
Information for applicants, employers
and supervisors

Periods of adaptation

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Periods of adaptation

Introduction

About us (the Health and Care Professions Council)

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). We are a regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. To do this we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills and behaviour.

We currently regulate the following professions.

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

All of these professions have at least one professional title that is protected by law. This means, for example, anyone using the title 'physiotherapist' or 'dietitian' must be registered with us. Professionals on our Register are called registrants.

Our Register is available on our website for anyone to search, so they can check the registration of their professional. We may regulate other professions in the future. For an up-to-date list of the professions we regulate, please see our website at www.hcpc-uk.org

Our main functions

In order to protect the public, we:

- set standards for registrants’ education and training, professional skills, conduct, performance and ethics;
- keep a register of professionals who meet those standards;
- approve programmes which professionals must complete to register with us; and
- take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The Health Professions Order 2001 says we set our standards to protect the public, and we must set standards which are necessary for safe and effective practice. This is why our standards are set at a ‘threshold’ level (a minimum level for safe and effective practice).

About this document

A period of adaptation is a period of supervised practise and / or academic training which allows an applicant with ‘mutual recognition rights’ under the Professional Qualifications Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC) to reach the standard required to be registered with us. If this period is successfully completed, an applicant can then be registered and practise their profession in the United Kingdom. This document gives guidance to applicants, employers and supervisors about periods of adaptation and aptitude tests.

The information in this brochure will be helpful if you are an applicant who has been asked to undertake a period of adaptation or if you are an employer who has been approached about providing an adaptation placement.

If you are an applicant who does not meet the criteria for mutual recognition rights, the information in this document will not apply to you.

There are three sections to this document.

- Section one is for applicants and employers and explains who is entitled to a period of adaptation, and how we make decisions about applications for registration.
- Section two provides guidance for applicants who have been asked to undertake a period of adaptation.
- Section three provides guidance for employers and supervisors who have been approached to provide and supervise a period of adaptation.

The 'More information' section at the back of the document suggests sources of further information and advice.

In this document 'us' and 'we' refers to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In the section for applicants 'you' refers to the applicant and in the section for employers and supervisors 'you' refers to the employer or supervisor.

If you have any questions about this document, please contact the Registration Department on +44 (0)845 300 4472.

Section one: Information for applicants, employers and supervisors

Who is entitled to a period of adaptation?

Applicants who do not meet the standard for entry to the HCPC Register are only entitled to a period of adaptation or aptitude test if:

- they are a national of a relevant European state or have acquired rights (for example, through marriage to such a national); **and**
- they are entitled to practise one of the professions that we regulate in another relevant European state.

A 'relevant European state' means Switzerland or any of the member states of the European Economic Area (EEA) which are:

Austria	Latvia
Belgium	Liechtenstein
Bulgaria	Lithuania
Cyprus	Luxembourg
Czech Republic	Malta
Denmark	Netherlands
Estonia	Norway
Finland	Poland
France	Portugal
Germany	Romania
Greece	Slovakia
Hungary	Slovenia
Iceland	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	United Kingdom

What are ‘mutual recognition rights’?

Under European Community law, if a person is fully qualified to practise a specific profession in one relevant European state, there is a presumption that, in principle, they should be permitted to practise that profession in any other relevant European state. However, if there are substantial differences between the education, training and experience of the applicant and the requirements for the practice of that profession in the host state, the applicant may be asked to compensate for these differences by undergoing a period of adaptation. If an applicant thinks that no compensatory measures are necessary they are entitled to request an aptitude test.

For this purpose ‘fully qualified’ means that the applicant meets all of the requirements in order to practise in their home state, whatever they may be. If a profession is regulated in their home state, this may simply mean holding a qualification, and in others there may be a compulsory period of supervised training. In member states where a profession is not regulated, the applicant will need to prove they are ‘established’ in that profession by having practised for at least two out of the last ten years.

The guidance notes, which form part of the application pack, provide details on what evidence can be provided.

How do we assess applications from overseas qualified professionals?

We assess every application we receive from someone who has qualified outside of the UK on an individual basis, to decide whether they meet our standards of proficiency. Each application is assessed by two registration assessors from the relevant profession.

We publish standards of proficiency for each of the professions we regulate. These standards are set at the minimum level we feel is necessary for safe and effective practice. Every application is assessed against these standards to decide whether we can register an applicant.

Applicants have to provide us with a range of information including identification documents, information about their education and training, copies of qualifications, a character reference and at least one professional reference. We advise applicants that it is their responsibility to provide us with as much information as possible so we can make a decision about their application.

If you are applying for registration as a speech and language therapist, you must also meet our requirements for English language proficiency by successfully completing an English language proficiency test that we accept. Community law does not allow us to test the English language proficiency of applicants from other professions who are nationals of a relevant European state. However, every HCPC registrant must still be able to meet our standard of proficiency for effective communication.

More information about our English language requirements can be found in the guidance notes that accompany the application form.

Once an application has been looked at by our registration assessors, we have the following options.

- The assessors will recommend that you meet the standards of proficiency and are eligible for registration. You will then need to pay the registration fee to become registered.
- We may ask for ‘further verification’; that is specific additional information to help us process the application, such as asking the applicant to provide us with further information about their qualifications or experience.
- If the assessors have identified substantial shortfalls between the applicant’s education, training and experience and the requirements for practice in the UK, we can ask the applicant to undertake a period of adaptation. If they recommend a period of adaptation, the applicant is entitled to request an aptitude test as an alternative.

Why a period of adaptation?

If, having looked at the education, training and experience of an applicant, we feel that there are significant areas of their skills, knowledge and experience in which they do not meet our standards, we may ask them to undertake a period of adaptation.

A period of adaptation is a period of supervised practice and / or academic training intended to make up for significant shortfalls which have been identified in an application. These are in the areas where, in the opinion of the assessors, our standards for registration have not been met.

A period of adaptation is supervised by a registrant member of the relevant profession. On completion, we ask the supervisor to send us a letter telling us whether they would recommend the applicant for registration.

When we ask an applicant to undertake a period of adaptation we send them a copy of their record of assessment.

This document identifies the areas in which the assessors felt there were significant shortfalls in the applicant's education, knowledge or skills.

We will also tell an applicant how long they will need to spend in each area in order to gain the experience necessary to meet the standards for registration. The assessors decide on the length of the adaptation period by looking at how an applicant's qualification and experience compares with the HCPC's standards of proficiency. However, if a supervisor thinks that an applicant has completed the requirements of the period of adaptation in a shorter period of time than the assessors recommended, they may still recommend the applicant for registration. Alternatively, if at the end of the recommended period the supervisor feels that the applicant has not completely met the requirement, they may extend the period of adaptation at their discretion. There is no time limit for the completion of a period of adaptation.

Section two: Guidance for applicants

Where can I undertake my period of adaptation?

A period of adaptation is usually undertaken in an appropriate setting within the United Kingdom. If a period of adaptation is undertaken outside of the UK, it must still be supervised by a current HCPC registrant from the relevant part of the Register.

Sometimes a period of adaptation may also include further study, such as taking a course module at a UK university. If you need advice as to whether a course or module will meet the requirements of the period of adaptation, we will normally be able to give you some guidance. There are also a small number of basic skills courses that are supervised by registrants and combine academic study and clinical experience which can help you to meet our requirements. However, we do not directly approve or endorse any specific placements or courses.

The types of study and / or experience that you need to undertake will be clear from your record of assessment. However, if you are in any doubt, please contact us.

If you have been asked to undertake a period of adaptation, it is your responsibility to arrange a suitable placement. We are unable to assist you with finding or funding a placement.

Sometimes employers will be unable to support a period of adaptation. This might be because of a lack of resources or the training needs of other staff. We cannot make an employer support your period of adaptation.

During your period of adaptation

You need to make sure when you are undertaking your period of adaptation that you cover the areas which have been identified by the registration assessors. You should speak to your supervisor to make sure that you are gaining the experience that you need.

As you will be working under supervision, you should ensure that you follow any instructions given to you by your supervisor. You should ask for help or advice from your supervisor if you do not understand an instruction or if you do not feel able to carry out a task safely and effectively. It is important that you are able to act within the limits of your skills and experience, and refer to others where this is necessary. The health and wellbeing of service users should be your main concern at all times.

What if I am unhappy with the decision?

If you disagree with the decision to require you to complete a period of adaptation you may request an aptitude test. The test may be in the form of a structured interview, or possibly a practical examination. The areas that the test should cover and how the test should be undertaken will be included in your record of assessment. If you wish to take an aptitude test you should advise us of this in writing and we will make arrangements for this. If you pass the aptitude test you will be eligible for registration.

You may also appeal against the decision. If you want to appeal you must write to us within 28 days of the decision, explaining why you disagree with the decision and why you feel you meet our standards. Full details of our appeals process will be enclosed with your record of assessment.

Section three: Information for employers and supervisors

Do I have to offer an adaptation placement?

As an employer you are under no obligation to provide a period of adaptation. We recognise that workload and resource pressures may mean that you are not able to support an applicant seeking a period of adaptation. We are unable to provide any funding for placements.

However, if you can assist, this can be beneficial to both the applicant and employer. The applicant benefits by gaining familiarity and experience with UK settings and experience of working practices, as well as being able to achieve HCPC registration. It can be beneficial for the employer should opportunities exist for employment if the applicant becomes registered.

The activity of supporting and supervising an applicant in completing a period of adaptation could be a useful opportunity for members of registered staff to gain and develop important teaching and mentoring skills, which could be of wider benefit to the employer. This might also be a very useful part of a registrant's continuing professional development (CPD) activity.

The only formal requirement that we set is that a supervisor must be registered in the relevant part of the HCPC Register. However, as with any other aspect of professional practice, the person must have sufficient experience and training to take on the role. This might include experience of teaching, supervising or mentoring others. It might also include experience of assessing performance. The supervising registrant will also need to be familiar with the standards of proficiency.

A note for supervisors

It is the responsibility of the applicant to find and arrange their period of adaptation. They have to ensure that they arrange the experience they need to meet our requirements and demonstrate they meet our standards.

However, supervisors have an important role to play in supporting and supervising applicants who are undertaking a period of adaptation.

If you are able to act as a supervisor your role will be to provide support and supervision to help an applicant achieve our standards. This might include teaching, mentoring and supervised practice, in a similar way as you might help and support students.

Before you begin your supervisory role, you will need to see a copy of the record of assessment which we sent the applicant. This will tell you the areas in which there are significant shortfalls in the applicant's knowledge and skills, and assist you in structuring a placement to meet these needs.

You should meet with the applicant before the adaptation period begins to discuss the record of assessment and to agree how you will assess whether they have met the standards of proficiency.

During the period of adaptation

You can treat the applicant in the same way as you might treat a student on a placement or a professional returning to practice after a career break.

As working practices vary between member states and healthcare settings, it is good practice to offer an orientation and induction period before the adaptation period begins. This will allow the applicant to become more familiar with local practices such as record keeping and health and safety requirements.

We will specify in the record of assessment how long we think an applicant needs to spend in each area to meet our standards. However, it may be that you find an applicant meets our standards in a particular area but needs a longer adaptation period in another area. You might also find that there are areas not included in the record of assessment where you feel that the applicant needs some additional experience.

Our requirements are flexible enough to allow you to make decisions about the work an applicant needs to undertake, based on your own professional experience and knowledge of the applicant.

As a registered professional your main responsibility is to your service users. The tasks you ask an applicant to perform will necessarily depend upon your professional judgement about their ability to undertake tasks safely and effectively. It will also depend on the policies or protocols of your workplace. If you have concerns about your role or about the way an applicant is working during their period of adaptation, you should inform a more senior manager or consider suspending the placement. You can also contact us.

Once the adaptation period is completed you will need to confirm to the HCPC in writing whether or not the applicant meets our standards. The letter must include:

- the full name of the applicant and application reference number;
- your name, registration number and signature;
- where the adaptation period took place;
- the start and end dates of the adaptation period;
- a statement saying that you have read the original recommendation of the HCPC assessors and are satisfied that the applicant does / does not meet the standards of proficiency for the profession; and
- a short statement explaining why you feel that the applicant should or should not be registered.

In the letter we ask you to tell us whether or not you think that the applicant has demonstrated that they meet the standards of proficiency for the profession and is therefore fit to practise. By 'fit to practise' we mean that a person has the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to practise safely and effectively. Therefore, we are not asking you to tell us whether the applicant is capable of working at any particular grade or in any particular setting, only whether or not they meet the threshold standards of proficiency.

Your letter is a recommendation to us. However, the decision whether to register an applicant is a decision for our Education and Training Committee. We consider all the information in the report when making our decision and may contact you for further information if we feel it necessary. We then write to the applicant to inform them of the decision of our Education and Training Committee.

More information

Full details on mutual recognition rights can be found by visiting www.europa.eu

UK National Contact Point (UK NCP) provides essential information for qualified professionals to aid mobility throughout the EU: www.ukncp.org.uk

ROSE (Refugees and overseas qualified health professionals into employment in health and social care) provides help and information for refugees and overseas qualified professionals. Their website includes links to other sites useful for finding job vacancies: www.rose.nhs.uk

The NHS website provides links to the names and addresses of NHS employers: www.nhs.uk

The NHS jobs website lists details of job vacancies with the NHS: www.jobs.nhs.uk

The Department of Health produces a document entitled 'Code of practice for the international recruitment of healthcare professionals' that outlines best practice in supervising adaptation placements. The code of practice can be accessed by visiting www.dh.gov.uk

Professional bodies

Each of the professions regulated by us has at least one professional body or association. These organisations carry out work which may include promoting the profession and representing members, as well as producing curriculum frameworks, overseeing post-registration education and training, and running courses on continuing professional development (CPD). Whilst these organisations are separate from the HCPC, their roles are complementary to ours. For an up-to-date list of professional bodies see www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/professions

Contact us

If you need more information, please contact our Registration Department using the following details.

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