



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

Guidelines for Programme Providers

Optometrist

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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 and profession specific. This document provides guidelines for providers on meeting the profession specific criteria for education and training programmes which are set out in two sections:

1. Level of qualifications for entry to the register
2. Practice placements

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

1. Programme admission
2. Programme management
3. Curriculum
4. Assessment strategy

Full details of the core criteria are outlined in the document *Core Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*. CORU also 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 your profession
- *Approval and Monitoring Guide*
- *Programme Information Guidelines for Education/Training Providers*

Documentation Used in the Approval Process

Mapping Document and Supporting Evidence

Providers submitting programmes for approval by the Registration Board must complete a mapping document explaining how the programme meets the criteria for education and training programmes and produces graduates who meet the standards of proficiency for the profession. The mapping document must be accompanied by supporting evidence. Supporting evidence is likely to consist of existing documentation already produced for the programme e.g. handbooks. It may also be necessary to prepare supporting evidence specifically for the approval process if this information is not already produced.

Against each criterion in the mapping document providers are required to include:

1. A narrative which explains how the programme addresses all aspects of the criterion as set out
2. A page number or reference to the location(s) in the supporting evidence which supports the narrative

This document provides some suggestions on the possible types of evidence which may be used. These are not exhaustive and providers may use any evidence they believe demonstrates that the programme meets the criteria.

For detailed information on how to complete a mapping document and submit supporting evidence please see *Mapping Document and Supporting Evidence - Guidance for Education Providers*.

This documentation and an approval visit to meet with students, staff and other stakeholder will be used to determine whether the programme meets the Registration Board's requirements for approval.

Layout of the Following Sections

Criterion type and number.

Criterion title

Specific criterion number.

Text of the specific criterion

Guidelines

This box contains examples and suggestions of the type of evidence to that may be submitted to demonstrate compliance with the criterion.

Guidelines on Profession Specific Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

Profession Specific 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.

Guidelines

The level of qualification is based on what the Registration Board believes is needed for those who successfully complete the programme to meet all of the standards of proficiency.

Suitable evidence may include:

- verification that the programme has been validated by the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at the specified level, or above

or if applicable

- verification that the awarding institution has delegated authority to make awards at designated levels of the NFQ subject to QQI approval and has awarded the qualification at the specified level, or above.

Profession Specific Criterion 2. Practice placements

2.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Guidelines

Suitable evidence may include a detailed programme structure showing the scheduling of placements across the programme and the connections between the academic and placement components of the programme.

2.2 The programme must ensure that each student completes 1000 hours of supervised practice.

Guidelines

Suitable evidence may include:

- a detailed programme structure showing the duration and scheduling of placements across the programme
- a calculation of the hours spent on placement
- description of the procedures utilised to ensure each student receives the required hours of placement and which addresses situations of non-attendance
- procedures for verification of hours in conjunction with placement educators

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.

Guidelines

Suitable evidence may include:

- an analysis of the current practice and demands of the profession
- a full listing of the placements provided since the previous approval, which must adhere to the number, duration and range requirements appropriate for the profession
- a description and schedule which show how the practice placement learning outcomes and progression are aligned with the rest of the programme and allow opportunities for feedback and progression towards 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include:

- a description of the requirements for a quality learning experience that reflects the normal context and environment of practice on placement
- a description of the processes used by the provider to satisfy itself that these requirements are met
- a copy of the written agreements used with placement providers that shows how the achievement of the standards of proficiency will be supported by all parties

- 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include:

- details of procedures for the on-going monitoring of placements
 - an explanation of how you collect, analyse and act on feedback from students and all stakeholder
 - a sample of feedback previously collected and the any actions identified
 - policies and processes for dealing with situations where difficulties arise.
- Evidence should demonstrate the existence of a functioning system rather than sporadic events or activities.

- 2.6** Clear communication and governance structures should be in place to facilitate ongoing communication between the placement and education providers.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include a description of the governance structure included in a handbook for placement providers, a shared web space for communication or secure email system, schedule of meetings with placement providers. Evidence must point to the existence of ongoing communication structures, not just periodic interaction e.g. during approval or monitoring activities. These structures should be available across the duration of the placement and in all locations including those outside the State.

- 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include:

- description of the decision making procedure used to allocate individuals to placement taking into account student's performance in theory and practice elements
- recording templates, logs or other supports that help students to relate theory to practice progressively over their placements and to receive feedback

- 2.8** Practice placement attendance requirements are explicit and detailed mechanisms and processes are in place to manage absence/non-attendance.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include:

- course handbook or placement handbook with explicit communication to students on placement requirements and detail of the consequences and procedures that will apply in cases of absence/non-attendance including repeat placements, regulations regarding carrying placements and the consequences for progression if attendance requirements are not met

- 2.9** Pre-placement requirements – including academic, legal, occupational health and other requirements, and procedures for non-compliance with these requirements, are clear.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include training materials or supporting documentation for students where the pre-placement requirements are outlined. This may overlap with evidence already submitted under the core criterion Admissions 1.1.

- 2.10** While on placement, appropriate support, guidance and supervision is maintained with the student by the practice education team.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include placement handbook or other documentation given to students. This must include details of scheduled sessions of support, guidance and supervision available from the practice education team as well as robust procedures for contacting the practice education team between scheduled sessions. These procedures should cover the placement period and all settings including those outside the State.

- 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include programme handbook or placement handbook where this process is communicated to students. The process should facilitate contact with the placement co-ordinator or other named individual throughout the placement and with the support services in the institution.

- 2.12** The student code of conduct - and processes for dealing with breaches of that code whilst on placement - is in place.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include documentation provided to students and practice placement providers which communicates the code of conduct and the processes used for dealing with breaches of the code.

- 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. *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.*

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include:

- job descriptions or role profiles used
- list of all practice educators and their registration numbers

- 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include training materials or support documentation such as a placement handbook where the expectations and requirements are communicated to the parties involved, this will include information on:

- the objectives of the placement
- the setting of programme level and individual learning outcomes to be achieved by the student on placement
- the timing and duration of the placement
- records to be maintained
- a student code of conduct
- assessment requirements
- procedures, including meetings, that should be followed when a student does not reach the required level of proficiency as specified in the documentation, and
- communication channels for all the parties

- 2.15** Supervision policies include guidelines on how students progressively achieve independence in practice.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include the webpage, handbook or other documentation given to students and practice placement providers.

- 2.16** Guidelines/procedures and supports are available for practice educators in managing students, including students who are in difficulty, throughout the placement.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include a webpage, handbook or other documentation given to practice placement providers. This may include details of the support person or service to contact for guidance on managing students. This may also include criteria for identifying a student in difficulty, details of the procedure to follow and details of a support person or service to contact in such situations.

- 2.17** The education provider will make regular support and training available to the practice education team to develop their practice education skills.

Guidelines

Suitable evidence may include training agendas, materials, handbooks or feedback mechanisms that show the regular support and training available to the practice education team in all locations.

- 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.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include a course or placement handbook to show clarity of communication with students and training materials or documentation outlining the support to the practice education team in making assessment decisions and to the provision of feedback.

- 2.19** Mechanisms for the return of placement assessments to the education provider must be in place.

G u i d e l i n e s

Suitable evidence may include a description of the mechanisms which apply to ensure that placements are returned in a timely manner to the education provider to be stored securely and not kept at the placement location. The training materials or supporting documentation where this is outlined may also be included.

