



Revalidation Support Team

Case investigator

Person specification and competencies

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Introduction

Revalidation of doctors is a key component of a range of measures designed to improve the quality of care for patients; it is the process by which the General Medical Council will confirm the continuation of doctors' licences to practise in the UK. The purpose of revalidation is to assure patients and the public, employers and other healthcare professionals that licensed doctors are up to date and fit to practise.

Through a formal link with their organisation, determined usually by employment or contracting arrangements, doctors will relate to a senior doctor in the organisation, the responsible officer. The responsible officer will make a recommendation about the doctor's fitness to practise to the General Medical Council (GMC). The recommendation will be based on the outcome of the doctor's annual appraisals over the course of five years, combined with information drawn from the organisation's clinical governance systems. Following the responsible officer's recommendation, the GMC will decide whether to renew the doctor's licence.

The responsible officer is accountable for the quality assurance of the appraisal and clinical governance systems in their organisation. Improving these systems will support doctors in developing their practice more effectively, which will add to the safety and quality of healthcare in the UK. It will also enable the early identification of those doctors whose practice needs attention, allowing for more effective intervention.

All doctors wishing to retain their GMC licence to practise will need to participate in revalidation.

This publication has been prepared by the NHS Revalidation Support Team (RST). The RST works in partnership with NHS England, the Department of Health (England), the General Medical Council and other organisations to deliver an effective system of revalidation for doctors in England.

Purpose and context

In 2011 the NHS Revalidation Support Team (RST) undertook an online survey in England around responding to concerns about a doctor's practice in the previous 12 months. There were also workshops facilitated in all ten of the then strategic health authorities (SHAs), with members of the responding to concerns teams (responsible officers, human resource directors and others). The survey and workshops resulted in the RST publication *Supporting Doctors to Provide Safer Healthcare: Responding to concerns about a doctor's practice*, in March 2012¹. One of the areas of need was training of case investigators. The RST, in partnership with the National Clinical Assessment Service (NCAS), has trained over 1,000 case investigators since January 2013.

This document outlines the person specification of a case investigator. It covers requirements of the case investigator role in the following areas:

- qualifications
- experience
- skills
- knowledge
- attitudes.

Primary audience

Those who are currently case investigators or are intending to take up this role. Others who may be interested in this document include:

- responsible officers
- medical appraisers
- human resource managers
- occupational health professionals

¹ A revised version was published in March 2013.

What is a case investigator?

A case investigator is an appropriately trained individual who is commissioned by a healthcare organisation to determine whether there is a problem to address in a doctor's performance. A healthcare organisation may commission a case investigator internally if they have appropriately trained individuals. A case investigator may also be commissioned from an external source to carry out an investigation in an organisation. In the latter situation the case investigator should make themselves aware of that organisation's governance structures so as to perform the investigation following the organisation's process and standards.

An investigation identifies facts around an event or set of circumstances.

"It is important to define what I mean by the term 'investigation'...I mean the gathering of information and evidence relating to the circumstances giving rise to a complaint."

Dame Janet Smith

An investigation is appropriate when there is information which suggests a doctor may:

- pose a threat or potential threat to patient safety
- expose services to financial or other substantial risk
- undermine the reputation or efficiency of services in some significant way
- be operating outside acceptable practice guidelines and standards.

An investigation relies heavily on the skills and professionalism of the investigator. Recruiting the right people is essential along with development and support of investigators to improve their skills and effectiveness.

The case investigator may benefit from the support of a human resource advisor throughout the investigation. Both should be appropriately trained.

The case manager, usually the responsible officer, appoints an appropriate case investigator, taking into account the role and specialty of the practitioner under investigation and the scope of the terms of reference. The case investigator may need to call on additional expertise as part of the investigation.

Person specification

Please see below a suggested generic person specification for selection of investigators. The **essential** requirements are the experience, skills and knowledge of the person undertaking the role. The qualifications and attitudes are **desirable** for an effective investigator, but some could be developed through training. It is essential that such training is carried out before an investigation is undertaken.

Qualifications

- postgraduate degree or equivalent
- completion of investigator training or demonstration of knowledge of the training themes (this may not be an essential requirement prior to appointment but should ideally be completed before performing an investigation).

Experience

- involvement in medical management, medical education or appraisal
- some experience of judging or reviewing against a standard.

Skills

- high level of interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to interview witnesses who may be vulnerable
- developed organisational and planning skills including the ability to work to tight deadlines
- developed questioning skills
- works within own limits of competence and understands sources of potential support and expertise and how to access this (e.g. medical, financial)
- ability to seek out and reference relevant standards (e.g. NICE, colleges and societies)
- ability to interpret relevant guidance documents and standards
- ability to judge relevance of information collected during investigation
- ability to give weight to (prioritise importance of) relevant evidence collected
- ability to judge credibility of witnesses
- ability to ensure safeguards are in place to avoid breaches of confidentiality
- ability to structure and write a comprehensive report which answers the questions in the terms of reference
- basic IT skills (e.g. Microsoft Office).

Knowledge

- understands the role of a case investigator and is prepared to work within the scope of a case investigator
- must engage in continuing professional development for the role
- knowledge of the revalidation and regulatory process, including *Maintaining High Professional Standards in the Modern NHS* (for case investigators of employed doctors) and/or *The National Health Service (Performers Lists) (England) Regulations 2013* (for case investigators of contractors) and/or the organisational policy/process (for case investigators of all other doctors)
- knowledge of equality and diversity issues
- knowledge of the process of investigation and its independence from the case manager role (not essential prior to appointment as will be part of training in the role)
- knowledge of the requirements of information governance
- knowledge of organisational governance structures and standards.

Attitudes

- motivated, conscientious and able to deliver to deadlines
- demonstrates integrity whilst conducting a case investigation and has strategies for dealing with potential challenges to this
- has respect of and for colleagues
- resilient and objective in situations of conflict
- committed to keeping up to date and fit to practice in the role of case investigator.

Competency framework for case investigators

A case investigator is an appropriately trained individual who is commissioned by a healthcare organisation to determine whether there is a problem to address in a doctor's performance.

Some core competencies must be recruited and selected for; others may be developed through training. The generic core competencies for case investigators below are derived from the core competencies for a medical appraiser, the learning objectives and the pre-course reading for case investigator training, and the person specification for a case investigator:

Competency framework for case investigators		
1	Professional responsibility: to maintain credibility as a case investigator	
	Competency	Behaviour
1.1	High standards of professional responsibility, personal integrity, effectiveness and self-awareness	Maintains high professional credibility Acts as a champion and role model for doctors under investigation Demonstrates insight and self-awareness Reflects on feedback Declares conflicts of interest
1.2	High standards of resilience and objectivity	Resilient and objective in situations of conflict
1.3	Develops professional competence as a case investigator	Undertakes appropriate development in all professional roles, including development, support and performance management as a case investigator, reflecting development needs in their personal development plan Supports efforts to evaluate and improve local systems and processes

2	Knowledge and understanding: to understand the role and purpose of the case investigator and to be able to undertake effective investigations	
	Competency	Behaviour
2.1	<p>Understands the purpose of revalidation and investigation of performance concerns</p> <p>Understands the role and responsibilities of the case investigator</p> <p>Understands the difference between fitness to practise and fitness for purpose</p> <p>Understands robust and meaningful terms of reference and knows how to work within them including the need to review and expand terms of reference</p> <p>Understands the principles behind conducting a structured investigative interview</p>	<p>Demonstrates understanding of the purpose of revalidation and investigation of performance concerns</p> <p>Understands and works within the limits of the case investigator role and responsibilities, setting appropriate boundaries</p> <p>Able to apply the appropriate standards to investigation of a doctor's work</p> <p>Works within robust and meaningful terms of reference</p> <p>Conducts investigative interviews using a structured approach</p>
2.2	<p>Understands quality and safety systems and relates this to the context of the doctor's work</p> <p>Aware of the organisation's governance structures</p>	<p>Applies knowledge of quality and safety systems to investigations</p> <p>Adapts approach to the work context of the doctor</p> <p>Performs the investigation following the organisations processes and standards</p>
2.3	<p>Understands relevant legislation and guidance including equality and diversity, bullying and harassment, data protection and confidentiality</p>	<p>Maintains knowledge of relevant policies and legislative frameworks and applies the principles in practice</p> <p>Demonstrates fairness and equality and makes allowance for differing backgrounds and requirements</p> <p>Always deals with confidential data in accordance with information governance policies and guidelines</p>

2.4	Understands how concerns about a doctor's practise arise and can identify the most common factors affecting performance	Identifies the factors affecting performance in the case being investigated and responds appropriately
2.5	Understands the <i>Good Medical Practice</i> framework, including relevant specialty-specific guidance	Demonstrates awareness of the <i>Good Medical Practice</i> framework and relevant specialty specific guidance and applies the standards appropriately
3	Professional judgement: to analyse and synthesise information presented during investigations including the identification of corroborating evidence and weighting of information	
	Competency	Behaviour
3.1	<p>Able to determine whether there is a problem to address in a doctor's performance</p> <p>Maintains and applies skills in evaluating the category of concern, while appreciating that there may be considerable overlaps</p> <p>Able to assess the level of concern to aid in risk stratification</p> <p>Able to identify any organisational failings (e.g. policies, processes, teamwork etc.) which have contributed to the concern about the doctor's practice</p>	<p>Identifies facts around an event or set of circumstances and evaluates them to determine whether there is a problem to address</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to evaluate the category of concern and investigate accordingly</p> <p>Assesses the level of concern and makes an appropriate judgement about risk stratification</p> <p>Suggests options/action plan to address organisational failings</p>
3.2	<p>Maintains and applies skills in evaluating (collecting, reviewing and weighting) the evidence</p> <p>Able to judge the credibility of evidence and witnesses</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability to collect and review the evidence</p> <p>Demonstrates accurate assessment of the weight to put on evidence</p> <p>Demonstrates insight into the credibility of witnesses and makes allowances in evaluation of the evidence</p>
3.3	Able to judge whether there is a patient safety issue or increasing performance concern	<p>Responds appropriately to patient safety issues and significant signs of increasing performance, conduct or health concerns</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to suspend the investigation process where necessary and take appropriate further action</p>

3.4	Able to judge whether the doctor has appropriately engaged in the investigation process and the review of their full scope of work	Makes appropriate judgements about the engagement of the doctor under investigation Communicates concerns about the doctor's engagement to the doctor and responsible officer (or their deputy) or case manager appropriately
3.5	Able to judge whether there is a need to call on additional expertise as part of the investigation	Calls on appropriate additional expertise when required in a timely fashion
4	Communication skills: to facilitate an effective case investigation, produce good quality outputs and deal with any issues or concerns that might arise	
	Competency	Behaviour
4.1	Able to manage the case investigation effectively	Prepares effectively for the case investigation Sets the context and agrees the priorities for the case investigation Demonstrates the ability to facilitate a well-structured and focused investigation, centred on GMC standards Highlights issues or delays promptly and informs relevant parties
4.2	Develops and applies good communication skills including appropriate levels of support and challenge	Builds rapport Demonstrates good communication skills including active listening, questioning and summarising Supports doctor and witnesses appropriately and is aware of support for them to access
4.3	Develops and applies good interview skills, including the ability to interview witnesses who may be vulnerable	Demonstrates good interview skills, particularly with witnesses who may be vulnerable
4.4	Able to manage a difficult case investigation	Understands the factors that might contribute to a difficult investigation Demonstrates a range of strategies in managing a difficult investigation Able to deal with conflict

4.5	Able to liaise and co-ordinate effective communication between all those involved in the investigation, including the RO, case manager, NCAS, GMC employer liaison adviser, and others	Brings together the relevant people in the investigation Ensures that all parties are kept informed about progress and involved in a timely fashion
4.6	Able to produce high quality written investigation records and case investigation report such that the written report answers the question(s) in the terms of reference	Completes case investigation documentation to a high standard Structures and writes a comprehensive report which answers the questions in the terms of reference Ensures that the investigation report comes to considered conclusions
5	Organisational skills: to ensure the smooth running of the case investigation, including timely responses and sufficient computer skills to be an effective case investigator	
	Competency	Behaviour
5.1	Effective management of time and workload Able to work within tight time frames Able to plan for an investigation which meets national requirements	Completes investigation caseload and documentation in a timely manner Demonstrates appropriate time-management within the investigation Responds in a timely way to doctors, managerial staff, responsible officer (or their deputy) and case manager Conducts investigations that are well-planned and meet national requirements
5.2	Sufficient computer skills to perform the role of case investigator	Demonstrates sufficient computer skills to perform the role of case investigator