



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh

Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Psychologists
Registration Board

Psychologists Registration Board

Standards of Proficiency for Counselling Psychologists

Bord Clárchúcháin na Síceolaithe
Psychologists Registration Board

About this Document

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 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 Psychologist's Registration Board's Standards of Proficiency for Counselling Psychologists.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- ▶ Psychologists Registration Board Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Counselling Psychologists
- ▶ 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 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 object 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 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

- ▶ 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

- ▶ 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 Psychologists 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 counselling psychologists 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 is 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 criteria sets out the Psychologists 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 Psychologists 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:

- ▶ Psychologists Registration Board Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for Counselling Psychologists
- ▶ Programme Information Guidelines for Education and Training Providers

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 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
8. 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
9. Understand the role of policies and systems to protect the health, safety, welfare, equality and dignity of service users, staff and volunteers
10. Understand and respect the confidentiality of service users and use information only for the purpose for which it was given
11. Understand confidentiality in the context of the team setting
12. Understand and be able to apply the limits of the concept of confidentiality particularly in relation to child protection, vulnerable adults and elder abuse
13. 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
14. Be able to recognise and manage the potential conflict that can arise between confidentiality and whistle-blowing
15. Be able to gain informed consent to carry out assessments or provide treatment/ interventions and document evidence that consent has been obtained
16. Be aware of current legislation and guidelines related to informed consent for individuals with lack of capacity

17. Recognise personal responsibility and professional accountability for one's actions and be able to justify professional decisions made
18. Be able to take responsibility for managing one's own workload as appropriate
19. 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
20. 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
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, age, 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 communicate in English at a standard equivalent to C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
7. Demonstrate a critical understanding of how to use media including digital and social media in an ethical, confidential and professional manner
8. Be able to produce clear, concise, accurate and objective documentation
9. Be able to apply digital literacy skills and communication technologies appropriate to the profession
10. Be aware of and comply with local/national documentation standards including, for example, terminology, signature requirements
11. 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 limitations of confidentiality
12. Understand and be able to recognise the impact of effective leadership and management on practice
13. Understand and be able to discuss the principles of effective conflict management
14. Understand the need to work in partnership with service users, their relatives/carers 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
15. Understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
16. 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
17. 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 comply 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, including the use of infection prevention and control strategies

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 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.
2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of relevant biological sciences, human development, social, and behavioural sciences and other related sciences, together with a knowledge of health and wellbeing.
3. Know, understand and critically appraise the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment/intervention efficacy, the research process and evidence-informed practice.
4. Demonstrate skills in evidence-informed practice, including translation of theory, concepts and methods to clinical/professional practice.
5. Be able to identify and understand the impact of governmental, organisational, community and societal structures, systems and culture on health and social care provision.
6. Demonstrate safe and effective implementation of practical, technical and clinical/professional skills.
7. Demonstrate ability to conduct or lead clinical, academic or practice-based research.
8. Know the basic principles of effective teaching and learning, mentoring and supervision.
9. Know the theories, models and research approaches specific to counselling psychology.
10. Know the history and development of counselling psychology.
11. Know the role of the service user as an active participant in planning their assessment, therapeutic and treatment process and other psychological interventions.
12. Know the application of theories of mental health, wellbeing, family systems and social, psychosocial and neuropsychological development – in individuals, couples, families and communities – in acute to enduring and mild to severe presentations.
13. Know and identify in practice how different biological, social and/or contextual factors and cultural traditions and practices – and their intersectionality – can impact on and affect psychological wellbeing across the lifespan.
14. Know the psychological and psychopathological theories of personal change and how human strength and social and cultural contexts impact human transition at individual, group, and social levels.

15. Know counselling and psychotherapy models and critically evaluate these models as they are applied to practice.
16. Demonstrate awareness of the impact of psychopharmacological and other therapeutic interventions on psychological practice with service users.
17. Know and communicate the role of counselling psychologists in providing evidence-based psychological services in a range of health and community settings that focus on personal and interpersonal functioning across the lifespan, including the provision of assessment, diagnosis, formulation, intervention, prevention, consultation, advocacy and research.
18. Establish, maintain and conclude a professional/therapeutic relationship with a service user, both safely and ethically, recognising and managing professional boundaries.
19. Be able to critically analyse the factors that influence therapeutic and professional relationships, including power dynamics between the practitioner and service user.
20. Know the benefits and challenges of working in partnership with service users in the delivery of assessments and interventions.
21. Identify and apply knowledge of the intersecting forms of diversity of service users, working in an inclusive, sensitive and equitable manner.
22. Select, evaluate and revise communication approaches to promote inclusive communication appropriate to the context of practice and the intended audience.
23. Know and be able to use – safely and ethically – technologies and communication approaches used in practice in a virtual environment.
24. Be able to produce clear, concise, accessible and accurate reports – devised in collaboration with service users, as appropriate – in order to communicate and justify professional opinions made and are suitable for the intended audience and context of their use.
25. Be able to critically evaluate the theory and application of a range of assessment methods used in counselling psychology practice.
26. Plan assessments, selecting appropriate assessment methods, critically evaluating and integrating the service user's need and perspective and social and cultural considerations as part of the planning process.
27. Conduct a range of assessment methods safely and ethically, adapting their application as clinically appropriate.
28. Interpret, synthesise and critically evaluate assessment data to inform and collaboratively develop case formulation and psychological intervention planning to address presenting needs.
29. Be able to critically evaluate the theory and application of evidence-based psychological interventions – including counselling and psychotherapy – in a range of formats, including individual therapy, couple therapy, family therapy and group therapy.

30. Design intervention plans on the basis of available data, evidence-informed professional judgement and formulation, including identifying and evaluating service user developmental and neuropsychological need, contextual and cultural factors and service user will and preference on the design process.
31. Apply safe and ethical intervention(s) appropriate to the goals identified in intervention plan(s).
32. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of psychological intervention(s) and reformulate and revise as necessary.
33. Conduct consultation relevant to service delivery and practice of counselling psychology, evaluating and revising the approach as necessary.
34. Work with other professionals – including multi-disciplinary teams – to build capacity in delivering interventions to meet the goals identified in intervention plan(s).
35. Be able to critically analyse, appraise and evaluate psychological and other relevant contemporary research to inform evidence-based practice.
36. Be able to formulate appropriate questions and plans in order to undertake research and produce outputs relevant to the practice of counselling psychology.
37. Apply research ethics when planning, undertaking and reporting on research with service users and relevant others in the context of professional practice.
38. Design and deliver training relevant to the application of counselling psychology across a range of teams – including multidisciplinary teams – appropriate to the professional needs of the participants.
39. Be able to critically reflect on the ‘self’ and the ongoing impact of one’s own culture, values, experiences, beliefs and biases on their professional/therapeutic practice – utilising supervision to assist in the reflective process – and use such reflection to inform practice.
40. Be able to recognise personal emotional responses and the impact of trauma, as identified through professional/therapeutic practice and supervision, and use appropriate tools to develop effective self-care to maintain professional functioning.

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