



Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists

INFORMATION PAPER

for

Physiotherapy Students completing a pre-registration

Physiotherapy Qualification outside 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 document for physiotherapy students who are completing a pre-registration physiotherapy qualification outside Ireland who may be considering coming/returning to Ireland to work when they graduate.

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.

Refer to the CORU Physiotherapists Registration Board (PRB) criteria for education and training programmes [HERE](#) which provide details on level of qualification, practice placement requirements, course curriculum, assessment strategy, programme admission and management.

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](#).

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 as '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 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 which 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 a PoA of 4/8/12 weeks 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 is 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 EPC recognition, the same procedure applies for CORU registration, as detailed above.

3) Contact the Professional Practice Unit

The Professional Practice Unit staff are there to advise, educate, support and assist members.

The Unit welcomes queries from students studying outside Ireland who are thinking of moving to this country once qualified.

Good luck with the rest of your studies.

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	Updated November 2023, removed APPP Officer details and enlarged information to Section 1 on clinical placements in recognition applications.
Board approved	December 2021
For Review	September 2025
Other Documents superseded by this one	Information Paper for Physiotherapy Students completing a pre-registration physiotherapy qualification outside Ireland - December 2021 - and August 2023 (minor updates)
Access to Document	Public access
Location of Document	Inventory of Documents
Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Information for supervisors of CORU PoA applicantso Information for supervisors of CORU RTP applicants

Professional Practice Unit, November 2023