



Regulation of Psychologists in Ireland

How will statutory regulation be structured for the psychology profession?

In brief ...

The statutory objective of the Psychologists Registration Board is to provide assurance of public protection by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through the registration of psychologists in Ireland. Under the provisions of the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*, this requires that the professional title 'psychologist' is protected.

The Psychologists Registration Board has designed a bespoke regulatory model that will facilitate the protection of the title in Ireland. This will require the establishment of 4 registers and the introduction of statutory regulation in 2 phases. In the first phase, three registers will be established for clinical, counselling and educational psychologists and, following this, a final register will be opened that will accommodate all other psychology specialisms.

When both phases of work are completed and the 4 registers are opened, the title 'psychologist' will become legally protected in Ireland.

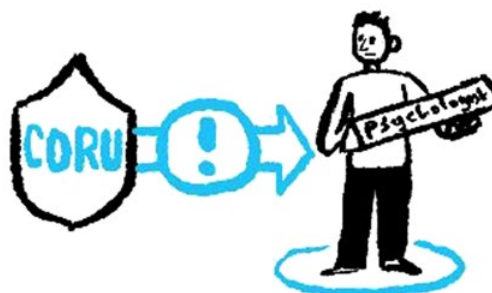


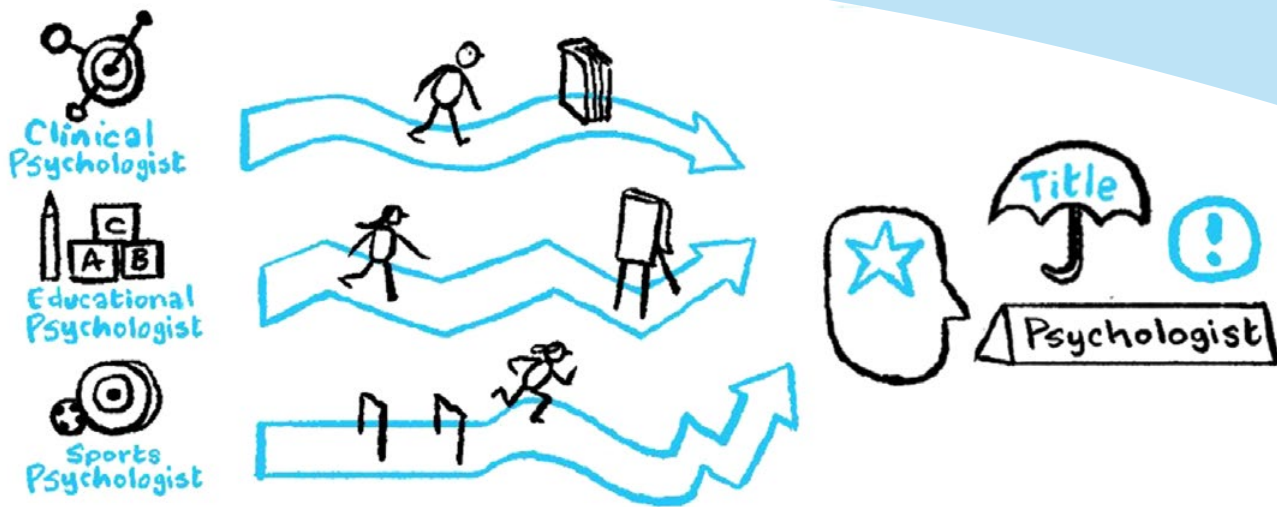
Protecting the Title 'Psychologist'

The regulatory approach that is set out in legislation and thereby underpins the work of all Registration Boards under CORU – including the Psychologists Registration Board – is known as *regulation by protection of title*.

Protection of Title means that, when regulation is introduced for a profession, only those practitioners who are registered are legally entitled to use the protected title. Practitioners who are registered have demonstrated achievement of the required knowledge and skills for entry into practice and, in joining the register, have confirmed their adherence to practising in line with professional and ethical standards, including making a commitment to engage in ongoing continuing professional development.

This approach provides assurance to members of the public that anyone using a protected title has met these threshold requirements for safe practice. If an individual uses a protected title without being on a register, CORU can take action to address this.





Applying Protection of Title to Psychologists

Under the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*, the Psychologists Registration Board is required to protect the professional title 'psychologist'. In jurisdictions where the title is protected, there exists – at entry into practice – education and training pathways aligned to a singular set of threshold standards, for example, in Australia.

In other jurisdictions, entry into practice as a psychologist is through specific training in a specialist area of psychology – for example, counselling psychology, sports and exercise psychology or educational psychology. This makes it challenging to protect a singular title of 'psychologist' as there are multiple and different entry qualifications into practice. It is for this reason that, for instance, the United Kingdom has protected multiple professional titles representing a range of different psychology specialisms.

This means, however, that the title 'psychologist' is **not** protected and while unregistered individuals are not able to use an individual specialism title (e.g. Clinical Psychologist or Educational Psychologist), there is no prohibition on the use of the general title 'psychologist'.

In Ireland, the education and training of psychologists mirrors that of the United Kingdom where entry into practice is through a specific psychology specialism. However, the Psychologists Registration Board has committed to introducing a model of regulation that will allow for the protection of the title 'psychologist', while ensuring that in so doing there is as minimum disruption to the profession as possible. It has developed a bespoke model that will continue to facilitate the current model of training psychologists in Ireland through specialism **and** allow for the legal protection of the general 'psychologist' professional title.

Two Phase Approach

Following a detailed risk-based evaluation of all psychology specialisms, the Psychologists Registration Board evaluated each area of psychology practice considering the risk to the public, the complexity of the work involved and vulnerability of service users, along with the readiness of education programmes to align to regulatory requirements.

Based on this assessment, the Board identified that it was in a position to progress, in the first instance, with introducing regulation for three specialisms: clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists and educational psychologists.

Phase *1



Clinical Psychologist



Counselling Psychologist



Educational Psychologist

During this first phase of its work, the Board will establish **three separate registers**; one for each of the three specialisms identified. This means that if a practitioner is looking to practise as a clinical psychologist, a counselling psychologist or an educational psychologist – and using that professional title in their practice – they must be registered on one of these three registers.

The second phase of work – which is happening alongside the first phase – will see the establishment of a **fourth register**. Known as the 'Psychologists Register', this fourth register will apply across all the remaining psychology specialisms. For instance, a practitioner practising as a behavioural psychologist or a sports and exercise psychologist will be required to be registered on this register.

Phase *2



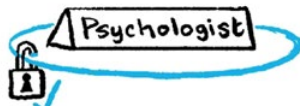
Clinical Psychologist



Counselling Psychologist



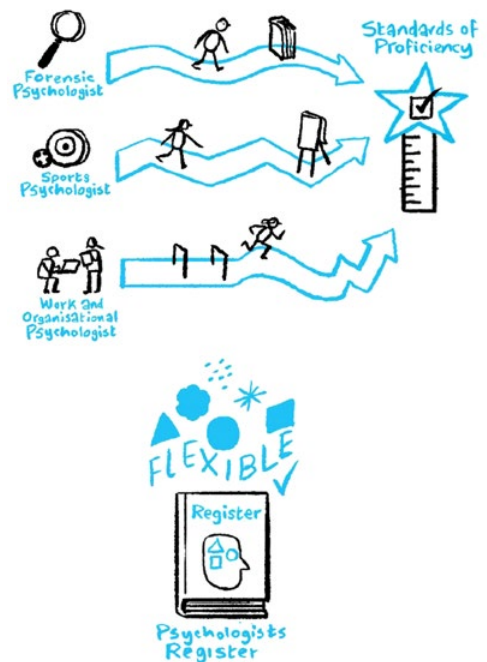
Educational Psychologist



Psychologists Register

How is one register going to manage multiple and different psychology specialisms?

Given that the *Psychologists Register* is designed to accommodate multiple areas of psychology practice some of the tools used to operate this register have been developed to allow for greater levels of flexibility in their application. This is particularly evident in the setting of the *Standards of Proficiency for the Psychologists Register* and the approach to how education and training is structured.



The Psychologists Registration Board will be responsible for four separate registers

Clinical Psychologists

Counselling Psychologists

Educational Psychologists

Psychologists

These four registers, while separate, will work together. When all are established – and the grandparenting process concluded for each – together they will ensure that any individual practising in Ireland and using the professional title 'psychologist' is subject to statutory regulation.

Standards of Proficiency for Psychologists

In determining what the threshold knowledge and skills for entry into practice as a psychologist, the Board has undertaken a detailed comparative assessment across all the specialisms that will be required to register on the *Psychologists Register* in order to identify what are the **common areas of knowledge and skill** required at entry into practice.



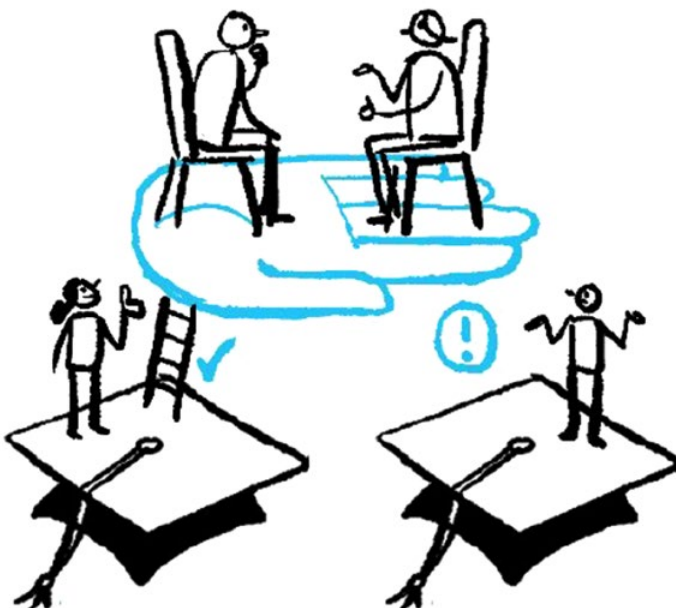
Having identified these areas of commonality, the Board adopted what is known as a principles-based approach to how it has articulated its *Standards of Proficiency*. This means that the *Standards of Proficiency* for entry to the Psychologists Register will be written slightly differently to the other three registers. They will not include the same level of detail or prescription. This allows for greater level of flexibility in their application, meaning that they can be applied across multiple and different areas of psychology practice.

Structure of Education and Training

Across all the areas of psychology that will be accommodated by the *Psychologists Register*, there already exists established education and training pathways. However, not all areas of psychology training, as they are currently designed, offer an assessed practice component.

Essential in the training of future health and social care practitioners – and a foundational requirement of all regulated programmes – is the exposure to practice of the profession – what is more commonly referred to as practice placement – during the course of an education programme. It is essential for any individual entering onto a register to be able to demonstrate that he or she has sufficiently and appropriately translated knowledge into practice.

Recognising the existing structures and in an effort to minimise disruption for education providers, the Psychologists Registration Board has designed an approach that allows for **two types of pathways for education and training**, both of which will require student engagement in practice education.



Single Qualification Route

Students, upon completion of an education and training programme designed through this route, would demonstrate achievement of all the Board's *Standards of Proficiency*.

The curriculum and assessment design of this qualification includes both the taught knowledge components and the practice-based requirements identified in the *Standards*. Both these elements are integrated into a single education and training programme.

Upon approval by the Psychologists Registration Board, this single qualification would be listed as an approved qualification and applicants holding this qualification would be eligible for entry to the *Psychologists Register*.

Single Qualification Route



Two Qualification Route

Students will complete two separate qualifications: the first being a qualification that is not designed to facilitate practice education and the second being a practice-based qualification.

A student who completes the first of these qualifications only would **not** have demonstrated achievement of the Board's *Standards of Proficiency*.

Achievement of the *Standards of Proficiency* is only possible – through this route – by completing both an academic programme of study and practice education, thereby ensuring achievement of all the Board's *Standards of Proficiency*.

Only applicants who have demonstrated achievement of both the knowledge-based **and** skills-based proficiencies through their education and training programmes would be eligible for entry to the *Psychologists Register*.

Two education and training programmes



Resources

- ▶ [Criteria and Standards of Proficiency - Coru](#)
- ▶ [About Approval and Monitoring - Coru](#)
- ▶ [Introduction to Principles-Based Standards Fact Sheet](#)
- ▶ [Applying Principles-Based Standards Resources](#)
- ▶ [Psychologists Registration Board - Information and Updates](#)

Got Questions? Get in touch

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