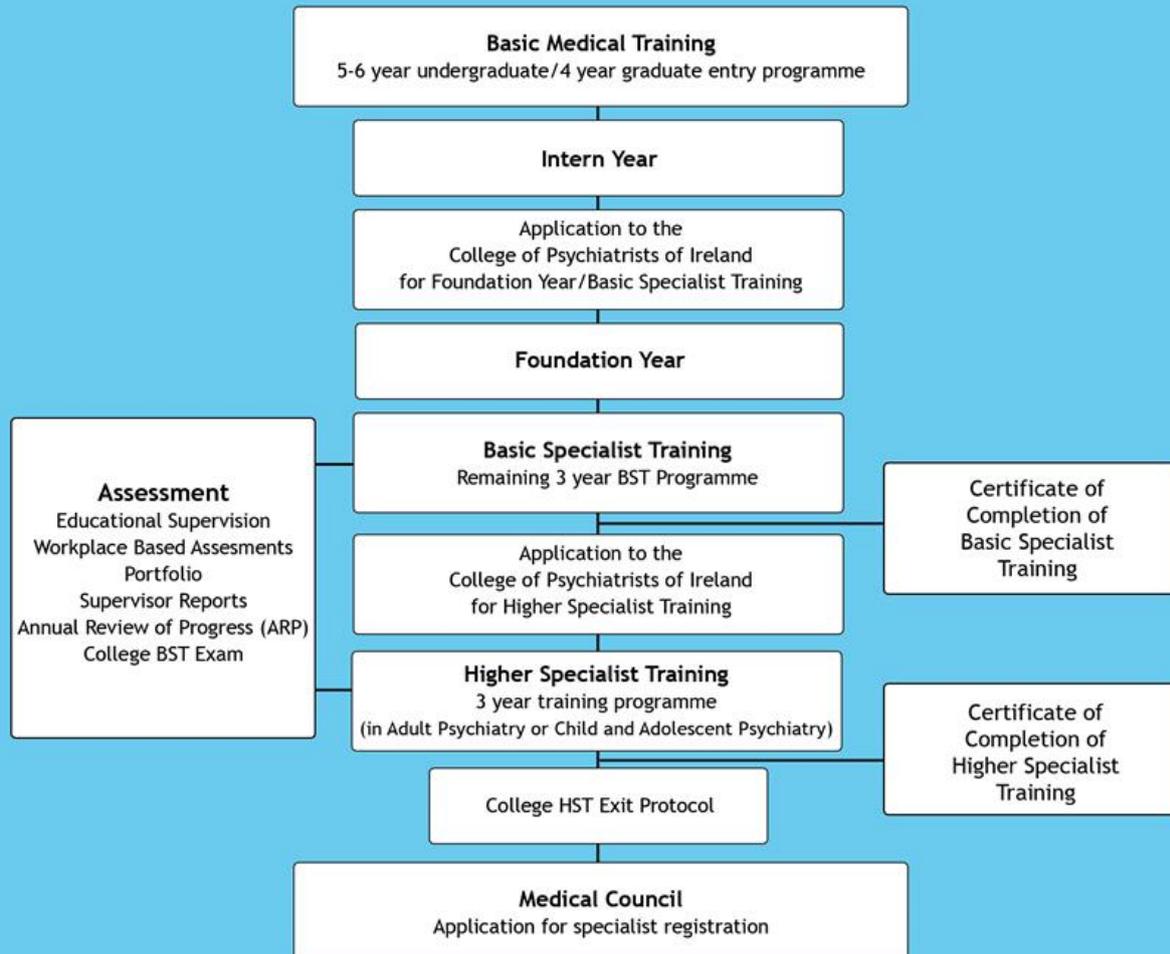




Career Pathway in Psychiatry

The Principal Career Pathway in Psychiatry



What is Psychiatry?

Psychiatry is the branch of medicine, which is concerned with the understanding, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the mind. These disorders can involve emotions, behaviour, perceptions and cognition (thinking). Psychiatry is one of the most varied, interesting and rewarding specialties in medicine. Every day can be different and every patient seen is unique. Psychiatrists work in a number of different places including hospitals, people's own homes, residential centres, old people's homes and even in prisons.

What do psychiatrists do?

Psychiatrists are doctors who look after patients with mental health disorders, illness and problems. They assess patients, make diagnoses, they may investigate medical problems, offer advice, and recommend different treatments including therapies, medication, counselling or other lifestyle interventions. Treatment of patients with mental illness, disorders and health problems depends on a wide range of professionals including psychiatric nurses, social workers, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists and occupational therapists. The psychiatrist works together with these professionals as part of a team. Psychiatrists also are involved in teaching, audit and research.

How do you become a specialist in psychiatry i.e. a psychiatrist?

To train to be a psychiatrist you must first qualify as a general doctor, which means completion of an undergraduate medical school qualification and then an internship in a hospital. Intern training is for a minimum of 12 months, which encompasses a minimum of 3 months in general surgery plus 3 months in general medicine. The remaining time allows opportunity to train in two medical specialties of which psychiatry is one. A general doctor must register on the 'General Division' of the [Irish Medical Council's](#) Register of Medical Specialists.

Once accepted onto the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland training scheme to become a psychiatrist the doctor must register on the 'Trainee Division' of the [Medical Council](#). The College of Psychiatrists is the only body in Ireland approved to train doctors to become psychiatrists.

To become a specialist doctor in psychiatry takes at least seven years.

Psychiatry training is divided into 'Basic Specialist Training' (BST) followed by 'Higher Specialist Training' (HST).

Once HST is complete, and certified, the doctor is now a fully qualified specialist in psychiatry and is eligible, and should, register on the Irish Medical Council 'Specialist Division'. As specialists, they can then apply for consultant posts in health services but even if not in such a post, they are still fully qualified to work as a specialist.

Training in psychiatry comprises:

- A one year 'Foundation Year' followed by a further 3 years of 'Basic Specialist Training' (BST) followed by 'Higher Specialist Training' (HST) of at least 3 years. The place of training is hospitals / mental health services i.e. trainees are salaried non consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs) while on a training scheme.
- To enter the Foundation Year in psychiatry doctors must have graduated from a university with a medical degree and completed an internship.
- BST is a general training in psychiatry where trainees rotate through and work in various specialties and complete exams and research.
- HST is in specific speciality areas broadly divided into Adult or Child and Adolescent Psychiatry but also involving subdivisions within each depending on the long-term career ambitions of the trainee. To enter HST, doctors must have successfully completed BST.
- Completion of HST leads to the granting of a Certificate of Specialist Training that guarantees that the doctor has achieved all the competencies set by the College as necessary to practice safely as a specialist in the area of Psychiatry in which they trained.
- The College holds that a doctor should not be a consultant if they are not a fully trained and certified specialist in the appropriate area of medical practice (as per the [Irish Medical Council Register of Medical Specialists](#)).

(See flow diagram above also)

