Working Practices

1. The Council of 35 is the governing body of the GMC, and whose function is for the development and implementation of strategy and its plans.

The role of Committees

2. Committees of the Council assist Council by developing policies and strategies by which Council fulfils its statutory duties. The Chief Executive is responsible for implementing Council policies and strategies and for reporting back appropriately to committees and Council on their success. The working practices are complementary to the standing orders and aim to give practical guidance for the smooth running of meetings.

3. Council meetings are directed towards understanding and choosing between options.

4. Where policies or operational procedures are being developed, reviewed or amended, the detailed work is expected to be done in the appropriate committee.

5. The functional responsibilities of a committee may be undertaken by the committee itself or may be delegated. Committees have full discretion to delegate work to short-life working groups or sub-committees, but remain responsible for the exercise of the powers given to them by Council. Normally there should be at least one Council member on sub-committees or working groups.

Terms of Reference

6. The Terms of Reference for all committees and working groups of Council will be defined by Council and will include details of membership, quorum, authorities, duties, voting and reporting requirements. They will clearly define the role of members and staff, where decisions should be taken and how members or staff account for them.

7. The Terms of Reference for all sub-committees and working groups of committees will be defined by the committee which created them. They will include details of membership, quorum, authorities, duties, voting and reporting requirements. They will clearly define the role of members and staff, where decisions should be taken and how members or staff account for them.

8. The President is an ex-officio member of all council committees except those from which he is excluded (e.g. Audit), though he may choose not to attend.
9. The Chief Executive has a right to attend all committees, except those whose Terms of Reference provide to the contrary, for example the Audit or Remuneration Committees.

10. The co-opted membership of committees and their voting powers are defined in their terms of reference.

11. Contributions from all members, staff, associate members and others should be actively encouraged and respected. Staff, associates and invitees may be co-opted on to committees and working groups and invited to contribute to Council. Teamwork must be actively promoted and improved.

Committee papers

12. All committee papers dealing with governance and policy issues will be available to all Council members via the members’ pages of the GMC web-site at the same time as paper copies are made available to committee members. Exceptions would include sensitive documents (including those that refer to individuals) such as those presented to the Remuneration Committee and all individual cases before the relevant FtP or Registration Committees. Only Council members have access to the members’ web-pages.

13. Case papers prepared in fitness to practise or registration, whether or not they are prepared for committees, will only be available to members considering the case and relevant staff. They will not be supplied to other Council Members or staff.

14. Council papers are produced by the office, on behalf of the whole Council, and not just the relevant committee. Advice on the papers will be taken from the Chairman, the committee and other Council members / interested parties.

Arrangements for meetings

15. Meetings should be scheduled well in advance and changed only in exceptional circumstances. There should be recognition of the need to arrange diaries, clinics and other appointments.

16. Agendas for meetings should include standing items such as:

   a. Previous minutes.
   b. Matters arising.
   c. Activity Reports, etc.

17. It may also be useful to set an indicative timetable against each agenda item to facilitate the extent of the discussion. It may also be useful to include an item towards the end of the agenda to agree the contents of any report to Council.
18. Except in exceptional circumstances members of committees should observe a cut-off date for apologies to avoid in-quorate meetings, limiting useful discussions and wasting actual attendees time and GMC resources.

19. Council members and members of staff may be members of any working groups or sub-committee created by a committee of which they are not a member.

20. Papers for Council, committees, working groups and sub-groups should be circulated well in advance of meetings. Those preparing papers should be encouraged to adopt a paper format that drives the identification of the reasons for recommendations and also for those options that are not to be recommended.

21. Attendees should ensure they are fully briefed on papers on which they are expected to contribute to a decision. Authors’ names on papers should be provided so they may be contacted in advance to explain a point or discuss an issue. This approach avoids the need for a lengthy introduction to a paper and avoids wasting time at the meeting. Only in exceptional circumstances should papers be tabled on the day of a meeting.

**Minutes and reporting requirements**

22. Minutes of Council meetings will be produced and distributed within 14 days and (in so far as is consistent with preserving personal, commercial legal or other confidentiality) will be included on the agenda for the next Council meeting.

23. All Council meetings and discussions should be in public save where issues of personal, commercial, legal or other confidentiality arise.

24. Transcripts should be kept of all Council meetings and discussions unless, by decision of the Council members present, the transcript is suspended.

25. The circulation of minutes of committees and working groups will be defined in their terms of reference.

26. Where necessary and in advance of minutes being prepared and circulated action point lists should be prepared and issued shortly after a meeting to ensure those responsible for action act expeditiously.

27. Minutes of committee meetings will detail:
   a. Decisions taken and the reasons they were taken.
   b. Decisions outside of delegated powers that must be referred back to Council and recommendations.
   c. Issues that Council should take particular note of.
28. Some sub-committees and working groups may report their work to more than one committee (for example there may be an overlap between the FPC and the Standards Committee). Where this happens a clear agreement, through its Terms of Reference, must be reached as to which committee retains the responsibility for the sub-committee.

**Decision Making outside Committees**

29. There may be circumstances when matters would have been best considered by a committee in advance of being brought to the full Council, but circumstances make this difficult. As a pragmatic solution to this and with the agreement of the committee chairman it may be appropriate to circumvent the committee and refer directly to the Council.

30. There may also be circumstances where decisions need to be taken by the President and/or the Chief Executive and/or committee chairman, outside of the committee and Council structure. In these circumstances these decisions will be taken to the committee at the earliest opportunity. It may be necessary to hold either virtual or teleconference meetings. If so, these should be minuted and reported to either a committee or to Council.

31. As good practice all committee chairmen have an explicit right of access to the President and to the Chief Executive.


Responsibilities of a Committee Chairman.

The Role of the Chairman

1. The role of the Chairman of a committee or working group is to lead its work and ensure that it remains focussed on its business, acts within its powers and properly accounts for the conduct of its business.

2. The Chairman should have a good knowledge of the committee or working group’s terms of reference and powers and should ensure that the committee follows the good working practices adopted by council.

Dates of meetings

3. The Chairman should agree the dates of meetings with the secretariat.

4. Normally meeting dates should be agreed yearly. Exceptionally, additional meetings may be called to meet business demands. Planned meetings should only be rearranged with the agreement of the committee.

Business

5. The Chairman should work closely with the committee secretariat to plan the committee’s business for the year ahead, consistent with the GMC business plan, and to agree an agenda for each meeting.

6. The committee secretariat will brief the Chairman on issues likely to arise during the meeting and ensure that the Chairman has the appropriate information on hand.

7. The committee secretariat will brief the Chairman on the terms of reference, remit and powers of the committee. It is the Chairman’s responsibility to ensure that the committee acts within it powers or, in exceptional circumstances, to justify any action outside its powers.

8. The secretariat will brief the Chairman if a meeting becomes, or is likely to become, inquorate. The Chairman should discuss with the committee how to take business forward in these circumstances.

9. The Chairman should ensure that committee business is conducted professionally and that respect is given to everyone. The Chairman should deal robustly with any inappropriate or offensive behaviour and ensure that all members behaviour is consistent with the GMC’s commitment to equality and diversity.

10. The Chairman should ensure that all members are given the opportunity to contribute; no member should dominate the discussion to the exclusion of others.
11. The Chairman should ensure that members of staff and observers should be actively encouraged to contribute to committee discussions. Working with the Committee Secretary the Chairman should ensure that only voting members participate in any decision making.

12. The Chairman should ensure that new members are welcomed to the committee and that arrangements are in place for any necessary induction or training.

13. The Chairman should ensure that appropriate time is given to each agenda item and that priority business is completed.

14. Where committee business impacts on the work of other committees the Chairman should ensure that there is appropriate liaison between the committees.

15. As good practice all committee chairmen have an explicit right of access to the President and to the Chief Executive.

16. There may be circumstances when matters would have been best considered by a committee in advance of being brought to the full Council, but circumstances make this difficult. It will be the Chairman’s responsibility to agree that this is the best way to take the business forward. Where such a decision has been taken the Chairman should tell the committee why the decision has been taken as soon as possible.

**Accountability**

17. The Chairman, liaising with the secretariat, should ensure that minutes are produced and circulated promptly, and that actions or matters arising are dealt with appropriately.

18. The Chairman, liaising with the secretariat, should ensure that the committee reports appropriately and accurately to Council by placing them on the members website.

19. There may be circumstances where decisions need to be taken by the Chairman, outside of the committee. If so the Chairman should take the decision to the committee at the earliest opportunity.

**Working Groups**

20. The Chairman should ensure that any working group set up by the committee has an agreed remit, appropriate terms of reference and reporting arrangements, and a defined life span.
Responsibilities of the Committee Secretariat.

The role of the Secretariat

1. The role of the Secretariat is to manage a committee’s meetings and business so that it can function effectively and achieve its objectives within the GMC’s business plan. The Secretariat will undertake a range of functions including policy development and implementation, technical and procedural advice and administrative support.

2. The Secretariat should have a working knowledge of the committee or working group’s terms of reference and powers as well as relevant Standing Orders and the good working practices adopted by Council.

Dates of meetings

3. The Secretariat should agree the dates of meetings with the committee.

4. Normally meeting dates should be agreed yearly. Exceptionally, additional meetings may be called to meet business demands. Planned meetings should only be rearranged with the agreement of the committee.

Business

5. The Secretariat should work closely with the Committee Chairman to plan the committee’s business for the year ahead, within with the GMC business plan, and to agree an agenda for each meeting.

6. The Secretariat should brief the Chairman on issues likely to arise during the meeting and ensure that the Chairman has the appropriate information to hand. The Secretariat should arrange a briefing meeting with the Chairman before each committee meeting.

7. The Secretariat should brief the Chairman on the terms of reference, remit and powers of the committee. The Secretariat should advise the Chairman if it appears the committee is acting (or is about to act) outside its powers. The Secretariat should ensure that the Chairman provides written justification for any action which is outside the committee’s powers.

8. The Secretariat should advise the Chairman if a meeting becomes, or is likely to become, inquorate.

9. The Secretariat should advise the Chairman if a committee member appears to be behaving in a manner which is not consistent with the GMC’s commitment to equality and diversity.

10. The Committee Secretary should brief the Chairman as to which participants are voting members of the committee and should advise the Chairman if it appears that non-voting members are participating in decision making.
11. The Secretariat should advise the Chairman if it appears a participant is not being offered the opportunity to contribute to a meeting.

12. The Secretariat should work with the Chairman to ensure that new members are welcomed to the committee and that arrangements are in place for any necessary induction or training.

13. The Secretariat should advise the Chairman on the timing of business at the meeting especially if it appears that the committee do not have sufficient time available to make decisions on all agenda items.

14. Where committee business impacts on the work of other committees the Secretariat should ensure that the relevant committees are aware of the issues and assist the Chairman in liaising with colleagues.

15. The Secretariat should raise any urgent business with the Chairman between meetings and brief the Chairman as to the options for taking the work forward.

16. As good practice all committee chairmen have an explicit right of access to the President and to the Chief Executive.

17. The Secretariat should ensure that work is carried forward between meetings and that papers are produced and circulated according to agreed service standards in advance of the meeting.

18. The Secretariat will ensure that the service standards are met or, in exceptional circumstances, account for the reasons why the standards have not been met.

Accountability

19. The Secretariat will produce draft minutes for approval by the Chairman and should distribute the minutes promptly. The Committee Secretary will identify any actions or matters arising and ensure that they are dealt with appropriately.

20. The Secretariat will prepare the necessary reports to enable the Committee to report appropriately and accurately to Council. Those reports will be cleared by the Chairman.

21. There may be circumstances where decisions need to be taken by the Chairman, outside of the committee. If so the Secretariat should ensure that the Chairman takes the decision to the committee at the earliest opportunity.
Working Groups

22. The Secretariat should produce a draft remit and terms of reference, to be cleared by the Chairman, for any working group set up by the committee.

23. Additionally the Secretariat will recommend to the Chairman reporting arrangements and an agreed lifespan for any such working group.
Terms of Reference Template for Committees of Council

Name

1. Constitution

1.1 The Committee is defined by Council. This will be recorded in the minutes of Council, and in Standing Orders.

2. Membership

2.1 As necessary to do the work. Will be made up of Council and if necessary, non-Council members. The composition of the group will be recorded in the minutes Council. Members of the group, who are non-Council members, will be there due to their position externally.

2.2 Number of co-opted members (if any) and voting powers.

2.2 Number of staff (in attendance – non voting).

2.3 Define if Chief Executive is eligible to attend.

2.4 Define quorum.

2.5 Define how Chairman is decided.

2.6 Decide when membership is reviewed / decided.

3. Frequency of Meetings

3.1 As necessary.

4. Authority

4.1 Has delegated authority from the Council.

5. Duties

5.1 The purpose of the group is set out and agreed by Council.

5.2 The duties of the group are set out and agreed by Council.

5.3 The scope of the group is set out and agreed by Council.

6. Reporting and Circulation of Minutes

6.1 The minutes of the meeting will be posted on the members website following agreement by the Chairman.

6.2 The Committee will report at least annually to Council.
Terms of Reference Template for Working Groups

Name

1. Constitution

1.2 The Committee is defined by the parent Committee of Council. This will be recorded in the minutes of the Committee, and so reported to Council.

2. Membership

2.2 Number of co-opted members (if any) and voting powers.

2.4 Number of staff (in attendance – non voting).

2.3 Define if Chief Executive is eligible to attend

2.4 Define quorum.

2.5 Define how Chairman is decided.

2.6 Decide when membership is reviewed / decided.

3. Frequency of Meetings

3.1 As necessary.

5. Authority

4.2 Has delegated authority from the parent Committee.

5. Duties

5.1 The purpose of the group is set out and agreed the parent Committee.

5.2 The duties of the group are set out and agreed the parent Committee.

5.3 The scope of the group is set out and agreed the parent Committee.
6. Reporting and Circulation of Minutes

6.1 The minutes of the meeting will be posted on the members website following agreement by the Chairman.
Diagram showing hierarchy of Council, Committees and Working Groups

GMC COUNCIL

WORKING GROUPS,
e.g. Committee Working Group, Strategy Development Group,
Shipman Steering Group

STANDARDS
& ETHICS

EDUCATION

REGISTRATION

FIT TO PRACTICE

INVESTIGATION

REDC

RESOURCES

REMUNERATION

AUDIT

PATIENT & PUBLIC REFERENCE GROUP
Functions not monitored

1. To identify key policy issues facing the GMC and formulate strategies and timetables for dealing with them.

2. To maintain an overview of GMC policy initiatives and assess their impact and effectiveness.

3. To co-ordinate the work of committees; keep their priorities under review; and take overall responsibility for policy development where the subject matter spans the responsibility of more than one committee.

4. To make recommendations to the Council on issues concerning its constitution and governance.

5. To decide and develop GMC strategy on external affairs and communications.

6. To oversee proposals for amendment of the primary and secondary legislation that governs the GMC’s work.

7. To co-ordinate the GMC’s response to initiatives by the Government or other bodies which have implications for the profession.

8. To assist the President with recommendations to Council on the appointment of members to undertake specific functions.

9. To advise the President on matters whose urgency requires immediate action.