



## Unite the Union Response to:

### Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) consultation on proposed amendments to the Registration and Fees and Practice Committee Rules

This response is submitted by Unite. Unite is the UK's largest trade union with 1.5 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, transport, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.

Unite represents in excess of 100,000 health sector workers. This includes eight professional associations - British Veterinary Union (BVU), College of Health Care Chaplains (CHCC), Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists (GHP), Hospital Physicians Association (HPA), Medical Practitioners Union (MPU), Mental Health Nurses Association (MHNA), Society of Sexual Health Advisors (SSHA). Unite also represents members in occupations such as allied health professions, healthcare science, applied psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, dental professions, audiology, optometry, building trades, estates, craft and maintenance, administration, ICT, support services and ambulance services.

Unite has 80,000 members in Local Authorities and represents members in social work, social care, housing, schools, waste and refuse, craft and maintenance.

## **Introduction**

Unite welcomes the opportunity to respond to the HCPC consultation on proposed amendments to the Registration and Fees and Practice Committee Rules. As part of this response, Unite has used its ongoing routes throughout the organisation to hear back the views of our members registered with the HCPC and these have informed our response.

### **Question 1**

***Do you agree with our proposal about electronic communication?***

Unite supports the proposal to increase the methods of communication available to HCPC registrants. However, we would suggest that there is a need to make clear that this is for those registrants who are willing and able to use this method so as not to raise anxiety amongst those who do not have ready access to this form of communication.

### **Question 2**

***Do you agree that we should remove the requirement for a character reference and replace it with a self-declaration?***

Unite questions the value to public protection of asking potential registrants to self-declare that they are of 'good character'. We are aware that potential Nursing and Midwifery Council registrants are required to obtain a character reference from an approved academic institution whereas potential General Medical Council registrants complete a number of self-declarations, but not that there is evidence for which of these provides better public protection. Ultimately, systems should be in place to ensure that universities do not allow students who are not considered to be of good character to progress to the point of registration. Equally, employers should have robust systems in place to ensure potential employees are of good character. Therefore, Unite would recommend that self-declaration may be brought in, in addition to the need for a character reference (removing the timeframe), to ensure public safety and to be consistent with our nursing colleague's registration and university admissions policies.

### **Question 3**

***Do you agree that Panel Chairs should be able to give directions without the need for a preliminary hearing?***

In principle Unite supports any changes that reduce the cost and length of the fitness to practise process. However, in making such a change it is essential to ensure Panel Chairs ascertain the views and requirements of all parties involved prior to giving directions that will ultimately affect the hearing.

### **Question 4**

***Do you have any other comments to make about our proposed amendments to the Registration and Fees Rules and Practice Committee Rules?***

No.

### **Question 5**

***Do you have comments on our future plans to change the registration cycles for some professions to avoid the summer and Christmas periods?***

Unite can see no reason why this change should not be made. However, as many registrants will be well established in their registration cycle there the HCPC will need to ensure the change is effectively communicated to those affected to ensure they do not inadvertently allow their registration to lapse.

This response is submitted on behalf of Unite the Union by:  
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