



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

Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board (CPRB)

Public Consultation 2023

Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

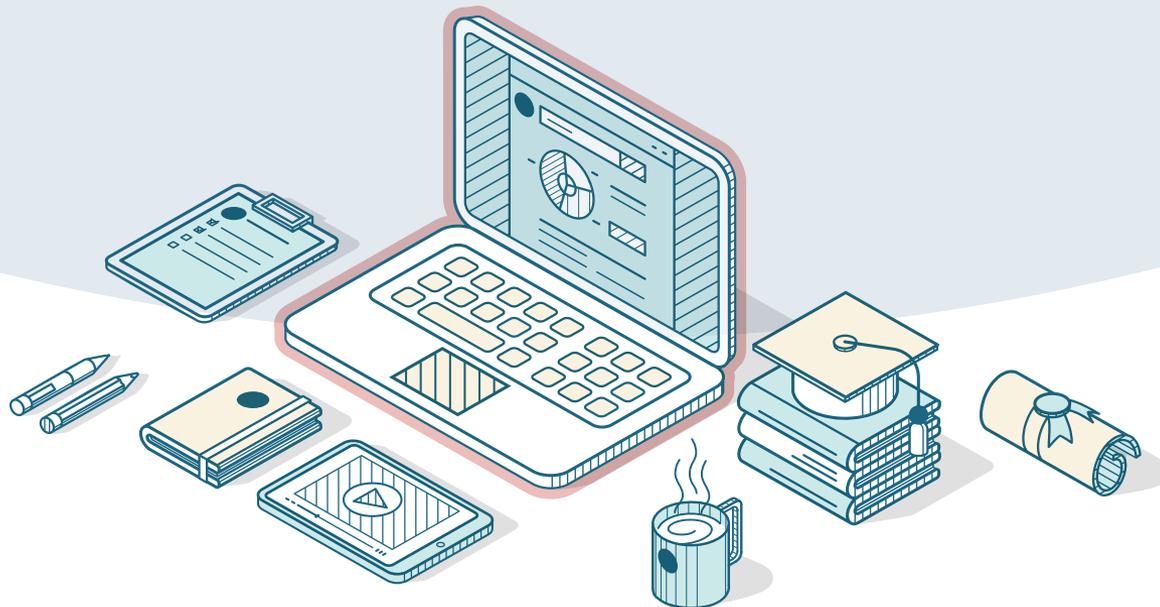


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Introduction

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. We therefore have 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 including:

- setting the pre-registration education and training standards;
- approving education and training programmes for new graduate entry; 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 Criteria for Education and Training Programmes and Standards of Proficiency**. This public consultation gives you the opportunity to provide feedback on this key step towards opening registers for counsellors and psychotherapists.



Chapter 1

Introduction to the Criteria for Education and Training Programmes



What is the Criteria?

The Criteria identify the requirements the Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board has set around how a professional education and training programme is designed and managed.

The Criteria is used to ensure that a programme has the systems and mechanisms in place to demonstrate that students graduating from the programme have achieved all the standards of proficiency for the profession and are proficient in the practice of the profession to enter onto the register and practise safely and autonomously.

The Criteria, by ensuring that graduates are suitably trained and qualified to practise as counsellors and psychotherapists, is pivotal to ensuring public safety.

What is the Criteria Used For?

The Counsellors and Psychotherapists Registration Board operates a qualifications-based register. This means that successful completion of a programme, approved by the Board, is required for new and future graduates to join the register, once the register is open.

Please Note: existing practitioners, at the time the register opens, will have a different route to registration.

The Criteria is used to approve and monitor education and training programmes. Each programme, and the education provider that offers it, is assessed against each of the criteria and only programmes that meet all criteria required by the Board are approved.

In approving a programme, the Board has assessed that successful completion of the course of study and awarding of the qualification provides students with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes required to practise safely and proficiently.

Where do the Criteria Come From?

The Board is responsible for drafting the criteria for Education and Training Providers. 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 Criteria. This involves:

- review and evaluation of the standards of proficiency in the context of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level Descriptors;
- review of any education and training requirements set by relevant professional bodies in Ireland; and
- consideration of the contemporary practice and structure of the profession in Ireland.

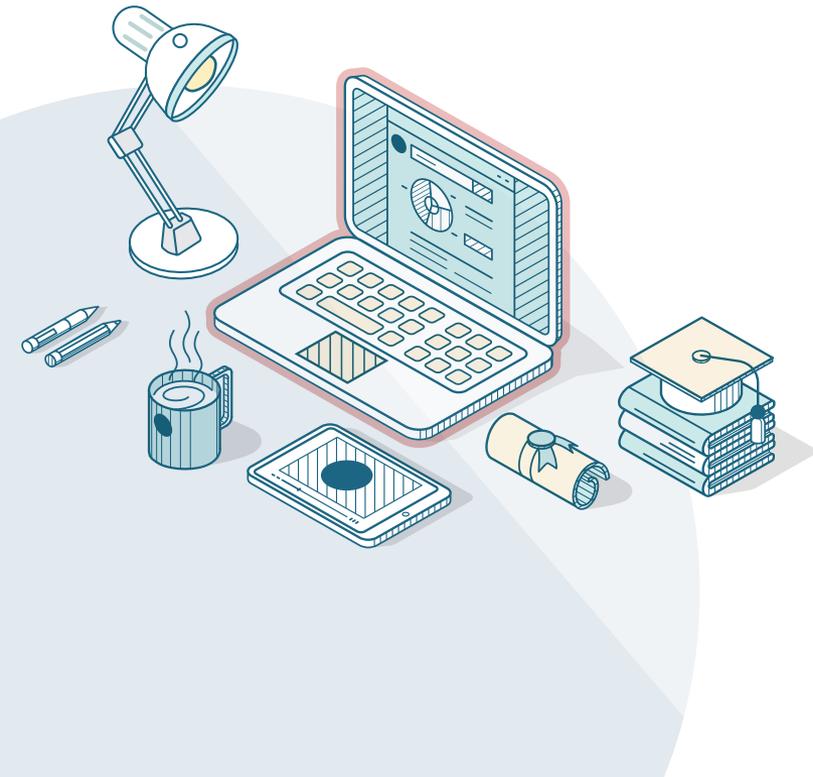
Who else is involved in this?

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. The Board has drafted two sets of criteria: one for counselling programmes and one for psychotherapy programmes.



Chapter 2

Criteria and Quality Assurance

The Criteria is structured around six key areas:

All these areas work together to ensure that a programme can continually produce graduates who have met all the standards of proficiency and so can practise safely in delivering high quality therapeutic care when they join the register, thereby ensuring public protection.



Make-Up of Criteria

It is important to note that the Criteria is comprised of two elements:

- Framework Criteria which is common across all regulated professions; and
- Profession specific criteria which the Board is responsible for drafting.



What is the Board Looking for Feedback On?

For its draft Criteria for Counsellors and its draft Criteria for Psychotherapists, the Board has identified the profession-specific requirements that it is looking for your feedback on:

- The threshold – or minimum – level of qualification for entry to the register; and
- The total number of practice placement hours a student must complete as part of an education and training programme.

Chapter 3

Level of Qualification

Threshold Level of Qualification

The threshold level of qualification refers to the minimum level on the National Framework of Qualifications a programme – and its qualification – must be designed to in order to deliver on the standards of proficiency.

Programmes can be designed to a qualifications level above this threshold and be considered for programme approval by the Board.

However, if the programme is designed at a level below the threshold, it could not deliver on the standards of proficiency and therefore would not be considered for programme approval.



The Board's Decision

The Board has set the minimum level of qualification for entry to the register at **Level 8** for **both counsellors and psychotherapists**.

The Board's Process

In setting the threshold at Level 8, the Board examined:

- the NFQ Level Descriptors which describe the threshold knowledge, skills and competence required at each level;
- the threshold level of practice of the professions as articulated in each of the standards of proficiency for counsellors and psychotherapists;
- the nature of the practice of the professions as providing advanced and specialised therapeutic support on a one-to-one basis with individuals; and
- the opportunity for all members in our society to access higher level education and enter into the counselling and psychotherapy professions, recognising that the professions reflect the people they serve.



The Board's Rationale

The Board concluded that NFQ Level 7 does not reflect the demands of practice or depth of engagement with service users required at threshold level.

The threshold requirements at NFQ Level 9 go beyond the threshold level of proficiency identified in the Board's standards of proficiency for both counsellors and psychotherapists.

NFQ Level 8 reflects the demands of both professions at threshold level and the articulation of the range and application of knowledge and skills required in the Board's standards of proficiency

Chapter 4

Practice Placement Hours

About Practice Education

Practice Education is an integral part of the training of a future counsellor or psychotherapist.

It is necessary to provide students with the opportunity to engage directly in the practice of the profession - with the appropriate supervision and support structures in place - to allow a student to translate what is learned in the classroom into practice. This ensures the quality and safety of future practitioners.

Practice education, too, plays a vital role in the assessment of students and whether they have demonstrated achievement of the standards of proficiency.

This is why an education provider must have for example:

- a process in place for approving suitable placement sites that have appropriate onsite supervisory arrangements for students;
- a process for how they allocate students to placement sites;
- monitoring and quality assurance processes to ensure the ongoing quality of placement education;
- mechanisms for training supervisors in placement sites;
- process around how assessments of students on placements are undertaken.



These are the requirements for practice education across all regulated programmes.

Practice Placement Hours

The Board has set profession specific requirements around the total number of practice education hours that a student must complete as part of an education and training programme.

The Board has identified three parts to its requirements around placement hours:

- the total number of practice education hours a student must complete;
- the minimum number of hours a student must complete in supervised service user contact; and
- the number of hours a student is directly observed in service user contact.

What Does this Mean?

Total Number of Placement Hours

The total hours that a student is engaged in practice education is made-up of two elements:

- the time on-site in a placement setting in the practice of the profession. This can include direct engagement with a service user, planning for a session with a service user, completion of reports and other administrative duties – all the things that go into practising the profession; and
- the time allocated to academic activities associated with practice education. This can include, for example, completion of a placement portfolio, attendance at supervision meetings with a supervisor.

Hours in Supervised Service User Contact

These are the hours that a student is on-site in a placement setting engaging in the practice of the profession, reflective of that student's experience and proficiency.

At each placement site, a student must be assigned a suitably qualified and experienced on-site supervisor who is available to the student throughout the course of the practice placement.

This is to ensure the protection of the student and the safety of any service users a student engages with during a placement experience.

Supervision is about providing a student with appropriate levels of support and guidance during a placement.

It is important to make a distinction between supervision and observation. Supervision may include observation, but observation is not supervision.

Direct Observation

Observation is directly linked with the assessment of a student and requires that the student is directly observed in practice by their supervisor to determine achievement of the standards of proficiency.

The Board's Decision

The Board has set different practice placement hours requirements for counsellors and psychotherapists.

For Counsellors, a student must complete:

- 450 hours of practice placement education during the course of a programme; of which
- a minimum of 300 hours must be completed in supervised service user contact; and
- of these 300 hours, 75 hours must be direct observed service user contact.

For Psychotherapists, a student must complete:

- 500 hours of practice placement education during the course of a programme; of which
- a minimum of 350 hours must be completed in supervised service user contact; and
- of these 350 hours, 100 hours must be direct observed service user contact.

The Board's Rationale

In setting the practice education hours for both professions, the Board has factored in:

- the practice of the profession and the types of engagement a practitioner has with a service user;
- the practice placement hours currently required by a range of professional bodies in Ireland;
- the threshold level of knowledge and skill as articulated in the standards of proficiency for both professions; and
- the requirement that students must demonstrate achievement of all standards of proficiency during their education and training.

Education providers have flexibility around how to design and structure their programmes to meet these placement requirements; there's no one way to do this.





**Have
your say!**

Stakeholder Consultation

**The Board's draft Criteria
for Education and Training
Programmes for Counsellors
and Psychotherapists is
available to access on
www.coru.ie**

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

- the level of qualification for entry to the register for both professions; and
- the requirements set by the Board for practice placement hours.

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