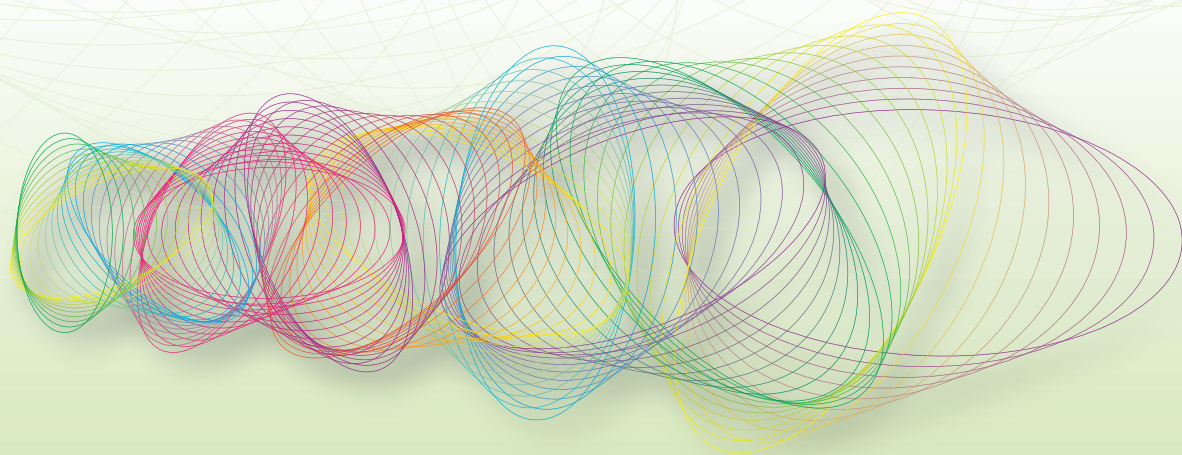


# SKILL Programme Sponsorship Scheme

Guidelines for public health service employees  
wishing to study for a BSc degree in  
*certain professional disciplines*



September 2009

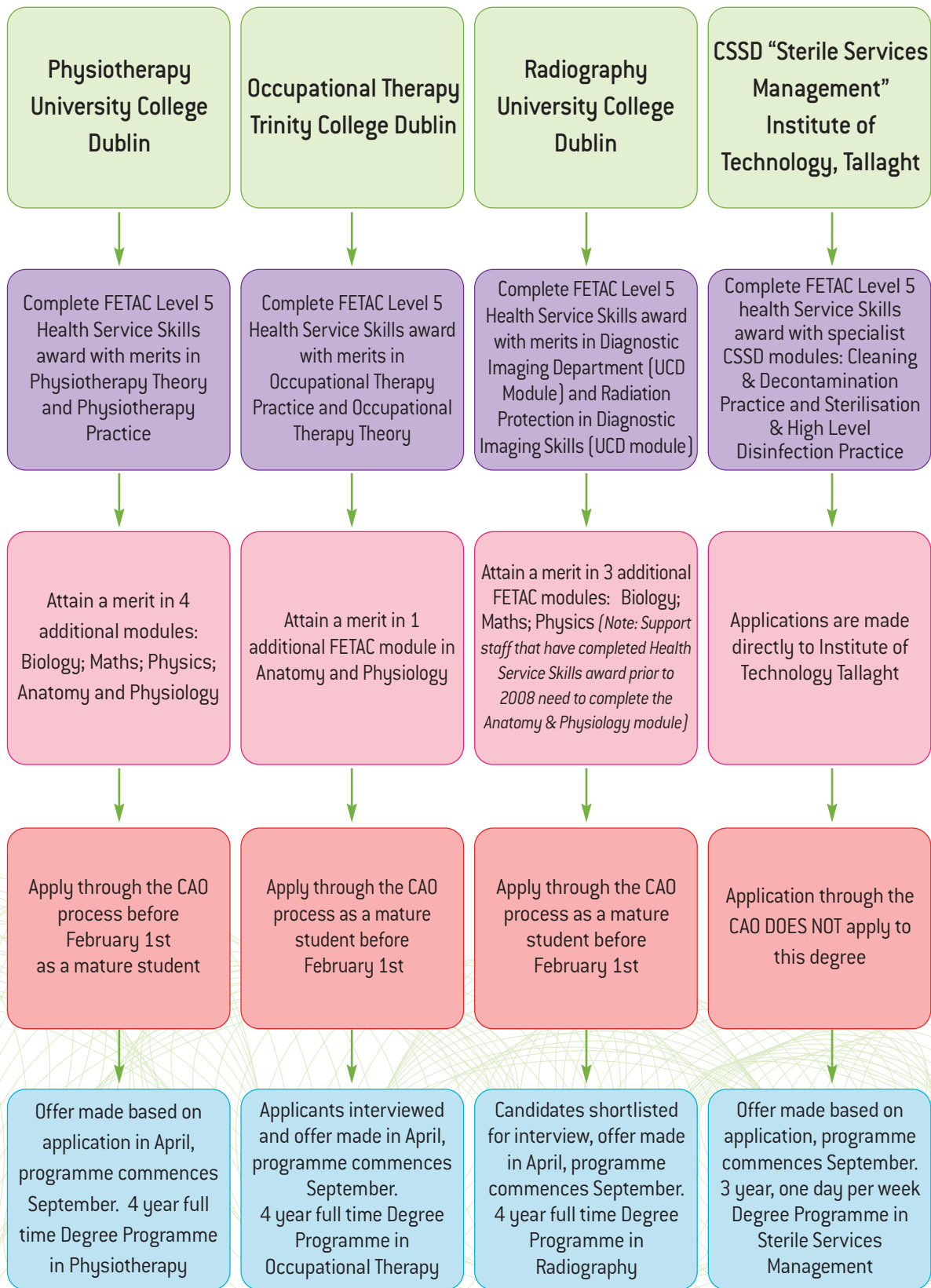


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## PROGRESSION ROUTES FLOW CHART



# SKILL Programme

# Sponsorship Scheme

Guidelines for public health service employees wishing to study for a BSc degree in certain professional disciplines

- **Physiotherapy**
- **Occupational Therapy**
- **Radiography**
- **Sterile Services Management (CSSD)**

## 1. The SKILL Programme

The SKILL Programme is a major initiative addressing the education, training and development of all support staff in the Irish health services. It is an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that the knowledge and skills of support staff are developed to their optimum, resulting in improvements in services to patient and clients. The SKILL initiative is funded independently by the Department of Finance following a unique agreement between the employer and the unions. This initial funding amounted to €60 million and covered a five-year period from 2004 to 2008. Ongoing further funding of €12 million linked to the consumer price index has also been agreed, based on clear evidence that the initiative is having a direct impact on improving services to patients and clients.

An important recent development in the SKILL Programme is the introduction of a sponsorship scheme for support staff wishing to train in the disciplines of Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Radiography, and in the area of Sterile Services Management (CSSD). In this regard the SKILL Programme provides sponsorship funding for a limited number of places on these degree programmes.

The sponsorship will cover full salary payment for support staff wishing to train in any of the above degree programmes.

## 2. Number of sponsorships

For this particular SKILL sponsorship scheme, five sponsorships places are available for the following degree programmes:

Physiotherapy (UCD 4-year full-time BSc) 1 place

Occupational Therapy (TCD 4-year full-time BSc) 1 place

Radiography (UCD 4-year full-time BSc) 1 place

CSSD – Sterile Services Management (IT Tallaght 3-year part-time BSc) 2 places.

The degree programmes commence in September of each year.

### **Note**

For general information on 'progression routes' through FETAC please check [www.fetac.ie](http://www.fetac.ie). Also, a sponsorship scheme is currently available for public health services employees who are directly involved in the delivery of care to patients/clients and who wish to train as nurses. For further information check [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie) or contact Nursing and Midwifery planning and Development Unit, Sponsorship Application Department, Health Service Executive, Mill Lane, Palmerstown, Dublin 20.

## 3. Eligibility for sponsorship

The sponsorship scheme is open to support staff in the public health service who are directly involved/working as part of a team in the areas of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiography or CSSD.

### 3.1 All sponsorships

Applicants must have a minimum of two years' experience and service in the discipline they wish to study on the first day of January of the year in which they apply for sponsorship.

Applicants must be employed on a full-time or part-time basis, either in a permanent or temporary capacity. Where employed on a part-time basis, they must have been working an average of not less than 15 hours per week.

Applicants may only apply for sponsorship to pursue a course of study in the area (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiography or sterile services management) in which their employing agency is predominantly involved.

### 3.2 Physiotherapy and radiography sponsorships

Applicants must have successfully completed FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award plus the following four additional FETAC modules: Biology; Maths; Physics; Anatomy and Physiology. Each must qualify as a mature code applicant as operated by the Central Applications Office (CAO) on behalf of the relevant third-level institution.

### 3.3 Occupational therapy sponsorship

Applicants must have successfully completed FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award plus one additional FETAC module: Anatomy and Physiology. Each must qualify as a mature code applicant through the CAO process and as a mature student supplementary applicant to Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

### 3.4 Sterile services management sponsorship

Applicants must have successfully completed FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award with the specialist CSSD modules Cleaning and Decontamination Practice, and Sterilisation and High-Level Disinfection Practice. The CSSD programme does not require application through the CAO; application is made directly to the Institute of Technology Tallaght.

### 3.5 Sponsorship is not open to support staff who

- are currently undertaking a degree programme
- have withdrawn from a degree programme within the five-year period immediately preceding their application for sponsorship
- have deferred the acceptance of a place on a degree programme from a previous year.

## 4 Application to CAO

### 4.1 All applicants

As already stated, all applicants must have successfully completed the FETAC Level 5 Health Service Support Award, and in the case of the therapy degrees they must have successfully completed with merit the following additional FETAC modules:

- for the physiotherapy and radiography degree programmes four additional modules are required – Biology; Maths; Physics; Anatomy and Physiology
- for the occupational therapy degree programme one additional module is required – Anatomy and Physiology.

### 4.2 Physiotherapy and radiography degree programmes

An eligible support staff employee intending to apply for sponsorship in order to pursue a degree course in physiotherapy or radiography must make a formal application through the Central Applications Office (CAO) as a mature code applicant.

As well as complying with CAO requirements applicants must also comply with the criteria for selection laid down by UCD.

For further information and online application please visit [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) or otherwise contact Central Applications Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Tel: (091) 509800.

Advice on the application process for the physiotherapy and radiography degrees may also be had directly from University College Dublin (UCD), Belfield, Dublin 4, or check online <https://myucd.ucd.ie/admission/matapp.eze>.

### 4.3 Occupational therapy degree programme

An eligible support staff employee intending to apply for sponsorship to pursue the occupational therapy degree programme must make a formal application through the Central Applications Office (CAO) as a mature code applicant.

In addition to making a formal application through the CAO the employee must also make formal application as a mature student supplementary applicant to Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and must comply with the criteria for selection laid down by TCD.

For further CAO information and online application please visit [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) or otherwise contact Central Applications Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Tel: (091) 509800.

For advice and information on the mature student supplementary application process and application form check online at [www.tcd.ie/maturestudents](http://www.tcd.ie/maturestudents) or contact Trinity College, Dublin 2, Tel: (01) 8961386.

### 4.4 Sterile services management degree programme

Application through the CAO process **does not apply** to the sterile services management (CSSD) degree programme.

## Additional information

### 1 **Satisfactory employment record**

An applicant must have a satisfactory service record in order to qualify for sponsorship. As part of the selection process the university/institute will obtain verification of satisfactory service from the applicant's employer.

### 2 **Service commitment**

Successful applicants must give a written undertaking to their sponsoring public health service employer that they will

- register with the professional association immediately following successful completion of the degree programme
- work in their professional capacity – therapy or CSSD graduate – for that particular employer for a period of five years immediately thereafter. In certain circumstances and with the employer's agreement all or a portion of this five-year service commitment may be fulfilled in the employment of an alternative public health service agency.

### 3 **Retention of salary**

Sponsored employees will remain on the staff of their public health service employer and receive their substantive salary and normal increments for the duration of the degree programme.

### 4 **Part-time employees**

Sponsored part-time employees must become full-time employees for the duration of the degree programme. Following graduation they may, with the agreement of their employer, revert to working part-time (provided the part-time work is not less than half-time).

### 5 **Annual leave**

Sponsored employees will retain their annual leave entitlements during the degree programme but such leave may only be taken outside of academic semesters.

### 6 **Availability for work**

Sponsored employees must resume work with their health service employer during working periods outside of academic semesters, except when they are on annual leave.

### 7 **Funding**

The SKILL Programme will provide the necessary funding for the five sponsored places. The funding will be provided directly to the employer and the university/institute and will cover salary for the therapy grades and salary plus fees for the CSSD grades. Details of required funding should be submitted to the Skill programme office as close as possible to the start of the academic year.

Please note that a successful applicant for sponsorship who already holds a primary degree is not covered under the Department of Education and Science free fees initiative and must pay her or his own third-level fees.



8 **Repayment of salary/fees**

A sponsored employee who does not remain in the employment of her/his sponsoring public health service employer for the duration of the degree programme will have the sponsorship terminated and must repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received by during the academic semesters.

A sponsored employee who fails to honour her/his written undertaking to work as a therapist/CSSD employee for her/his employer for a period of five years immediately following successful completion of the degree programme and to register with the relevant professional body shall be required to repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received during the academic semesters.

9 **Repeat year**

A sponsored employee who is required to repeat a year of the degree programme must remain in employment with her/his public health service agency for that year, working in her/his substantive grade, with the exception of time required for theoretical instruction, clinical instruction or examinations. The sponsorship arrangement in relation to salary and fees will be discontinued for the duration of the repeat year but will recommence after the employee has successfully completed the repeat year. However, salary will be paid in respect of time actually worked for the agency during the repeat year.

10 **Discontinuation or non-completion**

A CSSD sponsored employee who discontinues or otherwise does not complete the programme will

- if remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to the SKILL Programme all third-level fees paid on her/his behalf
- if not remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received by her/him during the programme and all third-level fees paid on her/his behalf.

A CSSD sponsored employee who is required to repeat any element of the programme must pay her/his own third-level fees.

11 **Review of sponsorship scheme**

Sponsorships will remain under review with the intention of possibly increasing the number of places available.

12 **Awards of sponsorship places**

Sponsorships will normally be awarded to those placed highest in the order of merit, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in these guidelines. The relative positions of applicants with equal scores on the order of merit list will be determined by reference to the length of their respective relevant service in the Irish public health service. The university/college will confirm the written assessment scores of applicants for sponsorship upon request from the SKILL Programme office.

If sponsorships are still available to be awarded following CAO round zero, the above procedure will be repeated in subsequent rounds.

# Timeframes and processes

## **BSc in Physiotherapy (UCD)**

- The employee completes FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award.
- Educational Provider circulates copies of these guidelines and invites expressions of interest.
- Employee and employer contact details are submitted to the SKILL Programme office which liaises directly with the employee's line manager regarding staff release etc.
- The employee completes the additional 4 FETAC modules – Biology; Maths; Physics; Anatomy and Physiology – between June and October.
- FETAC graduation takes place in November.
- The employee applies for a place on the UCD degree programme through the CAO mature code applicant process by 1 February. For more information check online at [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) or contact Central Application Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Tel: (091) 509800.
- Applications are forwarded to University College Dublin, School of Physiotherapy and Performance Science, Belfield, Dublin 4, Tel: (01) 7166525. The website is <https://myucd.ucd.ie/admission/mature.ezc>. The mature applicants' booklet is available via the website and contains details specific to the BSc programme in physiotherapy.
- There is no interview. The written application is the basis of assessment in accordance with selection criteria which include evidence of educational attainment (FETAC Level 5; additional modules; Leaving Certificate etc), personal testimonial, motivation to learn, life and work experience and employer and other references.
- A ranked order list of candidates for the sponsorship place(s) is forwarded to the SKILL Programme office which notifies the employee's line manager and subsequently forwards a letter of offer together with the sponsorship 'terms and conditions' to the successful candidate(s). This takes place in April, prior to the September start date.

### **BSc in Occupational Therapy (TCD)**

- The employee completes FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award.
- Educational Provider circulates copies of these guidelines and invites expressions of interest.
- Employee and employer contact details are submitted to the SKILL Programme office which liaises directly with the employee's line manager regarding staff release etc.
- The employee completes the additional 1 FETAC module – Anatomy and Physiology – between June and October.
- FETAC graduation takes place in November.
- The employee applies for a place on the TCD degree programme through the CAO mature code applicant process by 1 February. For more information check online at [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) or contact Central Application Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Tel: (091) 509800.
- The employee in addition applies to Trinity College as a mature student supplementary applicant by 1 February. For information on the mature student supplementary application process and application form check online at [www.tcd.ie/maturestudents](http://www.tcd.ie/maturestudents) or contact Trinity College, Dublin 2, Tel: (01) 8961386. Once completed applications are forwarded to Dr Siobhan MacCobb, Head of Discipline, Occupational Therapy, Trinity College, Dublin 2.
- The employee is interviewed in March at the School of Occupational Therapy (TCD) in accordance with set criteria including academic track record (FETAC Level 5, additional modules, Leaving Certificate etc), attitude and openness to learning, personal motivation, employer and other references.
- A ranked order list of candidates for the sponsorship place(s) is forwarded to the SKILL Programme office which notifies the employee's line manager and subsequently forwards a letter of offer together with the sponsorship 'terms and conditions' to the successful candidate(s). This takes place in April, prior to the September start date.

### **BSc in Radiography (UCD)**

- The employee completes FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award.
- Educational Provider circulates copies of these guidelines and invites expressions of interest
- Employee and employer contact details are submitted to the SKILL Programme office which liaises directly with the employee's line manager regarding staff release etc.
- The employee completes the additional 4 FETAC modules – Biology; Maths; Physics; Anatomy and Physiology – between June and October.
- FETAC graduation takes place in November.
- The employee applies for a place on the UCD degree programme through the CAO mature code applicant process by 1 February. For further information check online at [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) or contact Central Application Office (CAO), Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway, Tel: (091) 509800.
- Applications are forwarded to University College Dublin, School of Medicine and Medical Science, Belfield, Dublin 4, Tel: 01 7166525. The website is <https://myucd.ucd.ie/admission/mature.ezc>. The mature applicants' booklet is available via the website and contains details specific to the BSc programme in radiography.
- Applicants are shortlisted for interview in March at the School of Medicine and Medical Science (UCD) on the basis of their written applications, which include evidence of educational development and attainment, independent learning, interpersonal ability, motivation and academic application. They are then invited to interview.
- An adjudication report is forwarded to the SKILL Programme office which notifies the employee's line manager and subsequently forwards a letter of offer together with the sponsorship 'terms and conditions' to the successful candidate(s). This takes place in April, prior to the September start date

### **BSc in Sterile Services Management (IT Tallaght)**

- The employee completes FETAC Level 5 Health Service Skills Award with specialist CSSD modules – Cleaning and Decontamination Practice; Sterilisation and High-level Disinfection Practice.
- Educational Provider circulates copies of these guidelines and invites expressions of interest.
- Employee and employer contact details are submitted to the SKILL Programme office which liaises directly with the employee's line manager regarding staff release etc.
- FETAC graduation takes place in November.
- The employee applies for a place on the IT Tallaght degree programme to Mr John Behan, Head of Department of Applied Science, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Dublin 24, Tel: (01) 4042403. For more information and application form check online at [www.it-tallaght.ie](http://www.it-tallaght.ie) or contact Department of Applied Science, Institute of Technology Tallaght, Dublin 24.
- IT Tallaght evaluates all applications against a strict set of criteria which includes academic track record, personal motivation, drive, attitude to learning, and references. A ranked order list of candidates is drawn up. The sponsorship place(s) are awarded to the top two candidates. The Institute formally notifies all candidates of the outcome.
- The ranked list is forwarded to the SKILL Programme office which notifies the employee's line manager and subsequently forwards a letter of offer together with the sponsorship 'terms and conditions' to the successful candidates. This takes place in April, prior to the September start date.



## **SKILL Programme**

63/64 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2

Tel: 01 662 6966 Fax: 01 662 6977

[info@skillprogramme.ie](mailto:info@skillprogramme.ie) • [www.skillprogramme.ie](http://www.skillprogramme.ie)