



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2018/19



Regulator reviewed: **General Dental Council**

Key facts & figures:

- Maintains a register of dental professionals in the **United Kingdom**
- **113,931** dental professionals on register (at 30 June 2019)
- Annual registration fee: **£890** (dentists); **£116** (dental care professionals) - from 2019/20 **£680** and **£114**

Standards of good regulation

Core functions

Annual performance review 2018/19

Met

(number of Standards)

Guidance & Standards

4/4

Education & Training

4/4

Registration

6/6

Fitness to Practise

8/10

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Focus on: How the GDC is meeting the Standards

For this review period the GDC has met 22 out of 24 of our Standards of Good Regulation. It did not meet our Standards in respect of timeliness in progressing cases at the initial stages of its fitness to practise process or managing and protecting its fitness to practise data during this performance review period. The GDC did not meet either of these Standards in its 2017/18 review.

REGISTRATION: THE REGISTRATION PROCESS, INCLUDING THE MANAGEMENT OF APPEALS, IS FAIR

We were concerned about the increase in the time taken to process applications from individuals who obtained their qualifications from outside the UK. We had also received concerns about the length of time applicants were having to wait to sit the Overseas Registration Examination (ORE). The GDC attributed the increase in the processing times to the number of applications received, and the relocation of its registration department to its new headquarters in Birmingham, which included greater quality assurance checks. We were satisfied that the timescales remained appropriate and did not indicate a danger of a backlog. In relation to the ORE, the delays appear to be a result of legislative constraints around how much can be charged to applicants, which is outside the GDC's control. We are of the view that there is a need for legislative change to remove these constraints to allow the GDC greater scope in how the ORE is delivered and funded. We concluded that this Standard was met.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: ANYBODY CAN RAISE A CONCERN ABOUT THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE OF A REGISTRANT

In September 2017, the GDC introduced an online triage tool which provides information about the types of concerns the GDC can investigate and directs users to an online complaint form if the tool indicates the GDC is able to investigate the issues raised. We wanted to be satisfied that the tool was not inappropriately directing people with legitimate concerns away from the GDC. We considered that the tool had positive aspects in that it provides signposting to other organisations who may be better suited to dealing with concerns outside of the GDC's remit. We also noted that there are other ways in which concerns can be raised with the GDC and were satisfied that, overall, the number of serious complaints considered by the GDC had not been reduced as a result of the tool. We concluded that this Standard was met.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: CASES ARE DEALT WITH AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

This year, there has been a further increase in the time taken to progress cases at the initial stages of the fitness to practise process. Whilst the GDC has improved its performance in other areas of the measures we report on and has closed more cases this year than it did in 2017/18, its performance in respect of timeliness has been mixed. Overall, the GDC has taken longer to complete the early stages of its investigations, the reduction in the number of aged cases has been small and the proportion of these as part of its caseload is high. Its overall timescale remains at the high end of the regulators that we oversee. We have therefore concluded that this Standard is not met.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: INFORMATION ABOUT FITNESS TO PRACTISE CASES IS SECURELY RETAINED

The GDC has not met this Standard since it was introduced in 2012. There were three serious data breaches in the period under review, one of which involved the publication of sensitive mental health information which was included in a published fitness to practise determination, and which remained available online for a number of weeks. The GDC has told us that this was due to human error and following this incident, additional checks were added to its processes. The ICO has not taken any action in respect of these breaches. In addition, outside this period the GDC has completed its self-assessment against the NHS toolkit. While it is clear that the GDC is taking steps to address the concerns, we were not satisfied that these were sufficient for the Standard to be met in this period.

You can find out more in the GDC's full performance review, available on our website www.professionalstandards.org.uk/performance-reviews