



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

**CervicalCheck**  
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGHTÁSTÁLA CEIRBHEACS  
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME

# Cervical Screening Education Prospectus 2023–2024



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# Forward

1

CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme is a quality assured, organised and population-based screening programme that is managed by the National Screening Service (NSS).

Cervical screening education has been identified as critical in the provision of a quality-assured cervical screening programme to the women of Ireland. All sampletakers engaged in cervical screening should be appropriately educated by completing an accredited evidence-based training programme. It is the duty of the doctor with clinical responsibility to ensure that all sampletakers in their service are appropriately educated and competent.

CervicalCheck's Screening Training Unit offers two pathways to achieving cervical screening accreditation. The STU delivers education in partnership with three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and through our own education programme, which is tailored to the needs of both novice and experienced sampletakers. Both pathways have a theoretical and clinical component and upon successful completion, clinicians are equipped with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to competently deliver a cervical screening service in line with the *Standards for Quality Assurance in Cervical Screening - Quality Assurance in Primary Care and Other Cervical Screening Settings* (CervicalCheck, 2023). The HEIs offer 10 European Credit Transfers at level 9 National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), while the CervicalCheck STU provides category 1 accreditation from NMBI and recognition of learning from the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP).

In March 2020, CervicalCheck changed from a primary cytology programme to a primary HPV programme. Cervical screening is an extension in scope of practice for nurses and midwives. Nurses and midwives must be theoretically and clinically competent to expand their scope of practice to provide cervical screening consultations and to take a quality screening test. Healthcare professionals must engage in continuing professional development to ensure that they are providing the best care to women in an ever-changing environment. Healthcare professionals need to give consistent information to women and normalise the conversation around HPV infection.

Sampletakers must complete CervicalCheck Clinical updates at least once every three years. There are 3 standalone modules on the [National Screening Service online eLearning portal](#) that are available to maintain continuous professional development: CervicalCheck in Practice, HPV Cervical Screening, and the Cervix Visual Assessment Guide and Recognising the Suspicious Cervix course. There are also a number of supporting documents and webinars on the [CervicalCheck/Health-professionals/training website](#).

We hope that you will find an education programme that suits your learning needs. Places on courses are limited, therefore early application is advisable.



Dr Rachael Comer  
*National Screening Service (NSS) Education and Training Manager CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme*

\* Please note where we refer to 'women', we mean women and anyone with a cervix

# Eligibility requirements for the cervical screening education programme

1

Sampletakers must be qualified and registered with the Irish Medical Council or the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) - General Nurse Division and Midwives Division

2

The Clinically Responsible Doctor (CRD) who holds a contract with CervicalCheck must sign the Registration Form for Health Professionals & Supervision Agreement for Training as part of the online application process. The applicant must work or have access to supervised experience in a clinical setting which offers cervical screening consultations. It is the responsibility of the CRD to be the supervisor, or delegate this role to another suitably qualified sampletaker

3

Nurses/midwives and Doctors must register as a Qualified Person (QP) with CervicalCheck prior to commencing on the education programme. CervicalCheck stores all sampletakers' details on the CervicalCheck Sampletakers Register and each sampletaker is provided with a registration number, the Sampletaker I.D. This unique I.D. number is linked to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) PIN and the Medical Council Registration Number for doctors.  
[Registration Form for Qualified Person.](#)

4

Applicants must undertake the introductory online module CervicalCheck in Practice which outlines the requirements and operation of the programme as part of their registration process.

5

Applicants must possess the competencies recognised at Level 8 on the National Qualification Authority of Ireland framework (NQAI)

Please refer to Appendix 1 Toolkit 1 Cervical Screening Education Eligibility and introduction to Education pathways

# Learning outcomes of the cervical screening education programme

On successful completion of the cervical screening education programme, the trainee sampletaker will be able to:

- Critically discuss the principles of screening and demonstrate their knowledge of the National Cervical Screening Programme.
- Demonstrate their knowledge of the benefits, limitations, and harms of cervical screening
- Accurately describe the anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive organs and be confident in identifying anomalies
- Describe the epidemiology and pathology of cervical cancer
- Demonstrate competence in the consultation process, being cognisant of barriers to screening in low -coverage and hard-to-reach population groups
- Demonstrate an understanding of the elements involved in obtaining informed consent and the processes by which this is achieved
- Demonstrate competence in the taking of a cervical screening sample and the ability to troubleshoot practical problems
- Demonstrate the ability to document the consultation, clinical findings and medical history to ensure accountability, confidentiality, competence and professional responsibility.
- Demonstrate the ability to correctly complete the cervical screening form, ensuring all demographics and data are correct whilst ensuring informed consent is achieved and documented.
- Demonstrate knowledge on the appropriate dispatch of cervical screening samples
- Interpret laboratory cervical screening test results accurately and apply screening recommendations as appropriate to each situation
- Describe accurately the consultation process needed for women in the communication of cervical screening test results and be able to give advice on the next step of their management
- Instigate appropriate onward referral to colposcopy of screen-positive women or those suspected of having cervical cancer, and ensure correct use of the colposcopy referral form
- Provide evidence of knowledge of all relevant failsafe procedures

# Organisation and delivery of the theoretical component of the education programme

There are two pathways to achieving certification in cervical screening education

1

The HEIs –  
NUIG, RCSI,  
UCC

2

The CervicalCheck Screening  
Training Unit – novice and  
experienced programme

## 4.1 Higher Education Institutions

CervicalCheck STU currently facilitates the delivery of accredited stand-alone Cervical Screening Education programmes in partnership with three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The theoretical aspects of the training are delivered by STU staff through a combination of online and face-to-face workshops and presentations. The clinical component takes place in the trainee sampletaker's place of work, where they are supported and assessed by an STU Clinical Trainer. On successful completion of the cervical screening education programme in the HEIs, 10 European Credit Transfers (ECTs) will be awarded at Level 9 Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Both the theoretical and clinical components of the education programme must be successfully completed to be deemed competent. Please refer to Section 6 to find information about each course and how to apply and section 5 to read about the clinical component of the cervical screening education programme.

### UCC

One intake per year  
(30 students)

2 days face-to-face  
teaching

Clinical component

10 ECT credits

### NUIG

One intake per year  
(35 students)

2 days face-to-face  
teaching

Clinical component

10 ECT credits

### RCSI

Two intakes per year  
(35 students)

2 days face-to-face  
teaching

Clinical component

10 ECT credits

## 4.2 CervicalCheck Screening Training Unit

The CervicalCheck STU provides a cervical screening education programme tailored to the learning needs of both novice and experienced sampletakers.

A novice sampletaker is a registered nurse/midwife/doctor that is new to obtaining cervical screening samples and has never provided a cervical screening service before.

An experienced sampletaker has been in active clinical practice for a number of years with extensive clinical experience of taking cervical samples. They are nurses/midwives and doctors working under the supervision of a Clinically Responsible Doctor (CRD), or are CRDs themselves, who have chosen to undertake a recognised sampletaker training course to update their skills and consolidate their knowledge.

Core elements include:

- A clinical workshop
- Eight online presentations & MCQs
- Clinical component

Core elements include:

- Eight online presentation & MCQs
- Clinical Component

Please note that experienced sampletakers do not have to attend the 3-hour clinical workshop.

The clinical workshop consists of:

- Role modelling the cervical screening consultation – overview of the principles of screening, benefits, harms and limitations of cervical screening
- Role modelling and sampletaking on a pelvic mannequin
- Troubleshooting practical problems when taking screening tests
- Correctly completing the cervical screening form
- Correctly completing the colposcopy referral form

The theoretical component consists of:

- Eight e-learning modules with attached MCQs and supporting additional reading that meets the learning outcomes of the cervical screening education programme

The clinical component consists of:

- The trainee observing the sampletaking of at least 2 cervical samples
- Taking at least 5 cervical samples directly supervised by the Clinical Supervisor and completion of the self-assessment of competency in the cervical screening consultations assessment before starting unsupervised practice
- Completion of a Screening Test self-audit to assess cervical sample technique
- Clinical Trainers must assess the trainee using the Clinical Screening Competency Standard Assessment framework to deem competency in cervical screening
- Submission of a completed Clinical Trainer workbook
- Attend an observational colposcopy visit during their cervical screening training

Please refer to Appendix 2 to help you choose what Cervical Screening Education Programme suits your needs.



# Support for learning in the clinical component of the cervical screening education programme

Practical training should take place in the clinical area where the trainee is based. The Sampletaker Supervisor must be a registered nurse/midwife or doctor who is a competent and experienced sampletaker who has engaged in continuing professional development in relation to cervical screening in order to keep up to date with changes in practice.

If a trainee sampletaker has no Clinical Supervisor within their clinical area, the STU will develop a learning and support plan and the CervicalCheck Clinical Trainer will assume the role of Clinical Supervisor for the period of the sampletaker's training and will role model and supervise cervical screening consultations.

To qualify as a Clinical Supervisor the nominated Nurse/Midwife/Medical Practitioner must have completed the following:

- a certified Cervical Screening Education Programme
- or
- Complete three e-learning modules on NSSresources.ie
  - CervicalCheck in Practice
  - HPV Cervical Screening
  - The Cervix Visual Assessment Guide and Recognising the Suspicious Cervix course



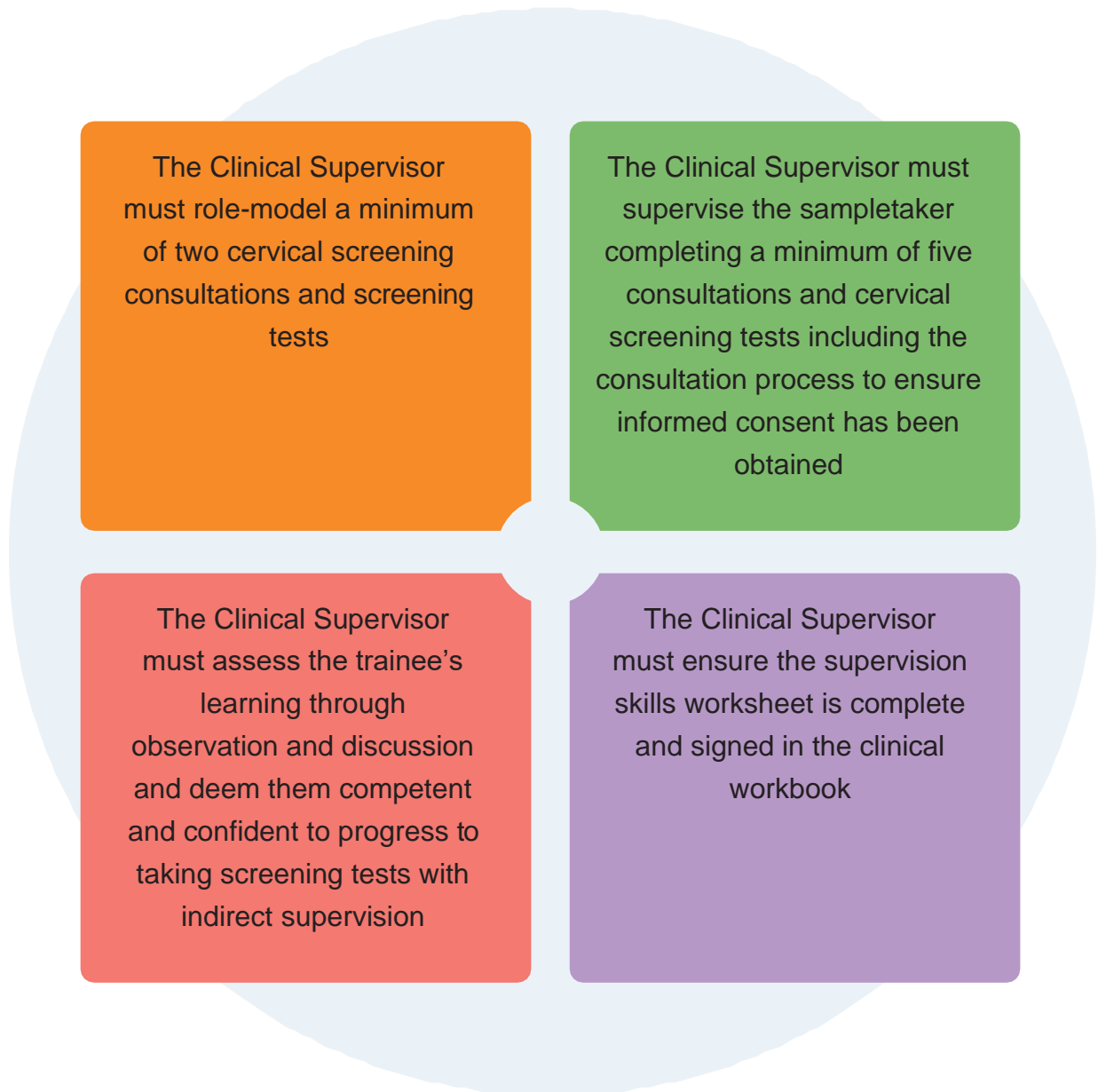
## 5.1 The Role of the CervicalCheck Clinical Trainer

- The Clinical Trainer must ensure appropriate clinical supervision with a Clinical Supervisor within their clinical environment that provides a safe and competent service for women being screened or provide appropriate supervision to the trainee themselves. They must assess and tailor what support is required by the trainee sampletaker by using the CervicalCheck Checklist for planning a clinical assessment support visit.
- The trainee should have completed the Consultation in Cervical Screening Self-Assessment of Competence before starting their supervised practice. The Clinical Supervisor/CRD/Clinical Lead has direct access to a Clinical Trainer who is a subject expert in cervical screening. The Clinical Trainer has access to CervicalCheck Clinical Advisors in Primary Care, Colposcopy and Laboratory for any queries in cervical screening.



## 5.2 The Clinical Supervisor's role and responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Clinical Supervisor will be determined by the level of experience of the trainee sampletaker. For novice sampletakers, the minimum supervision requires:



The Clinical Supervisor can provide indirect supervision to the sampletaker once the Clinical Supervisor deems that the sampletaker has met the competency standard set out by the CervicalCheck cervical screening education programme. At this stage, the Clinical Supervisor should advise the sampletaker to contact their Clinical Trainer to arrange a clinical assessment date. The Clinical Supervisor must maintain responsibility for indirect supervision of the sampletaker until final sign-off by the clinical trainer and successful completion of the cervical screening education programme. The Clinical Supervisor must be available to liaise with the Clinical Trainer throughout the education and training period.

## 5.3 The Trainee Sampletaker's roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities of the trainee sampletaker include:



1. Must maintain regular contact with their Clinical Supervisor to:
  - identify and discuss any emerging training issues or problems
  - discuss progress towards meeting identified training needs
  - review their progress throughout their unsupervised practice
  - prepare for the final cervical screening assessment

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2. Maintain their Trainee Workbook.
  - It must be kept in a safe place (digital or paper copy) and used by trainees as a record and guide to their learning and be available to their Clinical Supervisor and Clinical Trainer as required.

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3. Observe at least two full cervical screening consultations

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4. Complete five supervised full person-centered cervical screening consultations

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5. Complete the Knowledge of Cervical Screening Self-Assessment of Competency

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6. Demonstrate competence within practice in accordance with the learning outcomes as per the theoretical component of the education programme and additional resources, Units 1-8 of the Cervical Screening Education Programme

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7. Maintain a screening test self-audit:
  - The trainee must review their first 20 unsupervised cervical samples and discuss the results with their Clinical Supervisor.
  - If the self-audit identifies any rejected samples, including those inadequate for cytology, the trainee should discuss this with the Clinical Supervisor and Clinical Trainer.
  - Both parties must agree on an action plan.

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8. The Trainee must arrange an observational colposcopy visit if they have not had a previous colposcopy placement/visit

# HEI course information

5

All applications are to be made directly to the chosen academic provider below:

## National University of Ireland, Galway



NUI Galway  
O'É Gaillimh

Course Code: NU581  
Course Title: Best Practice in Cervical Smear Taking  
NFQ Level: 9 Credits: 10  
Cost: €550 (plus €35 application fee)

Date Open for Applications: April 2023  
Commencing Date: September 2023

Contact: Mari Moran  
E-Mail: [mari.moran@nuigalway.ie](mailto:mari.moran@nuigalway.ie)  
Telephone: 091 493 740 (Wed-Fri 9-2)

Apply online via: <https://www.nuigalway.ie/pca/bestpracticeincervicalsmear-taking/>

## University College Cork

School of  
Nursing and  
Midwifery



Course Code: NU6158  
Course Title: Evidence Based Cervical Screening  
NFQ Level: 9 Credits: 10  
Cost: €550 (plus €35 application fee)

Date Open for Applications: August 2022  
Commencing Date: January 2023

Contact: Dr Serena Fitzgerald (Module Coordinator)  
E-Mail: [serena.fitzgerald@ucc.ie](mailto:serena.fitzgerald@ucc.ie)  
Telephone: 021 4901516

Apply online via: To apply for this course please log on to the UCC APPLY page and create an account.

Applicants must also complete an additional CervicalCheck application form and forward directly to [stu@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:stu@cervicalcheck.ie): Click [Here](#)

## Royal College of Surgeons Ireland



Course Code: C8888  
Course Title: Cervical Screening  
NFQ Level: 9 ECTS Credits: 10  
Cost: €550

Date open for applications: April 2023  
Commencing Date: November 22  
Closing Date: When at full capacity

Contact: Anne Marie Kirby  
E-mail: [amclyons@rcsi.ie](mailto:amclyons@rcsi.ie)  
Telephone: (01) 4022206

Apply online via: <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/professional-cpd/nursing-and-midwifery>

**Should you require further assistance please contact the following in the screening training unit in CervicalCheck Screening**

Training Unit:  
[stu@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:stu@cervicalcheck.ie)

Louise McKee:  
[Nessa-Louise.Mckee@screeningservice.ie](mailto:Nessa-Louise.Mckee@screeningservice.ie)

Debbie Ramsbottom:  
[Debbie.Ramsbottom@screeningservice.ie](mailto:Debbie.Ramsbottom@screeningservice.ie)

Telephone: 061 406 511/406 508

# Workshop locations in the cervical screening education programme for novice sampletakers

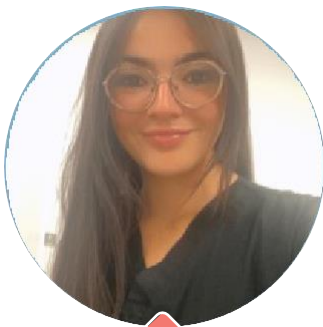
Workshops are planned for the following locations, please click here to apply for your chosen location:



# Feedback from the cervical screening education programme

*“As a newly appointed GP Principal, I wanted to build on my existing knowledge and improve my clinical management of the cervical screening programme. The training provided practical and up-to-date knowledge that is applicable to my daily practice. As a GP, I feel the course gave me confidence in my role and a better understanding of my clinical responsibilities overseeing practice staff such as nurses and GP registrars who are performing cervical screening. The course was delivered in an effective, engaging manner and I would thoroughly recommend the course to my colleagues.”*

**Dr Thomas Downey, NUIG 2022**



*“...The Cervical Screening Education programme is an amazing healthcare initiative to promote women’s health. The course offers nurses and doctors an in-depth understanding of cervical health and anatomy, with both a clinical and theoretical aspect. This course is person-centred. Dignity, respect, and health education for the patient is at the forefront in each topic covered. As a nurse with no previous experience in cervical screening I was given great support by my clinical Trainer. Any queries, questions, or concerns that I had I could run them past my Clinical Trainer. My assessment went really well because my Clinical Trainer made me feel at ease and equipped me with all the information, I needed to do a consultation and ensure I had obtained an informed consent. I am now confident that I can make a positive impact for people during their cervical screening journey”*

**Ms Debbie Dooher, Practice Nurse - RCSI Nov 2022**

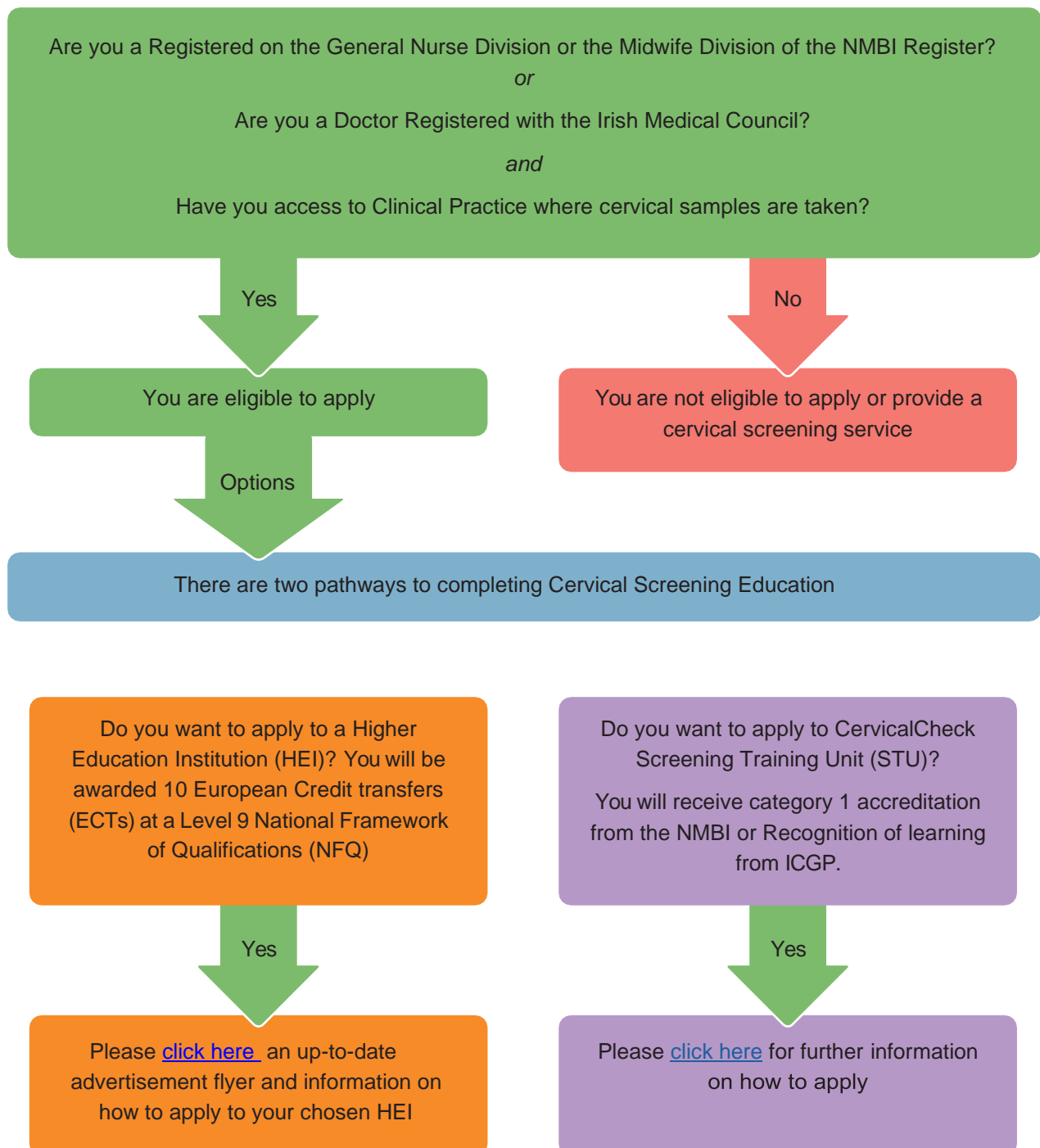
*“The most beneficial aspect of the cervical screening education course was having access to a Clinical Trainer. They visited my workplace and supported me providing consultations and taking samples until I felt competent doing them independently. I also found spending time in colposcopy very informative for cases when I need to refer patients to that service”.*

**Kellie Gardner, Practice Nurse, RCSI 2022**



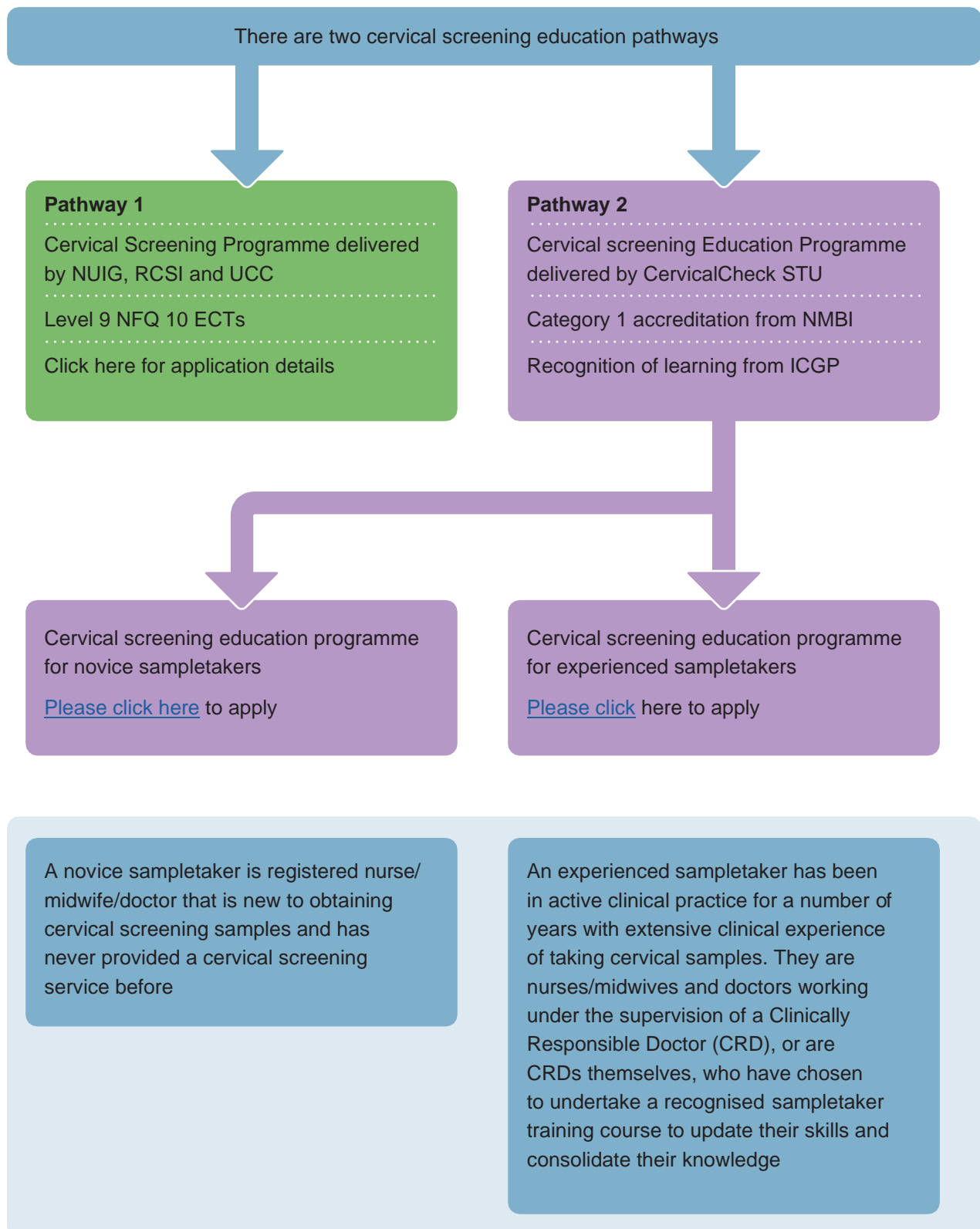
# Toolkit 1

## Cervical Screening Education Eligibility and introduction to Education pathways



# Toolkit 2

## Choosing the CervicalCheck Cervical Screening Education programme that best suits your learning needs







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