Q&A: Taking a break from UK practice

Index
QUESTIONS..............................................................................................................2

I am registered with the GMC and have a licence to practise, but I practise entirely abroad. How will I revalidate? .......................................................... 2

I work for periods of time outside of the UK doing, for example, voluntary work. How will this affect my ability to revalidate? ........................................ 2

I plan to take up a post abroad (in a non UK designated body setting) but wish to maintain my licence to practise. What are my options? .................... 3

I work in the Republic of Ireland but am also licensed with the GMC, how will revalidation affect me? ................................................................. 3

Can I be appraised for revalidation while I am overseas? ............................ 3

I am an International Medical Graduate planning to work in the UK. How will revalidation affect me? ................................................................. 4

I am an overseas member of the College and I am not on the GP Register. Will revalidation affect my membership? ............................................... 4

SCENARIOS..............................................................................................................5

I have been offered a 5-year appointment as a rural GP in Australia. If I leave the GMC GP Register voluntarily, can I rejoin it in the future if I choose to return to the UK? ................................................................. 5

I am thinking of taking a 5-year contract to work as a rural GP in Canada. If I give up my GMC registration, will there be a way for other organisations, such as the Passport Agency, my UK bank and the DVLA to know that I am still a doctor? ................................................................. 5

I work as a GP providing care to British expatriates in Dubai. I’m on the GMC Register but don’t have a licence to practise. I’m considering coming back to the UK to do a 3-month locum. Will I need a licence? .................. 6

I’m about to give up work as a sessional GP to have my first baby. I want to take a career break to ‘be there’ for the early years of our child’s life. I don’t see a need to retain my registration or a licence to practise at the moment, as I don’t know when, or indeed if, I shall be returning to work. I have my MRCGP and have always undertaken annual appraisal. Should the need arise during my career break, would the GMC let me write a prescription? . 6
QUESTIONS

I am registered with the GMC and have a licence to practise, but I practise entirely abroad. How will I revalidate?

Doctors who are based exclusively overseas do not need a licence to practise in the UK. The licence to practise gives doctors legal rights and privileges in the UK that do not apply in any overseas country. Doctors who are based overseas must abide by whatever regulatory requirements exist in the country in which they practise. Non-UK organisations should therefore not require their doctors to hold a UK licence to practise. You can relinquish your licence to practise whilst working abroad and reinstate it on return to the UK. Once your licence is restored, you would need to link to a designated body, participate in annual appraisal in the UK and provide supporting information in line with guidance. Any relevant information gathered while working abroad, as well as evidence of ongoing CPD, should be brought to your first appraisal on return to the UK.

If you choose to continue to hold your licence while practising abroad, you will have to revalidate in the same way as doctors practising in the UK, and link to a UK designated body. If your employer or contractor is based within the UK it may be that they will be able to provide you with a link to a Responsible Officer, and you should discuss your revalidation with them at the earliest opportunity.

If you have not already done so, you should confirm your current circumstances with the GMC through your GMC online account, so that the GMC can provide you with appropriate advice. You can read more about relinquishing your licence.

Please also see question: ‘What should I do if I can’t establish a connection with a designated body?’ on our General FAQ. This is available from [http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation-and-cpd/new-revalidation-guidance-for-gps.aspx](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation-and-cpd/new-revalidation-guidance-for-gps.aspx)

I work for periods of time outside of the UK doing, for example, voluntary work. How will this affect my ability to revalidate?

It should be possible for you to collect the supporting information, participate in appraisals and also to link to a Responsible Officer (RO) through your practice in the UK. You should discuss management of your appraisal and supporting information (including additional supporting information to demonstrate your practice abroad) whilst in the UK with your RO and appraiser. This is because primary care organisations (PCOs) are likely to have specific requirements with regards to maintaining your position on the performers list.
I plan to take up a post abroad (in a non UK designated body setting) but wish to maintain my licence to practise. What are my options?

In order to maintain your licence, you need to link to a UK designated body, participate in annual appraisal in the UK (or within a UK designated body) and provide supporting information in line with guidance. You have the option of relinquishing your licence with the GMC and reactivating it on your return. Your place on the GP register will indicate that you are in good standing with the GMC. The alternative is that you return to the UK at intervals to undertake appraisals and participate in appraisal. However, you will need to connect to a Responsible Officer and maintain your position on a performers list. Primary care organisations (PCOs) are likely to have specific requirements with regards to maintaining your position on the performers list so you should speak to your PCO in the first instance.

Also see question: ‘What should I do if I can’t establish a connection with a designated body?’ in the General FAQ section. This is available from http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation-and-cpd/new-revalidation-guidance-for-gps.aspx

I work in the Republic of Ireland but am also licensed with the GMC, how will revalidation affect me?

All doctors who wish to retain their UK licence to practise with the GMC will need to be revalidated.

Can I be appraised for revalidation while I am overseas?

To count for revalidation, your appraisal would normally be delivered through a UK designated body. However, the GMC’s alternative route to revalidation allows for a doctor to be appraised by an appraiser who is a licensed doctor with a connection to a designated body or an approved suitable person, and is participating in revalidation themselves. Nevertheless, in most cases a doctor who is practising entirely outside the UK would be expected to relinquish their licence to practise.

Will supporting information collected whilst overseas in a non-UK designated body setting count towards revalidation?

The majority of supporting information for revalidation should be UK based because the privileges inferred by the licence to practise only apply to practice in the UK. However, ultimately the responsible officer or suitable person will make a decision as to whether supporting information collected outside a UK setting can be relied upon for the purposes of revalidation. If a doctor is maintaining a CPD portfolio whilst overseas it may be of use as supporting information for their first appraisal on returning to the UK. Recording your CPD in a portfolio will help to demonstrate that you are meeting the standards of your area of practice.

The RCGP’s Essential Knowledge Updates are an excellent way for GPs to keep up with UK practice in preparation for their return to the UK.
I am an International Medical Graduate planning to work in the UK. How will revalidation affect me?

Once you have fulfilled all the requirements which allow you to work in the UK, revalidation will be the same for all General Practitioners. The GMC will decide when your revalidation is due.

I am an overseas member of the College and I am not on the GP Register. Will revalidation affect my membership?

As long as you are fulfilling your membership requirements, revalidation will have no bearing on your membership.
SCENARIOS

I have been offered a 5-year appointment as a rural GP in Australia. If I leave the GMC GP Register voluntarily, can I rejoin it in the future if I choose to return to the UK?

Yes. You would be able to apply to the General Medical Council for restoration. This is currently free for doctors who leave the register voluntarily. You can find out more on the General Medical Council's Restoration web page available at:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/restoration.asp

I am thinking of taking a 5-year contract to work as a rural GP in Canada. If I give up my GMC registration, will there be a way for other organisations, such as the Passport Agency, my UK bank and the DVLA to know that I am still a doctor?

All my UK forms of identity show me as being ‘Doctor’ and I don’t want to have to change them!

Even if you give up your registration, your name will still appear on the General Medical Council’s searchable online register even after you leave the register. Your status will be ‘Not registered - having relinquished registration’.

The GMC does this because the register is an important public record. Patients and others need to be able to see details of doctors who were registered in the past, but they cannot refer to previous volumes of the register now that it is no longer published in paper form. Your accreditation from Canada will show your current clinical status.

Further GMC information is available at:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/12637.asp#8
**I work as a GP providing care to British expatriates in Dubai.**

**I’m on the GMC Register but don’t have a licence to practise.**

**I’m considering coming back to the UK to do a 3-month locum. Will I need a licence?**

Unless required by an overseas employer, there is no need for doctors to maintain a licence to practise if they are not practising in the UK. However doctors will need a licence before they can practise again in the UK, even for a short period.

You should also be aware that doctors who decide to hold a licence while working overseas will need to take part in revalidation. Doctors holding registration without a licence will not be subject to the requirements of revalidation because they will have no licence to renew.

Further information is available in the General Medical Council’s frequently asked questions about revalidation and working overseas available at:  
http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/licensing/faq_licence_to_practise.asp#10a

**I’m about to give up work as a sessional GP to have my first baby. I want to take a career break to ‘be there’ for the early years of our child’s life. I don’t see a need to retain my registration or a licence to practise at the moment, as I don’t know when, or indeed if, I shall be returning to work. I have my MRCGP and have always undertaken annual appraisal. Should the need arise during my career break, would the GMC let me write a prescription?**

If you think that the need will arise for you to prescribe prescription-only medicines, you will need to maintain both your GMC registration and your licence to practise. That in turn means that you will need to revalidate. This is not a matter of GMC policy though, it is a statutory requirement. The law says that only doctors who are registered with a licence to practise can prescribe prescription-only medicines. The main legislation that applies is the Medicines Act 1968.

Further GMC information is available at:  
http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/12637.asp#8