



Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists

INFORMATION PAPER

for

Physiotherapists thinking about working in Ireland

November 2023

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The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP) is the sole national, professional organisation representing Chartered Physiotherapists in Ireland.

Purpose

The Professional Practice Unit has developed this information for physiotherapists who have qualified outside Ireland and are now moving, or considering moving, to Ireland to work as a physiotherapist.

1) Requirements to Work as a Physiotherapist in Ireland

To work as a physiotherapist in Ireland there is a legal obligation to be registered with the national regulatory authority for Health and Social Care Professionals called CORU. The information, application process and online application forms are all provided on the CORU website at www.coru.ie.

As a graduate of a programme outside Ireland, your programme cannot be approved by CORU, and therefore your qualification cannot be automatically accepted for registration. This means you are required to go through a process of recognition before the registration process, in which your qualifications have to be assessed on an individual basis not on a university basis. (A regulatory authority can only approve programmes within its own jurisdiction).

Recognition and registration are two separate processes, however since October 2021, CORU has introduced a change that enables some overlap which can reduce the total time involved.

1.1 Recognition of Qualification

Recognition involves the comparison of the qualification with the standards of proficiency required for qualification in Ireland. The Physiotherapy Standards of proficiency can be found [HERE](#).

Physiotherapists holding international/overseas qualifications, that have not been previously recognised by the ISCP, must first apply to CORU for the recognition of their qualifications.

Please Note - if you have had your qualifications previously assessed by the ISCP (i.e. prior to 2016), you will not have to go through the recognition process and can proceed to registration. Contact info@iscp.ie to seek a letter of proof of recognition which you can then submit with your registration documentation.

The Application process requires you to submit a considerable number of documents. You are strongly advised to submit all the required documents at the same time. Your application will not be assessed until all required documents have been received. As that stage, you will receive confirmation from CORU that your 'file is complete'. This means that the four-month time frame for assessment will begin. Please note the four-month timeframe does not begin on the date you start your application; it begins when CORU informs you that your file is 'complete'.

Completing **the recognition application form comprehensively, and** paying particular attention to demonstrating clinical placement/practice education time, experience and learning (see below) is a crucial part of the recognition process.

What you have to clearly demonstrate on your recognition application form is firstly that you have completed 1,000 hours of verified, supervised clinical placements with experience and learning outcomes. Within these 1,000 hours, the emphasis will be on your clinical placement experience in the three core areas of **Musculoskeletal, Neurology and Cardiorespiratory**. **You have to clearly demonstrate all your clinical placement/practice education experience hours, specially the breakdown of hours in EACH of the core areas**. If your experience, or some of your experience, in these core areas is part of other placements such as older people, paediatrics, surgical, medical wards, you

have to show these specifically within each placement description. It is important to show these clearly along with the learning experience and outcomes for each placement. Lists of conditions treated are not sufficient. The placements must also be verified by the university.

If the section on clinical placements does not sufficiently demonstrate your experience and learning, you may either be asked to provide additional information during the assessment process or, required to do a Period of Adaptation (PoA) (see below) in the core area/s.

If asked for more information (which can delay the process and the decision), it is crucial to provide it. If you do not provide ADDITIONAL information /detail (which must also be verified by the university), the outcome will be a requirement to undertake a PoA to make up the deficits.

Some applicants have been given a decision on needing a PoA because they have not demonstrated the supervised clinical hours and experience they actually have undertaken in Cardiorespiratory MSK and Neurology – because some might have been embedded in ‘non-neuro’ or ‘non-respiratory’ placements and they did not detail them. Clearly demonstrating the hours and experience in these core areas that are embedded in other placements can be the difference between recognition and needing to do a PoA.

If you actually have the clinical placement experience required but not clearly demonstrated it, a decision on requiring a PoA means a significant undertaking that could have been avoided. Obviously, it is a different situation if you actually had not achieved this coverage during your placements, then PoAs are necessary to make up the deficits.

Decisions on recognition assessment

There are 3 decisions that CORU can be make:

- Recognise the professional qualification;
- Refuse to recognise the professional qualification on the basis that the profession to which the qualification relates is not the same as the profession in the State, in that the activities covered are not comparable; or
- Decide there is a deficit in the professional qualification meeting some of the essential criteria and offer a compensation measure (detailed below).

If deficiencies are identified, these may be addressed through lifelong learning, professional experience, the application of ‘compensation measures’ or a combination of the above. The assessment is undertaken through CORU.

Information on applying for recognition of international qualifications can be found [HERE](#).

There is a fee to be paid for the recognition process. Information about the required fee can be found [HERE](#).

Appealing a CORU decision. Appealing a decision is an option. The Appeal must be made within 30 days of the decision and it must include ADDITIONAL information (that was not submitted before). It may take more than a year for a decision to be considered.

It is important to be aware that the recognition process can take some time, as mentioned by CORU on its website. Once all the required information has been received by CORU and you receive an email from CORU stating that your file is complete; the process of recognition starts then and can take up to four months to complete. The outcome of the application is not guaranteed and CORU strongly advises you not to travel or make other arrangements (such as applying for jobs) which depend upon your qualification being recognised. Accepting a job offer during recognition and then finding you have to do 4/8/12 weeks of PoAs can make for a difficult situation for you, the employer and the service. The ISCP

also advises to avoid this possibility. Further information from CORU on recognition timelines can be found [HERE](#).

Compensation Measures

Where applicants cannot demonstrate equivalence of their qualification to that of a physiotherapy programme in Ireland, **an Aptitude Test or a Period of Adaptation (PoA) may be required as a compensation measure.**

Aptitude Tests are normally held about twice a year and are organised by CORU.

Periods of Adaptation

Applicants who chose a PoA should be aware of the following.

- The PoA must be done in Ireland (i.e. supervised by CORU registered physiotherapists).
- The applicant has to seek and obtain the PoA themselves
- It has become increasingly difficult to get the placements required to complete a PoA.

In this country, there are currently five universities providing seven entry-level physiotherapy programmes. Due to the increased number of programmes and students in recent years, it is difficult for the universities to secure placements for all their students within the country. Most sites have students on placement all year round.

An already difficult situation was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many of the sites were unable to facilitate their usual placements.

Applicants looking for a PoA placement often contact the ISCP to request assistance. It is not however, within this organisation's remit to seek or secure PoAs, neither can it compel sites to accept such requests.

1.2 Registration with the Physiotherapy Registration Board of CORU

Registration is the second part of the process.

Physiotherapists who apply for recognition (above) after October 2021 no longer have to wait until the recognition process is complete before applying for registration. Once all the documents for recognition have been submitted and CORU has informed you that your 'file is complete' (this means that it is ready to start the recognition process), CORU will invite you to start the registration application process. Please note this does not mean that recognition is guaranteed, it simply allows you to apply earlier for registration and if your recognition goes through, then the interval between recognition and registration will be shorter than it previously was.

For the registration process, you will require supporting documentation for the application form. The list of required documents is available [HERE](#).

Prior to commencing the online application, read through the [Guidance Notes](#) and ensure you have gathered all the required documentation.

Submitting all the required documentation together is essential to ensuring the processing of the application can proceed quickly.

The Professional Practice Unit can provide advice throughout the recognition and registration processes.

2) European Professional Card

If your qualification is in another EU country, you may apply for recognition using the European Professional Card (EPC). The EPC is an electronic procedure to have your regulated profession recognised in another EU country. The EPC is an electronically generated certificate to provide proof you have passed the professional qualification administrative checking procedure and that you have met the conditions required to provide services temporarily or permanently in the country from where you have obtained your qualification.

Your home country authorities will assist with the application, as well as certify the authenticity and validity of all documentation. If a decision on your application is not made within the set deadline, recognition will be granted automatically. If the authorities refuse to issue an EPC, they must provide reasons and information to appeal the decision.

The EPC is optional, and you can decide whether to use this route or use the standard CORU recognition process for professional recognition. Further information can be found [HERE](#).

Following recognition via EPC, the same procedure applies for CORU registration, as detailed in Section 1 above.

3) ISCP and CORU - differences at a glance

CORU, the regulatory authority and the ISCP, the professional membership organisation are completely separate entities with different remits.

CORU's remit is to protect the public and registration is mandatory to work as a physiotherapist in Ireland. Being a CORU registrant, allows you to use the title physiotherapist and to work as a physiotherapist.

The ISCP is for you as a professional, and membership is voluntary. Being a member allows you to use the title *Chartered Physiotherapist*. (See Section 4 below for further information).

The different roles of the ISCP and CORU at a glance can be viewed [HERE](#).

4) Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists Membership

The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP) is the national, professional organisation representing over 3,000 Chartered Physiotherapists in Ireland. The Society is respected and recognised both within and outside the profession, as the voice of physiotherapy in Ireland, and speaks for, and on behalf of, the profession.

The Society supports members in delivering the highest standards of professional care and works with them to develop their skills and support them in their practice.

To become a practising member, you must first be CORU registered (see Section 1 above). Further information on membership can be found at www.iscp.ie

There are many benefits in becoming a member which include:

- You belong to a national community of over 3,000 physiotherapists representing students, managers, educators, researchers, practice owners and clinicians from all areas of practice
- You have access to a network of resources, information, guidelines, best practices and business guidance to help you throughout your career
- You are connected to a global physiotherapy community and expert resources.
- You have regular and easy access to important developments in the profession, with the opportunity to be at the forefront of the profession in Ireland.

- You are supported in your commitment to the continuing development of your professional expertise and ethical practice, which gives you a competitive advantage over non-Chartered Physiotherapists.
- You have access to over twenty professional networks to support you in your career. Each Network focuses on a key area of physiotherapy practice and is led by a volunteer committee which focuses on members' clinical or professional needs
- You have a voice in discussions with legislators, regulators and policy-makers.

Once you are a member, you may use the title *Chartered Physiotherapist*. There is an annual membership fee which includes Fitness to Practice legal expense insurance, and access to insurance cover for indemnity and public liability at a group rate.

The website hosts an extensive inventory of documents related to professional practice, policies and guidelines; professional procedures and ethics; clinical documents; core documents; documents relating specifically to private practice and HSE/public sector and many more.

The benefits of being a member and the services provided to members can be found at [Become A Member | The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists \(iscp.ie\)](#)

Whether you work in a public, voluntary, or private healthcare setting, the ISCP offers professional advice and support throughout your career.

5) Employment Permit

A non-EEA national, requires an employment permit to work in Ireland. The EEA comprises the Member States of the European Union together with Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein.

The Department of Trade, Enterprise, and Employment Permits Section, administers the Employment Permits system. Further details on Employment permits can be found [HERE](#).

Physiotherapist was recently added to the Critical Skills Occupation List with effect from 14th June 2022, when the Employment Permits (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2022 came into effect. The list of eligible occupations is set out [here](#).

Employments in which there is a shortage in respect of qualification, experience or skills which are required for the proper functioning of the economy are listed on the Critical Skill Occupations List.

Physiotherapists are now eligible to apply for a Critical Skills Employment Permit. The Permit is designed to attract highly skilled people into the labour market. Eligible occupations under this permit are deemed to be critically important to growing Ireland's economy, are highly demanded and highly skilled, and in significant shortage of supply in the labour market. Further details can be found at [Critical Skills Employment Permits](#).

The Critical Skills Employment Permit is attractive for several reasons:

- Because the skills are identified as being in short supply, a [Labour Market Needs Test](#) is not required.
- Permit holders can apply for immediate family reunification from the [Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service](#) of the Department of Justice and Equality and once their dependants/partners/spouses are resident in the State they are eligible to seek any employment and apply to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for a [Dependant/Partner/Spouse Employment Permit](#) which is currently issued free of charge
- Permit holders may apply to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service for permission to reside and work without the requirement for an employment permit upon completion of the Critical Skills Employment Permit's duration.

The prospective employee or the employer can apply for a Critical Skills Employment Permit. The employment permit will issue to the prospective employee (a certified copy will issue to the employer). The permit allows the prospective employee to be employed in the State by the named employer and in the occupation and location/s specified on the permit. In support of the objectives of the Critical Skills Employment Permit and its generous ancillary benefits they are only issued in respect of a job offer of 2 years' duration. For job offers of less than 2 years, a [General Employment Permit](#) may be applied for.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment examines a number of criteria when assessing Critical Skills Employment Permit applications including a job offer from a bona-fide employer based and trading in Ireland and who is registered with the Revenue Commissioners and, where applicable, the Companies Registration Office/Register of Friendly Societies.

Criteria for eligibility is available at [Critical Skills Employment Permit - DETE \(enterprise.gov.ie\)](#)

6) Ionising Radiation and MRI Referral

Currently, physiotherapists are not permitted to refer patients directly for medical radiological procedures, as they are not included in the secondary legislation (S.I. 256 of 2018) governing referral for these investigations.

As a result, where physiotherapists deem that an x-ray is required, they have to ask a GP or a consultant to refer the patient for radiological imaging. Through persistent lobbying and demonstrating the evidence, the Minister of Health announced in October 2023 that this will change but until then the above remains the legal situation.

While physiotherapists can refer directly for MRI imaging, only two of the three Health Insurers - Laya and Irish Life Health - will reimburse the cost of the MRI to the patient if the referral has been made by a physiotherapist. VHI does not and the ISCP continues to lobby for a change.

7) Health Services in Ireland

There are three different types of hospital provision in Ireland:

1. Health Service Executive (HSE) hospitals, which are owned and funded by the State.
2. Voluntary public hospitals, most of whose income comes from state funds but are sometimes owned by private bodies, for example, religious orders. Other voluntary public hospitals are incorporated by charter or statute and are run by boards often appointed by the Minister for Health.

Public health services are provided in HSE hospitals and public voluntary hospitals and in practice there is very little difference between these two types of hospital. Most of these hospitals also provide private health care but they must clearly distinguish between public and private beds.

3. Private hospitals, which receive no State funding and operate independently of state health services.

8) Public Health Sector

There are various options available when seeking work in the public health sector.

- Register with Cpl Healthcare Agency.
Further details and contact information can be found [HERE](#)
- Apply via a national panel system.
The Health Service Executive (HSE) which is the national public health system, operates a national panel system of recruitment to fill Health and Social Care Profession (HSCP) vacancies, running large scale national recruitment campaigns that result in the establishment of panels for each grade, from which successful candidates are appointed. The candidate who obtains first place on the panel is the first candidate considered for a position, and so on. the panel may contain several hundred physiotherapists and once established remains in place for a minimum of three years. These panels are for jobs in hospitals and primary and continuing care.

- The 28 Voluntary Hospitals <https://foi.gov.ie/voluntary-hospitals/> including the Dublin Academic Teaching Hospitals (DATH's) listed below may recruit directly.
 - Beaumont Hospital
 - Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown
 - Mater Misericordiae University Hospital
 - St James's Hospital
 - St Vincent's University Hospital
 - Tallaght University Hospital
- Opportunities advertised on the HSE website can be accessed at http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/Jobs/Job_Search/

From time to time when there are large recruitment drives, the ISCP provides interviewing skills webinars for members.

9) Private Health Sector

There are various options available when seeking work in the private health sector.

- Jobs may be listed on the website [Careers | The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists \(iscp.ie\)](https://www.iscp.ie/careers)
- A list of websites on which jobs and availability can be advertised is available [here](#). This alphabetical list has been adapted from a list compiled through betterteam.com. The provision of these sites does not imply endorsement by the ISCP.
- There are private hospitals which may recruit directly. These include:
 - Beacon Hospital, Dublin
 - Blackrock Clinic, Dublin
 - Bon Secours Hospitals - Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick at Barrington's & Tralee
 - Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital, Dublin
 - Clontarf Hospital, Dublin
 - Galway Clinic
 - Hermitage Clinic, Dublin
 - Kingsbridge Hospital, Sligo (formerly St Joseph's)
 - Mater Private Hospital – Dublin and Cork
 - Sports Surgery Clinic, Santry, County Dublin
 - St Francis Private Hospital, Mullingar
 - St John of God's Hospital, Dublin
 - St Vincent's Private Hospital, Dublin
 - UPMC Aut Even Hospital, Kilkenny
 - UPMC Kildare Hospital
 - UPMC Whitfield, Waterford

Chartered Physiotherapists in Private Practice (CPPP) is an Employment Group of the Society, representing chartered physiotherapists working in private practice in Ireland. The administrator is Clare Grimes Dooley who can be contacted at cPPP@iscp.ie . Further information and benefits of joining CPPP can be found [HERE](#)

10) Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a requirement of registrants by the Physiotherapists Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics. CPD is also a CORU requirement, to maintain knowledge and skills.

The following documents are available at www.coru.ie

- CPD Guidance Document that provides direction for registrants on the behaviours required to support compliance with the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics
- CPD Support Document that tools that can help you as a registrant to build and demonstrate those behaviours and ultimately meet your CPD requirements under your Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

Profession specific CPD Audit Record exemplars are available. The exemplars include a range of learning activities and examples of recording.

30 CPD credits are required in a 12-month period. Further details can be found at [CPD for Physiotherapists - Coru](#)

11) Contact the Professional Practice Unit

The Professional Practice Unit provides advice, education, support and assistance to members.

The Unit welcomes queries from physiotherapists who are thinking of moving to this country and offers assistance and supports to those who have recently arrived and are dealing with a different country and a different health system.

The contact details are

- Esther-Mary D’Arcy, Professional Advisor advisor@iscp.ie up to 31-12-2023
- Fran Theron, Professional Practice Officer frantheron@iscp.ie

Professional Practice Unit, November 2023

Board approved 9th December 2021

Updated July 2022 – Amendment to Section 5: Physiotherapists added to Critical Skill Occupation List

Updated November 2023, removed APPP Officer details, enlarged information to Section 1 on clinical placements in recognition applications and updated Section 6.