



# Welcome to medicine 2017

Getting the most out of your time  
at medical school

Working with doctors Working for patients

General  
Medical  
Council

# Get to know us. And get to know our standards.

Stay up to date with our work, the latest learning materials and a wide range of topical issues.

➡ Sign up to our regular e-bulletin at [www.gmc-uk.org/studentnewssignup](http://www.gmc-uk.org/studentnewssignup).

Get our My GMP app on your Android or Apple device to get to know our standards, which you must meet to practise in the UK.

➡ Go to [www.gmc-uk.org/mygmp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/mygmp).

You can also head to [www.gmc-uk.org/students](http://www.gmc-uk.org/students) for more information relevant to medical students.

# Welcome to medicine



Well done and congratulations on getting into medicine – I know you’ll have worked very hard to get to medical school and you deserve to be proud of yourself.

I’m Colin Melville, Director of Education and Standards at the General Medical Council (GMC). We oversee medical education and training in the UK, and we maintain the medical register of all our doctors – your name will be on this register once you’ve finished your course.

Medicine is fascinating. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a medical student in the 1980s. There is a lot to learn and a lot to do. At different times you may feel excited, challenged, bewildered or confused – sometimes perhaps even wondering if you made the right choice. But in the end it will be worth it. Because you have a privilege in society to work for people’s health in a way that no other sector in society does.

## Achieving good medical practice

In the UK, we hold doctors in great esteem. So we want you to uphold our professional standards. That means thinking, even now, about what it means to be a doctor and what behaviours and attributes are required of you to maintain that professional status that we hold.

To help you with this, we have guidance called *Achieving good medical practice* and other materials to support you. We know you have a lot to read right now, so we'll send you a copy of this guidance in early 2018. You can also read it at [www.gmc-uk.org/agmp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/agmp).

## Get support when you need it

I know studying medicine is hard work and can be stressful – up to 25% of medical students at different times feel a huge sense of stress, bordering on mental health problems. So be kind to yourself and think about the balance of how much work, study, downtime and relaxation you have. And if you're experiencing any stress at all, please seek help – your medical school is set up to support you and help you succeed.

There'll be lots of people asking for your time in these first weeks of medical school. But I'd recommend finding a few minutes to thumb through this booklet, which gives some great advice to help you get through your studies and achieve your aim of becoming a doctor.

Enjoy freshers' week, enjoy your studies, enjoy your course. And most of all, welcome to medicine.

### **Colin Melville**

Director of Education and Standards, GMC  
@drcolinm

# What is the General Medical Council?

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We protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine. This means we make sure that doctors have the right knowledge, skills and experience to practise medicine safely in the UK.

## Fostering good medical practice

We do this by producing ethical guidance that sets out the principles you should follow in your work – the duties of a doctor. *Good medical practice* is our core guidance, but we also give advice on issues such as reporting gunshot and knife wounds, personal beliefs and medical practice, appropriate use of social media and obtaining consent to treatment from children. You can access the full range of guidance on our website: [www.gmc-uk.org/guidance](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance).

## Promoting high standards of medical education and training

We set the standards for the education that medical schools provide. To see these standards, go to [www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards.asp).

We also set the knowledge, skills and behaviour that you must demonstrate by the time you graduate. You may want to have a look to see the types of things you will be able to do when you finish medical school, including the practical procedures you will be able to carry out. You can read these at [www.gmc-uk.org/undergrad\\_outcomes](http://www.gmc-uk.org/undergrad_outcomes). We're reviewing these outcomes – you can contribute to a public consultation on the new version in late autumn 2017. Email us at [quality@gmc-uk.org](mailto:quality@gmc-uk.org) if you'd like to take part.

## Keeping up-to-date registers of qualified doctors

We control access to the medical register. You will need to register with us and obtain a licence to practise before you are able to begin work as a doctor. We will only register those doctors who meet our standards, so it is important that you understand how your behaviour, even now as a student, is expected to reflect these.

## Dealing firmly and fairly with fitness to practise concerns

We have strong and effective legal powers designed to maintain the standards the public have a right to expect of doctors. We take firm but fair action where those standards have not been met. Where any doctor fails to meet those standards, we act to protect patients from harm – if necessary, by removing or suspending a doctor from the medical register or placing restrictions on their practice.

# Life at medical school: finding the right balance

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## Making the most of your time at medical school

- **Don't be distracted by how well others are doing.** Medicine is a competitive subject to study. Your fellow students will be some of the brightest in the country so you may find it's not as easy to stay ahead as it was at school.

Try not to worry about how your performance compares with your peers. Instead, focus on doing the best you can. Remember also that a fundamental part of being a good doctor is the ability to work in a team and willingness to reflect on your own practice.

- **Work hard, but don't overdo it.** One of the ways to do well is by putting the hours in on your studies. But make sure you're in a position to get the most out of your efforts. Don't work all day every day; if you try to do too much you may burn out, so make sure you get enough sleep. Exercising and eating well will help you concentrate. Both will also help to keep you healthy.



- **Take time out to enjoy yourself.** It's important that you find a way to deal with stress that works for you and to develop an effective support system. Taking time to make friends who you can unwind with, or talk to when you're finding things difficult, is important. Having interests outside of your study can also help. In addition, they can help to make your CV stand out in the future.
- **Make sure you know where to find help should you need it.** Your medical school wants you to succeed on your course, so it will provide different services to support you. You should familiarise yourself with these services, so you know where to get help if you need it. You should also make sure you register with a GP who is local to your medical school.

Our *Gateways to the professions* guidance suggests ways that your medical school can support students with long term health conditions and disabilities.

It makes clear that disabled students can make a unique contribution to patient care and the medical profession. You can find the guidance at [www.gmc-uk.org/gateways](http://www.gmc-uk.org/gateways), as well as short films and written accounts where students with disabilities share their experiences from medical school and beyond. You can also find more information about helping us review it in the box on the next page.

We've also worked with the Medical Schools Council to create a guide for medical schools on how best to support medical students with mental health conditions.

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The guidance aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions and makes clear that students can be affected by a range of conditions – such as depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and substance misuse. Any of these can affect your studies, but in almost every case will not prevent you from completing your course and continuing a career in medicine. You can find this guidance at [www.gmc-uk.org/mentalhealth](http://www.gmc-uk.org/mentalhealth).

### **Help review our guidance on supporting disabled medical students**

In the 2015/16 academic year, 8% (3,343) of medical students declared a disability to their medical school. You can read a few of their experiences at [www.gmc-uk.org/sharedexperiences](http://www.gmc-uk.org/sharedexperiences).

We're revising our guidance for medical schools to make sure it gives the best advice for supporting medical students with long term health conditions and disabilities. We will also produce separate guidance for medical students. We'll publish these in 2018.

Your participation will help us create guidance that will be practical and useful for other students like you, your medical school and other schools in the UK. If you're interested in contributing to our health and disability work, go to [www.gmc-uk.org/gatewaysupdate](http://www.gmc-uk.org/gatewaysupdate) or email us at [quality@gmc-uk.org](mailto:quality@gmc-uk.org).

## Have fun, but know where to draw the line

University is an exciting time and it's important that you balance your study with enjoying yourself. But you must know where to draw the line.

Your studies will suffer if you spend too much time on social activities or have too many late nights. More importantly though, risky behaviour such as heavy drinking or drug use, including legal substances, could seriously affect your health and even your career. Remember: just because something is legal, it doesn't mean it's safe and so-called 'legal highs' can be extremely dangerous.

Your behaviour, even as a student, reflects on the medical profession as a whole. Doctors are one of the most trusted professions in the UK and this is a big consideration for us as the professional regulator. We will not register medical graduates who we believe won't be safe to practise medicine or who don't meet our standards for ethical conduct.

## What happens if things go wrong?

Everyone makes mistakes and everyone gets ill or finds it hard to cope sometimes. Some issues may be so significant that they are not compatible with you becoming a doctor, but the vast majority can be dealt with.

- **If you're finding it hard to cope for any reason, don't wait to ask for help.** The organisations listed on the inside back cover are useful sources of support, but your medical school also wants you to do well and will have its own systems in place to support and advise anyone who is struggling, for whatever reason.



They will keep a watchful eye out for any behaviour that could mean your professionalism is in question. They will also have local procedures to deal with any such problems and to support you in getting back on track where possible.

- **Be open and honest about problems.** Honesty is one of the fundamental qualities of medical professionalism, so lying about a problem will actually make it worse than admitting it and finding a way to deal with it.

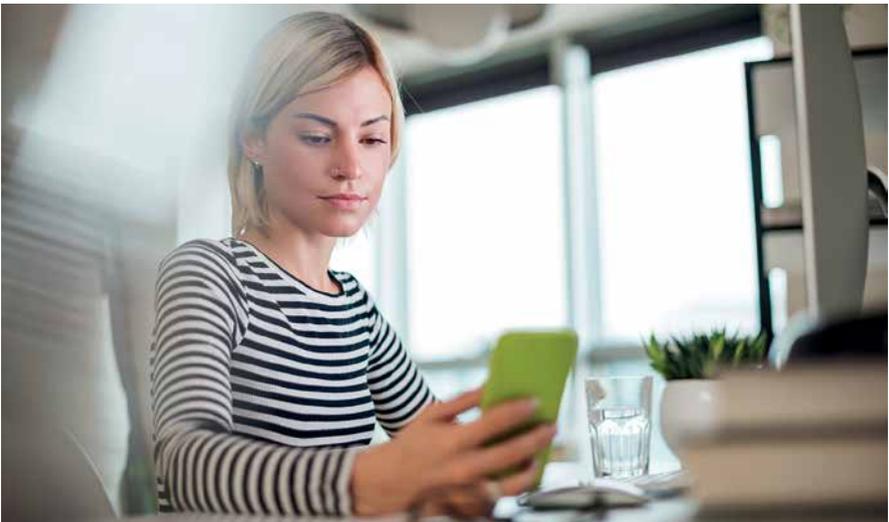
When you come to register with us, you will be asked to declare any past fitness to practise issues openly and honestly. We have a duty to look into all issues declared, but that doesn't mean that we won't then allow you to register as a doctor. We will, though, take the situation far more seriously if you have not told us about an issue and we subsequently find out about it.

“ The first few months of first year is all about exploring how you learn best. Not one learning method suits all, so figure yours out and you will be sure to succeed in medical school. ”

**Saad Khan.** Fourth year, intercalating student, at University of Birmingham

- **A note on police cautions.** Be aware that police cautions have a lasting legal status. You should not accept a caution from the police without taking legal advice.

If you receive a caution, you should discuss this with your medical school. You will also need to declare cautions or convictions that are not protected when you register with us along with other fitness to practise issues. For further information on what you should declare when applying for registration, see our website [www.gmc-uk.org/ftpdec](http://www.gmc-uk.org/ftpdec).



# New guidance to help you

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We've produced new guidance to help you prepare for becoming a doctor in the future.

As the UK regulator of doctors, we've spent a lot of time thinking about what the public can expect from every doctor registered with us.

In essence, what are the absolute musts for every doctor? What can you expect from your doctor, regardless of whether they are in a GP practice or a hospital, what they specialise in, or how or long they have been practising?

We decided these musts fall under four areas.

- Every doctor must have a certain level of **knowledge, skills, and performance**.
- Every doctor must prioritise patient **safety and quality**.
- Doctors work in partnership with colleagues and patients every day – so every doctor must demonstrate **communication, partnership and teamwork**.
- Every doctor must act in a way that **maintains the trust** in them as an individual and in the profession as a whole.



@DrMikeFarquhar



Sort out your sleep routine/habits as a student and stick to them as much as possible as a doctor!

## What does that mean for me?

When you graduate from medical school and register with us, we'll expect you to follow our standards in your day-to-day practice. Your medical school will help you build the skills to meet our standards throughout your degree. But these skills are complex, and doctors spend their entire careers honing them further. So we've translated our standards for doctors to show how they apply to you as a medical student.

*Achieving good medical practice* gives you practical advice about how to behave professionally and demonstrate the values expected of you as a medical student and a doctor. It deals with questions like how to be professional in clinical placements, dos and don'ts for social media, how to handle unconscious bias and how to behave outside medical school.

“ Use the first year of medical school as an opportunity to experiment with different learning styles, adapt to university life, surround yourself with the right people and essentially find a routine that best suits you – these are vital pillars that will help build a solid foundation for the rest of your degree. ”

**Sara Beqiri**, first year medical student at University College London

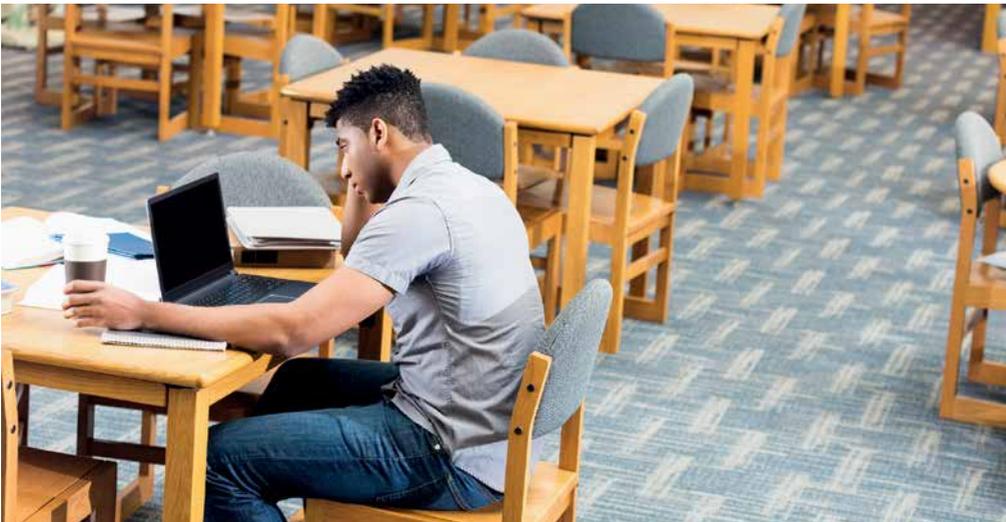
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## What do other students say about *Achieving good medical practice*?

'This guidance should be on the recommended reading list for all medical students.'

'By following the guidance from the moment we start medical school, up until the time we graduate to become doctors, gives enough time to practice and follow all we can to help us look after our self, our multidisciplinary team and our patients.'

'The way the guidance is worded helped emphasise that professionalism is not just about avoiding doing wrong – it is about actively trying to improve your skills and knowledge to provide the best possible patient care.'



## Where can I read the guidance?

You can read the guidance at [www.gmc-uk.org/studentftp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/studentftp). On this page you'll also find:

- a video by teachers from medical schools explaining why they think the guidance and professionalism are important
- our myth busters and questions about professionalism
- winning competition entries from other students about *Achieving good medical practice* from last year.

We'll also send you a copy of *Achieving good medical practice* in early 2018.



@SDeardoc



Don't let anyone grind you down. Don't believe you can't...  
Because you can!

# Useful resources for you

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## GMC news for students

*GMC news for students* is our e-bulletin for medical students. Whatever stage you are at in your medical education, this bulletin will help you keep up to date with our work and the latest learning materials.

It covers a wide range of topical issues – such as how you can use social media in your studies, the challenges students with a disability face, and ways for you to report and act on concerns about patient safety – with views from students and advice from doctors who are eminent in their field.

Thousands of students already get *GMC news for students*.

You can sign up at [www.gmc-uk.org/studentnewssignup](http://www.gmc-uk.org/studentnewssignup).

## Information for medical students

We've put all our information designed specifically for students into one handy place. The student section of our website lets you:

- find out about our role in medical education
- sign up to receive *GMC news for students*
- read all our published guidance
- get involved with our consultations
- find out how to apply for provisional registration, which you will need when you start practising as a doctor.

Head to [www.gmc-uk.org/students](http://www.gmc-uk.org/students) to see all this information for medical students.

## Guidance and interactive learning tools

You can find all our guidance on our website at [www.gmc-uk.org/guidance](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance).

Some of the guidance you might find most useful while studying at medical school include: *Doctors' use of social media*, *Confidentiality*, *Raising and acting on concerns about patient safety*, and *Personal beliefs and medical practice*.

### Order our guidance

To order hard copies of our guidance, email [publications@gmc-uk.org](mailto:publications@gmc-uk.org).

We've also developed a range of interactive learning tools to help you understand how the principles in our guidance apply to clinical practice. For example, in *Good medical practice in action* you can test your understanding of our guidance by choosing from over 60 scenarios highlighting different ethical issues. You can find all our learning materials at [www.gmc-uk.org/learningmaterials](http://www.gmc-uk.org/learningmaterials).

## Promoting high standards of medical education and training

You may also want to take a look at our standards for the education that medical schools provide. See [www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards.asp).

And you can see the types of things you will be able to do when you finish medical school at [www.gmc-uk.org/undergrad\\_outcomes](http://www.gmc-uk.org/undergrad_outcomes).

## Sources of support

There are a number of organisations that can support you if you're finding university life difficult.

### **British Medical Association (BMA)**

The BMA has an MSC Welfare Subcommittee committed to improving the welfare of medical students in the UK.

Go to [www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk).

### **Nightline**

Nightline is a confidential support service run by students at universities across the UK. Visit their website to find your local support line at [www.nightline.ac.uk](http://www.nightline.ac.uk).

### **Samaritans**

Samaritans provide confidential emotional support 24 hours a day.

Find out more at [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk).

### **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices has a range of information about student health, covering issues including stress and mental health, nutrition and sexual health.

You can find this at [www.nhs.uk/livewell/studenthealth](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/studenthealth).

Email: [gmc@gmc-uk.org](mailto:gmc@gmc-uk.org)

Website: [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

Telephone: **0161 923 6602**

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

## Join the conversation

 [@gmcuk](https://twitter.com/gmcuk)

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 [linkd.in/gmcuk](https://linkd.in/gmcuk)

 [youtube.com/gmcuktv](https://youtube.com/gmcuktv)

To ask for this publication in Welsh, or in another format or language, please call us on **0161 923 6602** or email us at [publications@gmc-uk.org](mailto:publications@gmc-uk.org).

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