

# PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION AND QUALIFICATION CHECKS

This guide details when and how employers should verify professional registration, qualifications, and English language competency.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is a professional registration and qualification check?

1.1.1 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.

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

## 1.2 Importance of professional registration and qualification checks

1.2.1 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.

1.2.2 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.

1.2.3 Qualification checks help employers verify the information about any educational or professional qualifications that the individual has outlined in their application form.

# 2. Professional registration checks

## 2.1 Minimum requirements

2.1.1 Employers must check the registration of all healthcare professionals with the appropriate regulatory or licensing 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 that must be considered by the employer.

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

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

2.1.4 Where relevant to the role, it should be made a contractual condition for healthcare workers to maintain any registration

that might be relevant to their profession for the full term of employment.

- 2.1.5 It will also be essential for employers to have appropriate mechanisms in place to manage healthcare professionals in response to any actions that may be taken by a regulatory or licensing body which would affect their registration or fitness to practise.
- 2.1.6 Employers must establish the appropriate regulatory body. Further information about how to check registration, license and fitness to practise with each of the regulatory bodies can be found via the links below:

<a href="#"><u>General Medical Council (GMC)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>General Dental Council (GDC)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>General Optical Council (GOC)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>General Chiropractic Council (GCC)</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>General Pharmaceutical Council (GphC)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)</u></a>

- 2.1.7 When recruiting registered healthcare professionals, employers must also check that there is no known information held about them on the healthcare professional alert notice (HPAN) system. If an individual is subject to an alert notice, then employers must check whether there are any restrictions which would prevent them from undertaking the duties of the role being applied for, prior to allowing them to take up the appointment. See further information about the HPAN system in section 6.

## 2.2 Recruiting from the European Union (EU)

- 2.2.1 Following the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, the EU Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications which enabled healthcare professional

regulators to recognise certain EEA-awarded professional qualifications (leading to entry of the relevant professional register) with minimal barriers via a near-automatic system, no longer applies in the UK.

- 2.2.2 Transitional arrangements now apply. UK healthcare professional regulators continue to recognise EEA qualifications listed in the Directive as evidence of skills, knowledge and experience regardless of the applicant's country of origin (under transitional arrangements it is the place of qualification that counts, not the nationality of the applicant).
- 2.2.3 Different arrangements are now in place for Swiss nationals, who benefit from a four-year grace period from 01 January 2021 during which they will be treated in the same way as pre-31/12/20 EEA applicants based on their nationality, not their place of qualification.
- 2.2.4 Professional regulatory bodies are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to review registration arrangements for applications from holders of EEA and Swiss qualifications. Until new arrangements are in place, professional qualifications will continue to be recognised under the transitional arrangements.
- 2.2.5 Professional regulatory bodies will continue to assess and approve any qualification that is not entitled to automatic recognition. Employers should be extra vigilant in checking applications from an applicant with EEA 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.
- 2.2.6 EEA-qualified healthcare professionals who were registered to practise in the UK prior to the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020 continue to have their recognition decision acknowledged.

## 2.3 Unregulated practitioners

- 2.3.1 The [accredited registers](#) are managed by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) and are a means of enabling employers to seek the necessary assurance that unregulated practitioners meet the same high standards of education, skills and expertise as those in statutory regulated professions.
- 2.3.2 While not compulsory for unregulated practitioners to be on an accredited register, employers may find it beneficial to encourage individuals to be on one because of the added level of assurances this can provide.
- 2.3.3 Employers will need to carry out the same level of checks to verify the registration of healthcare professionals on the accredited registers as they would for any other healthcare professional on a statutory register.
- 2.3.4 The PSA continually update their registers to recognise bodies and professions that have been newly accredited. Employers will need to regularly review job adverts and personal specifications to ensure they refer to all accredited registers that may be relevant to the role being appointed to, to ensure they do not restrict or prevent individuals from being considered.



# 3. Qualification checks

## 3.1 Minimum requirements

- 3.1.1 Employers will need to identify which qualifications are essential or desirable for any given role. 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.
- 3.1.2 The purpose of a qualification check is to verify information provided by candidates as part of their application form for educational or professional qualifications. Employers must ensure that applicants hold any professional and/or educational qualifications that are essential for the role they are appointing to. Employers have the discretion to accept other qualifications or experience which may be equivalent to any predefined requirements.
- 3.1.3 In the case of recruiting registered healthcare professionals, regulatory and licensing bodies will have undertaken checks to validate that they have the relevant qualifications for them to be on their register and can practise in their chosen profession. Additional checks on qualifications to practise are not normally necessary, but employers must ensure they validate any other qualifications which are prescribed as essential to the role they are appointing to.

#### 3.1.4 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 ENIC \(formerly UK NARIC\)](#), the UK national information centre for global 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. Detail on the lawful bases for processing and retaining document is available on the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\) website](#).

3.1.5 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.

3.1.6 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.

- 3.1.7 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 to obtain any such information.
- 3.1.8 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](#).
- 3.1.9 UK ENIC 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 ENIC website](#).
- 3.1.10 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.

# 4. Assessing language competency

- 4.1.1 All public facing roles require a proportionate level of English language proficiency for written and verbal communication.
- 4.1.2 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](#).
- 4.1.3 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](#).
- 4.1.4 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.

# 5. Withdrawal of a provisional offer of employment

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 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.

# 6. Healthcare professional alert notices

- 6.1.1 A healthcare professional alert notice (HPAN) is a system where notices are issued by NHS Resolution to inform NHS bodies, or other organisations providing services to the NHS, about registered health professionals whose conduct or practise would pose a significant risk of harm to patients, staff, or the public.
- 6.1.2 It will also confirm whether that person may continue to work or seek additional or other work in the NHS as a healthcare professional or whether that person falsely holds himself out to be a healthcare professional.
- 6.1.3 When recruiting registered healthcare professionals, employers must check that there is no known information held about them on the alert notice system as well as checking their professional registration. If an individual is subject to an alert notice, then employers must check whether there are any restrictions which would prevent them from undertaking the duties of the role being applied for, prior to allowing them to take up the appointment.
- 6.1.4 Employers can apply for access to the Performers List and Healthcare Professional Web Check Service, which will allow

them to check whether an individual is subject to an active HPAN.

- 6.1.5 Further information on how to check whether an individual is subject of an HPAN and the process to raise a HPAN where concerns about a healthcare professional's performance, conduct or practise comes to light, can be found on the [NHS Resolution website](#).

NHS Employers  
2 Brewery Wharf  
Kendell Street  
Leeds  
LS10 1JR

0113 306 3000  
[www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)  
@NHSEmployers

If you require this publication in an alternative format,  
please email [enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)

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