

Our performance review process

We have a statutory duty to report annually to Parliament on the performance of the 10 regulators we oversee. We do this by reviewing each regulator's performance against our Standards of Good Regulation and reporting what we find. Our performance reviews are carried out on a three-year cycle; every three years, we carry out a more intensive 'periodic review' and in the other two years we monitor performance and produce shorter monitoring reports. Find out more about our review process [here](#).

This monitoring report covers the period 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023.

Key findings

- The GDC did not meet Standard 11 because it is taking too long to register dentists and dental care professionals.
- The GDC did not meet Standard 15 because it is taking too long to deal with fitness to practise cases.
- The GDC re-started the Specialist List Assessed Applications process which had been paused since March 2022.
- The GDC tripled the number of places for Part 1 of the Overseas Registration Exam this year and plans to maintain these numbers for sittings in 2024. It also plans to increase the number of Part 2 sittings from three to four in 2024.
- The GDC and partners have been revising all 13 curricula for dental specialty training since 2015 and the final revisions were published this year. The 13 specialisms will take effect for all specialty trainees from September 2024.

Standards met 2022/23



General Standards	5 out of 5
Guidance and Standards	2 out of 2
Education and Training	2 out of 2
Registration	3 out of 4
Fitness to Practise	4 out of 5
Total	16 out of 18

GDC standards met 2020-22

2021/22	16
2020/21	17



[117,983]

professionals on the register
(as at 30 September 2023)

General Standards

The GDC met all five General Standards this year.

These five Standards cover a range of areas including: providing accurate, accessible information; clarity of purpose; equality, diversity and inclusion; reporting on performance and addressing organisational concerns; and consultation and engagement with stakeholders to manage risk to the public.

Accessibility of information

The GDC continues to publish information about its role and activities through its website and social media.

The GDC has a Board Assurance Framework which means that its performance reporting is reviewed in detail by its Finance and Performance Committee rather than the public Council meeting. The GDC is an outlier amongst health and social care regulators in terms of the material it publishes. In this review period, some stakeholders reported uncertainty about what the GDC's Council is aware of. While this did not mean the Standard was not met, we expect regulators to be transparent about their activities, and there is room for the GDC to improve in this respect.

Reliability of data from the GDC

Last year we noted some significant inaccuracies in the data we had received from the GDC that year and previously. In this review period we have had further minor occurrences of inaccurate data. In all instances, once we raised a query, the GDC was quick to review its data, provide an explanation and rectify the error. It also took action to prevent recurrence. We sought and received assurances from the GDC that these issues have not affected its performance reporting to Council.

Collecting workforce data

The GDC has this year started to ask dentists to provide information about where they work, as part of their annual renewal. The aim of collecting this data is to improve understanding across the sector about the dental workforce. Providing this data is voluntary and the GDC plans to expand the request to Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) next year, again as part of the renewal process. We will continue to monitor this work.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The GDC has improved the level of EDI data it holds for its registrants since last year, particularly for DCPs. For the second year running the GDC again carried out an analysis of the EDI data of registrants involved in fitness to practise. The GDC is still developing its understanding of what the data is telling it and how it might use the data to ensure that its fitness to practise process does not discriminate.

Last year we encouraged the GDC to increase the proportion of EDI data it held for Council members which had stood at five out of the 12 members since the year before. In April 2023 it reported that all Council members have now provided EDI data.

In last year's review we reported on the GDC's work to address concerns about the implementation of its EDI Strategy. In June this year, the GDC's Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the plan's delivery and noted slippage against the plan and raised concerns about its reported outcomes and delivery. It is important that the GDC does not fall significantly behind on its EDI strategic plan, and we will be considering this further as part of our consideration of Standard 3 against the new evidence framework¹ next year.

Stakeholder engagement

The GDC has worked with several stakeholders this year, including professional bodies, other regulators, Royal Colleges and Chief Dental Officers. It carried out a number of public consultations and published research reports on the experience of participants in its fitness to practise process and on the public's views and experience of dentistry.

We received feedback from 14 stakeholder organisations in this review period who said that they had had regular engagement with the GDC. Many stakeholders were positive about the quality of the GDC's engagement. Some stakeholders raised concerns on specific issues, and we have referred to this feedback in this report where relevant.



“The introduction of the Leadership Network is a positive development, bringing together all stakeholders to have a conversation about the challenges across dentistry. [...] the agenda has started to cover system working, integration and culture which are essential areas to explore with ongoing reform programmes across the UK.”

Stakeholder feedback

Guidance and Standards

The GDC met both Standards for Guidance and Standards this year.

Promoting professionalism

The GDC's current Standards have been in place since 2013. In this review period the GDC continued its work to develop a set of

Principles of Professionalism to form the basis for a new set of standards for registrants. It has commenced a three-stage stakeholder engagement exercise to explore how the GDC should provide guidance about the standards expected of dental professionals. We have not received any concerns or seen any evidence in this review period to suggest that the current standards are out of date or pose a risk to the public. We will continue to monitor the GDC's programme of work to review its standards.

Scope of practice guidance

The GDC held a public consultation on revised scope of practice guidance this year. We welcomed the draft document, which is less prescriptive than previous guidance, and represents a more flexible approach which should prove better able to adapt to future changes in dentistry. We will monitor the outcome of the GDC's consultation in next year's review.

Education and Training

The GDC met both Standards for Education and Training this year.

The GDC published a Review of Education 2021-22 this year, which detailed the quality assurance activities of education programmes and awarding organisations carried out between August 2021 and July 2022. It took action when it identified concerns.

Revision of specialty curricula

The GDC has been working with partners to revise all 13 curricula for dental specialty training. This work has been in progress since 2015 and the final revisions were published this year. The 13 specialisms will take effect for all specialty trainees from September 2024.

We received some concerns from stakeholders about the deliverability of the orthodontics curriculum which the GDC assured us would be

resolved this autumn. We will continue to collect feedback on the new curricula next year.

Safe Practitioner Framework

In last year’s review we reported on the work the GDC was doing to review its document which laid out the dental team learning outcomes for registration, which were last revised in 2015. This year, the GDC held a public consultation on and published the revised framework for dental education, *The Safe Practitioner: A framework of behaviours and outcomes for dental professional education*.²

Registration

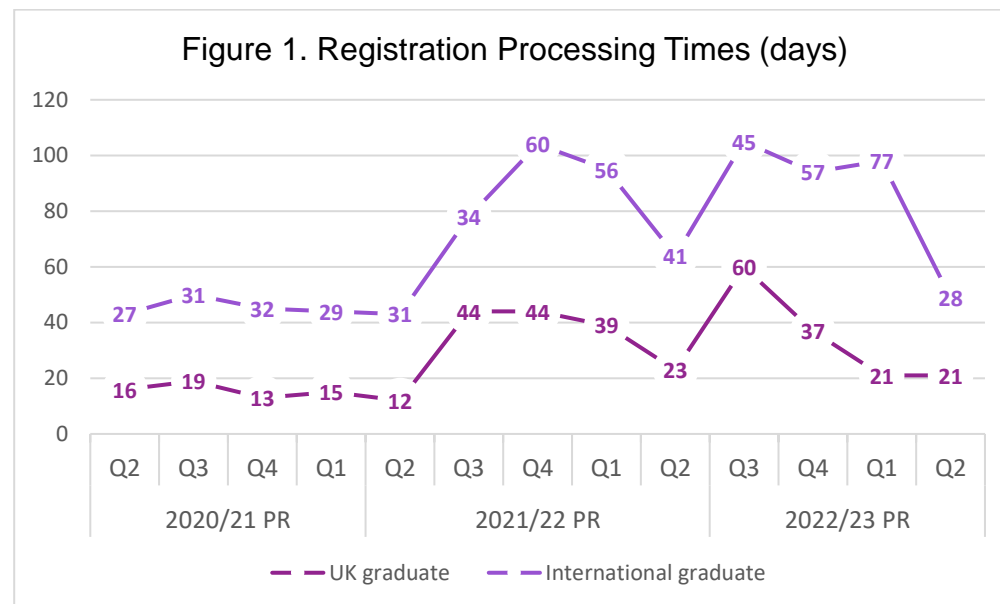
The GDC met three of four Standards for Registration. It met Standards 10, 12, 13 and 14 and did not meet Standard 11.

Time taken to process applications for registration

The GDC did not meet this Standard last year, and the overall data on application timeliness this year remains concerning. Standard 11 is not met. Figure 1 shows some recent improvement in the time the GDC takes to process UK and international registration applications. We will monitor the GDC’s progress.

International Registration

Legislative changes to the routes to registration for international applicants came into force during this review period, with the route allowing overseas-trained dentists to apply as DCPs closing from 8 March 2023. These changes resulted in a large increase in DCP applications ahead of the deadline. The GDC has now recruited 35 additional registration team staff to deal with the backlog, but it will take time to clear it.



Overseas Registration Examination

The legislative changes also permit those applicants who were unable to sit the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) within the five-year window due to the pandemic to sit the exam.

The GDC tripled the number of places for Part 1 of the ORE this year and plans to maintain these numbers for sittings in 2024. It also plans to increase the number of Part 2 sittings from three to four in 2024.

Specialist List Assessed Applications

The GDC has now restarted the Specialist List Assessed Applications (SLAA) process which had been paused since March 2022. The GDC has brought the process in-house and predicts that it will have cleared the entire backlog of applications by March 2024. The GDC has reviewed its application materials which it has now published on its website. We received mixed feedback from stakeholders on the GDC’s process, and we will continue to monitor this area.

Fitness to Practise

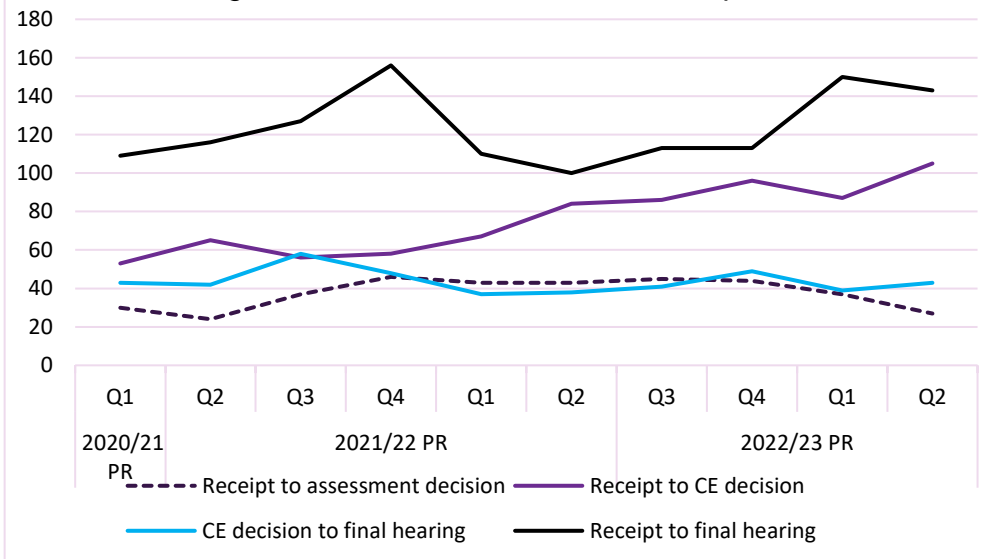
The GDC met four of five Standards for Fitness to Practise. The GDC met Standards 14, 16, 17 and 18 and did not meet Standard 15.

Time taken to progress cases

Last year, the GDC did not meet Standard 15 as it was taking too long to investigate fitness to practise cases. Figure 2 shows that the time taken to investigate cases has not significantly improved this year. The number of old open cases also remained relatively stable over the review period.

The GDC has outlined actions to improve performance in this area, but there is so far limited evidence of the impact of these measures. Standard 15 is not met. We will continue to monitor the GDC's progress.

Fig.2. Median time to reach decision points



Adjournments of fitness to practise hearings

There has been a rise in the GDC's rate of adjournment of final fitness to practise cases in this review period, but we are satisfied by the GDC's explanation that most of these were planned adjournments. It deliberately schedules hearings in stages to enable it to maximise panellist availability.

Interim orders

The GDC's median time from receipt of referral to IO decision increased in this review period but its annual data still remains within the range of the other regulators' performance. Overall, we do not have concerns about how long it takes the GDC to make IO decisions in this review period.

Support for people involved in fitness to practise cases

Research³ by the GDC and others reported negative experiences of its fitness to practise process, including the level of support provided for registrants and the tone of the GDC's communication with registrants. It was appropriate for the GDC to carry out research to understand people's experiences of its processes. The GDC is beginning to address some of the findings from its research and plans to review its wellbeing and mental health signposting. The GDC plans to seek input from stakeholders into a review of its fitness to practise template correspondence. We consider that this would be a useful step for it to take and we will continue to monitor the GDC's work in this area.

Response to Court of Appeal verdict

In this review period the GDC appealed against a High Court decision overturning a decision to erase a dentist due to dishonesty in relation to top-up fees.⁴ The GDC's appeal was turned down. In light of this decision, the GDC has now reviewed all fitness to practise decisions made since the introduction of the current NHS Contract Regulations where top-up fees were an issue, where charges of dishonesty

relating to top-up fees were proved and the registrant erased. The GDC plans to publish a statement on its website regarding the review and its findings and is also liaising with the NHS on this issue.



Quick links/find out more

- ▶ Find out more about our performance review process
- ▶ [Read the GDC's 2021/22 performance review](#)
- ▶ Read our Standards of Good Regulation

Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care

Telephone: 020 7389 8030

Email: info@professionalstandards.org.uk

Web: www.professionalstandards.org.uk

© Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care
December 2023

¹ https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/standards/professional-standards-authority-standard-3-evidence-matrix.pdf?sfvrsn=29bb4a20_2

² <https://www.gdc-uk.org/education-cpd/quality-assurance/learning-outcomes-review#safe>

³ GDC research: <https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/what-we-do/research/our-research-library/detail/report/experiences-of-gdc-fitness-to-practise-participants-2015-2021-a-realist-study>

Dental Protection research: <https://www.dentalprotection.org.uk/articles/urgent-reform-urged-as-dental-professionals-under-investigation-report-suicidal-thoughts-and-quitting-dentistry>

⁴ <https://www.gdc-uk.org/news-blogs/news/detail/2022/12/19/gdc-seeks-clarity-on-interpretation-of-nhs-regulations>