

Consultation on revised guidance on returning to practice

A consultation seeking the views of stakeholders on draft revised guidance for professionals who are considering returning to practice

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This consultation seeks the views of our stakeholders on draft revised guidance on our return to practice requirements.
- 1.2 This document provides information about the guidance and the proposed changes we are consulting on.
- 1.3 This consultation will be of interest for professionals who are currently not practising and are considering returning to practice, or are considering a break in their practice, and thinking about what this might mean in the future. This consultation will also be of interest for employers who are considering supervising or employing a professional who is returning to practice.
- 1.4 The draft revised guidance for consultation has been published alongside this document on our website. Please see: [INSERT LINK]
- 1.5 The consultation will run from **18 July to 7 October 2016**.

2. About the HCPC

- 2.1 We are a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills and behaviour. Individuals on our register are called 'registrants'.
- 2.2 We currently regulate 16 professions.
 - Arts therapists
 - Biomedical scientists
 - Chiropodists / podiatrists
 - Clinical scientists
 - Dietitians
 - Hearing aid dispensers
 - Occupational therapists
 - Operating department practitioners
 - Orthoptists
 - Paramedics
 - Physiotherapists
 - Practitioner psychologists
 - Prosthetists / orthotists
 - Radiographers
 - Social workers in England
 - Speech and language therapists

3. About the guidance

- 3.1 We set return to practice requirements to ensure that registrants who have been out of practice for more than two years update their knowledge and skills in order to resume safe and effective practice. These requirements have been in place since 2006.
- 3.2 We have also produced guidance to accompany the return to practice requirements, to help people to understand our expectations and the process of updating that returners must complete.
- 3.3 The draft revised guidance we are consulting on now is an update of the existing guidance which was the subject of a public consultation in 2005, and published in 2006. The existing guidance can be found on our website¹.

4. Reviewing the existing guidance

- 4.1 To assess whether the return to practice requirements needed updating, a rapid appraisal of the existing arrangements was undertaken in late 2014.²
- 4.2 Activities during the appraisal included meetings with professional bodies, a review of other regulators' requirements and discussions with HCPC employees involved in managing implementation of the return to practice requirements.
- 4.3 The report found that, while the return to practice requirements are generally considered to be working well, there was a need for further guidance on a number of issues, including the following.
- the definition of 'practising your profession' and how professionals decide whether the requirements apply to them or not;
 - the distinction between the supervisor and counter-signatory roles and requirements;
 - whether shadowing or observing counts as private study or supervised practice; and
 - the role of professional bodies in providing further information and guidance to returners.
- 4.3 We have explained the changes and improvements to the guidance which we are proposing in section 5 below.

¹ Health and Care Professions Council (2006). Returning to practice. <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/brochures/index.asp?id=108>

² Health and Care Professions Council (2015). Education and Training Committee <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004BCDEnc05-RapidappraisaloftheHCPCreturntopracticerequirements.pdf>

5. Our proposed changes to the guidance

- 5.1 We have used the findings of the appraisal, as well as subsequent discussions with HCPC employees in the Registration department, to put together the draft revised guidance for consultation.
- 5.2 We have made a number of changes to improve the guidance, including the following.
- We have restructured the guidance to provide additional clarity, including the addition of a 'Summary' section so that professionals can view at a glance what requirements are relevant to them.
 - We have updated information to reflect the way we deal with returners who are out of practice but still registered with us. Professionals who are registered with us may renew their registration and complete a period of updating within the following six months.
 - We have added clarification that observation or shadowing should be considered 'private study' where there is not a formal arrangement for supervision in place.
 - We have provided additional clarification around the difference between the supervisor and counter-signatory roles.
 - We clarified what we mean by 'practising your profession' and relocated this information nearer to the front on the guidance in order to provide a clearer indication for professionals as to whether the requirements apply to them.
 - We have made it explicit that professionals do not need to undertake all three types of updating (supervised practice, formal study, and private study).
 - We strengthened signposting to professional bodies for further guidance on profession-specific practice and periods of updating.
 - We have made more explicit our requirement that all updating must be completed, from start to finish, within the twelve months before applying for registration or readmission.
 - We have updated information about the HCPC to bring it up to date with other recent publications.
- 5.3 Once the consultation has concluded, we will use the comments we receive to consider further amendments to the guidance. We will then work with the Plain English Campaign to improve the clarity and accessibility of the guidance, and we plan to publish the final version on our website (in a dedicated section) as well as in hard copy. We will promote the guidance to all of our stakeholders who are likely to be interested in it.

6. How to respond to the consultation

6.1 We welcome your comments on the draft guidance. We have listed some questions to help you below. The questions are not meant to be exhaustive and we would welcome your comments on any aspect of the guidance.

Q.1 Is the draft guidance clear and easy to understand? How could we improve it?

Q.2 Could any parts of the guidance be reworded or removed?

Q.3 Is there any additional guidance needed?

Q.4 Do you have any other comments on the draft guidance?

6.2 You can respond to this consultation in the following ways.

- By completing our easy-to-use [online survey](#).
- By emailing us at: consultation@hcpc-uk.org.
- By writing to us at the following address.

Consultation on returning to practice guidance
Policy and Standards Department
Health and Care Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU
Fax: +44(0)20 7820 9684

6.3 Please note that we do not normally accept responses by telephone or in person. We normally ask that consultation responses are made in writing. However, if you are unable to respond in writing, please contact us on +44(0)20 7840 9815 to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help you to respond.

6.4 Please complete the online survey or send us your response **by 7 October 2016**.

6.5 Please contact us to request a copy of this document in Welsh or in an alternative format.

6.6 Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we receive. We will then publish a document which summarises the comments we received and explains the decisions we have taken as a result. This will be published on our website.