
7a – Supporting Strategies to the Corporate Strategy 2010-2013 Annex A

Research Strategy 2010-2013

Introduction

1. The key components of the GMC's Corporate Strategy for 2010-2013 involve changes to our role, remit and responsibilities, notably the introduction of revalidation, the assumption of responsibility for all stages of medical education, and the separation of our adjudication function into the Office of the Health Professions Adjudicator. Four supporting strategies – Communications, Equality and Diversity, European and International, and Research – will support us in delivering our Corporate Strategy. This Research Strategy sets out the GMC's vision for future research activities, outlining how we will use research to inform the delivery and direction of our strategic, policy and operational priorities.

Defining research

2. Medical regulation, like all areas of medicine, needs to be founded on robust principles and practices that take into account all available information. The GMC's policy and operational decisions are informed by a wide range of information and evidence, collating information from a range of activities that include engagement with key interests, quality assurance assessments, analysis of data from Fitness to Practise and Registration activity, pilot projects and opinion surveys.

3. For the purposes of this Strategy, research is defined as an externally commissioned, systematic academic enquiry aiming to advance knowledge, practice and understanding. Research in this sense is part of our overall approach to gathering evidence to support Council's decision making.

4. Appropriately commissioned independent and robust academic projects contribute to an evidence base that informs our work. Based on how the research can most effectively be run, we will commission projects directly or in collaboration with other organisations.

Aims

5. Our overall aim in this Research Strategy is to support the delivery of our Strategic Aims as defined in the Corporate Strategy.

6. Through research we aim to:
 - a. Identify or create knowledge that supports policy making.
 - b. Develop an evidence base that informs decision making.
 - c. Foster transparency and confidence in the regulation of medical practice.
 - d. Facilitate and encourage engagement with our key interest groups – patients and the public, doctors, the NHS and other healthcare providers, and medical schools and medical Royal Colleges.

Objectives

7. Our objectives when commissioning research are to:
 - a. Lead, anticipate, and respond to, developments in medical regulation to take into account the changing and increasingly diverse healthcare environment.
 - b. Encourage the publication and use of independent and robust research to promote medical education which enhances patient safety and the quality of care.
 - c. Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our processes and policies by underpinning them with evidence.
 - d. Ensure appropriate prioritisation and value for money by commissioning projects that are aligned to our Corporate Strategy.

Key research themes

8. We have taken the four overarching themes from the Corporate Strategy and highlighted the main areas in which we expect to commission research between 2010 and 2013.

9. These areas should not be seen as exhaustive since it may emerge that research will be valuable in other areas of our work. Our research priorities will therefore be reviewed at least once a year to ensure that the research programme can be responsive to needs as they arise, as well as addressing longer-term issues.

Protecting the Public: Providing assurance to the public by giving people further confidence that doctors are fit to practise; and providing them with greater access to information about their doctor's practice, and an understanding of the role of the regulator.

Continued iterative enquiry into the processes and policies underpinning revalidation and assurance that doctors remain fit to practice.

Gathering information to help ensure an integrated approach across our four main functions: Standards, Education, Registration, and Fitness to Practise.

Reviewing the perceived impact of our quality assurance of medical education on patient safety and doctors' professionalism.

Exploring possible additional information we could collect from doctors and what are the most effective channels for making it available to those who could make use of it.

Helping doctors: Providing doctors with first-class guidance at all stages of their medical careers, thereby enhancing their professionalism for the benefit of patients.

Gathering evidence about the applicability and usage of our standards and ethics guidance for doctors (including *Good Medical Practice*) to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and comprehensive in the light of changes in healthcare provision and wider societal attitudes.

Analysing best practice around the selection of medical students and the management of transitional phases in doctors' careers.

Working with partners: Working in partnership with key interest groups across the UK, Europe, and internationally, particularly the NHS and other healthcare providers, to develop appropriate, more effective relationships that will enhance patient safety.

Academic research into our key interest groups' understanding of our role and functions and their perceptions of how these contribute to patient safety.

Understanding the opinions, experiences and needs of our key interest groups in terms of patient safety and medical regulation.

Delivering value for money: Using our resources efficiently and effectively, and ensuring the organisation is well governed, with a clear purpose and evidence-based policies that demonstrate 'better regulation' principles.

Assessing how effectively new policies and processes have been developed in areas such as revalidation in terms of viability and practicality.

Investigation of service models that can be applied to Fitness to Practise hearings management.

Exploring the approaches taken to medical regulation in other jurisdictions and benchmarking the GMC's approach against this.

Investigating how well the services we provide are understood, perceived and valued by those using them.