. It is for this reason that these *Standards of Competence* must be read alongside both the *Standards of Proficiency* and the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*.

The *Standards of Competence* set out in this document are identified under three domains:

1. Professional Knowledge for Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures
2. Justifying a Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures
3. Safety and Communication

Under each of these overarching domains, specific standards of competence are detailed. These are known as enabling competencies and, when taken together, they articulate how achievement of the overarching domain must be demonstrated.

Requirements for Education Providers

The *Requirements for Education Providers offering Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures Education and Training Programmes* are used in conjunction with the *Standards of Competence*. The *Requirements* ensure that the education provider has the quality assurance systems and mechanisms in place to consistently and effectively produce graduates who meet the *Standards of Competence*.

Approval and Monitoring of Programmes

Education providers seeking to design and deliver an education and training programme to train physiotherapists to act as referrers for radiological diagnostic procedures will be required to seek approval of their programme by the Physiotherapists Registration Board in line with Section 27(1) of the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*.

An education and training programme that has been assessed by the Physiotherapists Registration Board and is determined to have met all the *Requirements for Education Providers* which ensures that all graduates have achieved all the *Standards of Competence* is granted approval and the qualification associated with the programme is listed on the Approved Qualifications Bye-Law.

More information on the approval and monitoring process is available [here](#).

Supporting CORU Documentation

This document should be read alongside the following documentation:

- ▶ *Standards of Proficiency for Physiotherapists*
- ▶ *Physiotherapists Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*
- ▶ *Requirements for Education Providers offering Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures Education and Training Programmes*

Domain One

Professional Knowledge for Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures

Graduates will:

- 1.1** Know the guidelines and the clinical application of the range of modalities used in diagnostic imaging
 - 1.2** Be able to critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of a range of modalities used in diagnostic imaging
 - 1.3** Know the risks and contraindications associated with exposure to ionising radiation in clinical presentations across the lifespan, including children, persons of childbearing age and pregnant people
 - 1.4** Know the legislative and regulatory framework governing the use of ionising radiation and the requirements related to the practice of referring for radiological procedures
 - 1.5** Know the principles of radiation protection, including justification and optimisation
 - 1.6** Know the clinical pathways for follow-up care, including where critical and/or incidental findings are identified
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Domain Two

Justifying a Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures

Graduates will:

- 2.1** Identify service user suitability for referral for radiological procedures and select the clinically appropriate diagnostic imaging modality to address service user presentation
- 2.2** Apply the principle of justification for radiological referring using evidence-based imaging referral guidelines
- 2.3** Justify the referral decision in written form through the production of clear, concise, timely and accurate documentation that provides the relevant and appropriate clinical information to support the justification and optimisation process

Domain Three

Safety and Communication

Graduates will:

- 3.1** Operate in accordance with legislation and national and/or local policies, guidelines and/or procedures for the referral of service users for radiological diagnostic procedures
- 3.2** Identify the service user's pregnancy or breastfeeding status, as appropriate
- 3.3** Be able to recognise the signs of clinical change during the referral process that may affect appropriateness and suitability for referral, and communicate with the multidisciplinary team as appropriate
- 3.4** Be able to effectively communicate the role and responsibilities of a referrer for radiological diagnostic procedures
- 3.5** Apply communication approaches, appropriate to the service user, to explain the purposes, benefits and risks of diagnostic imaging, to enable the service user to make an informed decision on referral and follow-up care as indicated



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CORU, Infinity Building, George's Court, George's Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7, D07 E98Y.

T: 01 293 3160 E: info@coru.ie

www.coru.ie