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**Eligibility Criteria and Application Guidelines**

**Professional Certificate Referring for Radiological Procedures (Physiotherapists)**

University College Dublin

**Applicants should read these guidelines prior to completing their application form in consultation with their clinical supervisor.**

# **1. Introduction**

A physiotherapist will become eligible to refer for radiological procedures following successful completion of a CORU approved education and training programme, and having regard to legislation, associated regulations, professional regulation, and national and local health service providers policies, procedures, protocols, guidelines (PPPGs).

The education and training programme, provided by University College Dublin (UCD), is a key step towards designating appropriately trained physiotherapists as referrers for radiological procedures. The initiative is funded through the Department of Health, Sláintecare Integration Innovation Fund (SIIF). This programme will provide education and training in line with the standards and requirements set down by CORU Frameworks: *Standards of Competence for Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures* and *Requirements for Education and Training Providers offering Referral for Radiological Diagnostic Procedures Education and Training Programmes*.[[1]](#footnote-2)

**A legislative amendment is required to designate physiotherapists as referrers for radiological procedures, including x-ray. Work is progressing in the Department of Health regarding this legislative change.**

Physiotherapists working in relevant roles across the health service are being invited to apply to train for the authority to refer patients for radiological procedures.

**2. Education and Training Programme Overview**

The Professional Certificate in Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Procedures, delivered by UCD provides the requisite knowledge, skill, and competence for physiotherapists to refer for radiological procedures safely and effectively in accordance with legal and professional regulatory frameworks and standards. The programme is a level 9 NFQ[[2]](#footnote-3) award (10 ECTS[[3]](#footnote-4) credits), which involves both theoretical and practical instruction followed by competency assessment.

The programme is delivered by experienced, expert staff over a single trimester, using hybrid (blended) learning to maximise engagement of busy health professionals. The course content will be delivered using a hybrid approach with eLearning materials available for students to complete both in advance of and following a one-day mandatory attendance in UCD. Competency assessment will be performed by the designated clinical supervisor.

On completion of the post-graduate programme, students will:

* Understand the principles of radiation protection of the person and staff,
* Demonstrate an understanding of medical radiological procedures and their implication in a person’s safety,
* Critically utilise evidence-based knowledge and skill in conducting a person’s assessment and consultation when referring for medical radiological procedures,
* Apply clinical decision-making skills in relation to referring persons for medical radiological imaging procedures,
* Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the legislative and regulatory framework associated with referral for medical radiological procedures, including professional guidelines, supporting safe practice,
* Understand the role of the practitioner in the referral process,
* Demonstrate effective communication skills, and knowledge of the role of the multidisciplinary team management involved for the safe and appropriate use of medical radiological procedures.

# **3. Eligibility Criteria**

Mandatory entry requirements for admission to education and training programmes for physiotherapist referral for radiological procedures have been set down.

The applicant must:

* Be registered with the Physiotherapists Registration Board at CORU and hold a relevant qualification in physiotherapy.
* Be a HSE employed physiotherapist or in an HSE funded role.
* Have a minimum of five years recent post-registration clinical experience and demonstrate that at least four of the five years have been attained in a relevant clinical specialism.
* Show written confirmation of agreed clinical governance arrangements with the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) / Local Implementation Group (LIG) at the work location to oversee the introduction and implementation of physiotherapist referral for radiological procedures
* Show written confirmation from the Radiology Clinical Director/Consultant in Administrative Charge (or designate) who is the designated radiologist to the Radiation Safety Committee, within the work location.
* Show written confirmation of a designated clinical supervisor. That supervisor must be a registered medical practitioner at Consultant level or Registrar supported by a Consultant.
* Show written confirmation from an Executive Lead/Senior Manager who has overall responsibility for governance of the physiotherapy service within the work location (e.g. HSCP Lead, Hospital Manager, General Manager, or equivalent).
* Show written confirmation from the Physiotherapy Manager, to whom the applicant reports professionally, of support for the applicant’s participation in the training programme, including alignment with clinical justification and service need.

**Further information on selection criteria and process is set out in Appendix 1 below.**

**4. Autonomous Practice**

On completion of the Professional Certificate in Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Procedures education and training programme, it will be necessary for the applicant to ensure all governance arrangements pertaining to radiation safety are satisfied, and that their name has been entered to the appropriate CORU register, prior to progressing to practice independently.

A legislative amendment is required to designate physiotherapists as referrers for radiological procedures, including x-ray. Work is progressing in the Department of Health regarding this legislative change.

**5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Application will require completion of an application form (see section 7) which must be signed by **four** members of the multi-disciplinary team and the physiotherapist themselves. The roles and responsibilities of each of those individuals is set out below.

**5.1 Physiotherapist Applicant:**

The registered physiotherapist who successfully completes the Professional Certificate in Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Procedures education and training programme, demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and competencies to refer persons for medical radiological imaging procedures safely, within their scope of practice.

The physiotherapist will:

* + Ensure they have successfully completed an approved education and training programme for physiotherapist referral for radiological procedures.
	+ Comply with national legislation and professional regulation requirements for medical exposure to ionising radiation (IR).
	+ Adhere to good referral practice guidelines such as RCR *iRefer Guidelines[[4]](#footnote-5)* or ESR *iGuide[[5]](#footnote-6)*.
	+ Operate in line with all governance arrangements and PPPGs, agreed in consultation with the LIGs at the work location.
	+ Engage in audit of referrals for radiological procedures to evidence the impact of the initiative at local level.
	+ Undertake post-qualification continuing professional development, specifically in the domain of radiology referral and maintain appropriate records of same.
	+ Maintain appropriate registration with CORU, in line with requirements set down by the Physiotherapist Registration Board.
	+ Report specific outcomes, to be agreed by the HSE under the delivery of the Sláintecare Integration and Innovation Fund project.

**5.2 Clinical Supervisor**:

The registered medical practitioner, at consultant level or Registrar supported by Consultant, who has agreed to provide the following supports to the physiotherapist at their work location.

The Clinical Supervisor will:

* + Sign the application form, confirming support for the physiotherapist to undertake the course and intention to supervise clinical learning.
	+ Provide support, teaching and learning opportunities for the physiotherapist in the clinical practicum.
	+ Facilitate learning by encouraging critical thinking and reflection.
	+ Provide dedicated time and opportunities for the physiotherapist to conduct a full episode of care to include referring for a radiological procedure.
	+ Verify and document all supervised practice documentation for the duration of the clinical practice module (i.e. Clinical Practice Portfolio).
	+ Meet formally with the physiotherapist to review progress through three documented review meetings.
	+ Formally assess the physiotherapist’s competence in the clinical practicum using the Clinical Competency Assessment Tool (episode 5 and episode 10).
	+ Document that the physiotherapist is competent or not competent to refer for radiological procedures.
	+ Collaborate with the Programme/Module Co-ordinator in UCD to ensure adequate support for the physiotherapist in the clinical practicum.
	+ Collaborate with the Programme/Module Coordinator in UCD regarding the development of an action plan with the physiotherapist in the event that he/she is deemed not competent.

**5.3 Physiotherapy Services Manager**:

The physiotherapy service manager to whom the physiotherapist (applicant) reports professionally, who has agreed to provide the following supports to the physiotherapist within the work location.

The physiotherapy services manager will:

* + Sign the application form, confirming the physiotherapist is working in a relevant role and has the requisite level of experience.
	+ Confirm support for the physiotherapist to undertake the course and intention to facilitate clinical learning.
	+ Facilitate the physiotherapist to complete the course to include theoretical education (minimum 20 hours) and practical training (10 supervised episodes of referral).
	+ Support engagement with the designated clinical supervisor to ensure supervised episodes of referral are completed.
	+ Oversee the professional work of the physiotherapist, ensuring that referrals made for medical radiological procedures are in line with their scope of practice.
	+ Ensure all necessary governance arrangements are in place at the work location, in consultation with the LIG.
	+ Facilitate audit of the physiotherapist’s referrals for medical radiological procedures to evidence the impact of the initiative at the work location.
	+ Maintain and regularly review an accurate record of approved physiotherapy referrers who are operating as independent physiotherapist referrers, to be made available to relevant stakeholders as required.

**5.4 Executive Lead/Senior Manager**:

The person with overall responsibility for governance of the physiotherapy service at the work location (e.g. HSCP Manager, Hospital Manager, General Manager, or equivalent) who has agreed to provide the following supports to the physiotherapist.

The executive lead/senior manager will:

* + Sign the application form, confirming support for the physiotherapist to undertake the course and intention to facilitate clinical learning at the work location.
	+ Provide support to the physiotherapy service and physiotherapy services manager as required to allow the physiotherapist referrer to complete the course and ensure referral practices are in line with agreed scope of practice.
	+ Ensure clearly documented lines of accountability from the executive lead/senior manager to frontline physiotherapist referrer working directly with medical IR are in place, as required by both

S.I. No. 30 of 2019 and S.I. No. 256 of 2018.

* + Ensure all necessary governance arrangements are in place at the work location, including a RSC and LIG.
	+ Ensure the necessary arrangements are in place to facilitate audit of the physiotherapist’s referrals for radiological procedures to evidence the impact of the initiative at the work location.

**5.5 Radiologist**:

The clinical director/consultant in administrative charge (or designate) who is the designated radiologist to the RSC at the work location. The radiologist has agreed to provide the following supports to the physiotherapist referrer.

The Radiologist will:

* + Sign the application form, confirming support for the physiotherapist to act as a referrer for radiological procedures (in line with their scope of practice) once all governance arrangements are satisfied at the work location.
	+ Communicate to all radiologists in the work location their requirement to review medical images arising from referrals from the physiotherapist and report on the findings.
	+ Communicate to all radiologists in the work location their requirement to act in line with local governance arrangements and professional judgment, to include communication of radiology alerts in a timely fashion.

# **6. Local Implementation Group (LIG)**

A Local Implementation Group (LIG) must be in place in work locations where physiotherapists are referring patients for medical radiological procedures. The LIG will be a sub-group of the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) and will function to ensure all appropriate clinical governance structures are in place for safe and effective implementation. The LIG will report to the RSC. It is necessary for each applicant to have written confirmation that all necessary local governance arrangements are/will be in place at the work location to oversee the introduction and implementation of physiotherapist referral for radiological procedures.

Referral practices for physiotherapists should include referrals for the appropriate medical diagnostic imaging procedures. The relevant procedures for individual applicants should be considered and agreed by the LIG and have appropriate local health service provider’s governance arrangements in place. These should include PPPGs for medical radiology referrals, with due consideration to audit plans, to evidence the impact of the initiative at local level.

Detailed national procedures for clinical audit of radiological procedures involving medical exposure to IR have been published by HIQA[[6]](#footnote-7) and should be taken into account. Audit must address compliance with the PPPGs of the local health service provider including reporting referral errors/incidents, risk occurrences and near misses. This should be undertaken biannually for the first year and annually thereafter.

The LIG should assist the physiotherapist referrer to agree a clinical audit plan, and results of audits completed must be shared with the LIG, who have a responsibility to evaluate the impact of physiotherapist radiology referral and ensure quality assurance at a local level.

# **7. Application Process**

Applicants should read these guidelines prior to completing their application form in consultation with their clinical supervisor and physiotherapy line manager.

It is necessary to complete all sections of the form, typing in BLOCK CAPITALS. All **four** members of the multi-disciplinary team and the physiotherapist applicant to sign the application form. Physical (handwritten) or digital signatures only are acceptable. Typed signatures will not be accepted.

**It is suggested that applicants engage with their Local Implementation Group (LIG) to obtain the required signature as outlined in section 5 above. Intended applicants should contact the Chair of the LIG at their work location (usually radiologist) for assistance in obtaining signatures once they have agreement from the clinician identified as their clinical supervisor. While processes may vary across work locations, the LIG may ask an applicant to attend a meeting of the group to discuss their application and progress sign-off. Alternative local arrangement may also be in place.**

Should an applicant experience any difficulties in identifying the chair of the LIG, the Chair of the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) may be able to advise (LIG will be a sub-group of the RSC and will report to the RSC). The Quality and Patient Safety Manager may also be able to assist in identifying the appropriate channels/staff in individual work locations.

**Submission of Application Forms:**

* Fully completed application forms are to be submitted by Physiotherapy Line Managers following conclusion of a local prioritisation process.
* Physiotherapy Mangers are asked to email all forms for their department to HSE National Health and Social Care Professions Office (HSCPO) @ CPD.HSCP@HSE.IE by the relevant closing date.
* The subject line should read: *Professional Certificate Referring for Radiological Procedures (Physiotherapists)*.
* This is a requirement as part of the application process to secure SIIF funding.

**Incomplete or incorrectly completed application forms will be returned to the applicant who may not be considered for admission to the education and training programme.**

**Check List**

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| **Please ensure the following has been completed as part of your application process by the specified closing date:** |
| 1 | Fully completed application form, typed in BLOCK CAPITALS with physical (handwritten) or digital signatures only. |  |
| 2 | Name of the physiotherapist applicant, as stated on the application form, is the name by which that person is registered with CORU. |  |
| 4 | Copy of completed application form emailed to HSE National Health and Social Care Professions Office (CPD.HSCP@HSE.IE) |  |

**Note: Those undertaking this course agree to reporting specific outcomes which will be agreed by the HSE under the delivery of the SIIF project.**

**Appendix 1: Selection Criteria and Process**

Applications are welcome from all relevant clinical areas provided the candidate meets eligibility criteria, as set out above. The following considerations will also be taken into account in the selection process.

**Selection criteria:**

* Selection criteria are aligned to the delivery of Sláintecare, Ireland’s plan and strategy to reform the Irish health and social care system. The selection process aims to ensure that physiotherapists invited to undergo training to refer for radiological procedures have the potential to contribute in a meaningful way to enhanced patient access, integrated care pathways, and reduced hospital dependency, in line with Sláintecare principles.
* Consideration will be given to the fact that roll out of this initiative is best placed in services where there are established pathways of care, governance arrangements and interdisciplinary teams.
* The following considerations relating to **clinical justification and service need** will be taken into account in selecting candidates for the training programme.
	+ Recommendation from Physiotherapy Line Manager that there is a demonstrable service need.
	+ Clear evidence of how the training will enhance service delivery and patient outcomes.
	+ Identified gaps in service provision where physiotherapist-led referrals would improve efficiency.
	+ Reduction in the number of health professionals required in a patient’s episode of care.
	+ Reduced workload on other members of the multidisciplinary team (NCHDs, ANPs etc.).
	+ Removal of duplication of patient contacts and workload by delegating task to the professional who has had most contact with the patient.
	+ Working in area where the need to refer patients is demonstrated.
	+ Working in area where high-service need is demonstrated while appropriateness of referral is maintained.
* The following considerations relating to **clinical practice area and geographical location** will be take into account in selecting candidates for the training programme.
	+ Evidence of four years’ experience in a relevant clinical specialism.
	+ Diversity in the range of clinical settings across which applicants are employed, ensuring equitable distribution of training across healthcare sectors.
	+ Regions with limited access to imaging services and the potential to support equity in healthcare.

**Selection Process:**

* Application forms must be submitted by Physiotherapy Line Managers to the HSE National Health and Social Care Professions Office by the specified closing date (see section 7 above).
* All applications will be reviewed by a selection panel agreed by the Education and Competency Subgroup of the Physiotherapist Referral for Radiological Procedures Expert Working Group and chaired by the National HSCP Office.
* The selection process will give consideration to eligibility and selection criteria, as described above. The selection panel will agree on application of a weighting process for selection criteria as required.
* Successful applicants and their line managers will be notified of their offer of a place on the *Professional Certificate Referring for Radiological Procedures (Physiotherapists)* at University College Dublin by the HSE National HSCP Office.
* Each candidate will then be provided with further instructions regarding next steps, including the requirement to register on the UCD portal. UCD will in turn provide further details to each student with regards to access to learning resources and other relevant materials in due course.
1. [prb-referrers-standards-of-competence.pdf](https://coru.ie/health-and-social-care-professionals/education/criteria-and-standards-of-proficiency/prb-referrers-standards-of-competence.pdf)

[prb-referrers-requirements-for-education-programmes.pdf](https://coru.ie/health-and-social-care-professionals/education/criteria-and-standards-of-proficiency/prb-referrers-requirements-for-education-programmes.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. National Framework of Qualifications (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. ##  European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (European Commission).

 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Royal College of Radiologists. [Home | iRefer](https://www.irefer.org.uk/). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. European Society of Radiologists. [ESR iGuide | Imaging Referral Guidelines published by the European Society of Radiology](https://www.esriguide.org/). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. HIQA. National Procedures for Clinical Audit of Radiological Procedures Involving Medical Exposure to Ionising Radiation. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)