



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh
Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board (CPRB)

Public Consultation 2023

Standards of Proficiency



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Standards of Proficiency	3
What are the Standards?	3
What are the Standards Used For?	3
Where do the Standards Come From?	4
Chapter 2: Articulating the Distinctions Between Counsellors and Psychotherapists	5
Two Sets of Standards - One for Each Profession	5
Why Each Set of Standards Reflect the Distinctiveness of Each Profession	5
Council set standards and Registration Board set standards	5
Chapter 3: Common Standards of Proficiency	6
Four Common Comains and the Key Principles of Competency	7-8
Chapter 4: Profession Specific Standards	9
Domain 5 and Profession Specific Standards	9
Consultation: Have Your Say	10

Introduction

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health regulator. Our role 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.

Once statutory regulation is introduced to the counselling and psychotherapy professions, practitioners wishing to work using these titles in the Republic of Ireland must be registered with CORU on the appropriate register.

On 27 February 2019, the then Minister for Health, Simon Harris, confirmed the establishment of and appointment of members to the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board, under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended) to regulate the professions of **counsellors and psychotherapists**.

At the time of designation by the Minister, following public consultation, **one Registration Board was established** which would be responsible for two registers – one for counsellors and one for psychotherapists.

It is CORU's role to implement this direction, as set out by the Minister. Therefore there is one registration board and we are working towards the opening of two separate registers.

There is a standardised process of work to be completed by each Registration Board before the opening of a register. This includes:

- setting the pre-registration education and training standards;
- approving education and training programmes for new graduate entry to registers; and
- making statutory bye-laws and setting the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for the professions.

The Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board is at the first stage of this process and has launched a public consultation on its **draft Standards of Proficiency and Criteria for Education and Training Programmes**. This public consultation will provide you with the opportunity to provide feedback on this key step towards opening registers for counsellors and psychotherapists.



Chapter 1

Introduction to the Standards of Proficiency

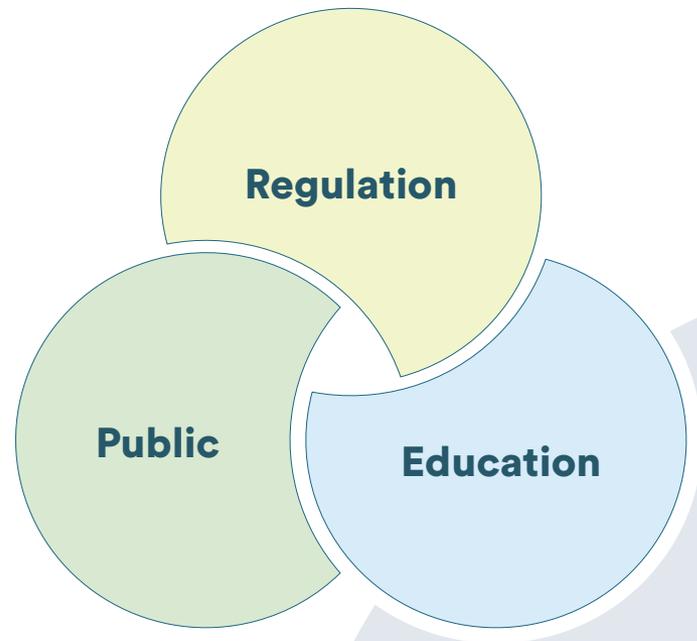
What are the Standards?

The standards of proficiency describe the threshold level of knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to enable a person to practise safely and, in so doing, keep the public safe.

What are the Standards Used For?

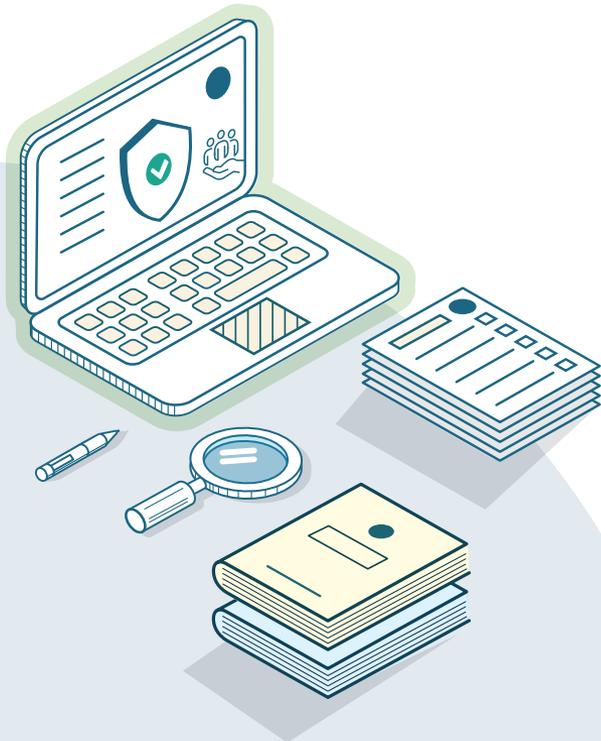
The standards are used in a number of settings:

- **Regulation:** they set the minimum level of knowledge and skills required to enter the professional register. All applicants – from Ireland and internationally – must demonstrate achievement of **all** the standards as part of the registration process.
- **Education:** education providers that prepare students to practise a profession upon graduation – and who seek approval from the Board – use the standards to design their education and training programmes.
- **Public:** the standards help the public understand the threshold level of service they can expect from a registered health and social care professional.



Where do the Standards Come From?

The Board is responsible for drafting the standards of proficiency. It is made up of practitioners, representatives from education and training and lay members, which ensures there is a broad range of voices and perspectives shaping their design.



The Board undertakes an extensive research process which informs the drafting of standards. This involves:

- review contemporary evidence-informed academic literature;
- review of comparator international professional standards; and
- understanding of the contemporary practice of the profession in Ireland

Who else is involved in this?

Key stakeholders, including the public (through the public consultation), are part of the drafting process.

What is next?

Once the Board has prepared a draft set of standards, they are presented for public consultation and feedback.

This is the stage the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board is at.

Chapter 2

Articulating the Distinctions between Counsellors and Psychotherapists

The Board has developed two sets of standards: one for counsellors and one for psychotherapists

- ✓ There are two sets of standards because they articulate the **distinctiveness between the practise** of counselling and psychotherapy.
- ✓ Each set of standards reflects the **distinct proficiencies of each profession.**
- ✓ There are a range of standards which are common to both professions – and are articulated in the same way for both professions. These are known as **Framework Standards** and are found in Domains 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Standards.

- ✓ The profession specific standards are found in Domain 5.
- ✓ There is no hierarchy across the standards; each area is an important as another. It is the achievement of all the standards that demonstrates that a person is ready to join the register and ensures public protection.



Chapter 3

Common Standards of Proficiency



1

Domain 1: Professional Autonomy and Accountability

(Applies to both professions)

This domain is concerned with the professional and ethical behaviours of practitioners in the delivery of counselling and psychotherapy treatment. Key areas of this proficiency include:

- working in the best interests of service users that reflects their will and preference;
- ensuring informed consent is received from the service user; and
- maintaining professional boundaries in the delivery of care; and practices around confidentiality.

2

Domain 2: Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking

(Applies to both professions)

This domain focuses on the key skills required to use open, responsive and appropriate communication approaches and tools effectively when engaging with service users and colleagues.

This includes counsellors and psychotherapists being able to:

- adapt and modify a communications approach, written and verbal, to ensure service user understanding; and
- recognise the dynamics of working as part of a team, including working alongside colleagues from other professions.

**Common
Standards of
Proficiency
for both
professions**

3

Domain 3: Safety and Quality

(Applies to both professions)

This domain recognises the relationship that exists between a service user, their health and wellbeing, the practitioner and the environment in which a counselling or psychotherapy treatment is delivered.

Key to this area of proficiency is the ability of practitioners to:

- gather, analyse and evaluate all necessary information when assessing an appropriate treatment course;
- evaluate, review and modify an approach to treatment, together with a service user; and
- establish and maintain safe environments for the delivery of service user care.

4

Domain 4: Professional Development

(Applies to both professions)

This domain articulates standards around engagement in Continuing Professional Development, including:

- the importance of participating in professional development and education opportunities; and
- the development of self-reflection and evaluation skills as part of professional continual improvement.

**Common
Standards of
Proficiency
for both
professions**

Chapter 4

Profession Specific Standards

5

Domain 5: Professional Knowledge and Skills

(Specific to each profession)

Domain 5 articulates the profession specific knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for the effective delivery of counselling or psychotherapy practice.

These standards are informed by relevant and contemporary theory, practice knowledge and evidence.

It is in these standards that you will see the distinctiveness of each of the professions emerge.

Feedback Wanted on Domain 5: Professional Knowledge and Skills!!



Professional Knowledge and Skills

While expressed differently to reflect the different scope of practice of both professions, these standards address areas including:

- knowledge and application of appropriate therapeutic approaches to meet service user needs;
- the appropriate skills required to establish, build, maintain and safely conclude a therapeutic relationship;
- the need for reflexivity in practice and understand the self, as a practitioner, in the therapeutic relationship; and
- the changing environments of practice and the skills needed to work and manage across these, including in the digital space.



Have
your say!

Stakeholder Consultation

The Board's draft Standards for Counsellors and draft Standards for Psychotherapists are available to access on www.coru.ie

We are looking for your feedback and perspective.
We would like your views on:

- whether the standards are set at the threshold level for entry to practice; and
- are there any gaps or anything missing?

You can access the consultation questionnaires and all relevant information on the CORU website:

www.coru.ie

The consultations are open for feedback from 4 September 2023 until 1 December 2023