



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

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**ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR POSTGRADUATE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING
IN
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

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DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Educational Psychologists work to support the psychological and educational development of students of any age in the education system. This includes working collaboratively with students, with their parents or guardians and with the people who work with the students. Their work can involve both assessment and intervention within the education setting. They are also likely to be involved in training, research and policy-making on related issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The ultimate purpose of these criteria is to assist in the preparation of Educational Psychologists for autonomous professional practice. This professional practice will be characterised by high ethical standards, competence to practice in a variety of professional contexts, and a disposition to work collaboratively with other parties (including parents and teachers) with high levels of professional skill and up- to- date knowledge.

1. PRINCIPLES

- 1.1. Postgraduate Professional Training Courses in Educational Psychology should prepare trainees for the range of autonomous and collaborative professional roles that are, or could be, performed by Educational Psychologists in relation to a range of contexts and client groups.
- 1.2. Courses should assist trainees in developing effective communication skills, spoken and written, and such personal and social qualities as may enable them to fulfil effectively their professional roles.
- 1.3. Courses should develop in trainees a critical and scholarly orientation to the main knowledge bases of educational psychology. The assumptions and approaches of other disciplines within psychology should be examined with reference to their implications for psychological interventions and collaboration with other professionals within the wider education and health systems.
- 1.4. Courses must enable trainees to develop assessment and intervention strategies and skills, with particular emphasis on problem appraisal, goal setting, the application of relevant knowledge and psychological theory, selection and competent administration of suitable assessment methods and intervention strategies, and the evaluation of outcomes.
- 1.5. Explicit connections should be made between theory and practice and trainees should be enabled to conduct relevant research.

2. PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

2.1 STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- 2.1.1 The PSI Code of Professional Ethics must be central to the ethos of the course.
- 2.1.2 All stakeholders in the course should be made aware of psychologists' professional responsibilities under the Code.

2.1.3 The necessary formal procedures must be in place to ensure that individuals on the course who display unacceptable ethical standards in their professional work are not allowed to continue on the course.

2.1.4 The PSI's Code of Professional Ethics should be used as a reference in all cases where judgments regarding professional ethics are being made and due regard should be given to parallel university procedures that exist.

2.1.5 Formal appeals procedures should be available to trainees who are judged unsuitable to continue on the course.

2.2 PROMOTING EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

2.2.1 Courses should assist trainees to value human diversity and understand the possible impact of social exclusion, discrimination and inequality on educational, health and psychological well-being.

2.2.2 Courses should provide sufficient reflective learning experiences for students to develop the awareness, knowledge and skills to adopt inclusive practice in their role as an Educational Psychologist.

Inclusive practice for psychologists means:

- Expecting diversity among colleagues, research participants and client population and respecting this diversity.
- Understanding the issues facing diverse groups and being able to respond to their specific psychological needs.
- Providing an accessible and appropriate service within a psychologist's area of competence.

2.2.3 In particular, courses should facilitate trainees to develop insight into personal attitudes and beliefs and how these can impact on the provision of an equal and inclusive service to a diverse range of people in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, socio-economic status, religion, disability, race, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller Community.

2.2.4 Courses should assist trainees to develop a thorough understanding of all relevant legislation in Ireland as it relates to aspects of their professional work.

COURSE CONTENT

3. ACADEMIC

3.1 The course content should be developed through a consultation process involving the Course Director, course staff, service providers and other relevant stakeholders.

- 3.2 All teaching on a professional postgraduate training course should be specifically designed for postgraduate trainees. Some joint teaching with other postgraduate trainees is acceptable and desirable.
- 3.3 Teaching in the core professional areas should be delivered by persons with substantial professional experience in educational psychology and by qualified members of other branches of psychology. Teaching by others with special expertise in academic and applied professional areas is encouraged.
- 3.4 The course curriculum which should be available to all participants should reflect the principles, as described in Section 1 above. The course content should make explicit connections between the academic components of the course and placement experiences.
- 3.5 The course content should be formulated in terms of the following three factors which provide a planning matrix:
- 3.5.1 Role Functions: assessor; advisor; counsellor; consultant; educator; researcher; policy advisor and advocate.
 - 3.5.2. Client Groups: children, young people, parents, adult learners, teachers, educators and other professionals and agencies.
 - 3.5.3 Context: educational and care settings across the life span (e.g. families, pre-school educational settings, primary schools, second-level schools, special schools, child and adolescent mental health services, third level institutions and adult assessment and guidance residential settings, guidance centres, and support groups across the education, health and justice sectors.
- 3.6 Formally taught course content should include the following main content areas:
- The distinctive contribution of the Educational Psychologist to education and psychology
 - Human development and psychological well-being across the life-span
 - Understanding educational systems at both the practical and systemic levels including understanding the school as a system
 - Assessment and evidence based learning
 - Test evaluation, development and practice
 - Educational disadvantage and special educational needs
 - Research methods and design
 - Professional, ethical and legal Issues
 - Multi-disciplinary and inter-professional collaboration
 - Counselling and other therapeutic interventions in various contexts
 - Curriculum and pedagogy at all levels of schooling
 - Cultural diversity – its educational implications

- Change management and organisational development
- Effective oral and written communication skills

4. PRACTICE

- 4.1 There should be a high level of co-ordination between the taught course content and the supervised practical placement experience.
- 4.2. Supervised placement experience should be provided in the following skill areas:
- Use of observation skills in education and care settings
 - Assessment and report- writing
 - Evidence based interventions
 - Provision of practical and relevant support appropriate to a client's needs
 - Recommendation of appropriate strategies and suggestions for a client which are realistic and functional
 - Consultancy, facilitation and systems work
 - Research
 - Evaluation of practice
 - Collaboration with children and young people, parents, professionals and other agencies
 - Presentation skills
 - CPD training to other professionals and client groups
 - Involvement of client as appropriate
- 4.3 In addition, arrangement should be made to facilitate ongoing personal development and interpersonal skills of the trainee.
- 4.4 Courses should provide experience in working with persons in a range of age groups in a range of settings but especially with children and young people who experience special developmental and/or educational needs
- 4.5 Experience must be gained in both primary and secondary mainstream school settings.
- 4.5.1 If a trainee does not possess a recognised teaching qualification, the trainee must undertake a supervised teaching placement of at least 20 days in an appropriate educational setting.
- 4.6 Courses should provide at least 120 full days practical work experience in applied settings.
- 4.7 Supervision on placement

As Educational Psychology develops into the future, course directors should work towards increasing the percentage of placement experience which is

supervised by experienced Educational Psychologists eligible for Registration from the minimum set out below. It is envisaged that, by the date of review of these guidelines, supervision under 4.7.1 below will have increased to at least 50%.

- 4.7.1 Course directors should ensure that supervision is provided to trainees for at least 33% of their placement experience by Educational Psychologists who hold, or are eligible to hold, Registered Membership of the PSI.
- 4.7.2 Supervision other than that provided by an Educational Psychologist as set out in 4.7.1 should be provided by a psychologist who holds a recognised qualification in Clinical or Counselling Psychology; who holds, or is eligible to hold, Registered Membership of the PSI; and who is working in a setting with pre-school children, or with children, young people or adults in education.
- 4.8 Courses should have written guidelines for supervision.
- 4.9 Supervision in all placements should contain the following elements:
 - 4.9.1 Placement objectives should be established between the supervisor and the trainee and a placement contract drawn up at the beginning of the placement.
 - 4.9.2 A minimum of one hour's formal supervision should occur weekly (assuming three days' placement per week) and in addition at least three hours 'contact' time per week between the supervisor and trainee (e.g. informal support, telephone contact etc).
 - 4.9.3 The psychologist offering supervision on the placement should be employed within the service on a full time basis. Where this does not occur the psychologist must be employed for at least 14 hours (2 days) per week and appropriate alternative supervision should be put in place during absence.
 - 4.9.4 Trainees must have the opportunity to observe the client work of the supervisor. The supervisor in turn must have the opportunity to observe the work of the trainees.
 - 4.9.5 A trainee's progress and experience obtained should be reviewed mid-way through the placement.
 - 4.9.6 At the end of the placement, written feedback should be provided on the trainee's performance on the placement and the trainee should have an opportunity to comment on this report.
- 4.10 All placements must be visited by a member of the course team at least once during each placement for monitoring and assessment purposes. (while a face- to- face visit may not be possible during an overseas

placement , the course director must ensure that the placement is adequately monitored).

- 4.11 Feedback must be obtained from trainees on the quality of placements and supervision and the Course Directors should take appropriate action when placements are reported to be unsatisfactory.
- 4.12 Regular seminars on supervisory skills and procedures and other relevant CPD should be provided for placement supervisors.
- 4.13 Courses should have written policy for how placement failure is managed.

5. RESEARCH

- 5.1 Courses should have an explicit and written statement of the aims and objectives for a programme of research training throughout the course.
- 5.2 There should be a formal teaching programme on research methods covering both qualitative and quantitative methods and this should be assessed.
- 5.3 During the course trainees should undertake a substantial research project relevant to the area of educational psychology and report it formally.
- 5.4 The research project must involve some field work at the level appropriate for the qualification awarded.
- 5.5 Trainees must undertake research that contributes to their development as a Scientist/Practitioner Educational Psychologist.
- 5.6 In conducting research close attention must be paid to ethical considerations.
- 5.7 A designated research supervisor should be provided to supervise the trainee's research.
- 5.8 Courses should identify a person who can act as a research co-coordinator with the responsibility for organising and monitoring the research project process.

6. ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE COURSE

- 6.1 Courses should be of at least two academic years' duration, full-time or its part-time equivalent, leading to at least a master's degree.

- 6.2 For full-time university based courses the equivalent of two days per week should be allocated to university based teaching, to amount to not less than ten hours per week average contact time over the course.
- 6.3 Learning experiences on the course can include face- to- face university based teaching, collaborative learning and e-learning modules to promote distance learning.
- 6.4 The equivalent of two days per week, on average over the course, should be devoted to professional placements and an equivalent of one day a week should be available for private study.
- 6.5 Strong links should be established with Psychological Services on a local, regional and national level.
- 6.6 Qualified Educational Psychologists and other relevant professional practitioners must make a contribution to the academic teaching of the course.
- 6.7 Core academic course staff must engage in on-going professional practice.
- 6.8 A course committee should be established which would comprise the course director and other key members of staff to over see the day to day running of the course.
- 6.9 A management committee, comprising core course staff and representatives of other stakeholders, should develop a policy for monitoring the assessment of trainees' work and for dealing with other management issues.
- 6.10 The management committee should consider course development and policy.

7. STAFFING RESOURCES

- 7.1 An Educational Psychologist with substantial professional experience should be appointed as Course Director and have overall responsibility, within the university structure for course organisation and direction.
- 7.2 The course should be the Course Director's major commitment and the Course Director should be free to devote most of his/her time to it.
- 7.3 The Course Director should be eligible for full membership of the Society's Division of Educational Psychology.
- 7.4 A member of the core academic staff should be responsible for monitoring placement experience.
- 7.5 A member of the core academic staff should be responsible for monitoring research experience.

7.6 The course should have appropriate administrative support.

8. COURSE RESOURCES

The course should have appropriate facilities and resources including:

- 8.1 Teaching space of appropriate size and quality for each cohort of trainees;
- 8.2 Access to computer facilities;
- 8.3 Appropriate space and office equipment to enable the course to be administered effectively, including office space for administrative staff;
- 8.4 Individual office space for academic staff;
- 8.5 Access to library facilities; to include access to a wide range of relevant and up-to-date books and journals in Educational Psychology
- 8.6 Access to a wide range of psychometric tests and other relevant resource materials;
- 8.7 Appropriate storage for the efficient operation of the course including storage for restricted materials;
- 8.8 Use of a common room, or similar facility, for trainees.

9. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

- 9.1 Applicants should have an honours degree in Psychology or an equivalent qualification, recognised by the Psychological Society of Ireland as conferring eligibility for Graduate Membership.
- 9.2 An equivalent of 2 years relevant experience working in the field of education or psychology or both is desirable.
- 9.3 Selection should be based on transparent, equitable criteria.
- 9.4 Short listed applicants should be assessed by a panel, to include the course director, the core course team and, where feasible, representation of the placement supervisors.
- 9.5 The selection panel should pay particular attention to the personal suitability of applicants to work with children.
- 9.6 Application requirements should include applicants receiving Garda clearance before beginning the course.
- 9.7 An outline syllabus, placement arrangements, code of conduct and details of fees and other expenses should be available to potential applicants.

10. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF TRAINEES

- 10.1 Relevant information should be made available to the trainees regarding the requirements necessary to achieve a pass on the course.
- 10.2 To successfully complete the Professional Training Programme, trainees must demonstrate their suitability for professional work in each of the following areas: professional competence in the field, academic knowledge and research ability and commitment to the work of an educational Psychologist.
- 10.3 A variety of evaluation procedures should be applied which may include examinations, a research project and a range of written reports, together with supervisors' assessments of each professional practice placement.
- 10.4 Trainees should be provided with ongoing feedback on their progress throughout the course. A trainee who is considered to be experiencing significant difficulties or who may be at risk of failing to complete the course satisfactorily should be advised of this possibility at an early stage and receive appropriate support and guidance.
- 10.5 It is the responsibility of the Course team to ensure that trainees who do not obtain professional competence, or whose behaviour does not conform to the PSI Code of Ethics, do not obtain a professional qualification to practice. Reference should be made to the PSI Code of Professional Ethics in making this decision.
- 10.6 In relation to those trainees who fail to satisfy course requirements, there should be an appeals procedure which is made known to trainees at the commencement of the course.
- 10.7 Course staff should be sensitive to personal issues which may bear on trainees' professional performances/and academic achievement.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

- 11.1 The course should engage in a quality assurance procedure possibly as part of the host institution's existing structure.
- 11.2 The Quality Assurance procedures should ensure that the views of all stakeholders are sought and contribute to the ongoing evaluation and development of the course.
- 11.3 An External examiner(s) appointed by the university, who is of high professional and academic standing, should be involved in all areas of assessment on the course.