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To consider

Publication of Information about the Work of the Three Boards

Issue

1. Whether to publish information about the work of the Undergraduate Board, Postgraduate Board and Continued Practice Board.

Recommendation

2. To agree to publish under our Publication Scheme the purpose, membership, agendas, papers and minutes of the three Boards (paragraphs 8-9).

Further information

3. If you require further information about this paper, please contact us by email: gmc@gmc-uk.org or tel. 0161 923 6602

Background

4. The GMC is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000). Under the 2000 Act we are required to make information we hold generally available unless it is subject to one of the exemptions defined in the 2000 Act. The exemptions cover areas such as the personal data of a third party, information provided in confidence, and advice provided by a lawyer.

5. We are committed to the spirit as well as the letter of our FOI responsibilities. We established the Information Access team which deals with about six hundred requests each year. We aim to provide information in a timely, accurate and helpful manner.

6. When FOI was introduced, we developed a publication scheme describing the classes of information we make available. Recently we worked with other healthcare professional regulators and the Information Commissioner to define a common publication scheme for healthcare professional regulators. We have adopted this scheme; and it is published on our website at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/publications/right_to_know/publications_scheme.asp.

7. The publication scheme is not simply a list of documents we publish. Rather, it describes classes of information we make available. We choose how to distribute this information and publish a significant amount on our website. Some information is available only on request, typically when the information (or part of it) is potentially subject to one or more of the FOI exemptions.

Discussion

8. The Undergraduate Board, Postgraduate Board and Continued Practice Board have been established. Each Board is charged with enhancing our ability to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by co-ordinating the GMC's four regulatory functions as they apply to the relevant stage of a doctor's career.

9. It would be consistent with the aims of the publication scheme to make information about the Boards' work publicly available. This would include the agendas, papers, minutes and details of the purpose and membership of all the Boards.

Recommendation: To agree to publish under our Publication Scheme the purpose, membership, agendas, papers and minutes of the three Boards.

Next steps

10. Subject to Council's agreement to the recommendation, we will publish information about the work of the three Boards on our website.

Resource implications

11. There will be some initial work to create a new area on the website, then ongoing work to publish material. We have recently invested in information systems for web publishing, so the cost of any additional work will be negligible.

Equality

12. Our website conforms to the Worldwide Web Consortium's guidelines for accessibility. In addition we will make information available in alternative formats if requested to do so.