

# **“Working Together”**

## **A Charter of Expectations for a High Quality Registration Function**

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*Registration Section*



Comhairle na nDochtúirí Leighis  
Medical Council



## Foreword

Registration and retention of registration is the core activity of the Medical Council, and establishes the register of medical practitioners. The integrity of the medical register is vital in maintaining trust between patients and doctors, as it ensures that patients can have confidence that their doctor has the knowledge, skills and competencies required. Given the importance of this activity; this process must be rigorous but also as efficient as possible within the legislative framework within which the Medical Council is required to operate.

The Council continually seeks to improve its processes, and in order to enhance its registration functions, this document “A Charter of Expectations” sets out for all doctors, who are either seeking registration for the first time or retaining their registration, what they can expect through the process and what is required of them. For doctors to be satisfied with the registration process, they must fully understand what is involved and the steps that must be followed in the interests of patient safety. This Charter sets out how the Medical Council will operate when registering all doctors, while at the same time setting out some reciprocal expectations to ensure the process is as efficient as possible for everyone involved.



Caroline Spillane  
Chief Executive  
Medical Council

## 1. Introduction

The Medical Council regulates the practice of medicine in Ireland. It protects the public through ensuring good standards are met and maintained by doctors. In this way, the Medical Council helps maintain public trust in the medical profession.

The establishment and maintenance of the register of medical practitioners is the cornerstone of the role of the Medical Council. It is an accurate and up-to-date record of doctors who are legally entitled to practice medicine in the state. This function is undertaken by the Medical Council in line with [EU Directive 2005/36/EC](#), the [Medical Practitioners Act 2007](#), and associated rules and guidance.

In an average year the Medical Council processes:

- approximately 1,200 new applications to enter the register;
- approximately 17,000 applications to retain registration;
- approximately 2,000 requests for certificates of current professional status;
- approximately 20,000 registration related telephone enquiries;
- approximately 5,000 registration related email enquiries.

The Medical Council is a progressive organisation which is continually looking to improve the way in which it works. It strives to ensure that its processes and actions are open and transparent, that it delivers effective services as efficiently as possible, that it treats everyone with respect and dignity, and that its duties are discharged in a fair and equitable manner. While most doctors find the experience of using the Medical Council's registration function is positive, we understand that sometimes experience does not meet with expectations.

Through this Charter the Medical Council establishes routine opportunities for doctors to provide feedback on how they have experienced their use of the registration function and is committed to using this information to inform continuous improvement.

In addition, the Medical Council is now a reviewable body by the [Ombudsman](#). The functions of the Medical Council that are reviewable by the Ombudsman are those that relate "to an action taken in the performance of administrative functions relating to the establishment and maintenance of a register of medical practitioners under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 and to its role as the competent authority for the purposes of mutual recognition of medical qualifications obtained in or recognised by a Member State". This scope is specified at point (I) of Part 2 of the First Schedule of the Ombudsman (Amendment) Act 2012 which lists agencies reviewable by the Medical Council.

The Medical Council understands that obtaining and maintaining registration is important for doctors. The Medical Council wants to work together with doctors to ensure that they experience a high quality registration function.

## 2. What is the purpose of a Charter of Expectations?

The Medical Council wants doctors to have a good experience when they use its registration function. How we experience a particular function or service depends on what we expect. Expectations are the perceptions we have about the kind, level and quality of products and services we will experience when interacting with an organisation. So that people can give feedback on their experience, and so that this feedback can usefully inform continuous improvement, it is important for organisations to be clear about what can reasonably be expected. A Charter is a statement which makes commitments to certain expectations and clarifies responsibility for meeting these.

This “Charter of Expectations” sets out what doctors can reasonably expect about the kind, level and quality of services they will experience when using the Medical Council registration function. As benchmarks are established, standards of performance for registration related activities, such as, relating to turnaround times, will be clearly set out on the Medical Council’s website

Doctors’ experience is also related to how they themselves approach the registration function; for example, if responses to a request from the Medical Council to provide supporting documentation are not timely, then this will impact on their experience of the registration function. To support a good experience, it is important that the Medical Council is also clear to doctors about what they should do to ensure a high quality registration function.

Therefore, the Charter also sets out what the Medical Council reasonably expects of a doctor using its registration functions so that the doctor’s experience can meet reasonable expectations.

The clear expectations set out in this Charter will provide a reference point to doctors and to the Medical Council when providing, receiving and responding to feedback about experience of the registration function.

The scope of the Charter is for initial applications for registration, retention of annual registration, restoral of registration and services associated with supporting doctors who are registered with the Medical Council.

The Charter is called “Working Together”. This reflects the interdependence of doctor and Medical Council expectations in delivering a high quality service.

### **3. Charter of Expectations – “Working Together”**

Doctors using the Medical Council registration function can expect us to:

- 1. Make the registration function accessible and easy-to-use so you can get things right first time**
- 2. Treat you fairly, reasonably and respect your honesty**
- 3. Handle your information correctly and respect your privacy**
- 4. Explain the decisions we make about you and respect your right to request a review of that decision**
- 5. Respect your right to provide a comment, compliment or complaint**
- 6. Be accountable for how we operate the registration function**

The Medical Council expects doctors using the registration function to:

- 7. Take care in presenting information accurately**
- 8. Observe timelines associated with the registration function**
- 9. Work cooperatively and politely with staff**
- 10. Be truthful in your interactions**

## What doctors can expect of the Medical Council - what does this mean in practice?

### **1. Make the registration function accessible and easy-to-use so you can get things right first time**

The Medical Council will provide you with the opportunities to make applications and interact with the registration function which are accessible and easy-to-use.

Your first point of call is the Medical Council website, [www.medicalcouncil.ie](http://www.medicalcouncil.ie). The Medical Council will use this to provide you with information which is accurate, up-to-date, easy to understand, straightforward and enables you to make a complete and correct applications.

The Medical Council will ensure that our application forms are understandable, laid out in a straightforward manner and enable you to provide complete and correct information so as to ensure the smooth and timely processing of your application.

Your email will be acknowledged and we will endeavour to respond in five working days.

You can call the Medical Council on +353 1 4981000 on Mondays to Fridays from 9.00am to 5.00pm. We will endeavour to answer you call but at peak periods cannot guarantee you that a member of staff will be available to deal with you personally by phone.

To improve the accessibility and ease-of-use of the functions and to better enable you to get things right, we will make increasing use of the web portal “My Account” <http://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Registration/FAQ/Online-Portal-for-Doctors/>. Where possible, we will ask you to use the Online Portal for Doctors to interact with the registration function. In developing a quality service, we will focus on developing this portal over other channels of interaction with the Medical Council.

The Medical Council will endeavour to get back to you when we say we will and without unnecessary delay but cannot always guarantee and immediate response.

### **2. Treat you fairly, reasonably and respect your honesty**

The Medical Council will treat you with courtesy, consideration and respect, behave in our dealing with you with integrity and honesty. The Medical Council will act impartially and make fair and equitable decisions in accordance with the law governing registration which takes into account relevant features of your application.

The Medical Council will presume you tell us the truth and that the information you give us is complete and accurate unless we have reason to think otherwise. Sometimes we run checks on the accuracy and completeness of information you provide us with. This is

because we have a responsibility to the public to ensure that all doctors meet good standards.

### **3. Handle your information correctly and respect your privacy**

In operating the registration function, we collect information about you. The Medical Council must respect your privacy and keep your information confidential. In some circumstances, the law allows us to disclose your information to others for specific purposes.

One way we do this is asking you to provide proof of identify when you contact us to discuss you affairs.

If you think that your privacy or the confidentiality of your information has been breached because of our actions, your first step should be to try to resolve it with the individual you have been dealing with. If you are not satisfied, talk to the officer's manager. If you are still not satisfied, you can make a complaint – refer to our complaints process.

You have the right to access information about you in documents we hold. You can also get access to documents that help us make decisions.

You also have the right to ask us to change the personal information we hold about you if you think the information is incomplete, incorrect, out of date or misleading.

The cost of freedom of information requests is set by the law.

If you want to access any of our documents, you should contact us first. We can provide copies of some of the more commonly requested documents without the need for you to make a freedom of information request.

<http://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Freedom-of-Information/>

### **4. Explain the decisions we make about you and respect your right to request a review of a decision**

When the Medical Council give you a decision about your registration, the decision will be we explained to you; while also providing a contact number for the person handling your case. We try to explain our decisions clearly. Generally, the explanation of a decision will be in writing. If a decision is provided orally, you will be provided an explanation at the same time.

When you receive a decision about your registration, an explanation will be given on how you can get the decision reviewed and if there are time limits.

The Medical Council will try to resolve any problems as quickly as possible. In many cases, if you disagree with our review decision you can ask for an independent review. If you want a decision reviewed, use the contact details provided. Reviews are conducted by people who did not make the original decision.

<http://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Registration/First-Time-Applications/Review-Procedure-for-applicants-refused-registration-on-Medical-Register.pdf>

#### **5. Respect your right to make a comments, compliment or complaint**

The Medical Council value your feedback on your experience and you can make a comment, compliment or complaint to inform continuous improvement of our work in registration.

It is recommended that you first raise this with the officer you have been dealing with and if you are not satisfied, or if you find it difficult to raise the issue with the officer, talk to the officer's manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way your feedback is being handled, you can provide written feedback which will be reviewed in line with our policy.

The Medical Council treat complaints seriously. If you come to us with any problems or complaints, we will try to resolve them quickly and fairly. Complaints also provide us with important feedback and help us to identify how we can improve our service.

If you have a complaint, you should try to resolve it with us first. If you are unable to, or if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your complaint, the Ombudsman may be able to help you. More information about the Ombudsman is available from their website at [www.ombudsman.gov.ie](http://www.ombudsman.gov.ie).

#### **6. Be accountable for how we operate the registration function**

The Medical Council take the need to be accountable and commitments made in this charter very seriously.

When a decision is made about your affairs, the decision will be explained. As will your rights and obligations in relation to that decision. Contact details will be provided if you have any queries or need more information.

If the issue cannot be resolved quickly, we keep you informed about our progress. We take all reasonable steps to see issues through to resolution.

The Medical Council is accountable to the Oireachtas and the Irish community and Medical Council decisions are appealable to the Courts.

## Doctor expectations - what does this mean in practice?

### **7. Take care in presenting information accurately**

Errors or omissions in completing of forms and provision of documentation are the most common cause of delay in registration interactions. Besides causing delay, errors and omissions consume staff time as they follow up with doctors. This has implications for other doctors and for the Medical Council's ability to maintain efficient functions.

### **8. Observe timelines associated with the registration function**

Sometimes there are timelines associated with your interactions with Medical Council functions. For example, applications to retain registration must be made by a due date; applications for intern registration must be made in time for doctors to be registered to start in post.

In addition, where doctors provide incorrect or incomplete information or documents, we ask that doctors attend to their application within a 4 week period. If doctors do not provide information or documents, application files are closed. This enables the Medical Council to focus resource on providing timely and high quality services to doctors who have provided correct and complete information and documents.

Financial penalties apply for doctors who fail to make applications to retain registration on time.

### **9. Work cooperatively and politely with staff**

We ask that you work cooperatively and politely with staff. We understand that registration interactions can be time-dependent and critical for doctors and will endeavour to meet your needs. Staff need to follow up with doctors who have provided incorrect or incomplete information or documents. Please respond quickly and courteously. Doctors who are uncooperative, obstructive, rude, discriminatory, threatening or abusive may have their interaction with us ended. Unprofessional conduct with staff will be dealt with by the Medical Council.

### **10. Be truthful in your interactions**

The establishment and maintenance of the register is the cornerstone of the Medical Council's role in maintaining public trust in the medical profession.

Doctors have a duty to provide honest information to the Medical Council when interacting with the registration function. We will take reasonable steps to ensure that information provided is correct. If we discover that information is incorrect, this will have implications for your registration.

