

Standards for health examiners

Foreword from the Director

Most doctors deliver good quality healthcare, often in difficult and demanding situations, but sometimes concerns do arise. Where those concerns relate to a doctor's health, they will usually be dealt with at a local level. The GMC only becomes involved in the minority of cases where there is a serious concern and there is a risk to patients that is not being managed.

Our assessments help us to understand where the risks to patients may arise and what we can do to protect patients and to support the doctor. Our Case Examiners rely on these assessments to inform their decisions about the appropriate outcome for a case at the end of the investigation process. Medical Practitioners Tribunals also rely on assessments to inform their decisions. Therefore, it is extremely important that our assessments are accurate and effective and, with around 400 assessments each year, it is vital that we are consistent in our approach.

Doctors rightly remind us of the need for continuous vigilance to ensure that our arrangements for assessing and managing doctors with health concerns are fit for purpose. We are committed to fairness and transparency in our procedures, which is why we have set out our standards for proficiency for health examiners in this booklet. These standards are intended to support health examiners by defining what they should know, understand and be able to do when they assess doctors and complete reports. They will also help doctors with health concerns understand what they should expect from an assessment and help ensure we are fair to doctors in our efforts to protect patients.

I hope you find this booklet helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Omo', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Anthony Omo
Director of Fitness to Practise

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 [*Handbook for health examiners*](#) and associated guidance, including the [*General Medical Council \(Fitness to Practise\) Rules Order of Council 2004*](#). 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 the Associate Appraisal and Training Team.

Email: AATT@gmc-uk.org

Telephone: 0161 2408282

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 your contact details or your availability changes.
- 3 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 other meeting you have been invited to.

Maintain communication with the other examiner

- 4 Respond promptly to requests for information from the other examiner.
- 5 Provide the other examiner with information received from third parties, including medical records, using GMC Connect.
- 6 Reports should be entirely independent, therefore you should not share your opinions or reports with the other examiner prior to submission.

Prepare, provide and submit reports to us

- 7 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.
- 8 Seek evidence from health professionals involved in the doctor's care as set out in our instruction letter and in the [*Handbook for health examiners*](#).
- 9 Produce written reports that:
 - a are accurate and legible
 - b are in the required format using the [*template*](#)
 - c are to the required timescales
 - d are entirely independent
 - e include all the information requested in the instruction letter.
- 10 Comment on only those matters that fall within your expertise as a health examiner.
- 11 Provide reasoning to support your opinion and diagnosis and, where relevant, quote from other sources to support this.
- 12 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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- 13 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.
 - 14 Identify and explain where further information is required, confirming why it is required and what it will be used for.
 - 15 Provide additional information to support and update written reports, as and when required.
 - 16 Only 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

- 17 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 2004](#).
 - 18 Understand and comply with the current legislation covering equality, diversity and human rights.
 - 19 Secure data in line with our information security requirements and your personal obligations under any relevant data protection legislation.
 - 20 Adhere to the [Associates expenses policy](#).
 - 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 with restrictions, and not fit to practise at all.
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Engage with training and appraisal

- 25 Attend mandatory training sessions (face to face or e-learning) 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.