



Understanding Regulatory Standards

What are the different types of standards a Registration Board sets and what do they mean?

In brief ...

There are different types of regulatory standards. It is, therefore, important to be able to understand their function and distinguish between them. Each of the Registration Boards in CORU set **two types of regulatory standard:**

- (a) the threshold knowledge and skills needed for entry onto a register (or division of a register) – known as the **Standards of Proficiency** – and
- (b) the standards of conduct, performance and ethical behaviour required of registrants – the **Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics**.

While both sets of standards deliver on each Registration Board's commitment to ensure public protection, the *Standards* and the *Code* each serve different regulatory functions and apply to different individuals. In short, the **Standards** are used for **registration** purposes to assess whether an applicant has demonstrated the proficiency for entry onto the register (except for existing practitioners at the time a register opens where there are specific grandparenting provisions set out in legislation) whereas the **Code** applies to **all registrants** – those practitioners who are registered – in setting out the expectations for professional conduct and behaviour.

What do you mean by Regulatory Standards?

Each of the Registration Boards established under CORU is responsible for ensuring public protection through the *setting, monitoring and enforcement* of standards for safe and effective delivery of health and social care services. The standards set by the Registration Board **apply to individual practitioners** (i.e. the physiotherapist, social worker, medical scientist) as opposed to the places in which the services are offered (i.e. a hospital, clinic, laboratory).

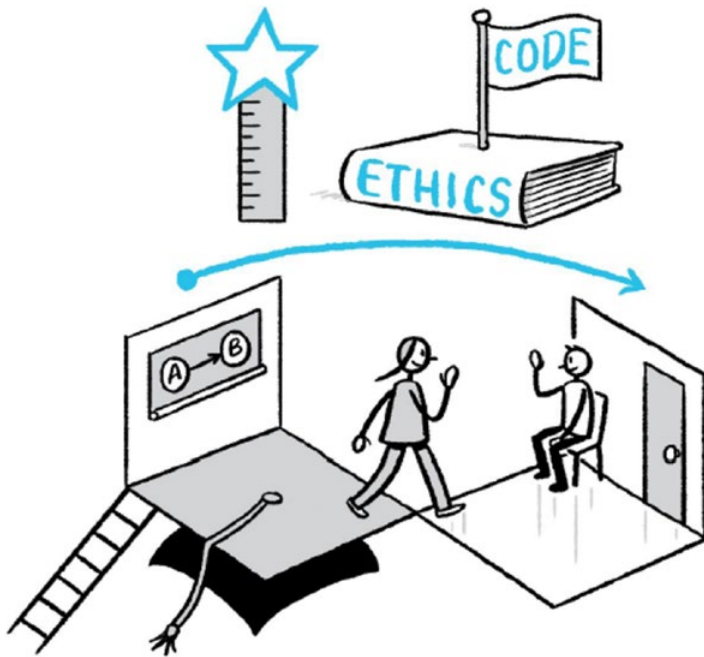
Two Types of Regulatory Standards in CORU

Each Registration Board sets **two** types of regulatory standards which, when taken together, form two of the three foundational pillars of regulation that provide assurance that regulated practitioners are both appropriately trained for and working safely and competently with members of the public.

1. The **Standards of Proficiency** articulate the threshold knowledge and skills needed for safe **practice for entry to the register**.



2. The **Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics** details the standards of conduct, performance and ethical behaviour that all registrants, through their professional practice must adhere to.

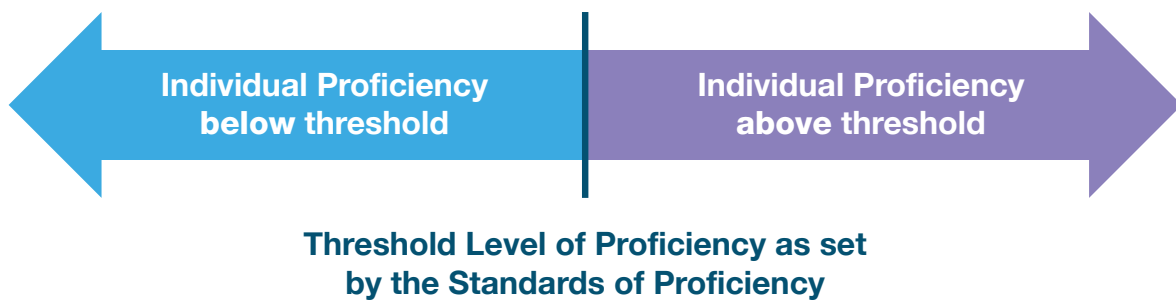


While both the *Standards* and the *Code* are concerned with providing assurance of public protection, they are used differently and have distinct regulatory functions. The *Standards* are used as the metric to determine whether an individual has demonstrated the proficiency to enter into practice, and the *Code* details the ethical behaviour and conduct requirements of practitioners when they are on the register.

Both sets of standards are used on the continuum of a practitioner's professional journey from their education, training and registration through to their professional practice, but at two separate and distinct points on this journey.

Standards of Proficiency: Entering onto the Register

Divided across five domains of knowledge and skills, the *Standards of Proficiency* comprise proficiencies common across all CORU regulated professions (Domains 1-4) and profession-specific proficiencies (Domain 5).



In setting the *threshold* knowledge and skills, each Registration Board recognises that proficiency to practice exists on a continuum.

The *threshold* represents the point on this **continuum** that is the minimum level of proficiency for safe practice.

For every practitioner, their knowledge and skill evolve over time and will change through their experience, engagement in continuing professional development and additional post-qualifying training. This means that the *Standards of Proficiency* set by a Registration Board may not fully reflect how an existing practitioner sees his or her current practice. This is because the *Standards* articulate what is needed for **entry onto** the registers; what a practitioner must be able to do on **day one** of working as a regulated professional.

Who do the *Standards of Proficiency* apply to?

The Standards of Proficiency are used to assess whether **graduates of an approved education and training programme** and **applicants holding an internationally awarded qualification** are eligible to enter the register.

At the time a register opens, applicants who are **existing practitioners** have a separate registration pathway. **The Standards of Proficiency do not apply as part of this application route.**

Graduates from an approved programme

Standards of Proficiency apply

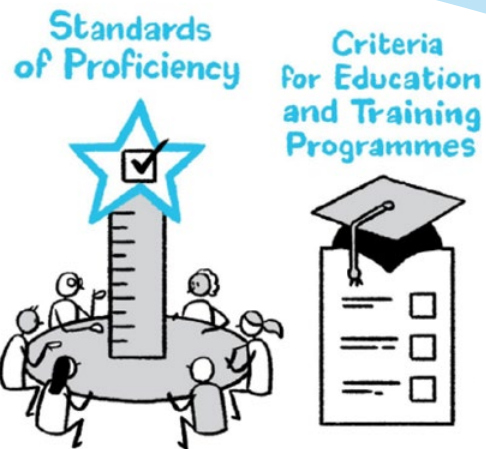
Applicants who apply through the specific pathway for existing practitioners (transition to regulation only)

Standards of Proficiency **do not** apply. There are different requirements for entry to the register

THE REGISTER

Applicants holding an internationally awarded qualification

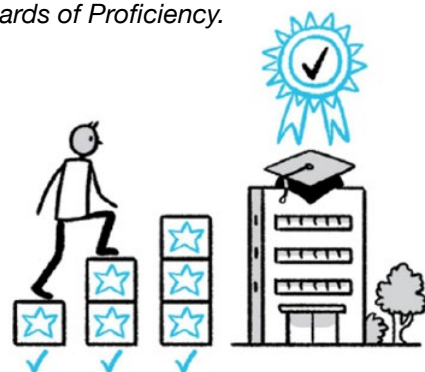
Standards of Proficiency apply



Tell me more about an approved education and training programme ...

Each Registration Board holds a list of education and training programmes that it has approved for entry onto its register. These are programmes the Board has determined have produced graduates who have achieved all the *Standards of Proficiency*. Education providers have a specific set of requirements that they must meet in order to gain Registration Board approval: the *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*.

The *Criteria* identifies the design and management requirements an education provider must have in place to ensure that the programme can consistently produce graduates that meet the *Standards of Proficiency*.



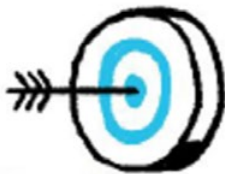
It is important to remember the *Criteria* only applies to education providers and sets out the design and management requirements for education programmes.

The *Standards of Proficiency* is a separate document that articulates the threshold knowledge and skills for entry into practice for all applicants **except** existing practitioners at the time the register opens.

Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics



Conduct



Performance



Ethical Behaviour

Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics: Standards for Registrants

When an applicant has been deemed eligible for entry to the register, he or she makes a commitment to adhere to the Registration Board's *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*. This is the second type of regulatory standard a Board sets.

The *Code* details the standards of conduct, performance and ethical behaviour expected of all registrants. These are not standards that detail knowledge or skills; that standard is set at the threshold level by the *Standards of Proficiency*. Rather, the *Code* sets the standard of **professional behaviour** each registrant must adhere to. Every practitioner on a register is an autonomous practitioner with the professional responsibility to deliver health and social care services ethically and competently. It is for this reason that the *Code* requires that each practitioner is responsible for working within the limits of their knowledge, skills and competence. In short, the *Code* enshrines professional responsibility with each individual practitioner.

Each year, when a registrant renews his or her registration, they pledge to continue to comply with the professional standards set out in the *Code*, ensuring that they take responsibility for their professional practice, behaviour and conduct. It is for this reason that the *Code* is the metric used to assess whether a practitioner is safe to practice. A breach of any standard set out in the *Code* could be assessed as being professional misconduct or representing poor professional judgement. Such an assessment could result in a complaint being brought against a registrant and a **Fitness to Practise** process being undertaken.

When is the Code used?

The *Code*'s principal function is that it acts as a guide and support to registrants in their practice. The *Code* is also used in the context of a fitness to practise process to determine if there has been a failing to adhere to the standards of professional conduct and ethics, performance and ethical behaviour expected of a registrant in the delivery of health and social care services.





Case Study: The Two Types of Standards in Practice

Cathy makes the decision she wants to be a social worker. In choosing the programme of study she wishes to undertake, she looks at the Social Workers Registration Board's list of approved qualifications. This list tells her what education and training programmes have been assessed by the Registration Board and have been approved as ensuring that all graduates who complete the programme have demonstrated achievement of the threshold knowledge and skills for practice. Each of the approved education and training programmes have successfully completed a programme approval process whereby its curriculum and assessment have been assessed against the *Standards of Proficiency* and the programme structure and management have been assessed against the *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*.

Upon completion of her social work qualification, Cathy makes an application to join the Social Workers Registration Board Register. As a graduate of an approved programme, the Board has the assurance that she has achieved all the *Standards of Proficiency* and so she is eligible for entry to the register.

At the point of joining the register, Cathy must pledge that through her professional practice she will adhere to the Social Workers Registration Board's *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*. Each subsequent year that she renews her registration she commits to continuing to meet the professional standards set out in the *Code*.

Resources

- ▶ [Criteria and Standards of Proficiency - Coru](#)
- ▶ [Codes of Professional Conduct - Coru](#)
- ▶ [Transitional \(Grandparenting\) Route \(S91\) - Coru](#)
- ▶ [Standard Route \(S38\) - Coru](#)
- ▶ [CORU International Applicant Leaflet](#)

Got Questions? Get in touch

Email: info@coru.ie

