



**Rules for the Approval of  
Post Qualifying Education  
and Training in Social Work  
in Northern Ireland 2006**

Produced by:

Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
7th Floor, Millennium House  
19-25 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AQ

Tel: 028 9041 7600

Fax: 028 9041 7601

Textphone: 028 9023 9340

Web: [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

Email: [info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk)

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# Northern Ireland Social Care Council

## Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Social Work in Northern Ireland 2006

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council), in the exercise of the powers conferred on it by Sections 10, 13 and 18 of the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001<sup>1</sup>, and, as required by Section 18(3) of the Act, with the consent of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, herein makes the following Rules.

### Arrangement of Rules

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<sup>1</sup> As amended by Article 46 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (NI) Order 2003

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# **PART I**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Citation and commencement**

- 1.1 These Rules may be cited as the Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Northern Ireland 2006, and shall come into force on 1st December 2006.

### **2. Post qualifying education and training**

- 2.1 The Rules contribute to the Council's role in promoting high standards of conduct and practice for the social care workforce. They set out arrangements for approving post qualifying education and training in social work in Northern Ireland and conferring post qualifying awards.
- 2.2 The aim of post qualifying education and training is to increase the expertise of social workers in order to enhance the quality of social work practice.
- 2.3 The Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework (hereinafter referred to as the PQ Framework), endorsed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in June 2006, will be relevant to the education and training needs of qualified social workers at all levels. It will support the requirement for registered social workers to engage in post registration training and learning.<sup>2</sup> It will build on the Degree in Social Work and the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE).
- 2.4 The PQ Framework will not encompass all education and training activity at post qualifying level but will provide a structure for the recognition of achievement leading to a Council post qualifying award.

### **3. Roles**

- 3.1 The Council will set standards for the operation of the PQ Framework, including the approval of the Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership (hereinafter referred to as the PQ Partnership).
- 3.2 The Council will confer awards.
- 3.3 The PQ Partnership will determine and manage the arrangements within the PQ Framework for the provision of post qualifying education and training in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>2</sup> NISCC (Registration) Rules Schedule 3

## 4. Interpretation

4.1 In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

**‘Act’** means the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

**‘Assessed Year in Employment (AYE)’** means the year of social work practice that new social work graduates are required to complete satisfactorily to maintain their registration with the NISCC.

**‘Award’** means a professional qualification which is achieved by meeting the requirements set out in the PQ Framework.

**‘CCETSW’** means the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

**‘Council’** means the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

**‘Courses’** means forms of study that may include training courses, programmes of learning, or other activities that could reasonably be expected to advance the social worker’s professional development.

**‘Department’** means the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

**‘Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework’** means the arrangements for post qualifying education and training in social work in Northern Ireland leading to a Council award.

**‘PQ Framework’** means the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework.

**‘Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership’** means a body approved by the Council to determine and manage the PQ arrangements set out in the PQ Framework. It has representation from education institutions and social work employers engaged in the provision of post qualifying education and training. The Constitution of the body is set out at Appendix 1.

**‘PQ Partnership’** means the Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership.

**‘The Register’** means the Register maintained by the Council under Section 3 of the Act.

**‘Visitor’** means a person who is independent and impartial, appointed by the Council, who may make reports on the standards of course provision according to Section 13(2) (b) (i) and (ii) of the Act.

**5. Publication of the Rules**

- 5.1 These Rules will be published on the Council's website [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info) and in such other manner as the Council sees fit.

## **PART II**

### **Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Social Work in Northern Ireland**

#### **6. Awards**

- 6.1 The Council will determine from time to time the range and nature of awards.

#### **7. Content and provision of post qualifying training**

- 7.1 The PQ Framework will determine the content of post qualifying education and training leading to a Council award.

- 7.2 The PQ Framework will:

7.2.1 be capable of addressing the needs of social workers at all stages of their professional development and in all professional settings and contexts;

7.2.2 accommodate recognition of professional achievement and access to academic achievement;

7.2.3 be based on a modular structure that is flexible and can allow for horizontal and vertical progression;

7.2.4 be responsive to the needs of employers;

7.2.5 be at postgraduate academic level;

7.2.6 be capable of linking with the learning of those in related professions and other workers in the social care sector; and

7.2.7 comply with any Standards set by the Council.

- 7.3 The PQ Partnership will determine and manage the arrangements for the delivery of the PQ Framework. There will be one PQ Partnership approved by the Council.

#### **8. Enrolment for an award**

- 8.1 To be eligible to enrol for a post qualifying award, a candidate must be a social worker registered with the Council on the social work part of the register and, if applicable,<sup>3</sup> have completed successfully the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE).

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<sup>3</sup> This is applicable to graduates of the Degree in Social Work.

8.2 Candidates must pay the required enrolment fees.

## **9. Approval of the PQ Partnership**

9.1 The PQ Partnership will be approved by the Council to determine and manage the arrangements within the PQ Framework.

9.2 The Council will approve the PQ Partnership only when it is satisfied that it meets the Standards for Approval which will cover the following areas:

9.2.1 Membership and collaborative arrangements.

9.2.2 Management, governance and organisation.

9.2.3 Policy and planning.

9.2.4 Use of resources and staffing.

9.2.5 Candidate enrolment.

9.2.6 Support for the delivery of the PQ Framework.

9.2.7 Assessment arrangements.

9.2.8 Accredited programmes.

9.2.9 Quality Assurance.

9.2.10 Equal opportunities.

9.2.11 Data collection.

9.2.12 Provision of information.

9.2.13 Public participation.

9.3 The Council may from time to time vary the Standards for Approval.

9.4 Following initial approval the PQ Partnership will be subject to periodic review as part of the Council's quality assurance arrangements. The first formal review following approval will be within 5 years.

9.5 Subject to any future changes to these Rules, approval of the PQ Partnership will continue unless and until:

9.5.1 approval is withdrawn by the Council; and

9.5.2 approval is withdrawn following a request from the PQ Partnership to that effect.

9.6 Where approval is refused, withdrawn or given subject to additional conditions, the PQ Partnership may appeal in accordance with Section 10 of these Rules.

9.7 The PQ Partnership will notify the Council of any proposed material changes to the way in which it meets the Council's Standards for Approval, and must not make any such change without the Council's prior consent in writing.

## **10. Appeals**

10.1 The Council will put in place an appeals procedure as set out in Appendix 1 whereby the PQ Partnership may appeal to the Council against a decision made in respect of approval, monitoring, review or formal investigation, or withdrawal of approval.

10.2 The PQ Partnership may appeal against a decision of the Council or a Council officer on the following grounds:

10.2.1 The Council did not take into account material information which was made known to it at the time of the decision.

10.2.2 New information which could not have been made available at the time of the decision and which materially affects the outcome has since become available.

10.2.3 The Council did not observe its own procedures and this failure materially affected the decision.

10.3 The Council will appoint a panel to consider any appeal.

## **11. Complaints against the Council**

11.1 The Council has a complaints procedure. Copies of this procedure are available from the Council's Head of Corporate Services.

## **12. Responsibilities of the Partnership**

12.1 The PQ Partnership will be responsible for:

12.1.1 enrolling candidates and collecting such enrolment and assessment fees as agreed with the Council;

12.1.2 recommending standards for candidate support;

12.1.3 ensuring there is a range of appropriate assessment arrangements;

12.1.4 accrediting assessment arrangements and quality assuring the assessment of candidates;

12.1.5 providing assessment structures for individual submissions;

12.1.6 tracking candidate progression and confirming achievement;

12.1.7 making recommendations to the Council to confer awards;

- 12.1.8 accrediting programmes of post qualifying education and training in social work in accordance with Accreditation Standards published by the Council;
- 12.1.9 monitoring the standard and validity of accredited programmes at regular intervals;
- 12.1.10 promoting the PQ Framework and providing information to candidates, employers and education and training interests;
- 12.1.11 providing development and standardisation opportunities for those involved in the delivery of accredited programmes and/or candidate assessment; and
- 12.1.12 advising the Council of any gaps, or potential gaps, in post qualifying education and training provision.

### **13. Provision of information to the Council**

13.1 The PQ Partnership will provide information to the Council on any aspect of post qualifying education and training provision, including management arrangements, learning and assessment, accredited programmes, provision of information, future plans, evaluation, statistics and any other information the Council may require and within timescales as directed by the Council.

13.2 The PQ Partnership will collect and analyse data in respect of:

13.2.1 Enrolments.

13.2.2 Progression.

13.2.3 Awards.

13.3 The PQ Partnership will supply the Council with:

13.3.1 any guidance documents issued by the PQ Partnership;

13.3.2 an annual report; and

13.3.3 monitoring reports as required.

### **14. Public participation**

14.1 There should be mechanisms in place to allow for relevant input and feedback from key interests, including lay, with an interest in social work education and training.

## **15. Visitors**

- 15.1 The Council may appoint visitors in accordance with Section 13 of the Act, to visit any place or institution where accredited post qualifying education and training is provided or is proposed to be provided.
- 15.2 A visitor appointed by the Council to visit places or institutions where accredited post qualifying education and training is delivered may be required to prepare reports on the nature and quality of the instruction or assessment to be given and the facilities provided or to be provided at any place or institution visited.
- 15.3 The Council may pay visitors a fee, allowances and expenses as determined by the Council.

## **16. Quality Assurance**

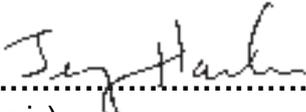
- 16.1 The Council will quality assure any aspect of the functioning of the PQ Partnership at regular intervals according to the quality assurance standards set by the Council.
- 16.2 The PQ Partnership will take action on identified areas for improvement and co-operate with the Council to maintain and improve standards of post qualifying education and training.
- 16.3 Where the Council's quality assurance process indicates that the PQ Partnership is not meeting the required standards the Council may withdraw approval from the PQ Partnership and require it to disband.

## PART III

### Transitional Arrangements

#### 17 PQ arrangements previously approved by CCETSW and transitional arrangements

- 17.1 By virtue of Section 5 of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (Transfer Scheme) Order 2001 (the 2001 Order), anything done by or on behalf of CCETSW in the exercise of its functions shall be treated as from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2001 as having been done by the Council, and therefore any course approved by CCETSW under Section 10(3) and 10(5) of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 is deemed to be approved by the Council until such time as the Council determines that the course is no longer recognised by the Council.
- 17.2 The Framework for Post Qualifying Education and Training originally approved by CCETSW and deemed to be approved by the Council under Section 5 of the 2001 Order, will continue to be approved by the Council to enable any person registered within this Framework before 1 April 2007 the opportunity to complete by 30 September 2010. See also 17.5.
- 17.3 New arrangements for post qualifying education and training will come into effect on 1 April 2007. There will be a new PQ Framework in operation from that date. All enrolments will be managed by the PQ Partnership.
- 17.4 The PQ Partnership will continue with the approval of the Council and will operate to the 'Standards for Approval of the Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership'. The PQ Partnership will manage the arrangements set out in the PQ Framework.
- 17.5 Transitional arrangements will be in place to ensure candidates can complete within the timescale. The Council reserves the right to consider each individual on a case-by-case basis.

  
..... Date 24th March 2006  
(Chair)

**The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety hereby consents to these Rules**

  
..... Date 24th November 2006  
(Senior Officer, DHSSPS)

**Appeal Procedure for the Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Council) is a statutory body established under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Act 2001.
- 1.2 The Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership (PQ Partnership) is required to comply with the Council's Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Social Work in Northern Ireland.
- 1.3 This appeal procedure has been drawn up in accordance with these Rules, Part 11 Section 10.
- 1.4 The Rules state that the PQ Partnership may appeal to the Council against a decision made in respect of: approval, monitoring, review or formal investigation, or withdrawal of approval.

**2. Grounds for Appeal**

- 2.1 The PQ Partnership may appeal against a decision of the Council on the following grounds:
  - 2.1.1 The Council did not take into account material information which was made known to it at the time of the decision.
  - 2.1.2 New information which could not have been made available at the time of the decision and which materially affects the outcome has since become available; or
  - 2.1.3 The Council did not observe its own procedures and this failure materially affected the decision.

**3. Principles**

- 3.1 The key principles which underpin the Council's appeal procedure are that it should be:
  - 3.1.1 open and transparent; an appeal decision will be based on open and relevant evidence.
  - 3.1.2 speedy; an appeal will be resolved as quickly as is reasonably possible, and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, within the timescales specified in the appeals procedure.

3.1.3 facilitative; the Council will seek to be responsive to and work with the PQ Partnership to resolve an appeal at the earliest stage possible.

#### **4. Procedure for appeal**

##### **Stage 1- Request for reconsideration**

- 4.1 An application for reconsideration of a Council decision and/ or procedure, in respect of approval, monitoring, review or formal investigation, or withdrawal of approval, should be made by the Chair of the PQ Partnership in writing, with supporting evidence, to the Council Director of Training within four weeks of the PQ Partnership's receipt of the Council's decision.
- 4.2 The relevant Professional Adviser will meet with the PQ Partnership within ten working days of receipt of the application for reconsideration. This meeting will explore the issues leading to dissatisfaction and attempt to achieve resolution. The outcome will be communicated, by the Director of Training, to all involved within five working days of the meeting.
- 4.3 If the PQ Partnership is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 they can proceed to Stage 2.

##### **Stage 2 – Appeal panel**

- 4.4 Where reconsideration fails to resolve the causes of dissatisfaction the Chair of the PQ Partnership should write to the Chief Executive of the Council within ten working days of receiving the Council's Stage 1 decision. The letter should set out grounds for appeal (see paragraph 2 above, Grounds for Appeal) and request formal consideration by the Council. The letter will be accepted as a Notice of Appeal.
- 4.5 On receipt of the letter the Chief Executive will consult with the Chair of the Council who will appoint an appeal panel.
- 4.6 The panel will comprise three members: a Chair who will normally be the Council Chair, and two other members, one of whom will be a Council member. The third panel member will be either a Council member or an independent person with relevant experience. No panel members will be connected with the PQ Partnership. The Director of Training will act as secretary to the panel.
- 4.7 Within ten working days of receipt of the notice of appeal the panel will consider the relevant paperwork and decide whether there is a prima facie case for further consideration. The panel will inform the PQ Partnership of its decision, in writing.

### **Stage 3 – Appeal process**

- 4.8 Where a review of the Council's decision is to take place the PQ Partnership will be informed of the date of the appeal panel meeting and will be invited to make oral submissions to the panel and/or send further written statements. No legal representatives will be permitted to appear on behalf of any party.
- 4.9 The panel will consider all relevant evidence, and may, on behalf of the Council, take either of the following decisions:
  - 4.9.1 Uphold the appeal; or
  - 4.9.2 Confirm the original decision
- 4.10 The decision of the appeal panel will be final. The PQ Partnership will be notified in writing. Stage 3 of the process should be completed within four weeks.

**For further information about Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying  
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**Contact:**

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