



Cumann Síceolaithe Éireann

The Psychological Society of Ireland

Process for Accreditation of Postgraduate Courses in Psychology

Updated January 2019

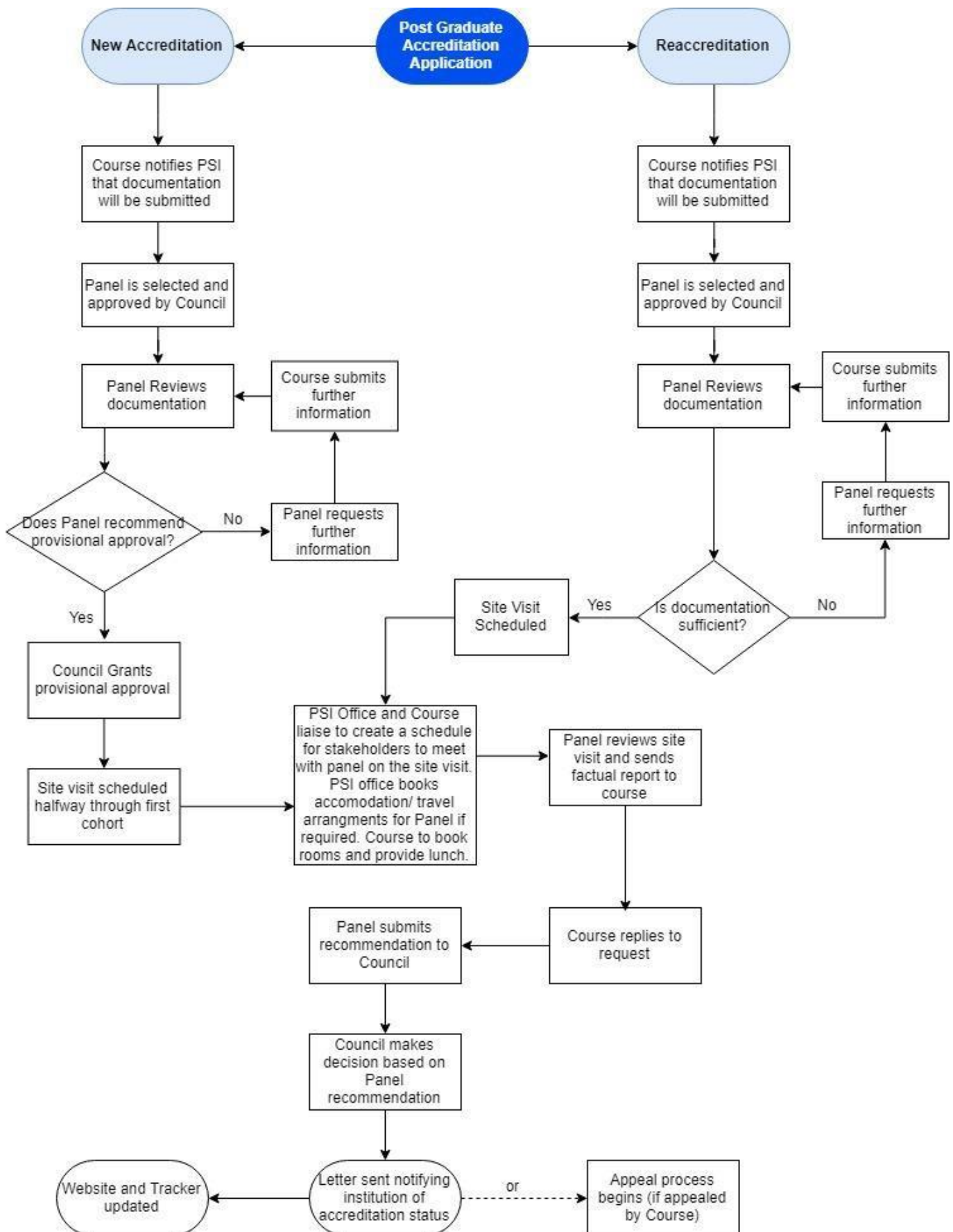
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Foreword

This Process Standards Document outlines the steps to be undertaken by any third-level institution wishing to apply for accreditation or reaccreditation of a postgraduate programme/course. This Document does not address the specific programme/course requirements. They are outlined in separate specialist standards documents specific to each area of psychological specialism. This document outlines the generic process all programmes/courses need to undertake in order to navigate the accreditation process of the Psychological Society of Ireland. It was approved by the PSI Council on 11 January 2019. It will be reviewed in 2022, or earlier if required.

Process Flow



1. Introduction

The Society invites institutions of higher education who are providing or seek to provide postgraduate education in professional psychology to submit their courses/programmes for accreditation by the Society. Through its accreditation procedures, the Society wishes to support courses/programmes in a period of self-study and peer review, thus enabling them to maintain the highest standards of postgraduate education and training in professional psychology. Accreditation procedures consist of examining documentation associated with the courses/programmes and an on-site visit to meet with appropriate teaching staff, students, supervisors and other stakeholder partners.

The words course and programme can be used interchangeably to refer to post-graduate training schemes in psychology throughout this document.

This document outlines:

New Accreditation Process

Reaccreditation Process

2. New Accreditation Process

2.1. Initial Application

The course/programme team should notify PSI in writing that they will be submitting an application for a new course/programme. The initial submission should be made before the first cohort of students begins the course/programme. Once the notification has been received, PSI will send an invoice for the Accreditation Application fee to the Course/Programme Director. Full payment of the accreditation fee is due upon submission of documentation.

2.1.1. Panel Selection

An accreditation Panel will be selected and approved by PSI Council. The accreditation panel should have five members, three of whom should have relevant expertise in the specialisation being accredited, and one who has experience in/understanding of University procedures. A panel should ideally be composed of the following:

- One Experienced Academic Psychologist – an academic appointee with experience in teaching in the requisite field who is independent of the course/college seeking accreditation. This nominee can be from outside of Ireland
- One Experienced Practitioner Psychologist –with experience of providing training in the requisite field who is independent of the institution seeking accreditation
- One nominee of the relevant Division
- One member of the general Division membership/profession with experience of delivering or contributing towards a postgraduate training course/programme.

The Chief Executive Officer will act as the Executive Officer to each panel or appoint somebody to act as the Executive Officer.

2.1.2. Chair of Panel

The Chair of the panel should normally be someone who will be familiar with current accreditation standards and other relevant processes and protocols within PSI. It is desirable, but not essential, that the Chair of the accreditation panel will have been a member of a previous PSI accreditation panel. The Chair will be appointed by the panel members. The duties of the Chair of the panel will be to chair meetings of the panel

2.1.3. Chief Executive Officer or Appointed Person to Act as Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer or appointed person to act as the Executive Officer will act as the Executive Officer to each panel, and his/her responsibilities among others will be to:

- Ensure the administrative tasks for the panel are carried out
- Facilitate all communication between the panel and the course/programme team during the accreditation process
- Act as a communication link between the panel and relevant PSI structures
- Act as a communication channel between the panel members
- Set and maintain the timeline for the completion of the task
- Ensure that all accreditation and provisional approval practice is carried out in a fair, transparent and consistent manner

2.2. Application Documentation

The documentation submitted must follow the PSI standards for the course/programme being accredited. The documentation must signpost clearly where the course/programme meets the PSI standards. If the panel is not happy with the quality and clarity it can be sent back for resubmission. The process will not continue unless the Panel is satisfied with the submitted documentation.

The course/programme standards outline the areas for consideration (see separate Standards Document) and each area must be completed.

The documentation submitted must be paginated and thoroughly proofread before submission. It should be submitted in electronic format (USB stick). One bound hard copy is also required.

Typically, documentation will contain the following:

1. Philosophy of course/programme including Ethics and Diversity Policies
2. Syllabus with examples
3. Assessment methods
4. Work Experience/Placements (if relevant)
5. Selection and Recruitment Processes
6. Governance of the course/programme
7. Staffing and resourcing, including CV's of key academic personnel
8. Physical and online learning facilities
9. Quality Assurance processes
10. Any other relevant information

2.3. Document Review

Once the Panel has been ratified by PSI Council, the Panel will review the documentation. The Panel will request further information from the course/programme team if it has any queries on the submission. If the Panel agrees that the initial application meets PSI standards, the Panel will recommend that the PSI Council grant provisional approval.

PSI Council will review the accreditation Panel's recommendation and will, if satisfied, grant provisional approval of the course/programme.

2.4. Site Visit

Once provisional approval has been granted, a site visit will be scheduled halfway through the first cohort of students; 18 months into a 3-year course/programme or 12 months in the case of a 2-year course/programme.

The Accreditation Panel will meet the following groups as appropriate, depending on the nature of the course/programme

- Course/Programme team
- Head of Department
- Representatives of the university management
- Representatives of employers/sponsors or representatives of employers of graduates where applicable
- Trainees/Students from each year of the course/programme
- Representatives of recent graduates from the course/programme
- Placement supervisors where applicable
- Representations from the support team

The PSI Learning and Development Coordinator will book accommodation and travel arrangements for the panel as required. The course/programme team will provide meeting rooms and organise refreshments for the Panel.

The Accreditation Panel will meet to discuss the course/programme and the documentation received prior to the on-site visit. The on-site visit lasts for one day and begins with a private panel meeting which is followed by a meeting with the course/programme team and then with other stakeholder groups throughout the day.

Prior to the on-site visit, all course/programmes will be asked to contact stakeholders and inform them as part of the accreditation process that the accreditation Panel is interested in their views of the course/programme.

Before the on-site visit and after the visit, all communication between course/programme team and the accreditation panel must be conducted through the PSI office rather than directly between the course/programme and the accreditation panel, the President or a Council member, as this could interfere with any potential appeal or constitute a conflict of interest.

2.5. Final Report

2.5.1. Review of Visit

The Panel will review all the documentation and site-visit meetings and draft its report using the template in Appendix 2. The Introduction and Methodology sections of the Draft Accreditation report will then be sent to the course/programme team for factual checking.

All items must score 3 or 4 to gain accreditation. Any scores below that, i.e. 1 or 2, will mean that the item in question has failed the accreditation standard. Failed items will require remediation before accreditation can be granted.

2.5.2. Potential outcomes of an accreditation application

The following recommendation options are available to an accreditation panel:

- i. Full accreditation awarded to cover five cohorts of students/trainees.
or
- ii. While full accreditation is the default position, provisional accreditation can be awarded if specific conditions for receiving accreditation for less than the maximum number of 5 cohorts can be met within a set timeframe.
In this case, the Panel will take into account
 - all accreditation standards and the extent to which they have been met and their impact on the overall quality of the course/programme
 - the developmental stage of the course/programme
 - resources available to the course/programme vs. resources needed by the course/programme
 - the time frame necessary to meet accreditation standards or
- iii. Accreditation not awarded at this time

The Panel will provide a written account of their decision-making process to include a rationale for their recommendation to the Council for ratification.

2.5.3. How long is a course/programme accredited for?

The Society has adopted a policy of accrediting a course/programme to cover a defined number of cohorts of students or trainees. In practice, this means that if a course/programme is awarded full accreditation all cohorts on the course/programme within a particular period of time would graduate from an accredited course/programme. The following wording is used:

“This accreditation covers five trainee cohorts commencing with those entering at start of academic session _____”

For example: *“This accreditation covers five trainee cohorts commencing with those entering at start of the academic session 2019/2020”*

This accreditation period would span the years

1. 2019/2020
2. 2020/2021
3. 2021/2022
4. 2022/2023
5. 2023/2024

If reaccreditation is then sought, an application should be made to PSI early in the 2023/2024 academic year to ensure completion of the process before the entry of the next cohort i.e. 2024/2025

2.6. Council Ratification

PSI Council will review the Accreditation Report and consider the recommendation from the Panel. If Council agrees with the report, it will ratify the report and award accreditation for the course/programme. Accreditation can be awarded up to a maximum of 5 years based on the Accreditation Panel recommendation.

Once Accreditation has been granted, a letter outlining the Council's decision will be sent to the course/programme team along with a full copy of the Final Accreditation Report.

2.7. Appeals Process

Accreditation decisions may be appealed by the Institution. The appeal must be lodged in writing to the Chief Executive Officer or appointed person acting as Executive Officer within 3 weeks of receipt of the Council decision.

An appeal panel of:

- 2 new panel members (1 external)

- Chief Executive Officer or appointed person to act as Executive Officer

will be established and will review the appeal and present their recommendation to Council for ratification. The appealed Council decision will be final and will be communicated to the Institution.

Canvassing or any form of deviation outside this protocol will disqualify the institution as the system has to be seen as fair and transparent. Any form of appeal in advance of due process will be ruled out of order.

The Chief Executive Officer or appointed person acting as Executive Officer has oversight of the integrity of this process.

2.8. How much does an accreditation application cost?

The current accreditation application fee for post-graduate courses/programmes is €6,000.

3. Reaccreditation

3.1. Reaccreditation Application

Course/Programme Team notifies PSI in writing when it will submit its application for reaccreditation. The application for reaccreditation should be submitted at least 9 months prior to the expiration of the current accreditation period. Once the notification has been received, PSI will send an invoice for the Accreditation Application fee to the course/programme Director. This is due prior to the Panel visit.

3.1.1. Panel Selection

An accreditation Panel will be selected and approved by PSI Council. The accreditation panel should have five members, three of whom should have relevant expertise in the specialisation being accredited, and one who has experience in/understanding of University procedures. A panel should ideally be composed of the following:

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The Chief Executive Officer or appointed person acting as the Executive Officer has oversight of the integrity of this process.

3.8. How much does a re-accreditation application cost?

The current re-accreditation application fee for post-graduate courses/programmes is €6,000.

4. Ongoing Review and Feedback

4.1 The Chair of the Panel will give feedback to Council after each accreditation process on any amendments/changes necessary based on the Panel experience of the process. This is to ensure continued “fit for purpose” of the standards and process.

Appendix 1

Pro Forma



The Psychological Society of Ireland

Accreditation/Re-accreditation application form

Name of course/programme seeking accreditation:

Name of University or Institution:

Accreditation application:

Re-accreditation application:

Signed:

Course/Programme Director

For office use:

Date application received

Supporting document supplied

Hard copy

Email/web link

USB Stick

Accreditation fee included

Appendix 2



Report Template



The Psychological Society of Ireland

***Report of the Accreditation Panel
for the _____
Course/Programme in _____ Psychology
At
_____***

The Psychological Society of Ireland
Digital Office Centre Camden,
12 Camden Row,
Saint Kevin's,
Dublin 8,
D08 R9CN,
Ireland

Appendix 2



Report Template

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Panel Membership

1.2 Date of Accreditation visit

2. Accreditation Methodology

3. Course/Programme Strengths

4. Results of Accreditation Assessment

5. Essential Requirements

6. Recommendations to strengthen the course/programme

7. Panel's conclusion and overall recommendation

Appendix 1 Timetable for the on-site accreditation visit (Including names of all those met during the visit)