# Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board

# Standards of Proficiency and Practice Placement Criteria

# Contents

## Supporting CORU documentation

The following documents must be read in conjunction with each other by applicants for recognition of professional qualifications:

- The application form for recognition of international qualifications

- Guidance notes for recognition of international qualifications

- Standards of proficiency and criteria for practice placements

## Background

The Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 (as amended) (HSCP Act, 2005) provides for the establishment of a Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board, whose functions include establishing and maintaining a Register. Registration will allow a person to use the protected title.

The object of the Speech and Language Therapist Registration Board is to protect the public by fostering high standards of professional conduct and professional education, training and competence among speech and language therapist registrants (HSCP Act, 2005: Section 27(1)).

Statutory registration is fundamental to the delivery of quality and accountability in the provision of speech and language therapy and will ensure that members of the public are guided, protected and informed, so that they can be confident that speech and language therapist providing services are properly regulated and qualified for the job.

This system of statutory regulation is designed to ensure professional conduct and the maintenance of high standards of professional education and training among the speech and language therapists, regardless of whether they work in the public or private sector or are self-employed.

All applicants who hold professional qualifications gained outside the Republic of Ireland (ROI) must first have their qualification recognised by the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board before an application for registration can be made.

## Standards of proficiency and Irish approved qualifications

One of the functions of the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board is to set the standards of proficiency for speech and language therapists. The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards required for the safe and appropriate practice of the profession in Ireland. They are the knowledge, skills, competencies and professional attributes for the safe practise of the profession. The standards of proficiency are the standards required for all entrants to the register.

Irish approved qualifications for entry to the register are at the following levels:

- **Bachelor degree at NFQ level 8** in Speech and Language Therapy

    or

- **Masters degree at NFQ level 9** in Speech and Language Therapy

The Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board set standards for the delivery of education and training in Ireland for speech and language therapists. It approves and monitor programmes against these standards. Graduates from an approved programme meet the Standards of Proficiency for speech and language therapists and are eligible to apply for registration. Please see the CORU website for the list of current approved Irish programmes.

## Recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside Republic of Ireland

If you were awarded your qualification outside the (ROI) and are interested in working here you must firstly apply to the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board to have your qualification recognised. **You cannot apply for registration until your qualification is recognised.**

The Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board is designated as the Competent Authority under European Union (EU) legislation - Directive 2005/36/EC for the purposes of recognition of professional qualifications for applicants from the European Economic Area (EEA).

A Competent Authority under EU legislation is any authority or body e.g. regulatory body or professional body empowered by the State to validate professional qualifications. The Registration Board may also recognise professional qualifications from outside the EEA.

For further detailed information about Directive 2005/36/EC log on to the European Commission website: www.ec.europa.eu.  Please also read the CORU Guidance notes regarding application for recognition of international qualifications

## Standards of proficiency

This section sets out the standards of proficiency required of graduates from an Irish approved programme for the safe and effective practice of the profession. They are the minimum standards necessary to protect the public and are required for entry to the Register.

They are also the standards of proficiency required of applicants with professional qualifications obtained outside ROI.

All applications for recognition of professional qualification (s) obtained outside of the ROI will be assessed against these standards of proficiency. Applicants must demonstrate to the Registration Board that their professional qualification(s) including any additional education and training and / or work experience gained in the profession meets the minimum standards of proficiency required. Evidence must be provided as part of the recognition application process.

The standards of proficiency explain the key obligations for a graduate in the profession and are accompanied by specific indicators, which provide more detail. The standards are highlighted in bold i.e. 2.1 with the specific indicators listed below them i.e. a, b, c…

These standards of proficiency are the intended learning outcomes which a professional qualification must meet. A diverse range of potential programmes and programme learning outcomes will be compatible with these standards.
The standards of proficiency are grouped under six domains:

Domain 1:      Professional autonomy and accountability

Domain 2:      Interpersonal and professional relationships

Domain 3:      Effective communication

Domain 4:      Personal and professional development

Domain 5:      Provision of quality services

Domain 6:      Knowledge, understanding and skills

# Domain 1: Professional autonomy and accountability

Graduates will:

1. **Practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession to the highest standard.**

   a) Act in the best interest of service users at all times and within the boundaries of their professional proficiencies.

   b) Respect and, so far as possible, uphold the rights, dignity and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic, therapeutic and social care process.

   c) Provide and articulate professional and ethical practice.

   d) Practise in accordance with current legislation applicable to the work of their profession.

   e) Contribute to the development of effective, ethical and equitable policy and practise, regarding issues addressed by their profession.

   f) Understand the implications of duty of care for service users and professionals.

   g) Understand the principles of professional regulation and the provisions of the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics*.

   h) Manage themselves, their practise and that of others in accordance with the Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

2. **Practise in a non-discriminatory way.**

   a) Acknowledge and respect the differences in beliefs and cultural practices of individuals or groups.

   b) Promote equality and respect, without prejudice, and practise in a culturally competent, non-discriminatory and inclusive manner.

   c) Assist in the promotion and implementation of policies and systems to protect the health, safety, welfare, equality and dignity of service users, staff and volunteers with particular reference to the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community, other ethnic groups and socio-economic status.

# Domain 1: Professional autonomy and accountability

Graduates will:

3. **Understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality.**

   a) Respect the confidentiality of service users and use information only for the purpose for which it was given.

   b) Understand confidentiality within a team setting.

   c) Understand the limits of confidentiality particularly in relation to child protection, vulnerable adults and elder abuse.

   d) Be aware of data protection, freedom of information and other relevant legislation.

   e) Understand the potential conflict that can arise between confidentiality and whistle-blowing.

4. **Understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent.**

   a) Demonstrate competence in gaining informed consent to carry out assessments or provide treatment/interventions.

   b) Understand issues associated with informed consent with individuals with lack of capacity.

   c) Maintain accurate records relating to consent.

   d) Respect the rights of the service user.

5. **Be able to exercise a professional duty of care/service.**

   a) Recognise personal responsibility for one's actions and be able to justify reasons for professional decisions made.

   b) Understand the need to maintain the highest standards of personal/professional conduct.

# Domain 1: Professional autonomy and accountability

Graduates will:

6. **Be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement.**

   a) Know the limits of their practice and know when to seek advice or refer to another professional.

   b) Recognise the need for consultation and/or supervision.

   c) Be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the situation.

   d) Be able to initiate appropriate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative.

   e) Recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions.

7. **Recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and resources and the able to practise accordingly.**

   a) Understand the demands that are placed on the professional practitioner in a given field and the skills required to practise effectively with the workload and available resources.

8. **Understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise.**

   a) Understand the need to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice.

   b) Understand the importance of maintaining their physical and mental health.

   c) Understand the importance of keeping skills and knowledge up to date over a lifetime of practise.

# Domain 2: Interpersonal and professional relationships

Graduates will:

1. **Work, in partnership, with service users and their relatives/carers, and other professionals.**

   a) Demonstrate capacity to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team.

   b) Demonstrate capacity to engage service users and carers in assessment and treatment to meet their needs and goals.

   c) Recognise and understand the concepts of power and authority in relationships with service users.

   d) Be able to make appropriate referrals.

2. **Contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of teams, whatever their context.**

   a) Demonstrate professional collaboration, consultation and decision making.

   b) Demonstrate an understanding that relationships with colleagues can impact on service delivery and therefore should be based on mutual respect and trust.

# Domain 3: Effective communication

Graduates will:

1. **Demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, listening, giving advice, instruction and professional opinion.**

   a) Be aware of, understand and modify communication to address the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by factors such as gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community, other ethnic groups and socio-economic status.

   b) Be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication, including listening skills, with service users and others.

   c) Demonstrate the ability to produce clear, concise and objective written communication and reports that are appropriate for the intended readers.

   d) Demonstrate an appropriate use of information technology relevant for speech and language therapy practice.

   e) Understand the importance of and demonstrate effective communication with other colleagues (inter-disciplinary communication).

   f) Understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary in an appropriate format to enable them to make informed decisions.

   g) Understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist patients/clients/service users where necessary.

2. **Understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user.**

   a) Recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to facilitate the active participation of service users.

   b) Demonstrate competence in presenting professional judgements and information in a variety of contexts including when conflict and resistance may arise.

# Domain 4: Professional and personal development

Graduates will:

1. **Understand the role of reflective practice in relation to personal and professional development.**

   a) Understand the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection.

   b) Be able to reflect critically on personal practice.

   c) Be aware of the relationship between personal life experiences and personal value systems and the impact these can have on one's decision making or actions

   d) Understand the role, purpose and function of supervision and the importance of seeking supervision of practice.

   e) Actively avail of opportunities for feedback, mentoring and support from colleagues in order to continuously improve personal practice.

   f) Take responsibility for personal and professional development.

   g) Develop and critically review a personal development plan which takes account of personal and professional needs.

   h) Identify and act on opportunities to advocate for the profession and for the professional development of colleagues.

   i) Understand the role of performance management as part of on-going professional development and effective service delivery.

   j) Understand the role of continuing professional development and demonstrate commitment to life-long learning.

   k) Recognise the need to contribute to policy and development of the profession.

   l) Recognise the contribution and value of research in developing evidence informed practice.

# Domain 5: Provision of quality services

Graduates will:

1. **Be able to identify and assess service users' needs in relation to speech, language, communication and swallowing.**

   b) Be able to gather appropriate information.

   c) Select and use appropriate assessment techniques: undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment.

   d) Identify conditions that require further investigation, making referrals to other professionals as appropriate.

   e) Analyse and critically evaluate the assessment data and information collected.

   f) Determine a diagnosis and probable outcomes for service users.

   g) Provide feedback on assessment findings to service users and relevant others

2. **Formulate and deliver plans and strategies to meet identified needs of service users.**

   a) Develop appropriate plans, interventions and strategies, according to evidence informed practice, agreed national guidelines, protocols and pathways, in consultation with service users and relevant others.

   b) Establish and document intervention goals, plans and outcome measurements.

   c) Identify resources required to implement effective management/intervention plans.

   d) Implement interventions, monitoring progress and modifying intervention approaches appropriately.

   e) Document and communicate progress, interventions delivered, outcomes and discharge plans.

3. **Use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate action.**

   a) Recognise the value of research to the systematic evaluation of practice.

   b) Engage in evidence informed practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit/review procedures.

   c) Apply knowledge of a range of research and evaluative methodologies, including evidence informed research.

   d) Demonstrate sound clinical/professional decision-making, which can be justified even when made on the basis of limited information.

   e) Demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving.

# Domain 5: Provision of quality services

Graduates will:

4. **Draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements**

   a) Understand the need to adjust/adapt practice as needed to take account of new developments.

   b) Demonstrate an appropriate level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate for speech and language therapy.

5. **Formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales.**

   a) Understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different service user groups, distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors.

6. **Conduct appropriate assessment/diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully.**

   a) Understand the need to maintain the safety of service users.

   b) Empower service users to manage their well-being and recognise the need to provide advice to the patient/client/user on self-treatment, where appropriate.

7. **Implement best practice in record management.**

   a) Use and maintain efficient information management systems.

   b) Keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines.

   c) Understand the need to use accepted terminology in making records.

# Domain 5: Provision of quality services

Graduates will:

8. **Monitor and review the on-going effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly.**

    a) Gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data that help to evaluate the responses of service users to their interventions.

    b) Evaluate intervention plans using tools and recognised performance/outcome measures. Revise the plans as necessary, in conjunction with the service user as appropriate.

    c) Recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement of programmes.

    d) Recognise important factors and risk management measures learn from adverse events and be able to disseminate learning.

    e) Make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease interventions/techniques/courses of action and record decisions and reasoning.


9. **Be able to evaluate, audit, and review practice.**

    a) Understand the principles of quality assurance and quality improvement.

    b) Be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including the use of appropriate outcome measures.

    c) Monitor and evaluate performance by conducting regular audits and reviews in accordance with national guidelines/best practice and implement improvements based on the findings of these audits and reviews.

    d) Participate in quality assurance programmes where appropriate.

    e) Understand the value of reflective practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection.

    f) Recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review.

# Domain 6: knowledge, understanding and skills

Graduates will:

1.  **Know and understand the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to the profession and demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge to normal and impaired communication at both theoretical and practical levels.**

    a) Demonstrate a critical understanding of relevant biological sciences, human development, social sciences and other related sciences, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction, appropriate to their profession.

    b) Know and understand the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment/intervention efficacy, the research process and evidence informed practise.

    c) Have knowledge of the roles of other professions in health and social care.

    d) Demonstrate an understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to practice within speech and language therapy.

    e) Understand the theoretical basis of and the variety of approaches to assessment/diagnosis and intervention.

    f) Demonstrate an understanding of the critical importance of effective communication skills for all aspects of participation in society and for an individual's quality of life. Demonstrate an understanding of the potential impact of communication impairment on self-fulfilment and autonomy.

    g) Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental role eating/drinking/swallowing can play in social participation and the potential impact of an impairment in eating/drinking on health, quality of life and well being.

    h) Demonstrate an understanding of linguistics, including phonetics, language acquisition, sociolinguistics and all levels of normal speech and language processing.

    i) Demonstrate an understanding of biomedical and medical sciences as relevant to the development and maintenance of speech, language, communication and swallowing.

    j) Demonstrate an understanding of relevant domains of psychology, as relevant to normal and impaired communication, psychological and social wellbeing.

Graduates will:

k) Demonstrate an understanding of sociology in relation to the practice of speech and language therapy, sociology, including its application to educational, health and workplace settings and within multi-cultural societies.

l) Demonstrate an understanding of educational philosophy and practice and the relationship between language and literacy.

m) Demonstrate an understanding of therapeutic contexts, models and processes, relevant to the practice of speech and language therapy.

n) Demonstrate an understanding of developmental and acquired disorders of speech, language, communication and swallowing

o) Demonstrate an awareness of the issues and trends in Irish education, social, health and public policy developments that influence speech and language therapy practice.

p) Demonstrate an awareness of relevant legislation, regulations, national guidelines and standards, findings of enquiries and investigations influencing speech and language therapy practice.

q) Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts, frameworks and guidelines underpinning ethical speech and language therapy practice in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

r) Recognise a professional responsibility to advocate on behalf of persons with speech, language, communication and swallowing impairments to support full participation in all aspects of society.


2. **Know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different approaches to practice, and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual, groups or communities.**

a) Be able to use knowledge of speech and language therapy to assess and manage people with difficulties in the following areas:
- Speech
- Language
- Communication
- Swallowing

## Domain 6: knowledge, understanding and skills

Graduates will:

3.  **Have knowledge and understanding of the skills and elements required to maintain service user, self and staff safety.**

    a)  Understand systems and impact of complexity on service user care.

    b)  Understand and be able to manage risk.

    c)  Be able to identify, prevent and manage adverse events and near misses and learn from errors.

    d)  Understand the importance of communication with service users and staff.

    e)  Be aware of applicable legislation e.g. health and safety legislation, employment legislation and relevant national guidelines.

    f)  Establish safe environments for practise, which minimises risks to service users, those treating them and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control.

    g)  Work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety legislation.

    h)  Undertake appropriate health and safety training.

# Practice placements

## Criterion:

Practice placement learning enables the student to acquire the standards of proficiency for the profession and become safe, competent practitioners willing to accept personal and professional accountability for their work. Learning initially developed within the academic component of the profession must be integrated into practice through the experience and supervision offered by structured placements within professional settings. A partnership approach between the education provider and the practice placement is essential. Practice placement education is an integral component of professional education and training.

## Indicators:

a) The number of placement hours chosen must be appropriate to the design of the curriculum and ensure that the students learning experience enables them to meet the Standards of Proficiency. Speech and language therapy students must complete at least 300 clinical hours of supervised practice placements as well as 150 clinically related hours.

b) The number, duration and range of practice placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the standards of proficiency across speech, language, communication and swallowing disorders.

c) By the end of the programme, practice placement experiences and assessments of each student should include a range of paediatric and adult diagnostic categories across speech, language, communication and swallowing disorders.

d) The selection of practice placements provided by the education provider in conjunction with service agencies reflects the scope of speech and language therapy practice settings.

e) The education provider will have a set of requirements for the selection of placements to ensure quality learning environments for students and will make a formal agreement that clearly sets out the responsibilities of both parties on an annual basis.

f) On-going reviews of practice placements will ensure that placements provide a safe and supportive environment, high quality professional practice and opportunities for the student to experience direct contact with service users. Students, practice educator and placement providers will have a role in this review process. Education providers will provide details of the practice education team.

g) Supervision will be provided to students by the practice education team/practice educator.

h) Students, placement providers, the practice education team and the practice educator will be fully informed and prepared for the practice placements.

i) While on placement appropriate support and supervision should be maintained with the student by programme providers.

j) Programme providers must ensure that practice educators will have relevant speech and language therapy practice experience and competence in the area which they are supervising. Practice educators should have a minimum of 2 years post qualification experience.

k) Support and training will be available to practice educators to develop their practice education skills in relation to facilitating students on placement.

l) Student allocation to practice placements is based on the need to integrate theory and practice and to facilitate the progressive development of knowledge, skills and competencies.  The knowledge, skills and competencies learnt in this way should be transferable between situations, contexts and agencies.

m) Pre-placement requirements such as Garda vetting, appropriate health and safety training, occupational health requirements and relevant insurance cover must be in place.

n) Policies and procedures must be in place for the assessment of students on practice placements, including appeal mechanisms for failed placements.

o) A code of conduct for students whilst on placement must be in place.