



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

# Medical Physics Experts Recognition Scheme

Statement on how the DHSC will recognise Medical  
Physics Experts in radiation safety

February 2018

## Introduction

[The Basic Safety Standards Directive \(BSSD\)](#) requires Member States to ensure that arrangements are in place for the establishment of education, training and retraining to allow the recognition of Medical Physics Experts (MPEs).

The Department of Health and Social Care, as the competent authority for medical exposures, has issued this statement to set out how it will comply with its legal responsibilities relating to MPEs as required by the BSSD. The statement provides information on the Department of Health and Social Care's expectations of MPEs and how a UK wide scheme will be implemented for the recognition of MPEs.

There is already a requirement for individuals working as MPEs to be entitled to act in that role by employers that are responsible for carrying out medical exposures. The new arrangements will formalise the role of the competent authority and recognition of MPEs by that authority.

It is important to note, however, that recognition of an individual as competent to act as an MPE does not in itself mean that individual is suitable for any particular MPE role. An individual's suitability to be appointed as an MPE is a matter for the employer responsible for undertaking the medical exposures for which MPE support is required. The BSSD allows for the MPE role to be discharged by a group of individuals, an MPE Body, however, this statement is intended only for individuals.

## Background

MPEs play a vital role in the optimisation of both individual and collective dose received as a result of medical exposures. A Medical Physics Expert is defined in the BSSD as follows:

'an individual, or, if provided for in national legislation, a group of individuals having the knowledge, training and experience to act or give advice on matters relating to radiation physics applied to medical exposure, whose competence in this respect is recognised by the competent authority.'

The BSSD requires MPEs to be appropriately involved in all medical radiological practices; the level of involvement being commensurate with the radiological risk posed by the practice. The BSSD also requires MPEs to be appropriately educated and trained and to be recognised by the relevant competent authority. The elements of the BSSD relating to medical exposures to ionising radiation, including the requirements for MPEs, are transposed by [the Ionising Radiation \(Medical Exposure\) Regulations 2017](#), as amended in England, Scotland and Wales, and by [the Ionising Radiation \(Medical Exposure\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2018](#) in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), as the competent authority for medical exposures, has written this statement to support the establishment of a formal system for the recognition of MPEs, including an assessment and recognition scheme by an Assessing Body.

## Statement on Medical Physics Experts

All employers who carry out medical exposures are required in regulation 14 of the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2017 and the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2018 to appoint an MPE whose competence to act in this role is recognised by the Secretary of State.

The Department of Health and Social Care, as the Competent Authority, intends to recognise MPEs through evidence of knowledge, training and competence in the matters contained in the

BSSD. Assessment of this evidence will be carried out by RPA 2000 as the Assessing Body appointed by the Department of Health and Social Care for this purpose.

The arrangements for those currently acting as MPEs under the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 are described below in the section on transition arrangements.

## Demonstration of Competence

It is the intention of the Department of Health and Social Care that the 2017 medical exposure regulations will explicitly widen the remit of the MPE to include an advisory role with regard to general compliance with those regulations. This largely reflects what currently happens and it is not the Department's intention for the MPE's role to change from current custom and good practice.

In order to gain recognition from the Department of Health and Social Care, or any authorised Assessing Body, an individual must demonstrate competence in the following core elements:

- dosimetry and dose calculation for medical exposures
- optimisation of dose associated with medical exposures
- analysis of accidental and unintended exposures and provision of advice following such an exposure
- commissioning, acceptance testing and routine quality assurance testing of medical radiological equipment
- medical radiological equipment specification
- detailed understanding of the requirements of UK medical exposure regulation and its practical application
- effective communication with management, other radiation professionals and members of clinical teams

The Department of Health and Social Care has developed, and will maintain, an MPE syllabus incorporating these competency requirements.

The criteria to demonstrate competence has been agreed between the Department of Health and Social Care, as the competent authority, and RPA 2000. A formal Working Group was established to define the recognition scheme and included representatives from the then Department of Health, RPA 2000 and relevant professional bodies, such as the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM), the Society for Radiological Protection (SRP) and the Association of University Radiation Protection Officers (AURPO).

The nature of the evidence that individuals will be required to present will come from their own training and experience and will therefore vary significantly in detail according to the area in which they specialise. However all the evidence will need to refer back to the core elements listed above. It is accepted that for some requirements, for example analysis of accidental exposures, the applicant may have limited workplace experience. In such instances, simulated evidence will be considered.

The assessment process will not address the suitability of an applicant to work as an MPE in any specific field and it is the responsibility of the employer undertaking the medical exposures in question to assess applicants' suitability for any MPE role.

## Administrative Arrangements

The Department of Health and Social Care has appointed RPA 2000 as a suitable Assessing Body to assess the competence of individuals wanting to act as MPEs.

The arrangements for the recognition of new MPEs will be in place by 6 February 2018. All persons wishing to be recognised as MPEs for the first time after this date will be required to apply for recognition through RPA 2000, as the Assessing Body.

RPA 2000 will maintain a register of those persons who have demonstrated the necessary core competency required to act as a MPE. The register will include:

- Individual's full name
- Date of first inclusion on the register
- A unique identifier (e.g. certificate number)

RPA 2000, on behalf of Department of Health and Social Care, will also hold contact information for all certificated MPEs.

Certificates of competence to act as a MPE will be issued by RPA 2000. These will be valid for a finite period and, in order to remain on the register after the date indicated on their certificate, individuals will need to meet the Department of Health and Social Care's requirements for continued registration, including continued education and professional development. The specific arrangements relating to re-certification will be agreed between the Assessing Body and the Department of Health and Social Care and information will be provided to all certificated MPEs when it becomes available.

## Existing MPEs (2017) and Transitional Arrangements

The Department of Health and Social Care has tasked RPA 2000 with generating a list of individuals who have been authorised to act as MPEs. All existing MPEs who are entitled to act in that capacity by an employer under the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 were required to apply to join that list before 31 December 2017. All individuals placed on the MPE list are expected to keep records of their ongoing training and professional development.

Individuals who were not able to provide the necessary information before this deadline will need to apply RPA 2000 in order to be recognised as having the basic competency required to act as an MPE.

The recognition arrangements detailed above will result in the formation of a list for existing MPEs and a register for new MPEs following assessment. All those on the list will be required to transition to the assessed register at a later date. The Department of Health and Social Care will release details explaining how this transition process will work in due course. Work to explore options for a joint recognition scheme for MPEs, Radiation Protection Advisors and Radiation Waste Advisors is underway and the transition process for current MPEs will be considered as part of these discussions.

## Enforcement

The requirements for employers to appoint suitably qualified and experienced recognised MPEs are included in the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2017 and the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2018, which come into force on 6 February 2018.

Compliance with the requirement will be monitored by the appropriate enforcing authority.

## Glossary

**Assessing Body:** An organisation independent from the Department of Health and Social Care that has been approved to assess the competence of individuals to act as MPEs

**Competence:** The combination of knowledge and experience that equips an individual to provide expert advice, for example, on dose optimisation with regard to medical exposures

**MPE Body:** A group of individuals who can collectively demonstrate the competencies required to perform the MPE role.