January 2020

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION AND QUALIFICATIONS CHECKS
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INTRODUCTION

What is a professional registration and qualification check?

This standard outlines the type of checks employers must carry out to assure themselves that prospective employees are qualified and competent to perform a particular role.

This entails verifying that the individual:

- has the necessary skills and qualifications for the job they are applying for and
- if applicable to the role, they are registered with the relevant professional body and they meet the required standards of training, competency and conduct to practice safely in their chosen profession.

In all cases, only the qualifications that form part of the requirements for the position being applied for will need to be verified.

Importance of professional registration and qualification checks

Professional regulation is intended to protect the public, ensuring that those who practice in a particular profession are committed to providing high standards of care.

There are currently eight main regulatory bodies in health, with more than one million health professionals on their registers. Their main functions include:

- establishing standards of competence, ethics and conduct
- establishing standards for training
- keeping a register of those who meet the standards
- dealing with registrants who fall short. For example, by placing conditions on their registration or erasing them from the register.

Qualification checks help employers verify the information about any educational or professional qualifications that the individual has outlined in their application form.
SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION CHECKS

Minimum requirements

Employers must check the registration of all healthcare professionals with the appropriate regulatory body before they allow that individual to start employment with them. This will verify that:

- the applicant is actually the person registered with that regulatory body
- there are no restrictions to their registration that would affect their ability to undertake the duties of the role being offered
- there are no pending investigations on their fitness to practise.

Employers must have the consent of the health professional and their registration number to check their registration.

Checking an applicant’s professional registration in itself does not guarantee their suitability for a particular role, employers must always seek the necessary assurances by carrying out the full range of checks outlined in the [NHS Employment Check Standards](#).

Where relevant to the position being recruited to, it should be made a contractual condition for healthcare workers to maintain their professional registration with the relevant regulatory or licensing body throughout their term of employment. In the event that an individual’s registration is suspended, the employer should treat this as an exclusion from the work for which the registration is required and manage it accordingly.

Further information about how to check registration with a professional regulatory body can be found in appendix one.

Recruiting from the European Union (EU)

Professional regulatory bodies are required to make certain types of professional registration more widely available to EU healthcare professionals who wish to practice in the UK under the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualification (MRPQ) Directive of the European Qualifications [Health and Social Care Professions] Regulations 2015. The directive which came into force in January 2016, is intended to improve mobility of health professionals (and other professionals) across Europe, while maintaining stringent safeguards and checks to ensure their competency. After the UK leaves the European Union [with or without a deal], alternative arrangements will come into force to replace the MRPQ directive and EU workers will be able to continue to practise in the UK. For the most up to date information and full information regarding MRPQ for new staff after the UK exists the European Union, see the section on the UK departure from the EU on the [NHS Employers website](#), and the associated guidance on the [gov.uk website](#).

Professional regulatory bodies also have the ability to assess and approve any applications to practice in the UK on a temporary, occasional or case-by-case basis. Employers should be extra vigilant in checking an EU national’s professional registration and qualifications, to ensure they are
appropriately registered and qualified to undertake the type and range of duties required for a particular role.

**Accredited registers**

Accredited registers can help employers seek the necessary assurance that health practitioners working in unregulated health care occupations meet high levels of education, skills and expertise to practise in their chosen profession.

If a healthcare professional is listed on one the Professional Standards Authority’s (PSA) accredited registers, employers should carry out the same level of checks to verify their registration as they would for any other healthcare professional.

It is not compulsory for unregulated practitioners to go on an accredited register but there are added values in them being able to demonstrate to employers their commitment to being recognised as being part of a professional community that works to high standards. Employers may therefore wish to encourage registration onto an accredited register as part of their recruitment process.

The PSA continually update their registers to recognise newly accredited professions and bodies therefore employers should ensure their recruitment packs reflect the most up to date information to ensure equal opportunities and fair recruitment practice. Visit the [accredited registers - top tips section](#) for guidelines on how to ensure you receive updates from the PSA on newly accredited bodies, so that you can ensure recruitment adverts and job specifications are kept up to date.

Further information about accredited registers can be found on the [NHS Employers website](#).
SECTION 2: QUALIFICATION CHECKS

The purpose of a qualification check is to verify information provided by candidates as part of their application form for educational or professional qualifications.

When writing job descriptions, employers will need to identify which qualifications are essential or desirable for any given role.

Employers have the discretion to accept other qualifications or experience which may be equivalent to any predefined requirements.

The criteria for each job role, and any flexibility around what might be essential or desirable, should be agreed between human resources and the recruiting manager prior to advertising, to ensure a fair and consistent approach to the recruitment process.

Minimum requirements

Employers must ensure that applicants hold any professional and/or educational qualifications that are essential for the role they are appointing to.

Employers must:

- request that applicants provide original documentation
- check that all certificates appear genuine and relate to a real qualification. This may include checking basic security features and the presentation of the document. You should also consider if the certificate matches other documentation you have seen previously. More information is available from UK NARIC, the UK national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.
- check that the details on certificates match the information provided by the candidate in their application form. For example, names, dates, course title[s] and grades. It is quite possible that the name given in a qualification certificate will not match that given by the applicant for a number of reasons, such as marriage/civil partnership, or divorce. In such cases, employers are required to obtain additional evidence to validate the change of name.
- retain a copy (scanned or photocopied) on file. When storing information such as this, employers should ensure they comply with existing data protection legislation (as amended by the General Data Protection Act 2018). Employers must have a lawful basis for processing and retaining data, and document this. More information on data protection is available on the NHS Employers website, and detail on the lawful bases for processing and retaining document is available on the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) website.

It is important to ensure that sufficient time is factored into the recruitment process to allow for obtaining qualification information, to avoid any unnecessary delays in recruitment.

Applicants may not always have the original documentation. In such cases, employers will need to make an appropriate risk-based assessment to the priority given to that qualification in the person specification, and the assurances that may need to be gained as part of the check process.
Where there is any discrepancy or concern about the authenticity of documentation provided by an applicant, employers may wish to contact the awarding body directly. This could be used to confirm attendance on the course stipulated by the applicant and the grade awarded. Employers will be required to provide a copy of the applicant’s consent in order to obtain any such information.

For qualifications awarded by a body outside of the UK, advice may be sought from the relevant country’s UK embassy, consulate or high commission. Contact details for UK based embassies, consulates and high commissions can be found on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website.

UK NARIC has produced an overseas degree comparison table to help organisations recruiting from overseas and individuals wishing to work or study in the UK. If there are doubts about whether an overseas qualification or its UK equivalent is genuine, further information can be obtained through the UK NARIC website.

For more serious concerns about suspected qualification fraud, employers can:

- call the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on (freephone) 0800 028 40 60 | lines are open 8am-5pm Monday to Friday
- fill in the online reporting form on the NHS Counter Fraud Authority website
- speak to their local counter fraud specialist (LCFS) - all NHS organisations are required by the NHS Counter Fraud Authority to have a LCFS.

Assessing language competency

All public facing roles require a proportionate level of English language proficiency for written and verbal communication.

Employers are encouraged to regularly review HR policies and practice to ensure they are in line with the Code of practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers section of the gov.uk website.

Regulatory bodies set their own professional standards including the requirement for each healthcare professional to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues. Further information and guidance can be found on their respective websites. Contact details for the UK healthcare regulatory bodies can be found in appendix one.

Registration with a regulatory body alone does not guarantee that the registrant has the clinical or language skills to perform a particular role. Employers remain responsible for assuring that the individual applying for the post has the necessary linguistic skills, as well as the necessary clinical skills and relevant qualifications, to undertake the type of role they are appointing to.

Further good practice guidance on how to assess language competency can be found on the NHS Employers website.

Withdrawal of a provisional offer of employment

Employers must make it clear to prospective employees that any offer of appointment is conditional and based on satisfactory registration and qualification checks, and that any information disclosed on the application form will be checked.
Prospective employees must also be informed that any offer of appointment may be withdrawn if they knowingly withhold information or they provide false or misleading information. It should also be made clear that their employment may be terminated should any subsequent information come to light once they have been appointed.

**Healthcare professional alert notices**

A healthcare professional alert notice (HPAN) is a process of notifying NHS bodies, or other organisations providing services to NHS bodies, about registered health professionals whose performance or conduct could pose a significant risk of harm to patients, staff or the public.

Employers must check their alert notice files prior to recruiting an individual. If an individual is subject to an alert notice, then employers must check whether they are suitable to be employed into the position being offered.

The operation of the alert notice system, is the responsibility of the National Clinical Assessment Service (NCAS), which is part of NHS Resolution (formerly the NHS Litigation Authority). Further detailed information on the process of issuing HPANs, and how to check whether an individual has been the subject of an HPAN, can be found on the [NHS Resolution website](#).
APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE ON SPECIFIC FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION

Each regulatory body has different procedures for disclosing fitness to practise information.

**General Medical Council (GMC)**

*Read the GMC’s fitness to practise guidance.*

The GMC has powers to suspend or place conditions on a doctor’s registration, this includes any interim orders which may have been imposed to protect the public, pending a full investigation.

The GMC can confirm a doctor’s:

- full name
- GMC reference number
- current registered address
- licence to practise
- due date for annual retention fee
- sex
- current registration status
- primary medical qualification
- specialist qualifications
- dates of registration (provisional, full, specialist or limited).

They are also able to provide a photograph of most doctors who registered after 2004 which will be helpful in assisting employers to confirm the doctor’s identity.

All doctors are required by law to be both registered with the GMC and hold a licence to practise before they can undertake any form of medical practice in the UK. This includes where prescribing prescription-only drugs and issuing medical certificates for statutory purposes, for example, death certificates. This requirement applies to any employed or self-employed doctor and is inclusive of any full-time, part-time, or locum contract. It also includes positions in private and independent healthcare and in the NHS, including GPs.

A time limit applies to doctors who are provisionally registered. Provisional registration is only valid for three years and 30 days (1,125 days), during which time doctors must complete the training required to progress to full registration.

Doctors who hold registration with a licence to practise are subject to the requirements under revalidation, details of which are available on the GMC website. All doctors are required to revalidate if they wish to keep their licence to practise. This is usually every five years, by having regular appraisals.
In addition, all European doctors and those applying for their first licence to practise must demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge of English in order to communicate effectively and practise safely in the UK.

Employers will need to ensure that any contracts that require doctors to possess registration with the GMC comply with these requirements.

Contact the GMC

Verification of a doctor’s GMC registration and licence to practise status can be obtained in a number of ways:

- online via the GMC’s List of Medical Practitioners
- by phone: 0161 923 6602
- by email: registrationhelp@gmc-uk.org
- in writing to the General Medical Council, 3 Hardman Street, Manchester, M3 3AW.

Details of a doctor’s suspension, or any relevant current conditions or undertakings, are included on the online search facility or by emailing regchecks@gmc-uk.org. The GMC will need to consider whether the organisation requesting the information is entitled to have access to this information. Data that is five years old or more is not normally included but will be made available through a link to the individual’s record.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

Read the NMC’s fitness to practise guidance.

The NMC can provide registration information on registered nurses and midwives and will inform an employer if a practitioner has the following status:

- removed
- restored
- conditions of practice
- cautioned
- suspended
- lapsed
- effective.

It will not show if someone is under investigation. For further information on the status of a practitioner, an employer would need to write to the NMC’s fitness to practise department. You can find the relevant contact details on the NMC website.

The NMC also issues monthly fitness-to-practise circulars, which include details of practitioners who have been struck off, suspended or cautioned during the previous month.

Nurses and midwives are subject to revalidation requirements, details of which can be found on the NMC website. As part of these requirements they must be able to demonstrate their ability to deliver safe, effective and professional care, are up to date in their professional practice, and meet the standards outlined by the NMC’s Code in order to register/or remain registered with the NMC.
Employers will need to ensure that any contracts that require nurses and midwives to possess registration with the NMC, comply with these requirements.

**Contact the NMC**

The NMC offers a number of ways to confirm registration status:

- online at [https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/search-the-register/](https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/search-the-register/)
- by phone on 0207 333 9333 - employers will need their caller code and pass number
- by email for confirmation using bar-coded confirmation forms - for more information about this service, please email UKenquiries@nmc.uk.org
- in writing for confirmation to Nursing and Midwifery Council, 23 Portland Place, London, W1B 1PZ.

Other useful NMC contact emails include:

- Registration enquiries and general advice email UKenquiries@nmc-uk.org.
- General overseas enquiries overseasenquiries@nmc-uk.org.
- Fitness to practise enquiries fitness.to.practise@nmc-uk.org.

**Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)**

[Read the HCPC’s fitness to practise information.](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/)

The health and care professionals regulated by the HCPC are available on the [HCPC website](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/) as are details of a professional’s registration status. Any changes to registration status will immediately be entered onto the register. Fitness to practise cases are listed on the website and after a hearing, the decision is posted online.

**Contact the HCPC**

Employers are strongly encouraged to use the HCPC’s online register, but if this is not possible, registration can also be checked in the following ways:

- by phone 0845 300 4472
- by email registration@hcpc-uk.org
- in writing to the Health Professions Council, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

For further information on fitness to practise, call 0800 328 4218 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) or email ftp@hcpc-uk.org.

**General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)**

[Read the GPhC’s fitness to practise information.](https://www.gphc.org.uk/)

The GPhC provides details of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who hold registration and details of current and recent fitness-to-practise inquiries.

In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be registered with the GPhC. From April 2018, registrants have been required to complete revalidation. In the first year
this will be through records of continued professional development (CPD), and in each subsequent year it will be CPD plus reflective accounts and peer discussion records.

**Contact the GPhC**

Registration can be confirmed in the following ways:

- online at [www.pharmacyregulation.org](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org)
- by phone 0203 713 8000.

Employers will need the member’s registration number, full surname and forename, date of registration and postal town of their registered address.

Details of current and recent fitness-to-practise inquiries can also be obtained from the GPhC website.

**General Dental Council (GDC)**

[Read the GDC’s fitness to practise information.](http://www.gdc-uk.org)

The GDC holds two registers that provide registration information on all dental care professionals:

- the dentists register
- the dental care professionals register, which includes dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic therapists, clinical dental technicians, dental nurses and dental technicians.

Some information relating to fitness to practise proceedings is not publicly available in the dentists register and employers will need to provide evidence of the dental care professional’s consent to access it. The consent form must be signed and dated by the dental care professional and include their full name and their GDC registration number.

Employers will also need to check applicants who may be registered on the temporary register. Overseas qualified dentists can apply for temporary registration in specific approved posts, if they hold a dental qualification that is recognised by the GDC for the purposes of temporary registration and the International Qualifying Exam. This allows them to work, with supervision, in dental schools or hospitals and (in a limited number of cases) in primary care dental settings for training, teaching or research purposes for a limited period. Apart from these approved settings, temporary registration* will not allow dentists to work in general or private practice, or in the community dental services.

*Temporary registrants are not added to the online register, employers should contact the GDC customer advice and information team on 0845 222 4141.

**Contact the GDC**

Employers can check an individual’s registration status and obtain information about any fitness to practise proceedings in one of the following ways:

- online at [www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)
- by phone 020 7167 6000
- in writing to the General Dental Council, 37 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 8DQ.
General Optical Council (GOC)

Read the GOC’s fitness to practise guidance.

The GOC provides registration information on optical professionals and publishes details of recent and future fitness to practise hearings.

Contact the GOC

Employers must check a registrant’s status in one of the following ways:

- online at www.optical.org
- by phoning 0207 580 3898
- in writing to the General Optical Council, 41 Harley Street, London, W1G 8DJ.

General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)

Keep up to date with the GOsC’s fitness to practise reports.

The GOsC provides details of osteopaths who hold registration and details of current and recent fitness-to-practise inquiries.

In order to practise in the UK, osteopaths must be registered with the GOsC and renew their registration on an annual basis, declaring that they hold professional indemnity insurance, have had no cautions/convictions in the previous 12 months not already disclosed to the regulator, that they are in good health and have complied with continuing professional development requirements.

Contact the GOsC

Registration can be confirmed in the following ways:

- online at www.osteopathy.org.uk
- by phone 020 7357 6655.
- by email info@osteopathy.org.uk
- in writing to the General Osteopathic Council, Osteopathy House, 176 Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 3LU.

Queries about current and recent fitness to practise cases can be sent to regulation@osteopathy.org.uk.

General Chiropractic Council (GCC)

The GCC publishes guidance containing best practice, processes to follow and outcomes from fitness to practise cases on their website.
The GCC can confirm a chiropractor’s:

- full name
- GCC reference number
- dates of registration
- current registered address
- current registration status.

The GCC has the power to remove, suspend or place conditions on a chiropractor’s registration. Recent decision information can be found on the GCC website.

It is illegal for an individual to call themselves a chiropractor or practice chiropractic unless they are on the GCC register. If disciplinary action has been taken against a chiropractor, it will appear on their record.

To be included on the register, an individual must be of good character, be in good physical and mental health and be suitably qualified. To continue on the register, a chiropractor must carry out continuous professional development activity, maintain their good character and good physical and mental health levels.

**Contact the GCC**

A chiropractor’s registration can be verified:

- online at www.gcc-uk.org
- by phone 0207 713 5155
- by email enquiries@gcc-uk.org
- in writing to the General Chiropractic Council, 44 Wicklow Street, London WC1X 9HL.
NHS Employers

NHS Employers is the employers’ organisation for the NHS in England. We help employers to develop a sustainable workforce, improve staff experience and be the best employers they can be.

Our practical resources and expert insights help make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues, to keep employers up to date with the latest thinking and ensure they are informed and equipped to support the NHS workforce.

We generate opportunities to network and share knowledge and we actively seek the views of workforce leaders to make sure their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice.

We also lead the national collective relationships with trade unions on behalf of the NHS and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

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Published January 2020 © NHS Employers 2020.