

## Declaring health issues

When you apply to join the medical register, you need to tell us about any health conditions that could affect your fitness to practise.

Our application will ask a series of questions about your health, but before you answer these questions you should read this guide carefully.

## Your health and patient safety

### Why your health matters

Medicine is a rewarding profession, but we understand it can also be challenging and stressful. Taking care of your patient is the first duty of every doctor. To do this, you need to look after your own health and wellbeing.

You may not need to tell us about every health condition. This is because the effect that a health condition has can vary from person to person.

Whether you need to declare it will depend on the seriousness of your condition, the help you may be receiving, and how much insight you have into its impact on your practice. Your ability to work safely can be enhanced by the support network you have, whether that is at medical school, at work or at home from the clinician(s) treating you.

We need to know about the effect that a health condition may be having on your ability to care for your patients, rather than about the condition itself.

Even if you answer yes to one of the questions, if you can show that you are managing your health and that it will not affect patient safety, it is unlikely there will be an impact on the outcome of your application.

### What does *Good medical practice* say about doctors' health?

Paragraph 28 of [Good medical practice](#) says that if you know or suspect that you have a serious condition that you could pass on to patients, or if your judgement or performance could be affected by a condition or its treatment, you must consult a suitably-qualified colleague (an independent licensed doctor or health professional).

You must follow their advice about any changes to your practice they believe necessary. You must not rely on your own assessment of the risk to patients.

# Do I need to tell you about my health condition?

In your application you will be presented with the statements in the green boxes below. If a statement applies to you, you'll need to tell us more about your health condition. To help you, we have explained each statement in the text below it.

Throughout this guidance, we use the term 'health condition' to mean an illness, injury, disability, or impairment. This includes physical and mental conditions.

## The questions

### **Statement 1**

I have, or have had a health condition(s) which required me to change one or more aspects of my medical training or practice, to enable me to work safely with patients or to continue my training.

A 'change' in this context means that you have been advised or requested to change your practice, training or study. This could include adaptations to equipment, additional support, facilities or changes to your working arrangements such as less-than-full-time work. The change could be required or recommended by your medical school, foundation school, employer, occupational health service, treating physician/health professional, or you might have requested it yourself.

### **Statement 2**

I have, or have had, a health condition(s) which has resulted in an interruption to, or breaks in my medical practice or studies, including retaking any part of my course or assessments/exams.

An interruption means one or more breaks that have had a major impact on your medical practice, study or clinical placements due to a physical or mental health condition.

For medical students, this is most likely to mean breaks that have resulted in you becoming 'out of step' with your peers. For example, this might have meant that due to your condition you will graduate a year later than planned, or you have had to stop your studies for a significant length of time and re-joined your course at a later point.

For established doctors, this is likely to result in you having taken a significant break from, or ended your employment or interrupted your training. If your physical or mental health condition was not a reason for an interruption or break, you don't need to declare it here.

### **Statement 3**

I have, or have had, a health condition(s), which has resulted in conditions being placed or undertakings being agreed in relation to my medical practice, training or registration.

A 'condition' means certain restrictions have been placed on your practice (such as not performing a particular procedure).

An 'undertaking' is an agreement, usually between a medical regulator or a medical school and you, about how you will adjust your practice to ensure patient safety. Undertakings may also include restrictions on your practice.

### **Statement 4**

I have, or have had, a health condition(s) which has been considered under fitness to practise proceedings whether in the UK or overseas.

'Fitness to practise proceedings' means a process to decide whether your fitness to practise is impaired, resulting from concerns about your ability to practise safely and effectively.

For students, this includes fitness to practise processes within medical schools, or any other medical school investigation into the impact of your health or ability to complete the course.

For established doctors, this may have been proceedings carried out by your employer or by a medical regulator either in the UK or overseas.

### **Statement 5**

Is there anything about your physical or mental health, which could prevent you meeting the standards described in our guidance?

Our guidance includes [Good medical practice](#) and [Outcomes for provisionally registered doctors](#).



## What happens if I declare a condition?

### If you answer yes to a question in your declaration

If you answer yes to any of the statements, we'll ask you to provide further information about your health condition in your online application as well as:

- how it has affected you
- how it has affected your medial practice or studies
- how you are managing it
- any relevant dates of occurrences and treatment

Once we have your information, we'll aim to assess it within five working days.

If we need more information or any supporting evidence we'll let you know. In a small number of cases, we may ask for more information from a third party. For example, from an occupational health practitioner, a doctor or a health professional who is treating you. But if we do, we'll ask for your consent.

### We treat your health information with confidence

We treat all matters about your health in the strictest confidence. We only share information with those who need it to deal with your application, such as the caseworker and the assistant registrar (the decision maker) who is dealing with your application. If the assistant registrar wants advice from a registration panel, your application will also be shared with the panellists.

Our staff and registration panellists have all had comprehensive training on keeping confidential information secure.

### We make decisions on health issues as quickly as we can

We know how important it is to give you a quick decision on your application, so we make decisions on applications as soon as we can. Throughout the process we give you regular updates on how your application is progressing. In most cases – about 80% – where a health condition has been declared we make a decision to approve an application within four weeks.

## **Some applications can take a little longer**

Some applications can take a bit longer for a number of reasons. For example if there are a number of complex factors to consider or if we are waiting for evidence from you. Or in some cases, an assistant registrar will decide that they need advice from a panel. If your application is referred to a panel for advice we will give you:

- the date of the panel
- opportunity to send further information to us
- further information about what happens at the registration panels.

Very occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, we have to make the difficult decision to refuse an application. If we refuse your application, we'll send you a detailed report to explain our decision. You'll also have a right to appeal the decision. If your application is refused, you can make a further application and send evidence to show that you've addressed the concerns we identified in our decision.

## **You can help speed up our decision on a health issue**

Where we can grant a licence, we want to give you our decision early so that you are ready to take up your offer of employment. You can help by:

- making your application at least three months before you first need to start work.
- giving us all the information we have asked for, promptly
- keeping your contact details up to date by logging on to [GMC Online](#).

If you do not send us the information we ask for in the timeframe we give you, or keep us up to date, then we may close your application.

## **Frequently asked questions and useful links**

### **Is a disability considered a health condition for the purposes of this declaration?**

The important thing is whether your health condition, illness or disability, impacts on your ability to work safely with patients. In many cases, doctors with a disability or health condition can practise medicine safely.

If, as a result of any health condition, illness or disability, you have answered yes to any of the statements above, you should tell us about it when you complete the declaration section of your application, relating to fitness to practise and health matters.

## Who else might I need to tell about my health condition?

You have a duty to tell your employer about any health condition that may affect your ability to practise medicine.

If you are in a Foundation Programme year one post or a locum appointment for training post, you'll need to make sure that your foundation school or employer knows about your condition(s). They may need to make reasonable adjustments so you can work safely with patients. The national transfer of information process is the best way to tell your foundation school that you need reasonable adjustments. You can [find out more about this process on the Medical Schools Council's website](#).

## If I have a health condition, will you refuse to register me?

Having a health condition is not, in itself, a reason for us to refuse to grant a licence. What we're looking at, is whether your health affects your fitness to practise. Even if your illness is serious, it doesn't necessarily mean that you can't practise safely.

We do need to assure ourselves that you are managing your condition and that patients are protected. Sometimes we may ask for evidence to show that you are seeking appropriate support or treatment for your own benefit and to ensure your continued safe practice.

## When do you need to request information from a third party?

In making your application for a licence to practise, you have agreed that we can make investigations. Sometimes, when dealing with matters of health, we will need to contact a third party for further information; in these cases we will ask for additional consent from you.

We will send you a copy of any information we receive from third parties and ask for your comments on it, before we make a decision on your application.

## What should I do if I want you to share information about my application with a third party?

If you want us to share information with a third party (this might be your medical school, foundation school or employer) about what is happening with your application for a licence, you will need to give us your written consent.

## What things do you consider when deciding if my health condition affects my fitness to practise?

If you tell us about a physical or mental health condition, we must decide whether it affects your fitness to practise. We ask ourselves questions such as:

- Does your health condition affect your judgement or your ability to care for patients?
- Have you sought independent advice and treatment for your condition from a suitably qualified independent healthcare professional?
- If appropriate, have you followed their advice for managing the condition, including taking prescribed medication and making changes to your medical practice, so that you can work safely with patients?
- If appropriate, have you told your employer or potential employer about your condition and about any adjustments you need so that you can work safely with patients?

## What will happen if I don't tell you about a relevant health condition?

We recognise that it can be difficult to decide whether you need to tell us about a health condition. We only need to know about those conditions where the statements set out in the Do I need to tell you about my health condition (above) apply.

Having read this guidance, if you decide not to tell us about a relevant health condition, it will raise additional concern if we find that your condition could impact on your fitness to practise.

In reaching that conclusion we will take the following into account whether you:

- gave a reasonable explanation for not telling us
- made a deliberate decision to conceal information relevant to your fitness to practise or you were trying to mislead us



- have insight into the effect of your condition, and are fully aware of the potential impact on your ability to work safely with patients.

## What advice do you have on managing my health?

If you are managing a health condition or living with a disability whilst being a doctor, you may find the following links helpful.

- Our [your health matters leaflet](#)
- Our [guidance on managing your health](#)
- Our [gateways guidance on access to medical education for disabled people](#)

## Other useful guidance

You may also find the following links helpful

- [Good medical practice](#)
- [Promoting excellence: standards for medical education and training](#)
- [Outcomes for graduates](#)
- [Outcomes for provisionally registered doctors](#)
- [Medical students: professionalism and fitness to practise](#)
- [Gateways to the professions – advising medical schools: encouraging disabled students](#)
- [Supporting medical students with mental health conditions](#)
- [Equality Act 2010 – guidance](#)

# Guide on completing the declaration of fitness to practise

As part of an application to join, leave or re-join the register, you must complete a declaration of fitness to practise.

These declarations are valid for three months and should be no older than that when we approve and grant your application. If the declarations were completed more than three months ago we will ask you to complete new declarations.

## Declaring health matters

To help you decide if there is anything you need to tell us about your physical or mental health please read our [guide on fitness to practise and health matters](#).

### *Why read this guide?*

To understand what to expect when you complete our fitness to practise declaration.

### *Next steps*

If you're ready to apply, log into your GMC Online account.

## The fitness to practise questions you'll be asked

When you apply for registration with a licence to practise or to restore your licence to practise, you'll be asked the 12 questions below in the fitness to practise character declaration section. You should complete the declaration by choosing YES or NO for each question.

### The questions

#### Question 1

Do you have any cautions or convictions which are not deemed 'protected' under the amendment to the Exceptions Order 1975, issued by a court of law in the UK or in any other country?

*What should you declare?*

You must include any:

- convictions or cautions in the UK, or another country that have been spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 unless they are a 'protected' conviction or caution ([see protected spent caution and conviction guidance notes](#) for details)
- road traffic convictions or cautions unless they are a 'protected' conviction or caution ([see protected spent caution and conviction guidance notes](#) for details). Please note that you do not have to declare any road traffic offences where you have accepted a fixed penalty notice for road traffic offences where you were not convicted by a court of law for that offence
- offences for which you have been convicted in a military court or tribunal.

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Whether you received a caution or if you were convicted of an offence.
- The date of the caution or conviction.
- The offence the caution or conviction was issued for.
- If known, the name and address of the issuing court or police authority.
- Any other information that you believe will help to explain the circumstances that led to the caution or conviction.

### *Why we ask these questions*

We have powers to require all applicants to disclose their criminal past.

These powers apply equally to applicants from any part of the UK or overseas. The powers are set out in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 ('the Exceptions Order') as amended by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013.

You can read our [guidance on declaring protected convictions and cautions](#) carefully and ensure you declare all offences in line with the above noted Acts. You should not declare any offences that are protected by law.

### **Question 2**

Have you ever been issued with a fixed penalty notice in the UK or another country?

#### *What should you declare?*

You need to declare any fixed penalty notices you have been issued with in the UK or another country with the exception of:

- any road traffic offences where you have accepted the option of paying a fixed penalty notice. e.g FPN issued for speeding offence or civil matters such as parking tickets.
- A fixed penalty notice issued in Scotland. This follows amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act which specifically provides that fixed penalty notices issued in Scotland are protected from disclosure.

#### *Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- The date you received the fixed penalty notice.
- The offence the fixed penalty was issued for.
- If known, the name and address of the authority who issued you with the fixed penalty notice.
- A statement providing any other information that will help to explain the circumstances that led to the fixed penalty notice being issued.

### **Question 3**

Have you ever been issued with a penalty notice for disorder, or harassment notice, in the UK or another country?

### *What should you declare?*

You need to declare any penalty notices for disorder or harassment notices you have received in the UK or another country with the exception of any penalty notices for disorder or harassment notices issued in Scotland.

### *Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- The date you received the notice.
- The offence the notice was issued for.
- If known, the name and address of the authority who issued you with the notice.
- A statement providing any other information that will help to explain the circumstances that led to the notice being issued.

### **Question 4**

Have you ever been suspended from duty, or had a complaint upheld or your registration or licence to practise removed while working as a medical practitioner, or health or social care professional in the UK or another country?

### *Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- The name of the organisation/employer involved
- Further information on the circumstances, and the nature and length of time the sanction was imposed.
- The nature of the complaint and a named person to contact for further information. e.g. complaints manager at University of Healthcare Organisation.

### **Question 5**

Have you ever been refused registration or a licence to practise by any medical, health or social care regulator in the UK or another country?

### *Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Details of the regulator who refused registration/licence to practise.

- Further information on the circumstances, and the grounds of the refusal and information of any appeal on the refusal of registration (successful or not).

### **Question 6**

Have you ever been fined, given a warning or reprimanded by any medical, health, social care or any other regulator in the UK or another country?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Details of the regulator that imposed the sanction, including your reference/registration number.
- Further information on the circumstances, and the grounds of sanction/warning and information of any appeal (successful or not).

### **Question 7**

Are you aware of any aspect of your conduct and/or capability that might raise a question about your fitness to practise as a doctor in the UK?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

Further information on the circumstances of the issue and how you believe it may raise a question about your fitness to practise.

### **Question 8**

Have you ever entered into a settlement as a result of a medical malpractice or negligence claim?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

Further information on the circumstances, including a statement on the nature of the medical malpractice/negligence that led to it. Please tell us if the claim was proven or disputed.

## **Question 9**

Has a medical school or university ever taken any form of disciplinary action and/or fitness to practise procedures against you?

*What should you declare?*

You need to tell us if a medical school or university has ever taken any form of formal disciplinary action and/or fitness to practise procedures against you.

You must tell us about any formal written proceedings you have been involved in (including written warnings or formally recorded investigations).

You do not need to declare any verbal warnings that were not formally recorded on your medical school records and that didn't lead to any subsequent action or investigation against you.

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Further information on the circumstances, including a statement on the background to the matter and any disciplinary action taken. Please tell us whether you received any sanction by a fitness to practise hearing/committee/board/panel at your medical school. Please also include any relevant dates and any other information you would wish us to consider.
- Contact names and contact details (address, email and telephone number) of person(s) involved at the medical school that we can approach to secure further information and details.

## **Question 10**

Has an employer ever taken disciplinary action against you?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Further information on the circumstances and reason why your employer took action against you which will assist us to consider your application.
- Contact names and contact details (address, email and telephone number) of person(s) involved at the employing organisation that we can approach to secure further information and details if required.

### **Question 11**

Do you know of any reason why the medical regulatory authority in any of the countries where you have worked since qualifying as a doctor would refuse to grant you a certificate of good standing?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Further information on the circumstances, and reason why you have not been able to secure the certificate(s) of good standing.
- The name of the medical regulatory authority.
- Your registration details with that authority.

### **Question 12**

Are there, or do you know of, any current or future proceedings or other matters that might lead to your registration or a licence to practise in any country being removed, suspended or restricted in any way?

*Information you should provide in your supporting statement*

- Further information on the circumstances and nature of the proceedings that will help us to consider this issue further.
- The names of the regulating or employing bodies and/or persons involved in the matter(s)
- Contact names and contact details (address, email and telephone number) of person(s) involved the proceedings/action whom we can approach to secure further information and details.

## Honesty and integrity

### Being honest in your application

Honesty and integrity are at the heart of medical professionalism. Our expectations of you in this area are covered in paragraphs 65-80 of [\*Good medical practice\*](#).



You must be honest when applying for registration with us. If you are not, we may refuse your application.

If your registration is approved or granted and we later discover you did not tell us about a relevant issue, we will investigate this and may open a fitness to practise case. This could lead to your name being removed from the register.

If you're not sure whether a matter is important, please tell us about it and provide full details so that we can decide.

## How long will it take to process my application?

### Each application is different

We can't say how long it will take to reach a decision on your application. We do all we can to minimise delays but it may take us some time to complete our investigations.

Our procedures allow us to ask for more information. We cannot issue a decision until we have all the necessary information. We must strike a balance between the interests of the applicant and our responsibility to protect the health and safety of the public. We can't guarantee how long it will take to issue a decision. We'll keep you informed on progress during the course of our investigations.

There are some matters which may result in it taking us longer than we would wish to reach a decision. This might be for one of the reasons below but there will be others.

- If you raise a concern and cannot supply the required documentary evidence, we may ask you to obtain a recent Enhanced Disclosure report from the Criminal Records Bureau (this may take at least eight weeks to receive)
- Where we are asking for information from overseas
- Where we are asking for information from a number of different bodies and/or parties

### Practice when you are waiting for the decision

You cannot take up an F1 post until we grant you provisional registration with a licence to practise. Similarly, you cannot progress to F2, or undertake any duties that require full registration, until we grant you full registration with a licence to practise.

If you practise outside the scope of your registration, or without a licence to

practise, this may call into question any registration that you hold or any current application for registration.