

Where is MPE defined?

The definition of an MPE can be found in the European Basic Safety Standards Directive (Council Directive 2013/59/EURATOM) Article 4 paragraph 49, and what an MPE should be responsible for in Article 83. The definition includes a requirement for recognition of competence from the Competent Authority.

MPE Recognition in the UK

IR(ME)R implements the Medical Exposures elements of BSSD in the UK, where Regulations 2 and 14 transpose Articles 4 and 83. The UK Competent Authority for formal recognition of MPEs is the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). With the assistance of relevant Professional Bodies, DHSC created a syllabus of knowledge and experience, based on BSSD Article 83, which in effect became the criteria for assessing the competence of MPEs. DHSC then appointed RPA 2000 as the Assessing Body to recognise individuals as competent to act as MPE against these criteria on their behalf.

The RPA 2000 MPE recognition scheme

The DHSC syllabus was presented to RPA 2000 already in the format of existing schemes for RPAs and RWAs, and with guidance on how to complete the application. RPA 2000 spent a year testing this scheme with individuals who had been volunteered by their line managers. The syllabus and guidance were revised as a result. RPA 2000 can make limited changes to the recognition process with DHSC approval but cannot change the syllabus. Further details on how this operates can be found in the G-series of documents elsewhere on the RPA 2000 website, as can background on RPA 2000 and who our volunteer assessors are. Assessors are appointed via an application process which is described on the Assessors page of the RPA 2000 website. Quality assurance is achieved through regular assessor meetings, internal auditing, and an assessor forum.

Current Situation

There are currently 17 Radiotherapy assessors, 9 Nuclear Medicine assessors and 12 Diagnostic Radiology assessors. 3 more Radiotherapy MPEs applied to be assessors in June 2023.

Since the scheme started in 2019, we have received (up to the end of 2022) 154 applications, of which 129 successfully demonstrated that they satisfied the criteria for MPE recognition and were awarded MPE certificates and 17 were unsuccessful, with 8 ongoing. We strive to complete assessments within 3 months but expect to complete all within 6 months. This does not include the time we allow applicants to submit additional information if that is required by the assessors. To the end of 2022, 75% of applications have been processed within our expected timescale. RPA 2000 recognises that needs to be higher.

The two main elements of the process which can take time are the selection of appropriate assessors and the assessment itself. Unfortunately, we have also seen delays in contacting applicants for more information, but we have taken steps to address this, and the other admin delays we have identified.

Our data indicate that Radiotherapy assessments tend to take longer to assess than Nuclear Medicine and Diagnostic Radiology, but this is not attributable to any individual assessors taking longer than others.

Across all modalities, and across all the assessment schemes we operate, a well-constructed portfolio with strong evidence and clear linking notes takes less time to assess. If the link between syllabus competence and evidence is unclear, assessors will spend longer on the assessment. In some cases, portfolios with less obviously robust evidence may have to be passed to all three assessors in turn for an opinion, which inherently triples the time taken.

RPA 2000 regularly reviews guidance to applicants and assessors and will be working with our sponsoring professional bodies to help more MPE applicants get it right first time.

July 2023