

SCHEME FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS (SCPA)

Guidelines for SCPA Psychologists – 2020/2021

Purpose of the Scheme

The Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) is provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)/Department of Education and Skills (DES) to assist in the delivery of a psychological service to all schools. The scheme provides funding to schools to commission individual psychological assessments for students from psychologists working in a private capacity.

The scheme is not a substitute for a full educational psychological service of the sort provided by NEPS. It is an interim measure intended to supplement the NEPS service and meet current urgent needs for psychological assessment of children and young people. The operation of the scheme is reviewed on an ongoing basis by NEPS/DES.

Terms and Conditions of the Scheme

The 2020/2021 SCPA scheme operates between the 1st September 2020 and the 30th June 2021.

Schools are responsible for commissioning psychologists to carry out assessments under the scheme. Schools may only commission psychologists who are on the current SCPA panel.

In general, the commissioning of psychological assessments, by schools, under SCPA, will be agreed and arranged in collaboration with the NEPS psychologist providing a service to the school. In some instances, schools that temporarily lose the service of a NEPS psychologist may be permitted to commission some assessments during the psychologist's absence, on receipt of written approval from the local NEPS Regional Director.

An individual psychological assessment, in its entirety, must be wholly and exclusively carried out by a psychologist, whose name appears on the current SCPA panel.

It is expected that all psychologists on the panel will complete no more than 180 assessments in a school year and not less than three assessments each year. If a psychologist completes three or more assessments in a year, they will be automatically invited to renew their membership of the new SCPA panel, for the following year. If a psychologist completes less than three assessments, and wishes to renew their SCPA membership, they should write to the SCPA Manager, clearly indicating how they can contribute to the new SCPA panel, and the renewal will then be considered on that basis.

Payment for assessments carried out under the scheme must be made from SCPA funds and from such funds alone. Psychologists who accept commissions under the scheme may not seek or accept payment from any other source in respect of such commissions and will be required to certify that they have not done so, as a condition of receiving payment. Seeking or accepting payment from any other source in respect of an assessment under the scheme will constitute grounds for removal from the SCPA panel.

The personal data of the individual student gathered for the purpose of a SCPA assessment may not be used for any purpose other than the conduct of the SCPA assessment.

Schools and psychologists are required to adhere to the recommended procedures, as laid down by the NEPS/DES.

SCPA psychologists must work within their areas of competence, keep abreast of relevant developments and comply with DES policy at all times.

The Panel of Psychologists

The SCPA panel of psychologists is compiled by NEPS. This list is regularly updated and is available on the DES website – Link to [Current Panel of SCPA Psychologists](#)

Any psychologist wishing to be placed on the 2020/2021 panel, and who was not a member of the 2019/2020 panel, is required to complete a SCPA Application Form and a Garda Vetting Application Form, both of which are available from the SCPA Manager.

The SCPA Manager may be contacted at scpa@education.gov.ie or by writing to:

SCPA Manager
National Educational Psychological Service,
50 Tower Road,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22,
D22 H925.

New psychologists will be added to the SCPA panel, as private practitioners, when they have satisfied NEPS:

- that they are a Registered or Chartered Psychologist (or the equivalent), with five years of relevant, supervised experience

OR

- that they hold a professional post-graduate qualification in Educational Psychology recognised by PSI or have a Statement of Equivalence or have been deemed eligible to meet the criteria for a Statement of Equivalence in Educational Psychology by PSI

OR

- that they hold a professional post-graduate qualification in Psychology, recognised by PSI, or have a Statement of Equivalence or have been deemed eligible to meet the criteria for a Statement of Equivalence in this area by PSI, plus two years of relevant, supervised experience

OR

- that they have previously been employed as an Educational Psychologist by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

AND

- that they are graduate members of an appropriate professional body (e.g. the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) or the British Psychological Society (BPS))
- that they receive relevant professional supervision for work completed as part of the Scheme for Commissioning of Psychological Assessments.
- that they adhere to the PSI *Code of Professional Ethics* (2011), to the PSI *Policy on the Use of Psychometric Tests in Ireland* (2006), and to the *PSI Guidelines – Confidentiality and Record Keeping in Practice* (2011)
- that they have successfully completed the Garda vetting process via NEPS
- that they have provided a Tax Clearance Access Number (obtainable from the Revenue Commissioners) and a PPSN
- that they have completed the 'Introduction to Children First' E-Learning Programme and are aware of their responsibilities as a mandated person under the Children First Act, 2015.

Psychologists who were members of the 2019/2020 SCPA panel and who wish to join the 2020/2021 scheme are required to complete a Renewal of Membership form. This form will be posted to them in advance of the opening of the panel in September 2020. Membership of the panel only implies the eligibility of the psychologist to conduct assessments under the scheme and (provided the requisite terms and conditions are satisfied) to receive payment for such assessments. It does not imply an entitlement to do so.

Persons who are admitted to the 2020/2021 panel are eligible to conduct assessments under the scheme from 1st September 2020 until 30th June, 2021, subject to the terms and conditions laid down in the SCPA Guidelines for 2020/2021. Psychologists are obliged both to familiarise themselves with and to adhere to these terms and conditions.

Procedures to be followed by Psychologists in Implementing the Scheme

Psychologists who carry out assessments under the scheme shall:

- Work within their areas of competence at all times.
- Conduct assessments with reasonable care and diligence.
- It is strongly recommended that all psychologists on SCPA have Professional Indemnity Cover.
- Personally carry out every component of any assessment for which they are individually commissioned and remunerated, including all associated tasks and activities.
- Conduct the assessment in the student's school, during school hours¹.
- Familiarise themselves and comply with circulars and documents relevant to special educational needs that are produced, from time to time, by the NEPS/DES and by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). These are available on the DES website – www.education.ie and on the NCSE website – www.ncse.ie
- Supply their own appropriate, up-to-date test materials and meet their other expenses out of the fee for the assessment.
- Have some form of identification (e.g. driving licence, passport) in their possession when conducting assessments under the scheme. In addition, the DES will provide all psychologists on the SCPA panel with a copy of their Garda Vetting Disclosure.
- Ensure, before meeting a student, that they have a copy of the Consent Form (Form 1) and the Referral Form (Form 2), completed and signed by the parents and the school.
- Review previous reports and relevant school records.
- Administer individual tests of cognitive potential and of attainments and appropriate behavioural check-lists as necessary. Engage in classroom or playground observation as required. (Note: The NEPS/DES expects that it will take most of a school day to complete an assessment under this scheme. In rare circumstances it may be possible for a SCPA psychologist to complete two assessments over the course of a full day but in general it will only be one.)
- Meet with the student's parents/guardians and teachers to provide verbal feedback on the assessment outcome, explaining findings and their implications.

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- ¹ *In very exceptional circumstances, a SCPA psychologist may be granted permission to carry out an individual assessment off the school premises. Such requests should be made by the SCPA psychologist, in writing, at least 3 weeks before the proposed assessment date.*
 - *Any such application should be made in consultation with the school principal and made on the basis that the principal has secured written approval from the student in question's parents/guardians for the assessment to take place off-site.*
 - *Requests should be sent to scpa@education.gov.ie stating the reasons why the assessment cannot be carried out in the student's school and full details of what is proposed as an alternative, including providing feedback to the parents and student's teacher.*
 - *Each request will be considered by the local NEPS Regional Director and SCPA Manager on a case-by-case basis. The SCPA psychologist and school will be informed of their decision.*

- Provide, within one calendar month, a psychological report with recommendations for the parents/guardians and the school, bearing in mind that the style, content and format of the report should be appropriate for the recipients and in line with NEPS requirements in this area.
- Guidelines on report writing are provided which we respectfully ask all SCPA psychologists to follow. A report writing self-reflection questionnaire is also provided for your convenience. Guidelines and checklist may be amended from time to time in the context of regular reviews of the scheme.
- Submit a completed and signed original copy of Form 3 to the principal, accompanied by a copy of the assessment report. The school principal then certifies that the work has been fully completed and s/he makes the submission for payment to NEPS.
- Please note that SCPA forms, psychological reports or any other documents containing information that is personal to a student, should never be sent electronically or by email.
- Reports submitted to NEPS should be printed on one side of the page only (not back to back)
- Psychologists and school principals must ensure that pupil details on the report supplied are consistent with the details supplied on Form 3.
- Inform NEPS when no longer accepting commissions under the scheme so that arrangements can be made for notifying schools.

Fees for Psychological Assessments Conducted under the Scheme

There is no charge to parents/guardians or to schools for assessments carried out under the scheme.

The fee payable by NEPS to psychologists conducting psychological assessments under the 2020/2021 scheme is €304.00 per assessment, which is subject to withholding tax. This will result in a net fee of €243.20. The psychologist will be responsible for the payment of any additional tax due. This payment includes all expenses (including travel and subsistence) incurred by the psychologist.

Psychologists seeking extra payment for SCPA assessments from parents/guardians or from schools may be removed from the panel.

Where it is determined that a psychologist has accepted an additional payment, from a parent/guardian or from a school, for work carried out under the scheme, the NEPS/DES reserves the right to withhold the standard fee from that psychologist.

Procedure for Payment under the Scheme

The payment process will be initiated upon receipt, by NEPS, of a Certificate of Completion of Assessment Form (Form 3) in respect of the individual assessment, together with a copy of the psychological report.

Form 3 must be fully completed and signed by the psychologist and by the school principal. The original (not a copy) is submitted to NEPS by the school principal within three calendar months of the date of assessment.

Payment may be withheld or refused until the NEPS/DES is satisfied that the terms and conditions of the scheme have been complied with.

When satisfied that the terms and conditions of the scheme have been fully complied with, NEPS will arrange for payment to be made directly to the psychologist.

Audit & Quality Assurance:

The NEPS/DES regularly audits the quality of work completed under the scheme. We reserve the right to access test protocols and other documents for this purpose. Feedback will be provided to individuals on the panel of psychologists when appropriate.

Grounds for Removal from Panel

The grounds on which a psychologist may be removed from the panel include the following:

- failing to fully comply with the terms and conditions of the scheme
- failing to conduct an assessment with reasonable care and diligence
- engaging in conduct that falls short of what would be expected from a professional psychologist
- seeking or accepting payment from a source other than the scheme in respect of an assessment conducted under the scheme
- failing to personally conduct the assessment in its entirety (including writing the report and providing feedback)
- providing false or misleading information in a submitted report or on Form 3
- providing false or misleading information in an application to be placed on the panel
- being convicted of a criminal offence for which the penalty is a term of imprisonment of 1 year or more
- representing themselves in an inaccurate or inappropriate manner, e.g. as employees of the National Educational Psychological Service

An allegation of serious misconduct against a psychologist on the SCPA panel may result in suspension from the panel pending investigation of the allegation and the outcome of any such investigation.

Further Information

Queries should be submitted to NEPS in writing, either by e-mail scpa@education.gov.ie or by conventional mail to:

SCPA Manager
National Educational Psychological Service,
50 Tower Road,
Clondalkin,
Dublin 22,

Every effort will be made to respond to queries as soon as possible.

Complaints should be dealt with at point of service, between the school principal and the psychologist. Where informal efforts to resolve difficulties have failed, complainants may invoke the formal DES Complaints Procedure, which may be accessed using the following link - [DES Complaints Procedure](#)

Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA)

General Disclaimers

Terms and conditions of the scheme are subject to ongoing review. They may be changed or updated at any time and without notice by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The SCPA panel is not a register of psychologists. Membership of the panel is not to be confused with eligibility for statutory registration of psychologists.

In accepting a psychologist as a member of the panel, the DES is not entering into any contractual arrangement with the psychologist. SCPA psychologists are not employees of the NEPS/DES.

Membership of the SCPA panel confers no particular rights on psychologists and does not provide any guarantee of being commissioned to administer psychological tests in schools.

In any given year, unless otherwise stated, membership of the SCPA panel is generally valid from date of appointment until the end of that school year only.

The NEPS/DES reserves the right to remove a psychologist from the panel at any time.

The scheme may be discontinued at any time by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The NEPS/DES is not a disciplinary body for psychologists. Such matters are more properly the remit of the particular psychologist's professional body.

Web Links

Current Panel of SCPA Psychologists

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/SCPA.html>

DES Complaints Procedure

<http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Customer-Service/Customer-Charter/Customer-Service-Complaints/>