



Cumann Síceolaithe Éireann

**Guidance for Psychological
Society of Ireland
Accredited Professional
Doctorate Programmes
During COVID-19 Outbreak**

To note: This document replaces any previous versions released by the PSI.

Guidance for Psychological Society of Ireland Accredited Professional Doctorate Programmes During COVID-19 Outbreak

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is issuing guidance for accredited Professional Doctoral programmes during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Whilst these guidelines came into effect from 28 March 2020 for an initial period of six months, the PSI extended the guidelines to cover the period up to September 2021, at which point they can be reviewed as to the necessity of their extension.

The aim of this guidance is to minimise stress and anxiety that trainees and course providers might be experiencing with regard to meeting PSI accreditation standards, future employment eligibility requirements, and university requirements.

In the first instance, education providers should follow Health Service Executive (HSE) and Government advice, and/or direction to ensure that the health and safety of students, staff, and the public is to the fore.

During this time of uncertainty, the PSI recognises that Professional Doctorate education providers are facing severe disruptions and have been implementing contingency plans to address same.

The PSI recognises that such contingency plans may result in the need to adapt established procedures for delivery of education and training programmes while maintaining previously agreed standards of competency development. This will also need to occur in parallel with the University regulations for education and assessment at a distance.

At this stage, the PSI does not require notification of temporary changes that have been put in place in response to COVID-19.

However, courses should clearly document any temporary adjustments made to course content delivery, research, and placement activities.

In the post COVID-19 era, it is likely that there will be an increased demand for psychological service delivery. Maintaining the supply of professionally trained graduates into the workforce should be a priority.

Education providers should, in so far as possible, attempt to keep training running. In the current situation, consideration should be given to remote delivery of content, and the potential for gaining placement experiences and other competencies through remote working.

For programmes that award a professional qualification conferring eligibility for employment (e.g., with the HSE), we would expect that the minimum days required for experience with key placements (e.g., adult, child, disability, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)) be maintained (i.e., at least 60 days on each placement).

Programmes should also maintain, where applicable, at least one advanced or elective placement as laid down in the accreditation criteria.

Programmes may make considered adaptations to additional specific placement experiences once they can demonstrate that the core professional competencies, as laid out in accreditation criteria, can be sufficiently developed, and assessed under appropriate supervision.

While it is preferable that trainee's skills will continue to be utilised in clinical contexts directly relevant to their training needs, it is accepted that, for some, they may be re-deployed to other areas of need. Should this be required there will be flexibility on behalf of the PSI with regard to how core competencies can be achieved in alternative settings once these competencies are clearly documented. There should be reasonable efforts made to ensure that there is no impediment to qualification for the important work being undertaken by those who have been temporarily re-deployed to support the national response to COVID-19.

In addition, there must be a clear record of the supervisory arrangements. It is acknowledged that the delivery of supervision may need to be arranged remotely in-line with existing PSI supervision requirements (e.g., frequency and duration).

Given the ever-changing nature of this current crisis it is likely that there may be some trainees, particularly third years, through no fault of their own, who may be inevitably delayed in acquiring some of the necessary minimum placement days.

On a case-by-case basis, the PSI recommends that Psychology service providers such as the HSE, the Department of Education and Skills/NEPS, and Education Training Boards make reasonable provision for newly qualified Psychologists whose training was interrupted by the Coronavirus in areas such as early career supervision and/or mentoring.

The PSI will continue to monitor the situation and communicate with education providers should University and school closures be extended indefinitely.