

LICENSING

Information for doctors'
employers and other organisations

Summary leaflet

General
Medical
Council

Regulating doctors
Ensuring good medical practice

LICENSING

The General Medical Council will introduce licences to practise on 16 November 2009. They are the first practical step towards the introduction of revalidation.

From 16 November 2009, all doctors who wish to practise medicine in the UK will, by law, need to be registered with a licence to practise. This will apply to all doctors whether they practise full-time, part-time, as a locum, privately or in the NHS, or whether they are employed or self-employed.

The introduction of licensing has important implications for doctors' employers and others who contract or commission the services of doctors.

This publication contains more information about licensing and how it affects employers and others. It has been produced to help organisations prepare for this change in medical regulation.

For more information about licensing for doctors, please visit www.gmc-uk.org/licensing or email licensing@gmc-uk.org

When licensing is introduced on 16 November 2009, it will be the licence to practise, rather than registration, that will give a doctor the legal authority to undertake the activities currently restricted by law to doctors who are registered with the GMC.

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 registered with a licence to practise:

- will legally be able to practise medicine in the UK
- will legally be able to 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
- will be required to follow the guidance contained in *Good Medical Practice*
- will be subject to GMC Fitness to Practise actions.

Doctors registered without a licence to practise:

- will **not** legally be able to practise medicine in the UK
- will **not** legally be 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 (because they will not have a licence to renew)
- will be required to follow the guidance contained in *Good Medical Practice*
- will be subject to GMC Fitness to Practise actions.

More information about licensing, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), can be found at www.gmc-uk.org/licensing

INTRODUCING THE LICENCE TO PRACTISE

Before 16 November 2009

Employers of doctors should review (and revise where appropriate) any policies and procedures they have in place for conducting pre-employment checks.

Contracts that currently require doctors to possess registration with the GMC as a condition of their employment should be reviewed in light of the new arrangements.

On 16 November 2009

Employers must ensure their doctors hold the appropriate registration for the type or post or practice they have or will be undertaking. This is no different from the pre-employment and other regular checks that are carried out currently by employers.

The best way for employers to check the GMC status of doctors employed by their organisations is to visit the online Register (the List of Registered Medical Practitioners).

Users of the NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR) and the Scottish Workforce Information Standard System (SWISS) may wish to use these systems to verify their doctors' new GMC status.

After licensing is introduced on 16 November 2009, we will write to all doctors to confirm their GMC status. This will confirm whether they hold registration with or without a licence. The GMC will **not** issue certificates or cards to confirm a doctor's new GMC status.

DEVELOPING THE ONLINE REGISTER

The online Register (the List of Registered Medical Practitioners) shows the current status of a doctor.

When licensing is introduced on 16 November 2009, the online Register will be updated to show the new status for every doctor.

Employers will be able to distinguish between doctors who are:

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

Other changes to the online Register

From 16 November 2009, the online Register will have a new multiple search function. This will enable employers to enter the respective GMC reference numbers for up to 10 doctors and retrieve their details.

The online Register will also display the date a doctor's annual retention fee is next due.

Services for database developers

The GMC provides a data download facility. Organisations may wish to import the entire List of Registered Medical Practitioners into their existing systems as a means of checking a doctor's status. This may be of particular help to employers outside the NHS that deal with large numbers of doctors. Further information about the download service is available at www.gmc-uk.org/lrmpdownload

CHANGES TO GMC CERTIFICATES

When licensing is introduced, there will be some changes to the certificates issued by the GMC.

- **Doctors will continue to receive a registration certificate** when granted provisional registration and when they are first granted full registration. However, the certificate will not state whether a doctor holds a licence to practise.
- **From 13 November 2009, we will no longer issue Annual Registration Certificates** to confirm payment of the Annual Retention Fee. Instead, doctors will receive a letter confirming receipt of their Annual Retention Fee.
- **The certified copy of a doctor's entry on the Register of Medical Practitioners, along with other certificates that certify changes in a doctor's GMC status, will be discontinued from 16 November 2009.** From this date, doctors will be able to obtain confirmation of their entry on the Register of Medical Practitioners. They will receive a new Proof of Entry on the Register letter, which will confirm a doctor's name, GMC reference number, primary medical qualification, their registration and licensing history, details of any entry on the Specialist and/or GP Register, and any restrictions relating to Fitness to Practise on the doctor's medical practice.

Please remember: Documents (such as certificates) that are provided by the GMC to doctors, employers and overseas regulators do not constitute a guarantee that a doctor is currently registered, nor do they act as proof of identity.

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

SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE NHS

NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR)

Since 2008, the ESR system in England and Wales, used by hospital trusts and by primary care trusts as employers, has included a GMC interface.

ESR has developed the interface to take account of the introduction of licensing. From the week commencing 16 November 2009, the interface will reflect the new structures and terminology. ESR users will be able to check the GMC status of their doctors to ensure they hold a licence to practise. The ESR team will provide a briefing to their users ahead of the introduction of licensing.

Scottish Workforce Information Standard System (SWISS)

SWISS will undertake further development work to ensure that the professional regulators' section of the system will include a doctor's GMC status.

Further information will be provided by the SWISS team in due course, including information about their implementation timetable.

PREPARING FOR LICENSING: ARE YOU READY?

- Is your team aware that licensing will start on 16 November 2009?
- Are you familiar with the changes that will be made to the online Register (the List of Registered Medical Practitioners) and GMC certificates?
- Does your team have arrangements and the appropriate resources in place to check the GMC status of your doctors on 16 November 2009?
- Have you reviewed and revised any policies, procedures and guidance for making pre-employment checks on doctors?

Email: licensing@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org/licensing

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