Agenda item: 9
Report title: Quality Assurance Strategy
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Action: To consider

Executive summary
In June 2015 we combined resources from the Fitness to Practise, Registration and Revalidation and the Resources and Quality Assurance Directorates to create the Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement teams.

As a regulator, we need to have confidence in our processes, the decisions we make and the outputs we deliver. To do this we need to provide assurance to Council, our customers and stakeholders, and ourselves that we have internal processes and governance arrangements in place to assure the quality of our work. To support this requirement we have developed a corporate Quality Assurance Strategy.

The paper also updates the Board on changes to the Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group’s terms of reference.

Recommendations
The Performance and Resources Board is asked to approve:

a The Quality Assurance Strategy.
b The amended terms of reference of the Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group.
**Requirement**

1. To have confidence in our processes, decisions and outputs, we need a consistent and effective approach to quality management and assurance. The Quality Assurance (QA) Strategy at Annex A will build on the excellent QA work already in place at the GMC, be proportionate and reflect the requirements of our stakeholders.

**Approach**

2. In developing the Strategy we have taken into consideration:
   - Good practice and QA processes within the GMC and other organisations.
   - Existing quality management models, including the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the GMC’s rollout of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).
   - The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care’s (PSA) revised performance review process.
   - Key internal stakeholders’ views including directorate management teams and the Internal Audit and the Corporate Business Planning teams within the Office of the Chair and Chief Executive (OCCE).
   - The development and implementation of GMC wide change projects including the Customer Service Strategy and Investors in People.

**Components of the QA Strategy**

3. The proposed Strategy contains two levels of assurance; a local (directorate) approach and a corporate QA programme of reviews which focuses on giving directors and the Board assurance of high risk and cross cutting operational processes. Both levels of assurance will be supported by the QA and Continuous Improvement (CI) teams. Internal Audit continues to provide a third level of independent risk based assurance.

4. We have produced a set of quality principles by consulting with a range of staff from across directorates. We also considered the principles applied in standard quality models such as ISO and EFQM and good practice within the GMC.

5. The QA team will work with each directorate to agree quality standards for key operational processes. We will ensure that there is a proportionate, cost effective QA programme in place. Assurance processes are already established in many parts of the organisation, however we need to standardise our approach and create a corporate picture of our quality activities and good practice.

6. The implementation of our Strategy will tie in with other initiatives. We have also considered ongoing work to develop the Customer Service Strategy, Investors in People.
People, the application of the EFQM excellence model and the currently unknown requirements of the Efficiencies Change Programme.

7 QA tells us how well we are delivering our processes. CI helps us to improve those processes. The Strategy is therefore designed to link closely with the work of the CI Team.

Roles
8 The QA and CI teams will work with directorates to develop and implement our QA Strategy, ensuring that operational areas of greatest risk are subject to the appropriate level of assurance. A chart showing our proposed high level approach to QA and the three levels of assurance proposed is at Annex B.

9 Work undertaken by Internal Audit and the Corporate Business Planning (CBP) team will continue to provide an independent approach to quality and risk management and will focus on providing assurance to the delivery of our Corporate Strategy.

Key Deliverables
10 The QA Strategy is a three year plan. In the first six to nine months the QA team will produce the guidance, methodologies and toolkits to support the implementation of its aims and objectives. We will present these guidance documents to the Board at future meetings for sign off.

11 The QA team will produce and manage a corporate QA work programme and undertake assurance reviews on high risk operational or cross cutting directorate processes providing assurance on these areas to the Board. The QA Team will work closely with the Assistant Director of Audit and Risk Assurance to ensure that operational QA activities complement Internal Audit.

12 The QA team will also produce progress reports to the Board on the implementation of the Strategy and the QA action plans within directorates. Exception reports on directorate quality assurance results and reports on the findings from corporate QA work programme will also be presented to the Board and the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service Committee. We are currently working with the CPB team to ensure that our reporting arrangements are streamlined.

13 The QA team has limited resources and will work with the directorates to prioritise QA work, deliver training and to continue to promote peer review as an efficient and effective delivery of QA.

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group
14 This working group was set-up to support the development of the organisation's QA and CI work. Reflecting on the work of the group over the last 12 months we have refined the group's terms of reference, at Annex C.
Quality Assurance Strategy

Purpose
This Strategy sets out our corporate approach to quality and quality assurance (QA). It outlines our quality principles and aims to ensure we have a consistent and embedded approach to quality that meets customers’ and stakeholders’ needs and supports organisational performance and continuous improvement.

The Strategy will be supported by operational guidance, training materials and methodologies which will help to ensure that over the next three years the aims and objectives of the Strategy are implemented.

Background
As a regulator, we need to have confidence in our processes, the decisions we make and the outputs we deliver. To do this we need to provide assurances to Council, our customers, stakeholders and ourselves that we have internal processes and governance arrangements in place to assure the quality of our work. To support this requirement, this Quality Assurance Strategy (QA Strategy) has been developed.

In 2013 external consultants reviewed the GMC’s QA and continuous improvement activity. They found that QA processes were directorate specific and, although well established with good practice being identified in some areas, there was no corporate quality management system in place.

In June 2015 we combined resources from Fitness to Practise, Registration and Revalidation and the Resources and Quality Assurance Directorates to create the Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement teams (QA and CI teams). This change was approved to support and enable the GMC to develop and implement a corporate approach to quality management and assurance that supports:

- A consistent QA approach which is proportionate and cost effective.
• QA built on existing knowledge, skills and methodologies, closely linked with our CI capabilities.
• Transparent processes with clear reporting, monitoring and governance arrangements.
• Additional assurance to managers on crosscutting operational processes.
• Greater understanding of where to focus our continuous improvement activity.

Quality Principles

QA is the systematic process for ensuring that our operational services deliver specified requirements and standards. These are often set out in our policy and guidance documents and our operational procedures.

Following research into existing quality management systems and engagement with staff we have developed six quality principles for the GMC.

• **Focus on customer expectations**
  Our quality standards must reflect the current and future needs and expectations of our customers and stakeholders

• **Leadership**
  Leaders and managers create and maintain an environment where staff are supported to provide good quality service and have responsibility for local quality assurance processes and continuous improvement

• **Risk based**
  QA is risk based and proportionate, focused on key functions and operational priorities

• **People**
  Quality is core to all our work and it is everyone’s responsibility to deliver it.

• **Continuous improvement**
  The results of QA lead to proportionate continuous improvement.

• **Quality supports decision making**
  Our QA processes support decision making by providing data and information.

These quality principles are central to our QA Strategy and are reflected in our existing standards, operational processes, policies and measures.

Where do we want to be (vision)

The QA Strategy will provide the GMC with a sustainable QA framework that enables us to improve and adapt to the changing demands of our key interests and our financial constraints. Our approach will allow us to understand the maturity of our processes. We will work with directorates to capture the main attributes of our key processes and use this information to help prioritise QA and improvement activities. QA activities will be proactive,
focusing on identifying issues or areas for development before they impact on services or our customers. QA should ensure we are doing the right thing, in the right way at the right time.

It is important to recognise that the achievement of quality is a journey with an end point that constantly changes as customer requirements change.

**Aims of the Strategy**

The QA Strategy is split into four aims. They build upon our existing QA work and closely link with our corporate approach to risk management.

**Aim One** - Support and further develop our QA culture ensuring that quality is everyone’s responsibility

**Aim Two** - Support directorates in setting local quality standards and in implementing, measuring and monitoring these by using appropriate assurance processes.

**Aim Three** - Conduct corporate reviews to provide assurance to GMC’s management teams on cross cutting and high risk operational processes

**Aim Four** - QA supports performance development and continuous improvement

**Objectives**

The QA and CI teams will work with directorates to support and oversee the implementation of the QA Strategy and support continuous improvement. Working with others we will achieve the aims through the delivery of a number of objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim One</th>
<th><strong>Support and further develop our QA culture ensuring that quality is the responsibility of everyone</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Milestone</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of relevant external</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>documents including the PSA’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>approach to Performance Reviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation and communication</td>
<td>October 2015</td>
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<td>with key leaders, internal</td>
<td></td>
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<td>stakeholders and corporate change</td>
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<td>management initiatives on the</td>
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<td>strategy and supporting quality</td>
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<td>guidance documents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undertake an organisational</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
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<td>assessment using the EFQM model</td>
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Develop a corporate quality induction package | January 2016 | Induction material
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim Two</th>
<th>Support directorates in setting local quality standards and in implementing, measuring and monitoring these by using appropriate assurance processes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Milestone</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult with directorates on their current approaches to quality and quality assurance</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support directorates to develop and implement directorate quality action plans (in line with quality principles)</td>
<td>February 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produce methodologies and training material to support directorates in developing appropriate assurance processes</td>
<td>March 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with directorates to develop and implement assurance processes into key functional and operational areas</td>
<td>March 2016 onwards</td>
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<td>Produce reporting templates and processes to report results</td>
<td>January 2016 onwards</td>
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<tr>
<th>Aim Three</th>
<th>Conduct corporate quality reviews to provide assurance to GMC’s management team on cross cutting processes and high risk operational processes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Milestone</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an approach to identify areas for review.</td>
<td>September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce a two year quality assurance work programme.</td>
<td>November 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop review methodologies, processes and reporting templates</td>
<td>November 2015 onwards</td>
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## Aim Four

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop an approach to ensure quality actions and recommendations feed into CI work plans and directorates are supported in implementing changes</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devise reporting templates for PRB and MPTS Committee</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
<td>Reporting templates</td>
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**Quality Assurance supports performance development and continuous improvement**
9 - Quality Assurance Strategy

Quality Assurance - High Level Approach
GMC Quality Strategy

1. Operational and business units
   - Operational Teams
     - QA identification methods
       - Customer analysis
       - SERs
       - Complaints
       - KPI's & SLA's
       - Staff feedback
       - Operational plans/risk register
       - Projects implementation

2. Corporate assurance
   - Embedding quality, independent assurance of QA and operational risk management, supporting CI and developing excellence
   - Central QA Team
     - QA identification methods
       - Quality reviews
       - EFQM assessment
       - Operational business plans
       - SERs and Complaints
       - Corporate Risk Register
   - Assurance methods
     - QA induction
     - Decision audits
     - QA & risk consultation
     - Thematic QA reviews
     - Training on QA methodology
     - Assurance monitoring tools
   - Reporting methods
     - Audit reports
     - Directorate QA Action Plans
     - Dashboards to PRB
     - EFQM Scoring

3. Audit and Risk Assurance
   - Deliver annual internal audit programme
   - Internal Audit
     - Risk identification methods
       - Corporate risk register
       - Reactive to ad hoc instruction
   - Assurance methods
     - Internal audit programme
     - External audit - PSA
   - Reporting methods
     - Reports to Audit & Risk committee

Lines of defence
9 - Quality Assurance Strategy

9 - Annex C

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

1 The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement (QACI) Working Group supports the development and delivery of the organisation’s quality assurance and continuous improvement systems.

Objectives

2 To provide expert input and advice on the development of quality assurance (QA) and continuous improvement (CI) systems.

3 To share QA and CI best practice across the organisation.

4 To identify cross directorate CI opportunities and to identify CI expertise.

5 To identify any risks and issues associated with QA and CI systems, utilising local directorate knowledge.

Membership

6 Membership of the QACI Working Group to comprise:

   a Neil Roberts – Director of Resources and Quality Assurance.

   b Nominated Business Champions.

   c Nominated quality assurance and continuous improvement directorate specialists.

   d Resources and QA directorate QA team.

   e Information Systems representative.
Meetings
7 The QACI Working Group will meet once a month for the foreseeable future.
8 Agenda and papers will be circulated in advance of each meeting.
9 A substitution system will be in place for attending meetings.
10 Sub-groups may be set-up as part of the Working Group’s remit.

Working practice
11 The QACI Working Group will be chaired by Neil Roberts – Director of Resources and Quality Assurance.
12 All meeting papers and minutes will be held in Livelink.
13 The minutes of the meeting shall be circulated to QACI Working Group members following each meeting and ratified at the subsequent meeting.
14 These terms of reference will be reviewed annually; they may be amended at any time with agreement from the Performance and Resources Board.

Reporting and accountability
15 QA and CI Key Performance Indicators will be included in the Operational Performance and Risk review report to the Performance and Resources Board.
16 In addition an annual report on Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement will be presented to the Performance and Resources Board.