



Standards for health examiners

Working with doctors Working for patients

General
Medical
Council

Foreword from the Chair

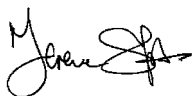
For the majority of doctors whose health affects their fitness to practise, local support and supervision works well. However, occasionally these local measures are not sufficient to protect patients, and the General Medical Council (GMC) needs to become involved.

Accurate assessment of the impact of a doctor's ill-health on their ability to practise is essential to help us understand what we may need to do both to protect patients and to support the doctor.

Every year we carry out around 400 health assessments. Case examiners and medical practitioners tribunals rely on these assessments when deciding what action to take. This is why we view the work of our health examiners as of the utmost importance in helping us regulate effectively and proportionately.

Our arrangements for assessing and managing doctors with health concerns have become well established over time. However, there is quite rightly an ever greater demand on us to be consistent, fair, open and transparent in what we do. With this in mind, this booklet sets out for the first time standards of proficiency for health examiners. These standards are intended to support health examiners by defining what someone in this role should know, understand and be able to do when they assess doctors and complete reports for the GMC. This will also help doctors with health concerns understand what they should expect from an assessment.

I hope you find this booklet helpful, and I look forward to us continuing to work with you, in ensuring we are fair to ill doctors while ensuring patients remain protected.



Professor Terence Stephenson

About this booklet

This booklet sets out the standards that we expect health examiners to meet.

The standards are not hierarchical and are all equally important to the role. You need to meet all the standards to carry out the role of health examiner. The standards complement the *Health examiner handbook* and associated guidance, including the *General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules Order of Council 2014*. It is important that you read and understand all of these documents.

Who to contact

If you have any questions about the standards, please contact Kate Harrison, Associate Appraisal and Training Manager.

Email: kharrison@gmc-uk.org

All other enquires should be directed to the Associate Appraisal and Training team.

Telephone: 0161 240 8282

Write: General Medical Council,
3 Hardman Street, Manchester M3 3AW

Maintain communication

Maintain communication with us

- 1 Respond promptly to requests from us to:
 - a take on a new health assessment
 - b provide information.
- 2 Inform us as soon as possible if:
 - a you have any concerns that the doctor you are assessing is currently at risk of suicide or self-harm
 - b you have any concerns that the doctor you are assessing currently poses a risk to patient safety
 - c the doctor you are assessing fails to attend an appointment with you
 - d you are unable to carry out the agreed testing
 - e your contact details or your availability to carry out testing changes.
- 3 Follow our instructions regarding the testing required.
- 4 Take all reasonable steps to give advance warning to us if you are unable to:
 - a carry out an assessment you had previously agreed to
 - b attend a training session or another mandatory meeting.

Maintain communication with the other examiner

- 5** Respond promptly to requests for information from the other examiner.
- 6** Liaise with the other examiner to decide who is going to carry out the required testing.
- 7** Provide the other examiner with information received from third parties, including medical records, using GMC Connect.

Prepare, provide and submit reports to us

- 8 Take reasonable measures to make sure you have adequate time to:
 - a review all material that we have given to you before your appointment with the doctor
 - b obtain any additional material that may reasonably influence or support your opinion and recommendations.
- 9 Seek evidence from health professionals involved in the doctor's care as set out in our instruction letter and in the *Health examiner handbook*.
- 10 Produce written reports that:
 - a are accurate and legible
 - b are in the required format
 - c are to the required timescales
 - d include all the information requested in the instruction letter.
- 11 Comment on only those matters that fall within your expertise as a health examiner.
- 12 Provide reasoning to support your opinion and diagnosis and, where relevant, quote from other sources to support this.
- 13 Provide copies of all information you have received from third parties as part of the assessment when you submit your report.

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- 14** Give your opinion and detailed reasoning in relation to the doctor's:
- a** level of insight into their condition
 - b** risk of relapse
 - c** risk of self-harm or suicide
 - d** risk to others.
- 15** Identify and explain where further information is required, confirming why it is required and what it will be used for.
- 16** Provide additional information to support and update written reports, as and when required.
- 17** When requested, consider the written report from the other examiner and produce supplemental reports that clarify the areas on which you agree or disagree with the opinion of the other examiner.

Comply with legislative, organisational and regulatory requirements

- 18 Keep up to date with:
 - a relevant trends and developments in your field of expertise, and know how to do so
 - b rules and guidance relating to being a health examiner, including the *GMC Fitness to Practise glossary of terms* and schedule 2 of the *General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules Order of Council 2014*.
- 19 Understand and comply with the current legislation covering equality, diversity and human rights.
- 20 Secure data in line with our information security requirements and your personal obligations under any relevant data protection legislation.
- 21 Identify conflicts of interest and inform us as soon as reasonably possible if any arise.
- 22 Understand and follow the relevant guidance on maintaining confidentiality, data protection and freedom of information, and know how it applies to your role.
- 23 Adopt a professional manner at all times when carrying out the responsibilities of a health examiner.
- 24 Understand and apply the definitions of fit to practise, fit to practise on a limited basis, and not fit to practise at all.

Engage with training and appraisal

- 25** Attend mandatory training sessions or other mandatory meetings.
- 26** Reflect and act, where appropriate, on feedback provided.
- 27** Participate fully in:
 - a** your own GMC appraisal
 - b** the mentoring of other health examiners if you are requested to.

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Website: www.gmc-uk.org

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General Medical Council, 3 Hardman Street, Manchester M3 3AW

Textphone: **please dial the prefix 18001** then
0161 923 6602 to use the Text Relay service

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