



Comhairle na
nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council

Public Consultation on Draft Registration (Amendment) Rules

Explanatory memorandum

2026

Summary

The Medical Council is consulting on proposed Registration (Amendment) Rules before they are finalised and become law. The consultation is open to interested parties, and feedback received will help inform the final Rules.

The Medical Council protects the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training, and competence among doctors. It also maintains the Register of Medical Practitioners, which all doctors must join to practise medicine in Ireland.

New Registration Rules are required to support the commencement of the Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Acts 2020 and 2023, next year. These Acts introduce significant changes to the registration system and require the existing framework to be updated.

The proposed Rules include five key changes:

1. Consolidation of existing Rules: Seven sets of Registration Rules will be combined into a single set of Registration Rules. Professional Indemnity Rules will remain unchanged.
2. Register of Interns: Interns will no longer be registered in the Trainee Specialist Division, and a separate Register of Interns will now be established.
3. Recognition of qualifications before registration: Applicants will need to have their medical degree formally recognised before applying for registration.
4. Register of Adapters: A new Register of Adapters will be established primarily for certain EU/EEA citizens undertaking compensatory measures, including adaptation periods.
5. English language requirements: All first-time applicants will be required to meet English language requirements.

The draft Rules will be subject to a public consultation and a proportionality assessment before being considered by the Medical Council and progressing through the legislative process.

Introduction

The Medical Council is seeking views on proposed Registration (Amendment) Rules before they are finalised and become law.

Over the coming weeks, we will consult with doctors, patients, healthcare professionals, employers, educators, trainers, regulators, representative bodies, indemnifiers, medical media, and other interested parties. We welcome feedback from anyone with an interest in these proposed Rules.

Our Role

The Medical Council protects the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training, and competence among doctors.

The Register

The Medical Council maintains the Register of Medical Practitioners, which lists all doctors entitled to practise medicine in Ireland.

By law, doctors must be registered with the Medical Council to practise medicine in Ireland and must renew their registration every year.

More than 35,000 doctors are currently registered across five Divisions of the Register. A description of each division is provided in Appendix 1.

Why are we making new Rules?

The Medical Council is a statutory body established by the Medical Practitioners Act 1978 and currently operates under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 (as amended).

The Medical Council is required to make rules for the operation of the Medical Practitioners Act¹. There are currently seven statutory instruments relating to registration.

Two new laws are due to be commenced in 2027:

1. the Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Act 2020; and
2. the Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Act 2023.

These Acts introduce significant changes to the registration of doctors and require new Registration Rules.

What will change?

Consolidation of all existing rules

There are currently seven separate sets of Registration Rules, introduced over time, since commencement of Part 6 of the Medical Practitioners Act in 2009.

¹ See Section 11 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 (as amended)

The new Rules will consolidate all existing Registration Rules into a single set of Registration Rules, **except** for Professional Indemnity Rules² which are not affected by the new legislation and will remain in force.

Establishment of a new Register of Interns

Interns are currently registered in the Trainee Specialist Division of the Register of Medical Practitioners for the duration of their internship training.

Under EU legislation, a medical qualification must meet specified minimum training requirements. In Ireland, the intern year contributes to meeting these requirements. Under the 2020 Act, Interns will no longer be registered in the Trainee Specialist Division, and a separate Register of Interns will now be established.

Recognition of qualifications before registration

Currently, applicants' qualifications are assessed as part of the registration application process. The 2020 Act introduces a requirement for formal recognition of an approved medical degree before an applicant can apply for registration.

Applicants will therefore need to have their medical degree formally recognised by the Medical Council before proceeding to registration.

Establishment of a Register of Doctors

Doctors who obtain their medical qualification within the EU or EEA may be entitled to automatic recognition of that qualification, if it meets the criteria set out by EU legislation,³ which is designed to allow for the recognition of qualifications and skills held by EU citizens in other EU and EEA member states.

Where those requirements are not met, applicants may be required to complete compensatory measures to address identified differences between their qualification and the qualifications required for recognition in Ireland. One such measure is an adaptation period of up to three years.

A new Register of Doctors will be established for doctors undertaking an adaptation period in Ireland. This will allow the Medical Council to formally monitor and regulate doctors while they complete the adaptation process.

English language requirements

The Medical Council needs doctors to demonstrate that they can communicate proficiently in the English language with patients and colleagues to safely practise medicine in Ireland. An amendment to EU legislation allows the Medical Council to assess the English language competency of first-time applicants, regardless of where they qualified.

Until now, English language requirements did not apply to all categories of applicants. The 2020 Act introduces English language requirements for all applicants seeking registration for the first time.

² [SI No. 222 / 2018 Medical Council \(Evidence of Indemnity\) Rules](#)

³ EU Directive 2005/36/EC (as amended) (mutual recognition of professional qualifications across the European Union and European Economic Area)

Consultation Process

The draft Registration (Amendment) Rules will be published for public consultation until the 6th October 2026.

A proportionality assessment will also be carried out to determine whether the Rules are justified, proportionate and aligned with Medical Council values⁴.

Anyone wishing to participate in the consultation can provide feedback online at www.medicalcouncil.ie during the consultation period.

All feedback received will be carefully considered and may result in changes to the draft Rules. A report will then be prepared for consideration by the Council.

The Council may decide to:

- (a) not approve the Rules,
- (b) amend the draft Rules, or
- (c) approve the draft Rules without amendment.

Once approved, the Rules will be submitted to the Department for laying before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Either House may pass a resolution annulling the Rules, or any part of them, within 21 days.

If no such resolution is passed, the Rules will become law.

⁴ Trust, Respect, Accountability, Collaboration, Excellence. Source: [Medical Council Statement of Strategy 2025-2028](#)

APPENDIX 1

Divisions of the Register of Medical Practitioners

1. Trainee Specialist Division

- (a) **Internship registration** allows a person with an EU/EEA/UK⁵ medical degree to carry out internship training in hospitals recognised by the Medical Council.
- (b) **Trainee Specialist registration** is for doctors completing recognised training programmes. They practise solely within the confines of training posts allocated by the HSE, in conjunction with national postgraduate training bodies.

2. Specialist Division

For doctors who have completed specialist training recognised by the Medical Council. These doctors may practise independently, without supervision and are the only doctors on the register who may represent themselves as specialists.

3. Supervised Division

For doctors who have been offered a post with specific supervisory arrangements and approved by the national [Health Service Executive \(HSE\)](#).

4. General Division

For doctors, whose medical degree is recognised by the Medical Council and who meet the criteria for registration in Ireland but do not meet the criteria to be registered in any other Division of the Register. Once a doctor is registered, or is eligible to be registered, in the General Division, they are also eligible for registration in the Trainee Specialist Division; if they get a place on a recognised training programme.

5. Visiting EEA Practitioners Division

EU/EEA citizens who are fully established to practise medicine in another EU/EEA member state may practise medicine in Ireland on a temporary and occasional basis without having to be registered in the General or Specialist Division.

⁵ Graduates of medical schools located within the European Union, European Economic Area, or United Kingdom