

Consultation

**The Framework for Professionalism:
a new approach to setting standards and providing guidance
to the dental team**

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Overview

The General Dental Council (GDC) is consulting on its approach to providing guidance to dental professionals about the standards expected of them. These consultation proposals flow from our strategy, [Trusted and Effective: A strategy for dental regulation 2026–2028](#).

The Strategy outlines our commitment to set standards and professional guidance which supports dental professionals to make the right decisions, and to regulate in a way that promotes learning rather than fear. We believe patients are best protected when dental professionals are supported to make decisions in their patients' best interests, and when regulation makes effective use of upstream levers to promote and support professionalism and good practice.

One way we support dental professionals to deliver safe care and maintain public confidence is by providing clear, accessible guidance about professional standards.

We are therefore proposing to introduce a new Framework for Professionalism (the Framework), which would replace the current Standards for the Dental Team (the Standards), subject to consultation. The Framework moves away from detailed, rule-based standards and instead sets out clear Principles and Expectations. It is intended to support dental professionals to apply their professional judgement in different situations.

We signalled in our Strategy a commitment to regulate in a supportive way. In this spirit, we have worked with registrants, patients, their representative bodies, indemnifiers and educators throughout the development of the proposed Framework. From building on [research](#) with dental professionals and patients, to sharing early drafts of the Framework along the development journey, including through [a large-scale engagement exercise](#), we have asked stakeholders about the approach, the structure and the content of the draft Framework. We have used the feedback shared with us to design a framework that sets out standards and provides guidance that better supports and empowers dental professionals to apply their professional judgement, in the best interest of their patients.

The Framework would be supported by a new online content hub designed to make the guidance easier to access and use. The content hub would bring together the different parts of the Framework in one place and help dental professionals understand and apply the standards of conduct, performance and practice expected of registered professionals. An important part of the Framework, and the content hub, will be Supporting Material. These will include practical examples and

resources to help dental professionals apply the Principles of Professionalism in real situations.

This consultation includes a [mock-up of the content hub](#) and sample Supporting Material. This is intended to provide an experience of navigating the Framework, and how it works together to support dental professionals find the guidance and support that they need. We encourage you to explore this resource as you go through the consultation.

This consultation does not propose changes to the GDC's fitness to practise processes. However, it is important to explain how the Framework would operate in that context. The legal tests and thresholds for regulatory action remain unchanged, and the Framework must therefore be clear enough to be applied within those processes. The consultation includes information about this relationship and about further work planned in this area.

We recognise that this would represent a significant change in how we provide guidance to dental professionals. If consultation responses indicate support for these proposals, we will publish an implementation plan and timeline to support the transition.

We are seeking feedback from dental professionals, partner organisations and members of the public on the Framework itself, including the clarity and relevance of each component and whether it provides the support registered dental professionals need to demonstrate professional judgement.

Consultation period and deadline for responses

This 12-week consultation exercise was opened on 2 June 2026.

The closing date, or deadline for responses, is 31 August 2026.

Contact us

If you have any questions or queries about this consultation, please email:

stakeholder@gdc-uk.org

Phone: 020 7167 6330

About the GDC

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the UK professional regulator of the dental team. Dental professionals must be registered with the GDC to practise dentistry in the UK.

We regulate the whole dental team across the UK. We seek to ensure patient safety and public confidence in the dental professionals we regulate, which include dental nurses, clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental technicians, dental therapists, orthodontic therapists and dentists.

Our primary objective is to protect the public, and in doing so:

- Protect, promote and maintain the health, safety, and wellbeing of the public.
- Promote and maintain public confidence in the profession regulated.
- Promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of the profession.

All dental patients should be confident that the treatment they receive is provided by a dental professional who is properly trained, qualified, and meets our standards.

To achieve this, we register qualified dental professionals, set standards for the dental team, investigate serious concerns about dental professionals' fitness to practise, and work to ensure the quality of dental education.

Information about the consultation process

Analysis

We will use descriptive statistics to analyse the closed questions, including sub-group analysis if appropriate. Responses to the open questions will be analysed thematically to identify key areas of interest. When analysing and reporting on the data we will consider whether responses are from an individual or an organisation.

Responding to your views

The GDC will respond to views raised during the consultation by producing a consultation outcome report. The report will be published on the GDC website.

About this consultation

This consultation survey has 20 questions, which start on page 13. We would encourage all respondents to read the information in the consultation before answering the questions.

This consultation is structured in eight different sections:

Section 1: Our proposals

Section 2: The Principles of Professionalism

Section 3: Professional Guidance

Section 4: Expectations

Section 5: Supporting Material

Section 6: Framework for Professionalism

Section 7: The Relationship between the Framework for Professionalism and Fitness to Practise

Section 8: Equality Impact Assessment

About your response

Summary and direct quotes of individual response may be included in our consultation outcome report, and responses from organisations may be attributed to them.

We ask for contact details from individuals and those responding to the consultation on behalf of an organisation only for the purposes of asking questions about your response. The need to do this is

rare. The names and personal contact details of those responding will not be included in our outcome report and will not be published as part of a Freedom of Information (FOI) release.

At the end of this consultation, we will ask you to tell us about yourself by completing an anonymised survey. This information will not be connected to your responses to this consultation. We will use the data you provide us for overall analysis and insight into the fairness and inclusivity of our processes. Providing this data is extremely helpful, and we would like to encourage you to complete this step.

For details of how we collect, store and process information, please see our [privacy notice](#).

Information held by the GDC is subject to FOI requests, so please do not provide any information you would not want to be disclosed.

Ways to respond

Please respond to this consultation by using the [online response form](#).

You can also submit your response by email, please include the name of the consultation in the subject line of your email: stakeholder@gdc-uk.org.

If you would like to submit your response by post, please address it to:

General Dental Council
Policy and Research Team
37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ

We welcome responses to this consultation in Welsh. A Welsh version of our consultation can be found [here](#),

EDI information section

The GDC's core purpose is to protect patients and the public, and to maintain trust in the dental profession. One way we do this is by setting clear standards for all dental professionals in the UK.

We want every patient to be treated as an individual, with respect for their culture and values, and without discrimination. We believe dental professionals give better care when they work in safe, fair, and inclusive environments—free from discrimination or bias. This isn't just a legal duty; it's also the right thing to do for professionals, patients, and the public. In putting together these proposals, we have thought about how the way that we provide guidance to the dental team can support this important aim.

To stay trusted as a regulator, we put equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at the heart of our work. We explain how we do this in our 2026-28 Strategy, which aims to support a profession that is inclusive and focused on patient-centred care for everyone.

The Framework is designed to help dental professionals understand and meet their legal and ethical responsibilities around EDI. It encourages them to think about EDI in their daily decisions and actions.

In Section 7, we explain how the new Framework supports EDI, and helps dental professionals do the same.

We have also considered how our proposals may affect people with protected characteristics. As you read this consultation, we ask you to think about whether we have missed anything and to share your views on how these groups might be impacted.

Understanding who is responding

ORGANISATION OR INDIVIDUAL

1. Does your response represent your personal views, or are you providing the official response of an organisation?
 - Personal response [Go to Q.4]
 - Organisation response [Go to Q.2]

ORGANISATION QUESTION FOLLOW UP

2. Please tell us the name of your organisation.
3. Occasionally we may need further information about your organisation's response (the need to do this is rare).
Please provide a contact email address.

INDIVIDUAL MULTIPLE QUESTION FOLLOW UP (delete where necessary)

4. Please tell us if you are (Select all that apply):
 - UK registered dental professional [Go to Q.5]
 - Dental student or trainee [Go to main consultation questions]
 - Qualified dental professional not currently registered with the GDC [Go to main consultation questions]
 - Employed by a UK dental education or training provider [Go to main consultation questions]
 - Employed by a UK healthcare regulator [Go to main consultation questions]
 - None of the above [Go to main consultation questions]
5. Please tell us your registered title and if you are on a specialist list (Select all that apply):
 - Dentist
 - Dental nurse
 - Dental hygienist
 - Dental therapist
 - Dental technician
 - Orthodontic therapist
 - Clinical dental technician
 - Specialist list

Consultation proposal

Background

One of the ways in which the GDC works to keep patients safe is by providing guidance to dental professionals about the standards of conduct, performance and practice expected of them.

We want to ensure that this guidance is up to date, relevant and effective in supporting professional behaviour and good decision making. Our research and engagement suggest that a more principles-based approach can better support dental professionals to use their professional judgement when caring for patients. We have therefore reviewed how we provide guidance to ensure it remains effective and reflects new and emerging risks in dental practice.

We believe the most effective way to safeguard patients is through 'upstream' regulation. By this, we mean regulatory activities that focus on enabling professionals to provide safe and effective care by setting out guidance that is clear, accessible and practical. This guidance should support good decision making and help enable dental professionals to deliver the best standard of care to patients and continue to be trusted by the public.

The Framework for Professionalism has been developed using feedback from research and engagement. Throughout the development process we have involved dental professionals, indemnifiers, educators, patients and other stakeholders. Their input has helped to shape the proposals set out in this consultation, and we are grateful for the time and insight they have contributed.

Section 1: our proposals

We have reflected on the research we have conducted, and the valuable feedback received from our engagement with dental professionals, the public and other important stakeholders. We believe that the Framework is flexible and agile in order to allow dental professionals the space to use their professional judgement, whilst also setting clear directions and boundaries from the regulator.

The Framework will contain all guidance issued to dental professionals by the GDC relating to professional conduct and practice. The GDC expects all dental professionals to be aware of, and follow, the statutory guidance set out by the Framework, using their professional judgment, and demonstrating insight at all times. In some situations, a departure from this or other guidance may

be appropriate, provided that the decision can be clearly justified. There is some guidance that dental professionals must follow without exception. In these cases, we make this clear in the guidance itself.

The Framework also contains Supporting Material which are a set of resources that provide helpful interpretation and context but do not introduce new requirements. As we move through this consultation, we will make clear the purpose of each element of the Framework, and how dental professionals are expected to use it.

As with the current Standards, in addition to guidance issued by the GDC, registered dental professionals must make sure they understand and follow the laws and regulations that apply to their professional conduct and practice.

We propose that the new Framework for Professionalism consists of:



This Framework focuses on supporting professional judgement, placing patients' interests at the centre of care, and recognising the importance of context in professional decision-making.

Rather than following a list of rules, dental professionals would use the Principles to guide their judgement and decide how to act in each situation to achieve the best outcome for their patients.

In addition to guidance issued by the GDC, registered dental professionals must find out about, and follow, the laws and regulations which apply to their professional conduct and practice.

In the following sections we set out each of these elements in detail. The new Framework aims to improve the way we organise our guidance offering into a resource that is easily accessible, dynamic and useful to dental professionals when they are seeking advice or support in making complex decisions.

In addition to reviewing our proposal, we encourage you to visit the [content hub mock-up](#). This has been developed to illustrate how the Framework could work in practice, and how its core components; the Principles, the Expectations, Professional Guidance, and Supporting Material, sit together under the one umbrella.

The [content hub mock-up](#) has been designed to make the links between these components clear, showing how they connect and support one another across the Framework. It demonstrates how guidance can be organised in a way that is forward looking, consistent and easy to follow.

By exploring the hub, you will see how we hope this approach will support more intuitive navigation, helping registrants move between related content and access relevant guidance more efficiently. The aim is to present a Framework that is clear, practical and straightforward to use.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the proposed approach will be further developed and undergo comprehensive user testing with internal and external stakeholders.

Section 2: the Principles of Professionalism

When creating the Framework, our goal was to give dental professionals the freedom to use their professional judgment, skills and experience to make decisions in different situations.

The Framework is based on four Principles of Professionalism (the Principles) that represent what it means to be a professional. These Principles are intended to be clear and easy to keep at the heart of professional decision making. The Principles are intended to guide professionals in applying their skills, knowledge and experience, recognising that every patient and situation is different.

When we set out to develop these Principles, we talked to dental professionals, patients and the public through both commissioned research and engagement, about what professionalism means to them. We used this insight to review the Standards and group them into broader themes that speak to the heart of what it means to be a professional in dentistry. We have invited feedback on these

Principles throughout their development and have been pleased with the positive feedback that we have heard so far.

We want dental professionals to feel a sense of ownership of these Principles and so we will keep engaging with stakeholders throughout this consultation and afterward to make sure the Principles work well for dental professionals, patients and the public, educators, indemnifiers and other stakeholders with an interest in dentistry in the UK.

Principles of Professionalism



Questions 1 to 3:

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the role of the Principles is clear?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Principles capture the key areas of professionalism in dentistry?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Principles, when applied by dental professionals, will help maintain public and patient safety?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

Section 3: Professional Guidance

The Principles of Professionalism set out the fundamental standards of conduct, performance and practice required of dental professionals and allow room for professional judgment based on training and experience.

In some instances, it is necessary for the GDC to say more about a specific topic to help ensure patient safety and public confidence. This type of guidance is referred to in the Framework as Professional Guidance and relates to areas where there is a need for the GDC to provide clear direction, obligations or boundaries.

This Professional Guidance is statutory guidance, meaning that dental professionals must understand and follow it, and it may be referenced in the fitness to practise process – this remains unchanged from the current model.

These documents contain some guidance that you must follow without exception. In these cases, we make this clear in the Professional Guidance document itself.

Professional Guidance:

- Relates to professional conduct or practice.
- Can be considered in fitness to practise processes if not adhered to.
- Must undergo formal consultation to issue, vary or withdraw.

To ensure the Framework remains accessible and straightforward, the GDC intends to issue Professional Guidance only where there is a clear need. Criteria have been developed and tested with stakeholders to help identify when Professional Guidance is required and to ensure it remains focused on the GDC's statutory objectives of protecting the public and promoting and maintaining public confidence in dentistry. In rapidly evolving areas, issuing Professional Guidance may be less effective, as the extensive consultation, development time, and resources required can mean guidance risks becoming outdated quickly. Where statutory Professional Guidance is not necessary, Supporting Material will be developed to provide explanatory or practical information to aid understanding of the Framework.

The GDC will provide this detailed Professional Guidance when:

- Clear direction or boundaries are needed to ensure patient safety or maintain public confidence and/or
- The GDC is the body responsible for issuing the guidance

We have this criteria to review our existing supplementary guidance, and other outward facing information we provide (such as position statements).

Questions 4 to 5:

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the criteria for Professional Guidance are clear?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

Below are the areas we believe meet the above criteria and will therefore be included in the proposed Framework as Professional Guidance.

- [Guidance on Professional Indemnity and Insurance](#) (effective 12 February 2024) – this professional guidance clarifies the requirements around holding cover that will compensate patients who have suffered harm, in the event of a successful claim.
- [Guidance on Reporting Matters to the GDC](#) (effective 1 February 2025) - this guidance outlines all the things dental professionals must report to the GDC.
- [Guidance on Scope of Practice](#) (effective 1 November 2025) - guides professionals to carry out only the tasks for which they are trained, competent and insured, while remaining within the boundaries of their role.
- [Guidance on Advertising](#) (effective 30 September 2013) – sets the requirements for dental professionals with regards to honesty in their advertising, and in the use of protected titles.
- [Guidance on Social Media](#) (effective 27 June 2016) – explains our requirements in relation to dental professionals' online behaviour.
- Professional Guidance on Consent and Shared Decision Making

Our Guidance on Professional Indemnity and Insurance, Reporting Matters to the GDC and Scope of Practice have been recently updated and recognise the importance of professional judgement. If our proposals are accepted, we would carry out light touch updates to each of these documents to reflect the Framework for Professionalism, where they currently reference the Standards.

We would do the same light touch update to the Guidance on Advertising and the Guidance on Social Media; however, we know these would benefit from a fuller review. As they contain important information that dental professionals currently rely on, we propose to include them in the Framework at launch, with a light update to reflect the Principles. In the longer term, these would be reviewed to ensure they remain up to date and align with our wider approach to supporting professionalism in dentistry and potentially combined to form a Professional Guidance on Communication.

We are also planning to create new Professional Guidance on Consent and Shared Decision-making. Patient feedback and emerging themes arising from the fitness to practise process have identified this as an area in which clear direction or boundaries are needed to ensure patient safety or maintain public confidence. Obtaining valid consent and keeping patients at the centre of all decision making is essential to providing a good standard of care to patients.

If these proposals progress, we will develop and consult on this area of Professional Guidance before implementing the Framework for Professionalism. To do this we would look to involve patients, dental professionals, their representatives and other stakeholders in creating this resource.

We expect that new areas of professional practice or conduct that meet the threshold set out above, and require professional guidance to be developed, may be identified over time. As and when they do, we will use the criteria to assess whether there is a need to create and consult upon new Professional Guidance.

5. In addition to the areas listed above, are there any other aspects of professional practice or conduct that you think meet the criteria for the GDC to issue Professional Guidance?

Section 4: the Expectations

Expectations are set out under each of the four Principles. They have been drafted to explain how a dental professional can demonstrate or uphold the Principles. The level of detail is intended to strike a balance between providing clarity and allowing sufficient space for professional judgement, which is central to this Framework.

The Expectations were developed through analysis of the positive duties for registrants which are currently within the Standards and referred to as 'Standards' and 'Guidance.' In developing the Expectations, we also considered feedback from engagement and research, and shared draft Expectations with stakeholders.

As set out above, where there are specific mandatory actions that dental professionals must take, or boundaries they must observe, this will be set out in Professional Guidance.

In order to ensure this is clear, the Expectations will be clearly linked to relevant Professional Guidance and Supporting Material, making it easy for dental professionals to navigate the wider Framework to locate the guidance they need in each situation. This is demonstrated in the mock content hub.

The Expectations are intended to set out the kind of behaviours and approaches the GDC expects to see. They are not a complete list of every possible way a dental professional can demonstrate they are upholding the standards. Expectations are set out under each Principle and provide an explanation of many of the ways that dental professionals can demonstrate they have upheld that Principle. They may be demonstrated in various ways, and how they do this will be informed by professional judgement, context, and the patient's circumstance.

Dental professionals are normally expected to meet the Expectations. It will be necessary to use professional judgment to assess which Expectations are relevant to a situation and be able to justify any decision to depart from an Expectation with reference to another Principle, Expectation or Professional Guidance.

The Expectations may be met in different ways, depending on the dental professional's judgement, the context, and the needs and views of the individual patient and/or colleagues.

Expectations link together the other elements of the Framework, making it easier for dental professionals to navigate to the guidance or content they need to help them.

The Expectations are listed below under each Principle:

Treat patients with respect:

Treat your patients with dignity and compassion, supporting them to make informed decisions about their care.

There are many ways that you can demonstrate that you are treating patients with respect. Below we have highlighted some expectations regarding respect. It is important to recognise that this is not a complete list.

As a dental professional, you are expected to:

- Treat patients as individuals and not make assumptions about them based on how they look or their background.
- Be clear, patient, empathetic, kind, respectful, and polite with your patients.
- Work with patients to make shared decisions about their care, ensuring they understand and keeping their needs at the centre of decision making.
- Communicate clearly with patients in a way they understand about relevant treatment options, including the associated costs, risks, and benefits, and keep their preferences central to decision-making throughout their care.
- Provide patients with a clear explanation and rationale of the proposed care, obtaining valid consent before commencing care, and at each stage of treatment.
- Ensure that patients understand who is involved in providing their care, including their role within the dental team.
- Identify and support vulnerable patients, including those who may not be able to provide consent themselves, and those who require reasonable adjustments to be made for their care.
- Be aware that some patients are anxious or afraid of dental treatment and how you behave or speak to them may affect the likelihood of them seeking oral healthcare.
- Manage complaints using a clear and accessible policy that empowers patients to give feedback about their care, and ensure that you listen to, learn from, and respond to that feedback.
- Keep patient information confidential and respect patients' privacy.

Practise safely and effectively:

Use your knowledge and skills to provide the right outcome for your patients, keep up to date with relevant guidance, legislation and regulations that affect your work, and speak up to protect others.

There are many ways that you can demonstrate that you are practising safely and effectively. Below we have highlighted some expectations regarding safe and effective practice, however, it is important to recognise that this is not a complete list.

As a dental professional, you are expected to:

- Provide care that takes into account a patient's broader healthcare and wellbeing.
- Adopt an evidence-based approach to practice and the care you provide for patients.
- Be aware of and work within all relevant guidance, legislation and regulations as it applies to you as a dental professional and ensure you provide care in a safe environment.
- Keep up to date, complete, and accurate patient records that allow you and other professionals to clearly understand them.
- When using technology to support practice, ensure you understand your responsibility, the technology you are using, and its limitations.
- Reflect on your performance and identify strengths and areas for development.
- Seek feedback from colleagues and patients, and listen to, learn from, and act on this feedback.
- Keep your knowledge and skills up to date to develop and maintain your practice over the course of your career.
- Understand your personal and professional scope of practice, and only perform tasks that you are trained, competent and indemnified/insured to do.
- Reflect on your own mental and physical health and seek support when you need it, including adjusting or limiting your practice as necessary.
- Ensure that you and those you work with are trained in medical emergencies and understand their role, and there is sufficient support where care is provided.
- Speak up when you see something go wrong to support your patients and colleagues and to protect them from harm.

Maintain trust in the profession:

Act with honesty, and integrity, ensuring your actions maintain the trust of colleagues, patients, and the public.

There are many ways that you can demonstrate that you are maintaining trust in the profession. Below we have highlighted some expectations with regards to maintaining trust, however, it is important to recognise that this is not a complete list.

As a dental professional, you are expected to:

- Put patient interests at the centre of what you do and encourage others to do the same.
- Conduct your life both inside and outside work, including on social media or online, in such a way that maintains your patients' trust in you, and the public's confidence to seek oral healthcare.
- Demonstrate candour, be open and transparent in your interactions with patients, colleagues, regulators, and others.
- Ensure that all your communication, with patients and others, including advertising, is accurate, truthful and not misleading.
- Act fairly and not discriminate against people for any reason, including, but not limited to, any legally protected characteristics.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of patients by recognising, responding to, and reporting any safeguarding concerns.
- Maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries in the relationships you have with patients, colleagues and the public.
- Ensure you have appropriate indemnity or insurance arrangements in place so patients can obtain compensation if something goes wrong.
- Raise concerns without delay if patients or colleagues are at risk and take measures to protect them.
- Understand your duty to report concerns about your fitness to practise or that of another healthcare professional to the appropriate healthcare regulator, and your obligation to inform the GDC if you are subject to criminal or regulatory proceedings anywhere in the world.
- Cooperate with investigations of public bodies, including the GDC, fully and in a timely way, and comply with any sanction that may follow.

Work in partnership with others:

Work with colleagues to uphold these Principles and ensure an effective and supportive environment in which the safety and wellbeing of the patient and

There are many ways that you can demonstrate that you are working in partnership with others. Below we have highlighted some expectations with regards to working with others, however, it is important to recognise that this is not a complete list.

As a dental professional, you are expected to:

- Work with colleagues to provide patient-centred care.
- Treat your colleagues with respect, support them, and do not put them in positions that make them uncomfortable.
- Work with colleagues to develop a culturally safe and inclusive working environment and make their wellbeing your concern.
- Understand the skills and expertise (scope of practice) of the whole dental team and working with others in a way that benefits your patients.
- Work as a team in the patient's best interests by referring and delegating to other professionals who are competent to provide the required care and be willing to take instruction from others where appropriate.
- Ensure that you are appropriately supported for the work you are undertaking.
- Seek feedback from your colleagues to improve your practice and respond constructively.
- Be clear of your role within the team and effectively perform your responsibilities as a colleague, leader or manager.
- If you lead or manage a team, ensure that those you work with have appropriate registration and indemnity, and are trained and competent to undertake their role.

Questions 6 to 8:

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of the Expectations is clear?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Expectations themselves are clear?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Expectations cover the areas in which the regulator should set expectations for registrants?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

Section 5: the Supporting Material

The addition of Supporting Material within the Framework for Professionalism is a central part of our commitment to support dental professionals, by providing information in a way that supports them in their professional decision-making and helps to navigate different situations.

During engagement, the feedback we heard highlighted a clear appetite for the GDC to provide resources that assist dental professionals to exercise their judgement and apply the Principles to their practice. Supporting Material are a key part of the Framework that present what application of the Principles, Expectations and Professional Guidance looks like in a dynamic and responsive way. Supporting Material will be designed to help dental professionals understand how each component of the Framework can be applied in a range of contexts.

Supporting Material is:

- advisory, or supportive in nature
- related to the Principles of Professionalism and the Expectations or Professional Guidance
- not, by themselves, subject to mandatory legal or regulatory compliance by dental professionals.

The Supporting Material will present content in a variety of engaging formats designed to assist dental professionals in applying the Principles, Professional Guidance and Expectations in different contexts, and not as prescriptive rules. Examples of the types of content proposed include statements, case studies, videos, blogs, and other resources that brings the Framework to life and inform professional decision-making.

We'll use Supporting Material as one of the ways to fulfil our commitment in the Strategy to enable learning. We intend to regularly update and develop these materials, drawing on insights gained from fitness to practise processes and horizon scanning of emerging trends in dentistry. Where appropriate, we will collaborate with dental professionals, representative organisations, and other stakeholders to co-produce content. We will also signpost to relevant external guidance frequently referenced by dental professionals.

To assist stakeholders in understanding the role and use of these materials within the Framework, we have developed a [content hub mock-up](#). This simulation shows how Supporting Material could be organised to be easily accessible and searchable, illustrating our ambition for the Framework to be a dynamic and responsive resource.

While the primary audience for these materials are dental professionals, they will be publicly accessible and so can be of benefit to educators, representative bodies, and members of the public who have an interest in dentistry.

Supporting Material can be developed on any given topic; but in order to ensure their purpose is clear, they are relevant to dental professionals and support the wider Framework, we have developed the following criteria.

The need for a Supporting Material requires one or more of the following:

- Raised by stakeholders,
- or raised within GDC (via research, policy queries, fitness to practise trends),
- or in response to emerging issues

and must:

- Have a clear link to the Principles, Professional Guidance or Expectations, and
- Not introduce new Principles, Professional Guidance or Expectations and are not intended to replace them.
- Be supportive in purpose – meaning that they will not be used as the basis for fitness to practise allegations.

It is important that dental professionals and other stakeholders can easily recognise this type of material. While the format will make it clear, each piece will also include the following note.

These Supporting Material show ways in which the Principles, Professional Guidance, the Expectations and the relevant legislation can be applied within different contexts, and they may signpost to relevant resources. They do not introduce new principles or guidance and will not be used as a basis of an allegation of impaired fitness to practise.

Questions 9 to 10:

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of Supporting Material is clear?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

Because we believe the Supporting Material to be so valuable in bringing the wider Framework to life, we would ensure that there was a well-developed suite of Supporting Material available at the future launch of the Framework subject to consultation outcome.

This prioritisation of Supporting Material to be ready for launch considered factors such as alignment with the current Strategy and its objectives, level of legal and stakeholder interest, and the anticipated resource intensity required for development.

10. Are there any topics in particular that you believe the GDC should prioritise to support registrants in using the Framework?

Section 6: Framework for Professionalism

In this consultation, we have explained our proposals for the new Framework for Professionalism, which fulfils the GDC's duty to provide guidance to dental professionals about the standards expected of them to protect patients and promote public confidence in the dental team.

The Framework is designed to help dental professionals use a principles-based approach when making decisions, focusing on outcomes that are best for patients. We believe this approach moves away from relying on rules toward supporting professional judgement.

The Framework would replace the current Standards and supplementary guidance with:

Principles of Professionalism	The Principles of Professionalism are the core tenets of what it means to be a dental professional.
Expectations	The Expectations provide an explanation of many ways that dental professionals can demonstrate that they have upheld the Principles.
Professional Guidance	Professional Guidance are documents which set out clear direction from the GDC on a specific topic where clear boundaries or obligations are required.
Supporting Material	Supporting Material provide additional explanation and context for the Principles of Professionalism, Expectations and Professional Guidance. They are designed to support understanding, encourage reflection, and illustrate the GDC's position on particular topics or areas of interest.

As outlined earlier in this consultation, this proposed structure is intended to be supported by the development of a digital content hub, designed to bring the different components of the Framework together in a clear, coherent and accessible way. The hub would support users to navigate more easily between the Principles, Expectations, Professional Guidance and Supporting Material, helping to reflect how these elements connect and are applied in practice.

Questions 11 to 14:

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism will prioritise patient safety and public confidence?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism encourages and supports the use of professional judgement?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism supports dental professionals to make the appropriate decision for each situation?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism provides a useful way to organise guidance for registrants?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please explain your answer:

Section 7: the relationship between the Framework for Professionalism and Fitness to Practise

We have a statutory duty to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for dental professionals with the aim of protecting the public and maintaining trust in the dental profession. An important way we do this is by setting guidance as to the standards of conduct, performance and practice expected of registered dental professionals.

Our fitness to practise processes are designed to support this aim by determining whether a dental professional has fallen short of the expected standards. We do this by considering the behaviour displayed by the registrant, the seriousness of the alleged misconduct, and the specific circumstances of each case. Our approach is forward-looking and focused on maintaining confidence in dental services by supporting future good practice and professionalism, rather than seeking to punish registrants.

The primary purpose of our guidance is to promote and maintain high standards of professionalism across the dental profession. Currently, this guidance consists of the Standards and supplementary guidance, through which we set out requirements for dental professionals' conduct and the way they perform their clinical role. We have provided a large amount of prescriptive detail about the application of the Standards in practice in the guidance that underpins them. While there is no legal requirement to do so, we refer to the Standards in the fitness to practise decision-making process and the determination where this is useful to illustrate where a registrant has significantly departed from the standards expected.

Under the proposals contained in this consultation the Principles, the Expectations and the Professional Guidance would together form the GDC's guidance. Under the proposed Framework, dental professionals will use the Principles to guide their judgement when making decisions about how to achieve the right outcome for patients based on individual circumstances and context, with the Expectations providing additional support for that judgement.

The Principles are of equal importance and are not listed in priority order. Dental professionals must uphold the Principles in every aspect of their practice and in their personal life. Dental professionals should use the Principles as a framework for decision making, using them alongside their skills, experience and professional judgement to decide what the best course of action is in different situations.

We will be providing specific and detailed Professional Guidance where certainty in registrants' professional obligations is required to ensure patient safety and maintain public confidence. This Professional Guidance can be referred to in fitness to practise proceedings alongside the Principles. As we go through the consultation we will indicate the status of each part of the Framework.

The Expectations form part of the GDC's statutory guidance. They may be referred to in fitness to practise proceedings as examples of how a dental professional may have fallen short of the Principles. Dental professionals are normally expected to meet the Expectations, however it will be necessary to use professional judgment to assess which Expectations are relevant to a situation and be able to justify any decision to depart from an Expectation with reference to another Principle, Expectation or Professional Guidance.

We understand that there is an appetite and a need for greater transparency around the relationship between GDC guidance and our enforcement processes. Should our proposals be accepted, we will publish an explanation of our approach to enforcement and the Framework's role in those processes to support implementation.

Section 8: Equality Impact Assessment

As part of these considerations and in order to meet requirements associated with the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), we ensure the equality and diversity implications of new proposals are considered through an Equality Impact Assessment, and we are seeking to gather further information on the impact of the proposals from respondents.

We would like you to consider whether our proposals have the potential to impact people based on their protected characteristics. Please note, you do not need to provide us with any information regarding your protected characteristics to answer this question. The protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

Would any people in the above groups face increased inequalities, challenges or difficulties as a result of a move to a principles-based model for setting standards and providing guidance to the dental team?

Questions 15 to 20:

- 15.** Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for how these issues could be addressed.

16. Would the Framework for Professionalism address any existing equality issues, challenges or difficulties that you are aware of? Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how. If applicable, please let us know if you have any suggestions for how these issues could be better addressed.



17. Would the Framework for Professionalism have any positive equality impacts? Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how.



We are required by law to uphold the Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022 so that people who speak, read, and write in Welsh can have the same opportunity to use the Welsh language as anyone using the English language. We are also required to consider the impacts of changes to the Standards on opportunities to use the Welsh Language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English Language.

There may be impacts caused by the influence the Framework has on members of the public. Therefore, we want to seek and consider views on whether there are any positive or adverse impacts caused by our proposal of the Framework, and if there are ways that we can enhance the positive impacts and reduce the negative impacts.

18. Thinking about the above, do you think the proposed Framework has any impacts (positive/negative/neutral) on opportunities to use the Welsh Language?

- Positive
- Negative
- No Impact
- Don't know

19. Thinking about the above, do you think the proposed Framework has any impacts (positive/negative/neutral) on treating the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language?

- Positive
- Negative
- No Impact
- Don't know

20. Do you think there are ways to enhance the positive impacts or reduce the negative impacts of our proposal?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Opportunities to use the Welsh Language?			
Treating the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language?			

EDI monitoring information and link

Thank you for taking the time to share your views as part of this consultation.

To help us better understand who we are reaching and improve future consultations, we would appreciate it if you could complete our optional short Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questionnaire linked below.

Link: [EDI Monitoring Information](#)

Appendix: list of all questions

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the role of the Principles is clear?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Principles capture the key areas of professionalism in dentistry?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Principles, when applied by dental professionals, will help maintain public and patient safety?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the criteria for Professional Guidance are clear?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
5. In addition to the areas listed above, are there any other aspects of professional practice or conduct that you think meet the criteria for the GDC to issue Professional Guidance?
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of the Expectations is clear?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Expectations themselves are clear?
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Expectations cover the areas in which the regulator should set expectations for registrants?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer [open text box]
9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of Supporting Material is clear?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
10. Are there any topics in particular that you believe the GDC should prioritise to support registrants in using the Framework?
11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism will prioritise patient safety and public confidence?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism encourages and supports the use of professional judgement?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism supports dental professionals to make the appropriate decision for each situation?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed Framework for Professionalism provides a useful way to organise guidance for registrants?
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Please explain your answer
15. Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for how these issues could be addressed.
16. Would the Framework for Professionalism address any existing equality issues, challenges or difficulties that you are aware of? Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how. If applicable, please let us know if you have any suggestions for how these issues could be better addressed.
17. Would the Framework for Professionalism have any positive equality impacts? Please specify which groups you think would be impacted and how.
18. Thinking about the above, do you think the proposed Framework has any impacts (positive/negative/neutral) on opportunities to use the Welsh Language?
- Positive
 - Negative
 - No Impact
 - Don't know
19. Thinking about the above, do you think the proposed Framework has any impacts (positive/negative/neutral) on treating the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language?
- Positive
 - Negative
 - No Impact
 - Don't know
20. Do you think there are ways to enhance the positive impacts or reduce the negative impacts of our proposal?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Opportunities to use the Welsh Language?			
Treating the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language?			

General Dental Council

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