



Revalidation: frequently asked questions

for retired doctors and those preparing to retire

General
Medical
Council

Regulating doctors
Ensuring good medical practice

2014

Revalidation is the process by which licensed doctors are required to demonstrate on a regular basis that they are up to date and fit to practise.

It is part of a broad system of measures promoting improvements in the safety and quality of UK healthcare. Revalidation is intended to support doctors in their professional development, and aims to give patients further assurance that doctors are competent and safe to practise.

The GMC and British Medical Association have worked closely together to produce this booklet to give you more information about revalidation if you are planning to retire, or if you have already retired.

Your questions on revalidation

I am retired or planning to retire – will I need to revalidate?

If you hold a licence to practise, you'll need to revalidate like every other licensed doctor. This applies regardless of whether you do any clinical practice (for example, as an occasional volunteer), and regardless of whether you're employed or contracted by any organisation.

How does revalidation work?

Licensed doctors revalidate by having an annual appraisal, which covers the whole of their practice. It is based on the *Good medical practice framework for appraisal and revalidation*, which reflects our core guidance for doctors, *Good medical practice*.

At your appraisal, you must demonstrate that you have reflected on information that you will have collected about your whole practice. You can read more in the publication, *Supporting information for appraisal and revalidation*, which is available on our website.

Most doctors are supported with their appraisal by the designated body in which they work, and by their responsible officer, who will recommend to the GMC whether doctors can revalidate.

How do I revalidate?

There are three possible ways, depending on your specific circumstances.

- If you have a legally prescribed connection to a designated body, your revalidation will be based on a recommendation to us from your responsible officer.
 - Most doctors have a connection to a designated body which helps them with their annual appraisal (this could be your employer, faculty or another organisation). Designated bodies are responsible for nominating or appointing a responsible officer.
 - If you are unsure of your prescribed connection, you can use our designated body tool to check. Go to **www.gmc-uk.org/dbtool**.
 - Your responsible officer is usually the medical director of your designated body. Their revalidation recommendation to the GMC is based on your annual appraisals and other information drawn from the organisation's clinical governance systems.
- If you don't have a responsible officer, you may be able to find a suitable person to make a revalidation recommendation to us about your fitness to practise.
 - You can read more about the procedures for identifying and approving suitable persons on our website. Go to **www.gmc-uk.org/suitable**.

If you don't have a responsible officer or a suitable person to make a revalidation recommendation about you, and want to keep your licence to practise, you'll need to give us information each year about your fitness to practise and continuous engagement in revalidation. You'll also need to undertake an independent assessment of your medical knowledge and skills if we request it.

- You can read more about the process for revalidation for those without a connection to a responsible officer or suitable person on our website. Go to www.gmc-uk.org/suitable_none.

Do retired doctors need to hold a licence to practise?

The licence to practise gives doctors legal rights and privileges in relation to practice in the UK, such as writing prescriptions. You can read more about these rights and privileges on our website.

If you have fully retired, you should consider giving up your licence to practise. This means that you won't need to revalidate.

If you give up your licence, your good standing with the GMC will be maintained by keeping your registration. You'll pay a reduced annual retention fee, and can restore your licence free of charge at any point in the future should you decide to return to practice.

If you decide to give up your licence, go to your GMC Online account and follow the guidance. If you don't have a GMC Online account, you can set one up at www.gmc-uk.org/gmconline.

More information about giving up and restoring your licence is also available at www.gmc-uk.org/relinquish.

As a retired doctor, will I have a designated body and responsible officer?

It is possible, but you may not have. There is a clear set of rules that determines whether you have a designated body, as set out in the *Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010, as amended*.

If you are unsure of your prescribed connection, you can use our online designated bodies tool. We also publish a list of designated bodies and their responsible officers, which you can check at www.gmc-uk.org/dbtool.

How can I revalidate if I don't have a responsible officer?

If you want to keep your licence to practise, you may be able to identify a suitable person to support your appraisal and recommend whether you can revalidate. The role of an approved suitable person is substantially the same as that of a responsible officer. In brief, that person must:

- hold a licence to practise and have been registered with us continuously for at least five years
- have a connection to a responsible officer or an approved suitable person, for their own revalidation
- be a responsible officer or hold a post similar to that of a responsible officer, in an organisation operating and located in the UK or the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man
- have a logical link to your current medical practice.

To help you try to identify a suitable person, you should look at the criteria for being a suitable person at www.gmc-uk.org/suitable.

If you find someone who meets these criteria, you should ask them if they are willing to act as a suitable person for you. If they are, they will need to apply to us to be a suitable person, and have their application approved before the arrangements can be confirmed.

How can I revalidate if I don't have a responsible officer and can't identify a suitable person?

If you wish to maintain your licence you will still be able to revalidate. You will need to:

- tell us by emailing revalidation@gmc-uk.org (including your GMC reference number in the email)
- send us information each year about your work and evidence of your participation in appraisals. You will need to make sure our criteria for appraisals and appraisers, set out in *A guide for doctors to the General Medical Council (Licence to Practise and Revalidation) Regulations 2012*, are met
- take part in an independent assessment of your medical knowledge and skills if we ask you to do so
- pay us a fee to evaluate any evidence and for each part of the assessment.

If you pass the assessment, and the evidence from your appraisals shows you are fit to practise, you will be successfully revalidated. If you don't pass the assessment, we will investigate further whether you are fit to practise. This means your registration as well as your licence would be at risk.

You can find out more about this process at www.gmc-uk.org/suitable_none.

How important is an appraisal?

Annual appraisals are the cornerstone of revalidation. It is your responsibility as a licensed doctor to participate in appraisal for revalidation, and the processes that underpin it. Failure to do so, without a reasonable excuse, will put your licence to practise at risk.

What are the appraisal requirements for retired doctors?

The requirements for retired doctors are the same as for any other doctors. If you wish to maintain your licence you will need to have an annual appraisal that complies with our guidance.

How can I get an appraisal if I don't have a responsible officer or a suitable person to help me?

If you are unable to arrange appraisal through an employer, you will need to make arrangements yourself, through an independent provider of UK medical appraisals.

We have established specific criteria for annual appraisals for doctors in this group. This is to make sure that appraisals are robust in the absence of a responsible officer or suitable person with statutory responsibility to oversee the appraisal and the processes supporting it.

We've also established criteria for those who want to be appraisers of this doctor group. In summary, these make sure that the appraisers are registered with us and have a licence to practise, and that they understand and are fully engaged with revalidation themselves.

You're responsible for making sure that your appraisal and appraiser comply with the criteria set out in section 4.4 C of the GMC's *A guide for doctors to the General Medical Council (Licence to Practise and Revalidation) Regulations 2012*.

You can read more about how to revalidate without a recommendation on page 15 and at www.gmc-uk.org/suitable_none.

What does holding a licence to practise mean?

A licence to practise gives a doctor the legal authority to undertake particular activities in the UK, such as prescribing, and signing statutory certificates. To practise medicine in the UK, all doctors are required by law to be registered and hold a licence to practise.

I hold a licence to practise but I'm now retired and I don't do any clinical practice. How will I revalidate?

If you want to continue to hold a licence to practise, you will need to revalidate, based on annual appraisal, like every other licensed doctor.

If you don't carry out any clinical practice, then you may not need a licence to practise. If this is the case, you can give up your licence but maintain your registration. This will show you remain in good standing with the GMC. You can restore your licence if you need it at some point in the future if your circumstances change.

Please remember, though, that without a licence to practise you will not be able to exercise any of the privileges conferred by it. These include writing prescriptions, and signing death or cremation certificates.

If you decide to give up your licence, go to your GMC Online account and follow the guidance. If you don't have a GMC Online account, you can set one up at www.gmc-uk.org/gmconline.

More information about giving up and restoring your licence is also available at www.gmc-uk.org/relinquish.

I hold a licence to practise but am planning to retire and cease clinical practice. Do I need to revalidate?

Your retirement plans have no bearing on revalidation requirements. Since medical revalidation was introduced on 3 December 2012, it has been a legal requirement, as well as a professional responsibility, for all doctors with a licence to practise in the UK to engage fully and continuously with all aspects of revalidation. This applies regardless of the date on which your revalidation submission is due, and regardless of any plans you may have for the future – for example, to retire.

What should I do in order to revalidate?

If you want to continue your licence to practise, you should already be:

- making sure you have an annual appraisal based on the *Good medical practice framework for appraisal and revalidation* and in accordance with the our core guidance for the profession, *Good medical practice*
- collecting supporting information to show how you are meeting our professional standards
- maintaining a GMC Online account.

What can I do by just maintaining my registration?

As a senior doctor retiring from clinical practice, you may want to continue to use the skills and experience developed over your career in a variety of ways. These may include teaching, medical management and providing first aid at sporting or community events. You may not need to hold a licence to carry out such activities. You should always check with those who instruct you, or your employer or other relevant body, in order to make sure there is no misunderstanding about whether or not you need a licence to carry out any activities.

Holding registration without a licence shows that you remain in good standing with the GMC. This is because it continues to be your responsibility to be familiar with *Good medical practice* and to follow the guidance it contains. You may not exercise any of the privileges conferred by the licence (such as writing prescriptions).

If you decide to give up your licence, go to your GMC Online account and follow the guidance. If you don't have a GMC Online account, you can set one up at www.gmc-uk.org/gmconline.

More information about giving up and restoring your licence is also available on the GMC website at www.gmc-uk.org/relinquish.

Where can I get more information about revalidation?

Our website has more information to help you revalidate at www.gmc-uk.org/revalidation. It includes the following key guidance.

- *Good medical practice*
- *The Good medical practice framework for appraisal and revalidation*
- *Supporting information for appraisal and revalidation*
- *A guide for doctors to the General Medical Council (Licence to Practise and Revalidation) Regulations 2012*
- Suitable persons – information for doctors
- Information for doctors who cannot identify a suitable person

General Medical Council

Telephone: 0161 923 6602

Email: revalidation@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org/revalidation

British Medical Association

Telephone: 0300 123 1233

Email: info.revalidation@bma.org.uk

Website: www.bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/revalidation

Common terms and additional information

Designated body

Most licensed doctors have a prescribed connection with one organisation which will support them with their appraisal and revalidation. This organisation is known as your designated body. Designated bodies and prescribed connections are established by the *Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010*, as amended in 2013. These regulations give statutory responsibilities to designated bodies, including nominating or appointing a responsible officer.

GMC Online

This is a secure area of our website that helps you manage your registration and revalidation. If you don't already have a GMC Online account, go to **www.gmc-uk.org/gmconline** and follow the guidance to set one up.

Responsible officer

The statutory role of a responsible officer is also established by *The Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010*. A responsible officer must be a licensed doctor, registered continuously for at least five years. In summary, responsible officers are responsible for:

- making sure designated bodies carry out regular appraisals of their doctors
- making sure systems and processes for collecting and holding information are in place to support doctors in their revalidation

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- investigating concerns about doctors' fitness to practise and referring doctors to us if appropriate
 - making recommendations to us about doctors' fitness to practise.

Suitable person

Where a doctor has no prescribed connection to a designated body, the *General Medical Council (Licence to Practise and Revalidation Regulations) 2012* provide for a doctor to arrange for a suitable person to make a recommendation about their fitness to practise.

We must approve suitable persons before the arrangements can be confirmed. A suitable person must be a licensed doctor, registered for at least five years continuously, who we have approved to make a revalidation recommendation about a doctor's fitness to practise, where that doctor does not have a prescribed link to a designated body, and therefore does not have a responsible officer.

The role of suitable person is substantially the same as that of responsible officer. In brief, suitable persons:

- will be employed in a role comparable with that of a responsible officer
- make sure you take part in annual appraisal.
- make a revalidation recommendation about you

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- monitor any concerns which might arise about your practice
 - keep records of their evaluations of your fitness to practise.

Revalidation for those who don't have a connection to a responsible officer or suitable person

Doctors who wish to keep their licence but don't have a responsible officer or an approved suitable person to make a revalidation recommendation about them will need to provide us with robust evidence annually, to show that they are up to date and fit to practise.

You can read more about how to revalidate without a recommendation at **www.gmc-uk.org/suitable_none**.

In summary, you will need to have a regular appraisal, from a licensed doctor trained in medical appraisal in the UK, based on our *Good medical practice framework for appraisal and revalidation*.

If you are unable to arrange your appraisal through an employer, you will need to make arrangements yourself, through an independent provider of UK medical appraisals. Every year, you will need to complete and submit a revalidation annual submission form to give us evidence of your practice, your participation in regular appraisal and your continuous engagement revalidation.

You will also need to give us statements about your health, probity, and fitness to practise, as well as evidence of your good standing with any regulatory body outside the UK with which you have been registered in the last 12 months. You will need to take part in an independent two-part assessment of your medical knowledge and skills, if we ask you to do so. This assessment is designed to evaluate your ability to practise medicine safely in the UK.

If you do not pass the assessment, we will investigate further whether you are fit to practise. This means your registration as well as your licence will be at risk.

You will need to pay a fee for us to evaluate your revalidation annual submission, and for each part of the assessment.

Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org

Telephone: **0161 923 6602**

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