



## Specialty Recognition

Recognition of Medical  
Specialties under the Medical  
Practitioners Act 2007:  
Guidance for Specialties



Comhairle na nDoctúirí Leighis  
Medical Council



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## INTRODUCTION

A key regulatory function of the Medical Council is to oversee the quality of medical education and training in Ireland, part of this remit includes the recognition of the medical specialties practised in the country. [Section 89 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 \(MPA 2007\)](#) outlines the Council's responsibility for determining, with the consent of the Minister for Health, the medical specialties that can be recognised for the purposes of registration in the Specialist Division of the Register of Medical Practitioners, in line with the relevant domestic and EU legislative requirements.

This Guidance document is provided to guide applicants through the process of seeking recognition of a new medical specialty.

## INITIATING AN APPLICATION

To commence the application process, aspiring applicants must submit their expression of interest outlining the need for specialty recognition, electronically to [specialtyrecognition@mcirl.ie](mailto:specialtyrecognition@mcirl.ie)

Following receipt of the expression of interest, applicants will be assigned a designated Medical Council Liaison Officer (MCLO) who will issue the specialty recognition application form and guide applicants through the application process. The MCLO will also provide details about the Mentor Support option that applicants can avail of. Please note that a single point of contact from the aspirant specialty must be agreed during the initial application phase.

All application forms are to be returned electronically via the dedicated email address.

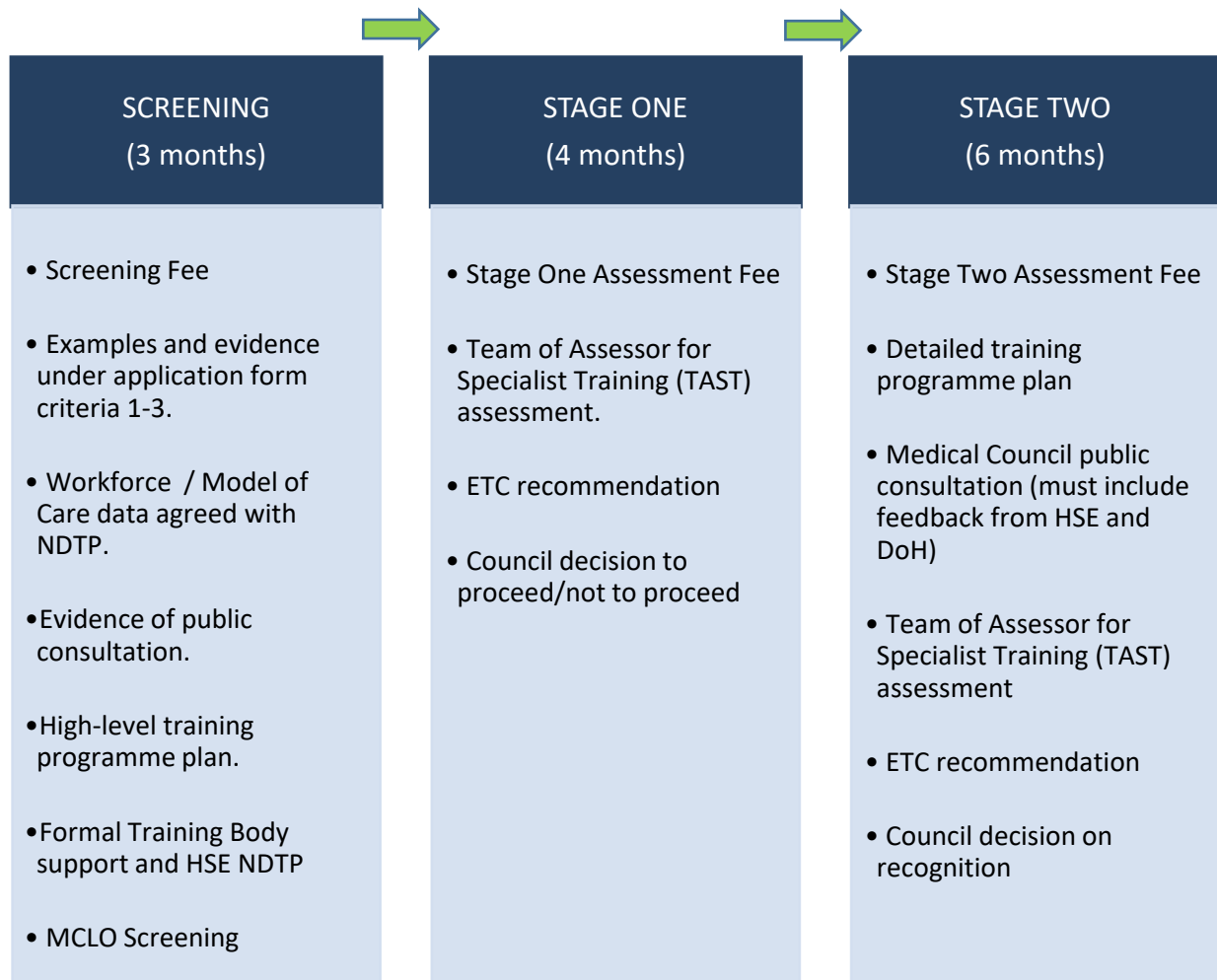
## APPLICATION PROCESS

There are three stages to the application process.



**Figure 1. Overview of the Specialty Recognition Assessment Stages**

*\*All timeframes provided are estimates and serve as a guideline when completing the Specialty Recognition Application Process.*



## 1. SCREENING

Following receipt of the application form, signed Terms of Engagement and Screening fee (€500) from the aspirant speciality, applications are screened by the MCLO to assess the eligibility to proceed to Stage One of the application process based on the evidence provided under each of the requirements.



### Requirements for Screening

- Examples and evidence provided for all criterion and sub-criterion 1-3 as indicated in the application form.
- A workforce model of care detailing how recognition of the proposed speciality will address population and epidemiological changes, demand for the service and specialists, healthcare priorities, workforce projections and training, as agreed with the HSE Liaison Officer (HLO);
- Formal expression of support from the HSE support including the proposed Model of Care;
- Formal letter of support from an Irish Medical Postgraduate Training Body to house the specialty and deliver a programme of specialist training in the proposed specialty;
- A high-level training plan outlining the proposed specialty programme;
- Evidence of market research, stakeholder engagement or public consultation in evaluating the need of a new specialty and the benefits associated with the new specialty;
- Compliance with Article 59 - EU Directive 2005/EU/ 36.

### Article 59 - EU Directive 2005/EU/ 36

In 2013, Directive 2005/36/EC, the Professional Qualifications Directive, was amended by Directive 2013/55/EU, with the view to modernising the law in the area of regulated professions. It also introduced a transparency and mutual evaluation exercise between the Member States of all their regulated professions. In order for the Medical Council to comply with this legislation and for medical specialties recognised in Ireland to potentially be mutually recognised in some/all other EU Member States, the Medical Council must be able to assess the proportionality of the introduction of a new specialty and justify the need for the recognition of a new specialty. This is also in keeping with Medical Council policy on specialty recognition. This is a necessary step in the application process and throughout the questions in the application form we are asking each aspirant specialty to provide as much information and evidence as possible to justify the need for the proposed specialty.



### Assessment and decision making during Screening

If sufficient evidence is provided during the Screening stage, then applicants will proceed to Stage One and will be informed in writing of the outcome. Applications failing to proceed to Stage One of the process will be archived for record purposes only. Applicants who wish to continue in seeking recognition for the aspirant specialty can initiate the application process again by submitting a new application for the aspirant speciality no sooner than 18 months after the decision of not to proceed.

## 2. STAGE ONE

Stage One of the application process establishes a case for full assessment during Stage Two. The assessment will be based on the evaluation of the evidence-based responses provided in the application form.

An application is *unlikely* to proceed to Stage Two if the aspirant specialty is:

- In an area of practice limited to a specific geographic area or demographic group;
- In an area of practice limited to the treatment of a single disease or based on a limited number of techniques;
- In an area of practice based on a single modality of treatment;
- Already recognised (fully or partly) under a different specialty title

### Assessment and decision making during Stage One

Applicants will be informed in writing that their application has been progressed to Stage One. Following receipt of Stage One fee (€3,000), applications will initially be considered by a Team of Assessors for Specialist Training (TAST) followed by the Education and Training Committee (ETC) and ultimately by Council.

TAST will assess the application evidence and agree on one of the following recommendations:

- a) That an initial case for recognition has been made and that the application should proceed to Stage Two; **or**



- b) That an initial case has not been made and that the application should be rejected.

The TAST will make their recommendation to the ETC, stating the reasons for their recommendation. The ETC will consider the TAST's recommendation and make a final recommendation to Council. It is open to the ETC to endorse or overturn the TAST's recommendation.

The aspirant specialty will be informed of the ETC's recommendation to Council at the earliest opportunity.

#### **Internal Review of a recommendation made by the ETC.**

If the aspirant specialty is concerned that due process was not followed by the TAST and/or the ETC in deciding on their recommendation, the applicant will have the option to request a formal review by the Internal Review Group. This request must specify the grounds on which the review should be considered and must be made in writing to the designated MCLO within 28 days of the issue date of the decision notification letter, detailing the ETC's recommendation to Council.

On expiry of the review window, or completion of the review process (where applicable), a final decision on Stage One of the application process will be made by Council.

Applicants wishing to re-submit following a rejection decision must commence a new application process by sending on an initial expression of interest and may not do so within 18 months of Council's decision.

### **3. STAGE TWO**

If the Medical Council decides that an initial case for recognition has been demonstrated, applicants will proceed to Stage Two. Stage Two is an in-depth assessment where additional supporting evidence is sought from the aspirant specialty. The nature of the additional supporting evidence required for Stage Two will be discussed with individual applicants and may vary depending on the depth of information already submitted.

#### **Requirements for Stage Two**

- The Medical Council will launch a public consultation with stakeholders in relation to needs and benefits; associated with the aspirant specialty, (feedback must be received from HSE and DoH);



- The aspirant specialty must submit a fully detailed training plan for the proposed specialty.

An aspirant specialty is required to submit the Stage Two requirements documentation within 6 weeks of the Council decision to proceed to Stage Two.

### **Medical Council Public Consultation Process**

Stage Two applications, along with a feedback form and contact details, will be uploaded onto the Medical Council website for wider stakeholder consultation. Information about the consultation process will be advertised on our website, circulated to key stakeholder groups, such as (but not limited to) all postgraduate training bodies, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Health Service Executive, and posted on other media platforms. The consultation process will typically be at least four weeks in duration, but the Medical Council reserves the right to extend the process further, as it sees fit. All feedback from the consultation process will be collated and analysed by the Executive and considered by the Specialist Training Assessor Team who in turn will present the findings to the ETC.

### **Assessment and decision making during Stage Two**

Applicants will be informed in writing that their application has been progressed to Stage Two. Following receipt of Stage Two fee (€10,000) and the detailed training plan within the required timeframe, the TAST will assess the application based on the evidence provided against the Stage Two requirements, in combination with the stakeholder feedback obtained during the Medical Council Public Consultation Process.

Applications deemed satisfactory by the TAST will be put before the ETC at the next available opportunity. The TAST may propose one or more of the following further evaluations at its discretion which may include involvement of appropriately-qualified external Assessors from both inside and outside of the State:

- Meeting(s) between external Assessors and the applicant body;
- Meeting(s) the relevant Postgraduate Training Body;
- Meeting(s) with the relevant HSE representatives;
- Visits to potential training sites.





The TAST will make one of the following recommendations to the ETC:

- a) That the ETC recommend that Council recognise the specialty; **or**
- b) That the ETC recommend that Council defer recognition until all necessary clarifications have been received; **or**
- c) That the ETC recommends that Council refuses to recognise the specialty under section 89 of the MPA 2007.

The ETC will then make one of the following recommendations to Council:

- a) That the Council recognise the specialty; **or**
- b) That the Council refuses to recognise the specialty under section 89 of the MPA 2007

The aspirant specialty will be informed of the ETC's recommendation to Council at the earliest opportunity.

#### **Internal Review of a recommendation made by the ETC.**

If the aspirant specialty is concerned that due process was not followed by the TAST and/or the ETC in deciding on their recommendation, the applicant will have the option to request a formal review by the Internal Review Group. This request must specify the grounds on which the review should be considered and must be made in writing to the designated MCLO within 28 days of the issue date of the decision notification letter, detailing the ETC's recommendation to Council.

On expiry of the review window, or completion of the review process (where applicable), a final decision on Stage Two of the application process will be made by Council.

Applicants wishing to re-submit following a rejection decision must commence a new application process by sending on an initial expression of interest and may not do so within 18 months of Council's decision.

#### **Council approval of the Stage Two application**

If the Medical Council decides to recognise the proposed specialty, the Council will proceed to seek Ministerial approval from the Minister for Health.



### **Council refusal of the Stage Two application**

If the Medical Council decides to refuse recognition, applicants wishing to apply again must do so as a new application via the initiating an application process, no sooner than 18 months following the refusal decision date.

## **SPECIALTY RECOGNITION STATUS**

Once the Minister for Health has approved the recognition of the proposed medical specialty, the aspirant speciality achieves formal recognition status. The applicant body will be formally notified of this outcome and the new speciality will be added to the list of Medical Specialities recognised in Ireland.

The next phase for the postgraduate training body is to apply for the accreditation of the associated postgraduate training programme. Detail of this process is available on the Medical Council [website](#).

## **APPLICATION FEES**

Fees are applicable at each assessment stage of the application process. Fees are made payable to the Finance department.

**Please note** – Payments are to be made within 30 days of the invoice issue date. If the payment conditions are not adhered to, the application (at any stage) will not be processed.

- **Screening**

A fee of €500 is applicable for the initial screening of applications and is to be paid upon initial application. This fee is non-refundable and is not a guarantee for progression to Stage One assessment.

- **Stage One assessment**

A fee of €3,000 is required upon notification of applications proceeding to Stage One assessment. This fee is non-refundable and is not a guarantee for progression to Stage Two assessment.

- **Stage Two assessment**

A fee of €10,000 is required upon notification of applications proceeding to Stage Two assessment. This fee is non-refundable.



## ROLE OF LIAISON OFFICERS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- **Medical Council Liaison Officer (MCLO)**

Following the expression of interest to the Medical Council, applicants are assigned a dedicated Medical Council Liaison Officer (MCLO), versed in the Speciality Recognition Process. The assigned MCLO's provide assistance throughout the entire lifespan of the application process. All process queries are to be directed to the assigned MCLO.

- **HSE Liaison Officer (HLO)**

The HSE provide a designated Liaison Officer to assist applicants with relevant information on public health service needs, priorities and workforce projections. The HLO is a vital contact from the beginning of the application process. HLO contact details are provided in the application form.

- **Training Body Liaison Officer (TBLO)**

Formal support from the relevant Irish Medical Postgraduate Training Body is an application requirement. Applicants must detail a designated Training Body Liaison Officer (TBLO) within the Training Body, for contact purposes throughout the application process.

## MENTOR SUPPORT

Applicants are offered the option of accessing a Mentor to assist the application process from initial application. Mentorship is offered from key personnel who have previously went through the Speciality Recognition process and were successful in having their speciality recognised. Details of mentorship will be provided by the assigned MCLO following receipt of the expression of interest.

**APPROVED BY THE MEDICAL COUNCIL ON 20 FEBRUARY 2019**



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