

Changes to registration requirements for UK doctors

Information for overseas medical regulators

Published 16 November 2009

Introduction

On Monday 16 November 2009, the General Medical Council (GMC) of the United Kingdom (UK) changed the registration arrangements for doctors wishing to practise medicine in the UK.

A change in UK law means that from 16 November 2009, doctors must hold both registration and a licence to practise with the GMC to allow them to practise medicine in the UK.

This briefing paper provides an overview for international medical regulators of the changes that have been made to UK medical regulations and to some of the services and documents that the GMC makes available to organisations around the world.

For more information about these changes, please contact intel@gmc-uk.org

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Licensing for UK doctors

The GMC introduced licences to practise on 16 November 2009. They are the first practical step towards the introduction of revalidation - a new approach in UK medical regulation. The purpose of revalidation will be to give patients regular assurance that the doctors who treat them are up to date and fit to practise. The first revalidations will not happen before 2011.

From 16 November 2009, doctors who wish to practise medicine in the UK need by law to be registered with a licence to practise. This applies to all doctors whether they practise full-time, part-time or as a locum, whether in private practice, or in the UK National Health Service (NHS).

This change in UK law means that the activities that were restricted to registered doctors prior to 16 November 2009 can now be undertaken only by doctors holding registration with a licence to practise. These activities include, but are not limited to, prescribing, signing death or cremation certificates, and holding certain medical posts (such as working as a doctor in the NHS).

Doctors on the GMC's Register of Medical Practitioners can be:

- Registered **with** a licence to practise; or
- Registered **without** a licence to practise.

Doctors registered *with* a licence to practise:

- Are able to legally practise medicine in the UK
- Are able to legally undertake any of the activities restricted by law to doctors holding a licence, such as writing prescriptions or signing death certificates
- Will be subject to the requirements of revalidation, when it is introduced
- Are required to follow the GMC's guidance contained in *Good Medical Practice*
- Are subject to GMC fitness to practise actions.

Doctors registered *without* a licence to practise:

- Are **not** legally able to practise medicine in the UK
- Are **not** legally able to write prescriptions, sign death certificates or undertake any of the activities restricted by law to doctors holding a licence
- Will **not** be required to participate in revalidation when this begins (because they do not have a licence to renew)
- Are required to follow the GMC's guidance contained in *Good Medical Practice*
- Are subject to GMC fitness to practise actions.

Application arrangements

The application processes for doctors seeking registration for the first time or to restore their registration will remain unchanged. Applicants must continue to satisfy the GMC's registration criteria to be granted registration with a licence to practise.

From 16 November 2009, doctors registering with the GMC for the first time must apply for registration with a licence to practise. On first registration, it will not be possible to apply for registration without a licence.

GMC fitness to practise arrangements from 16 November 2009

All doctors, whether registered with or without a licence, will be expected to comply with the professional standards set out in our core guidance for doctors, *Good Medical Practice*. Therefore, doctors holding registration with a licence or registration without a licence will be subject to GMC fitness to practise actions.

Any fitness to practise sanctions that are made will be imposed on a doctor's registration and will therefore apply regardless of whether or not a doctor holds a licence.

If a doctor's registration is erased, the licence will automatically be withdrawn. Likewise if a doctor's registration is suspended, the licence will be withdrawn. When the period of suspension ends, a doctor will be re-instated to their pre-suspension status. For example, if they were registered without a licence at the time they were suspended, registration without a licence will be restored and it will be open to the doctor to apply for a licence if they so wish.

When a doctor's registration is subject to conditions or undertakings which restrict their practice, they will still be entitled to hold a licence to practise. However, they must continue to comply with the conditions or undertakings imposed on their registration, regardless of whether or not they hold a licence. Failure to do so could put their registration and their licence at risk.

With the introduction of the licence, it is now a criminal offence to undertake any activities without a licence for which UK law requires a doctor to hold registration with a licence (such as prescribing or signing statutory certificates). It is also a criminal offence to pretend to hold registration either with or without a licence when this is not the case. Both offences may lead to prosecution.

Changes to the online Register

The GMC's online Register (the List of Registered Medical Practitioners) has been updated to show the new status of every doctor practising in the UK. The online Register can be accessed by visiting www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/medical_register.asp

From Monday 16 November 2009, the system distinguishes between doctors who are:

- Registered **with** a licence to practise; or
- Registered **without** a licence to practise.

This is how the online Register shows that a doctor is registered **with** a licence to practise (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

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List of Registered Medical Practitioners

Search Again? [print view](#) [Help](#)

Refine Search

Results

Current Details

History

Details

Results of search on: 16 Nov 2009 at 11:11:25. The details shown are valid at the date and time of the search only.

GMC Reference Number	1234567
Given Names	Example Doctor
Surname	Example
Gender	Woman
Status	Registered with a licence to practise

More Details

Primary Medical Qualification	MB ChB 2006 University of Manchester
Provisional Registration Date	01 Aug 2006
Full Registration Date	01 Aug 2007
Specialist Register entry date	This doctor is not on the Specialist Register
GP Register entry date	This doctor is not on the GP Register

Information for Employers [Details](#)

[Data Protection & Privacy Statement](#)

This shows that a doctor is registered **with** a licence to practise

This is how the online Register shows that a doctor is registered **without** a licence to practise (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

The screenshot shows the GMC website interface. At the top left, it says "Regulating doctors Ensuring good medical practice". At the top right is the "General Medical Council" logo. The main heading is "List of Registered Medical Practitioners". Below this, there are navigation links: "Search Again?", "Refine Search", "Results", "Current Details", and "History". The "Details" section is active, showing search results for a doctor on 16 Nov 2009 at 17:11:25. The doctor's details are as follows:

GMC Reference Number	7654321
Given Names	Example Doctor
Surname	Example
Gender	Man
Status	Registered without a licence to practise

Below the "Status" field, there is a "More Details" section with the following information:

Primary Medical Qualification	MB BS 1972 University of London
Provisional Registration Date	04 Dec 1972
Full Registration Date	10 Jun 1974
Specialist Register entry date	This doctor is not on the Specialist Register
GP Register entry date	This doctor is not on the GP Register

At the bottom of the details section, there is a link for "Information for Employers" and a "Details" link. At the very bottom of the page, there is a "Data Protection & Privacy Statement" link.

This shows that a doctor is registered **without** a licence to practise

Changes to GMC certificates and other documents

The General Medical Council provides a range of documents to overseas regulators about doctors who are practising or who have practised in the UK.

The Certificate of Good Standing (CGS) and the Certificate of Past Good Standing (CPGS) changed on Monday 16 November 2009.

Please note: Certificates that are provided by the GMC to overseas regulators do not constitute a guarantee that a doctor is currently registered, nor do they act as proof of identity. They are only accurate at the time they are produced.

For the most current and up-to-date status of a doctor practising in the UK, the online Register (the List of Registered Medical Practitioners) should always be checked.

The Certificate of Good Standing (CGS) has been renamed the Certificate of Current Professional Status (Good Standing). Its previous name

will continue to be referenced in its title for the convenience of non-EEA regulators. The content of the certificate has been updated and now includes:

- Date of birth
- Nationality at the point of registration
- Whether a doctor is on the GMC's Specialist Register or GP Register.

The Certificate of Past Good Standing (CGPS)

is issued to regulators when a doctor does not hold registration but has done so in the past. The name of this certificate has not changed. However, the content of this certificate has been updated to ensure the information provided is consistent with the new Certificate of Current Professional Status (Good Standing).

Registration details will be published on both sides of the Certificate to help counter fraudulent copies and we are extending the use of electronic sharing of such certificates.

This is how the **Certificate of Current Professional Status (Good Standing)** now looks (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

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The certificate has been retitled although its previous name ('The Certificate of Good Standing') will continue to be referenced for non-EEA regulators.

<Generation Date>

<Addressee Correspondence Name>
 <Addressee Organisation>
 <Addressee Department>
 <Addressee Address Line 1>
 <Addressee Address Line 2>
 <Addressee Address Line 3>
 <Addressee Address Line 4>
 <Addressee City>
 <Addressee County>
 <Addressee Postcode>
 <Addressee Country>

General Medical Council

5th Floor, St James's Buildings
 79 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FQ

Telephone: +44 (0) 161 923 6602
 Facsimile: +44 (0) 161 923 6201
 Email: registrationhelp@gmc-uk.org
 www.gmc-uk.org

Date of birth has been added. Where we do not have this on record, the field will display the phrase 'Not known'.

Certificate of Current Professional Status (Good Standing)

Practitioner's name: <Register Name>

GMC reference number: <GMC Reference Number>

Gender: <Gender>

Date of birth: <Date of birth>

Nationality provided at the point of registration: <Nationality>

Primary medical qualification: <PMQ>

Current status: <Registration and Licence Status>

Date of provisional registration: <Award date>

Date of full registration: <Award date>

Date of current entry from: <Award date>

Nationality at the point of registration has been added. Where we do not have this on record, the field will display the phrase 'Not known'.

'Registration status' has become 'Current status'. This will show whether a doctor holds registration with or without a licence to practise.

Specialist Register entry:

Specialty	Sub-specialty	Date of entry
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>

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Specialty details have been added. Where the doctor is not on the Specialist Register, this field will display the phrase 'This doctor is not on the Specialist Register'.

This is how the **Certificate of Current Professional Status (Good Standing)** now looks (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

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GP Register entry date: <Date of entry into GP Register>

Practitioner's address: <Addressee Correspondence Name> <Addressee Organisation>
<Addressee Department> <Addressee Address Line 1>
<Addressee Address Line 2> <Addressee Address Line 3>
<Addressee Address Line 4> <Addressee City>
<Addressee County> <Addressee Postcode> <Addressee Country>

I certify that no proceedings under the Medical Act 1983 are at present in progress or contemplated in relation to the conduct or fitness to practise of the above named practitioner. All doctors who want to practise medicine in the UK must hold both registration and a licence to practise.

All UK and International Medical Graduate doctors granted full registration for the first time, or returning to the Register after a prolonged period out of UK practice, are required to work initially within an approved practice setting (APS). Doctors must make an application to the GMC to have this requirement removed. A list of organisations with approved practice setting status can be found on our website (www.gmc-uk.org).

This certificate does not guarantee that this doctor's status on the Register has not changed. You can check this doctor's status on the Register, and find up to date details of this doctor's eligibility to practise medicine in the UK, on our website or by calling 0161 923 6602 (+44 161 923 6602 from outside the UK). This certificate is not proof of identity.

Anthony Egerton
Assistant Registrar

The GP Register entry date has been added. Where the doctor is not on the GP Register, this field will display the phrase 'This doctor is not on the GP Register'.

Two paragraphs have been added to the certificate to ensure that recipients are aware that doctors must hold a licence to practise in order to practise medicine in the United Kingdom; and secondly, to introduce the concept of the Approved Practice Setting (APS). This is because the 'Current status' field will display the phrase 'Full registration in APS with a licence to practise' where the doctor is restricted to working in an APS.

This is how the **Certificate of Past Good Standing (CPGS)** now looks (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

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<Generation Date>	General Medical Council	
<Addressee Correspondence Name>	5th Floor, St James's Buildings	
<Addressee Organisation>	79 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FQ	
<Addressee Department>	Telephone: +44 (0) 161 923 6602	
<Addressee Address Line 1>	Facsimile: +44 (0) 161 923 6201	
<Addressee Address Line 2>	Email: registrationhelp@gmc-uk.org	
<Addressee Address Line 3>	www.gmc-uk.org	
<Addressee Address Line 4>		
<Addressee City>		
<Addressee County>		
<Addressee Postcode>		
<Addressee Country>		
Certificate of Past Good Standing		
Practitioner's name: <Register Name>		
GMC reference number: <GMC Reference Number>		
Gender: <Gender>		
Date of birth: <Date of birth>		
Nationality provided at the point of registration: <Nationality>		
Primary medical qualification: <PMQ>		
Current status: <Not Registered - Having relinquished registration>		
Registration and licensing history*:		
Status	From	To
<Registration and Licence Status>	<Award Date>	<Expiry Date>
<Registration and Licence Status>	<Award Date>	<Expiry Date>
<Registration and Licence Status>	<Award Date>	<Expiry Date>

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This is how the **Certificate of Past Good Standing (CPGS)** now looks (as of Monday 16 November 2009):

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*From 16 November 2009 all doctors who want to practise medicine in the UK are required to hold registration with a licence to practise. Prior to this date, doctors only needed to hold registration to practise medicine in the UK.

Specialist Register entry:

Specialty	Sub-specialty	Date of entry
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>
<Specialty>	<Sub specialty>	<Date of entry into Register>

GP Register entry date: <Date of entry into GP Register>

Date of erasure from Register: <Date>

I further certify that during registration no proceedings under the Medical Act were undertaken or contemplated in relation to the above-named practitioner's conduct or fitness to practise.

This certificate does not guarantee that this doctor's status on the Register has not changed. You can check this doctor's status on the Register, and find up to date details of this doctor's eligibility to practise medicine in the UK, on our website or by calling 0161 923 6602 (+44 161 923 6602 from outside the UK). This certificate is not proof of identity.

Assistant Registrar

The CPGS can be signed by any of the GMC's Assistant Registrars. Their name is not shown on the document.

Further information

If you require more information about the changes to registration arrangements for doctors working in the UK, please contact intel@gmc-uk.org

Additional information about registration, licensing and revalidation can be found on the GMC's website at www.gmc-uk.org

Email: intel@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org/licensing

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