**Quality Assurance of
Case Investigation**

Questionnaires



**Version 1**

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# Contents

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction | 3 |
| What is quality assurance? | 4 |
| Purpose and context | 5 |
| Primary audience | 6 |
| Sample questionnaire to be completed by case manager | 7 |
| Sample questionnaire to be completed by case investigator | 9 |
| Sample questionnaire to be completed by doctor | 11 |
| Sample questionnaire to be completed by witnesses | 13 |
| Sample questionnaire to be completed by other members of the responding to concerns team. | 15 |
| Evaluation of the investigation report (report template) | 17 |

 |  |
|  |  |

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 confirms 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 organisational 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 health care 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.

**What is quality assurance?**

Quality assurance refers to the engineering activities implemented in a [quality system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality_system) so that requirements for a product or service will be fulfilled. It is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop that confers error prevention. In the context of responding to concerns about a doctor this refers to the management of the process following national and local policy standards from the raising of the concern to the outcome of the process.

Two principles included in quality assurance are:

* ‘fit for purpose’ – the product should be suitable for the intended purpose; and
* ‘right first time’ – mistakes should be eliminated.

(The product is the service offered by the responding to concerns team.)

Feedback about all stages of the process will enable the team to learn and further improve the service they offer for the next situation when a doctor is found to have concerns about his/her performance.

***"Feedback is the breakfast of champions"***

**Ken Blanchard (author and management consultant)**

**Process**

The processes by which feedback can be obtained should be considered. Information can be collected in several ways but it is important to capture learning points along the way and actively at the end of the process. The responding to concerns team should keep a record of issues which can be improved upon during the process. Feedback from the doctor and the witnesses may arise spontaneously during the investigation. All of this should be logged contemporaneously. Active feedback should be formally sought at the end of the process.

**Purpose and context**

In 2011 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 with members of the responding to concerns teams (including responsible officers, human resource directors and others). The survey and workshops resulted in the publication of, *Supporting doctors to provide safer healthcare. Responding to concerns about a doctor’s practice* in March 2012[[1]](#footnote-1). One of the areas of need was the training of case investigators. The RST, in partnership with NCAS, has trained over 700 case investigators in 2012 and plans to train a further 500 in 2013. A need for case manager training was also identified. This is being delivered to appropriate delegates in 2013. Case managers are usually but not exclusively responsible officers.

This document provides sample questionnaires to aid the quality assurance of an investigation. The report template is an example of how the outcome of the quality assurance process can be formatted. The responding to concerns team involved in an investigation should learn from each investigation so that the process can be improved for the next investigation in the organisation. It is also important to reflect on what happened for the personal learning of individuals. This will ensure consistency and equity of approach.

The questionnaires need to be administered soon after the investigation is completed (ideally within a week) by a nominated member of the team. Any learning captured during the process should also be reviewed by this team member. The responding to concerns team may have collected information on a feedback log which should be reviewed and considered in the report. This team member should then compile a report of learning outcomes from the investigation with action plans for the organisation and individuals. When the report is available it should be circulated to the responding to concerns team and a meeting to discuss it would also be helpful. The report should be kept confidentially and each organisation should have relevant information management systems to explain how the report is circulated/stored etc.

Learning themes could form the basis of team updates and continuing professional development.

**Primary audience**

This document is aimed at all those in the responding to concerns team. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

* responsible officers (ROs)
* medical appraisers
* human resource managers
* occupational health professionals
* case investigators
* case managers

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Questionnaire to be completed by case manager**

**Name of organisation:**

**Name of doctor/case reference number investigated:**

**Name of case manager:**

**Name of case investigator:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please write or type your answers below** |
| 1. What was the profession of the case investigator?
 | [clinician/HR/general manager/other] |
| 1. Was the most appropriate case investigator selected?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. If you think an alternative case investigator would have been more appropriate, please say why
 | [e.g. It would have been better to have a HR professional in this case.] |
| 1. Had the investigator received appropriate training?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. How long did the investigation take from the start until you received the report?
 | [State in weeks and days] |
| 1. Did the investigator act objectively throughout?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please give examples] |
| 1. Did the investigator manage the investigation in a professional manner?
 | [Yes/No If no, please give examples] |
| 1. Did the investigator ask for changes to the terms of reference when required?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the investigator ask for appropriate specialist opinions?
 | [Yes/No, If no state any deficiencies.] |
| 1. Was the report clear and understandable?
 | [Totally/Partially/Not at all. Include any relevant comments for feedback.] |
| 1. Did the report contain appropriate evidence?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain] |
| 1. Did the report answer the questions in the terms of reference?
 | [Totally/Partially/Not at all. If not totally, please explain any deficiencies.] |
| 1. What was the overall quality of the report?
 | [Excellent/Good/Average/Poor] |
| 1. Was the doctor supported appropriately?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Were the complainants/patients/relatives supported appropriately during the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Was media communication handled appropriately?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to add which would improve the process of this investigation or the skills/knowledge of the case investigator and others in the responding to concerns team?
 |  |

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Questionnaire to be completed by case investigator**

**Name of organisation:**

**Name of doctor/case reference number investigated:**

**Name of case investigator:**

**Name of case manager:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please write or type your answers below** |
| 1. Did you receive all the evidence for the investigation from the case manager at the start of the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager ask you if you had any conflicts of interest at the start of the investigation?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did you get a clear explanation from the case manager about what the investigation was about at the start?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Were the terms of reference focused and clear?
 | [Yes/No If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did you have to ask for the terms of reference to be changed during the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If yes, please explain.] |
| 1. Did you have difficult accessing any information you needed?
 | [Yes/No. If yes, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager support you appropriately throughout the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager support the doctor during the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager support the complainants/patients/relatives appropriately during the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Was media communication handled appropriately?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Were you given time to complete this investigation?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. How many hours did it take you to complete the investigation and write your report?
 |  |
| 1. Were you able to complete the investigation within four weeks?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please state how many weeks and days it took.] |
| 1. Were you able to write the report within five days of completing the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please state how many days it took.] |
| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to add which would improve the process of this investigation or the skills/knowledge of the case manager and others in the responding to concerns team?
 |  |

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Questionnaire to be completed by doctor**

**Name of organisation:**

**Name of doctor/organisation’s case reference number:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please write or type your answers below** |
| 1. Did the case manager meet with you at the start of the investigation and explain adequately what the investigation was about?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager offer you adequate support?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please state what more would you have wanted.] |
| 1. If you were offered support what was it?
 |  |
| 1. Did you receive a letter from the case manager explaining the investigation including who the case investigator was and the terms of reference of the investigation?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did you receive a letter from the case investigator indicating that you can be accompanied at the interview?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Was the arrangement of the interview meeting satisfactory (i.e. were you given adequate notice etc.)?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator introduce those present at the start?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator explain the process to you at the start including the need for confidentiality?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator seek to make you feel comfortable as much as possible?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the investigator maintain eye contact with you during questioning?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did you feel that the investigator was listening to your answers?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the investigator explain what would happen next at the end of the interview?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Were other communications (e.g. with the media/patients/colleagues etc.) handled appropriately and to your satisfaction?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did you see the report/all evidence about the allegations?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to add which would improve the process of this investigation or the skills/knowledge of the case manager, case investigator and other professionals associated with this process?
 |  |

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Questionnaire to be completed by witnesses**

**Name of organisation:**

**Name of doctor/case reference number investigated:**

**Name of witness (not essential):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please write or type your answers below** |
| 1. Did the case investigator arrange the meeting with you with adequate notice?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did you receive a letter from the case investigator giving an adequate explanation as to why they wanted to interview you?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did the case investigator tell you in the letter that you could be accompanied e.g. by a friend/colleague at the interview if you wanted?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator introduce those present at the start?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator explain the process to you at the start including the need for confidentiality?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. At the interview did the investigator seek to make you feel comfortable as much as possible?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the investigator maintain eye contact with you during questioning?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did you feel that the investigator was listening to your answers?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the investigator explain what would happen next at the end of the interview?
 | [Yes/No] |
| 1. Did you get adequate support during the process of this investigation from the investigator and/or others?
 | [Yes/No. If no explain.] |
| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to add which would improve the process of this investigation or the skills/knowledge of the case investigator and other professionals associated with this process?
 |  |

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Questionnaire to be completed by other members of the responding to concerns (RtC) team.**

**Name of organisation:**

**Name of doctor/case reference number investigated:**

**Name of RtC team member completing questionnaire:**

**Designation/role of RtC team member completing questionnaire:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please Write/Type your answers below** |
| 1. What was your role in the investigation?
 |  |
| 1. Did the case manager follow the correct process?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager support the doctor in this process?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager support the case investigator in this process?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager communicate clearly and promptly and in a professional way to the patient/relatives?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case manager communicate professionally with the media?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the case investigator follow the correct process?
 | [Yes/No/N/A. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Was the report clear and understandable?
 | [Totally/Partially/Not at all. Include any relevant comments for feedback.] |
| 1. Did the report contain appropriate evidence?
 | [Yes/No. If no, please explain.] |
| 1. Did the report answer the questions in the terms of reference?
 | [Totally/Partially/Not at all] |
| 1. What was the overall quality of the report?
 | [Excellent/Good/Average/Poor] |
| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to add which would improve the process of this investigation or the skills/knowledge of the case manager, case investigator and others in the RtC team?
 |  |

**Quality assurance of case investigation**

**Evaluation of the investigation report (report template)**

**Cover page should contain the following information:**

Strictly confidential

Evaluation of the investigation process of doctor (doctor’s name/case reference number)

Organisation’s name:

Report author:

Date:

**Side headings of report are as follows:**

Contents

Background

*[Give a brief explanation of the concerns and the doctor investigated and the outcome. The outcome needs to be described (e.g. no case to answer, detail remediation, disciplinary etc.)]*

The responding to concerns team

*[List the names of the team and their designation (e.g. Dr A Green; Case Manager etc.)]*

Methods

*[Give a brief description of how the questionnaires were circulated and who to and response rates. Describe any other feedback received in the process not actively sort.]*

Results

*[How long did the case investigation take? What was the quality of the report? Did the report answer the terms of reference? Did the report allow a decision to be made?*

*It would be sensible to separate responses from responding to concerns team from doctor and witnesses so results can be considered in three sections. Describe summary of results and compile quantitative responses from all the questionnaires. It is often useful to type out verbatim the comments made.]*

Conclusions

*[Brief summary of overall conclusions]*

Recommendations

*[This is an important section and should include action plans, as follows:*

* *Organisational Action Plan*
* *Responding to Concerns Team Action Plan*
* *Personal Action Plans of individual team members]*

Appendices

*[Include examples of template questionnaires. You may want to include the returned questionnaires depending on numbers etc.]*

1. A later edition was published by the RST in March 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)