



STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

**S.I. No. 249 of 2020**

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SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD RETURN TO PRACTICE  
BYE-LAW 2020

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The Social Workers Registration Board, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 31 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended), with the approval of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council, hereby makes the following bye-law:

1. The Social Workers Registration Board Return to Practice Bye-Law 2013 (S.I. No. 319 of 2013) is hereby revoked with effect from the date specified in paragraph 2(2), without prejudice to any applications for registration or restoration received by the board prior to that date.

2. (1) This bye-law may be cited as the Social Workers Registration Board Return to Practice Bye-Law 2020.

(2) This bye-law comes into operation on 16 July 2020.

3. In this bye-law –

“Act” means the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (No. 27 of 2005), as amended from time to time;

“applicant” means a person who wishes to commence practice of the profession of social worker after a period of two years or more has passed since that person obtained an approved qualification within the meaning of section 38 of the Act or a person who wishes to resume practice of the profession of social worker after not having practised the profession for two years or more;

“attesting signatory” means a registered social worker who has been in practice for a minimum period of three years; who has not been subject to any disciplinary sanction under the Act and who satisfies such other conditions as the Board may determine from time to time;

“Board” means the Social Workers Registration Board;

“contact hours” means hours spent by the applicant actively engaged in activities relevant to the profession for the purposes of the period of updating;

“learning plan” shall have the meaning specified in paragraph 6;

“period of updating” means the requisite period of time specified in paragraph 4 during which an applicant engages in activities to refresh, update and improve his or her skills, knowledge and performance as are relevant for practice

“practice” means the practice of the profession;

“profession” means the profession of social worker;

“register” means the register of social workers established and maintained under section 36 of the Act;

“supervisor” means a registered social worker who has been in practice for a minimum period of three years; who is not subject to any current disciplinary proceedings or sanction under the Act and who satisfies such other conditions as the Board may determine from time to time.

4. For the purposes of sections 31, 37 and 38 of the Act, the Board has determined that where a person wishes to commence practice of the profession after a period of two years or more has passed since that person obtained an approved qualification within the meaning of section 38 of the Act or wishes to resume practice of the profession after not having practised the profession for two years or more, the criteria and conditions set out in this bye-law must be satisfied and that person must provide satisfactory evidence of his or her compliance with this bye-law in his or her application for registration.

5. (1) An applicant who has not practised the profession for a period of between 2 and 5 years must complete a period of updating consisting of not less than 210 contact hours.

(2) An applicant who has not practised the profession for any period greater than 5 years must complete a period of updating consisting of not less than 420 contact hours.

(3) An applicant must have completed his or her period of updating within the two year period prior to the date of submission of his or her application, unless the Board permits otherwise.

(4) The period of updating shall consist of contact hours spent by the applicant engaging in:

- (a) supervised practice, making a minimum of 50% of the period of updating;
- (b) formal study, making a minimum of 10% of the period of updating; and/or
- (c) private study, making a minimum of 10% of the period of updating.

(5) The applicant shall keep an accurate record in reasonable detail of his or her period of updating and if requested to do so, shall provide such record to the Board.

6. (1) For the purposes of the period of updating, supervised practice shall, subject to paragraph 9, consist of the applicant practising the profession:

- (a) under the guidance of a supervisor;

- (b) in a structured manner in accordance with a learning plan which has been agreed between the applicant and his or her supervisor; and
  - (c) in accordance with such guidelines as the Board may publish from time to time.
- (2) The learning plan shall:
- (a) be structured in a manner which is consistent with the standards of proficiency published by the Board from time to time; and
  - (b) provide for the applicant to develop, demonstrate and apply his or her knowledge and skills in the profession;
- having regard to:
- (c) the applicant's experience in the profession (if any);
  - (d) the applicant's intended area of practice upon commencement or resumption of practice;
  - (e) the length of time the applicant has not practised the profession;
  - (f) any relevant developments in the profession during the period the applicant has not practised the profession; and
  - (g) any relevant knowledge and/or skills acquired or developed by the applicant during the period the applicant has not practised the profession.
- (3) The supervisor shall make reasonable efforts to monitor and supervise the applicant's practice of the profession during the supervised practice and to provide input, assistance and guidance to the applicant as the supervisor deems fit, having regard to each of the factors specified in paragraph 6(2)(c) to (g).

7. (1) For the purposes of the period of updating, formal study shall, subject to paragraph 9, consist of the applicant undertaking and participating in educational courses, training or programmes of education and/or training (including structured educational courses or training delivered electronically and/or through distance learning) relevant to the practice of the profession.

(2) Formal study may include group learning whether undertaken by means of a lecture, workshop, seminar, tutorial, video-conferenced lecture or tutorial or in such other manner as may be acceptable to the Board from time to time.

8. (1) For the purposes of the period of updating, private study may, subject to paragraph 9, consist of the applicant engaging in one or more of the following:

- (a) reading professional journals or publications relevant to his or her area of intended practice;
- (b) engaging in research relevant to the profession generally and/or his or her intended area of practice;

- (c) engaging in online study or e-learning consisting of education and/or training that is generated, communicated, processed, sent, received, recorded, stored and/or displayed by electronic means or in electronic form including that provided through the internet or other computer network connections, sound and/or visual formats provided through an electronic file, and/or provided through digital or other electronic means;
- (d) publishing written materials in relation to the profession and/or his or her intended area of practice; and
- (e) such other activities as may be acceptable to the Board from time to time.

9. The Board may publish guidance materials from time to time for the purposes of providing additional guidance and/or specifying any restrictions or other limitations which apply for the purposes of this bye-law in relation to the period of updating, contact hours and/or the nature of any supervised practice, formal study or private study undertaken by an applicant.

10. (1) An applicant must complete, in writing or by electronic means, such Returners to Practice form as is provided from time to time by or on behalf of the Board and submit same to the Board with his or her application for registration.

(2) An applicant must ensure that his or her supervisor(s) signs the relevant section(s) of the Returners to Practice form.

(3) An applicant must ensure that an attesting signatory verifies that the applicant has completed the period of updating, takes reasonable steps to satisfy himself or herself that the applicant has completed the requisite period of updating and signs the Returners to Practice form to indicate same.

(4) An attesting signatory shall take reasonable steps to satisfy himself or herself that the applicant has completed the requisite period of updating.

(5) The applicant must provide such additional information or supporting materials to evidence his or her completion of the period of updating to the satisfaction of the Board as the Board may request.

11. The Board shall evaluate and verify the education and training undertaken by the applicant during the period of updating and such other information as it deems appropriate, for the purposes of satisfying itself that the applicant has met the requirements of this bye-law.

GIVEN under the seal of the Social Workers Registration Board  
16 July 2020

PERRY SHARE,  
Chairperson, Social Workers Registration Board

COLETTE MCLOUGHLIN  
Member, Social Workers Registration Board.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the instrument and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.)*

This bye-law details the criteria and conditions which must be satisfied by an applicant for registration in the register of social workers established and maintained by the Social Workers Registration Board if he or she wishes to commence practice of the profession after a period of two years or more has passed since that person obtained an approved qualification within the meaning of section 38 of the Act or he or she wishes to resume practice of the profession of social worker after not having practised the profession for two years or more.

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