

**General
Dental
Council**

Monitoring Guidance

For Education Providers and Awarding Organisations

March 2026

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Introduction

As the regulatory body for dental professionals, the General Dental Council (GDC) promotes high standards of education in all aspects of dentistry.

The GDC has published a set of [Standards for Education](#). These standards are the regulatory tool that the GDC uses to ensure that a programme is fit for purpose. The four standards are central to the GDC's quality assurance processes and contain a total of 22 requirements.

The four standards cover:

1. Patient protection and safety
2. Student development and support
3. Quality assurance of the programmes
4. Examination and assessment

Standards 1-3 are only applicable to organisations that provide both programmes and examinations. Standard 4 is only applicable to the providers that deliver assessments.

The Standards for Education require that providers only allow students to be awarded a qualification if they demonstrate a set of learning outcomes, which have been defined in the current GDC Safe Practitioner Framework.

One of the ways in which the GDC fulfils its primary role to protect patients, and the public is by assessing whether a programme is fit for purpose through our quality assurance processes. These processes consist of a range of different tools including monitoring and inspections of Education Providers and Awarding Organisations (AOs).

Monitoring is used to gather information that assures the GDC that the programme continues to deliver the required standard of education and does not pose any risks in terms of patient safety. In the past, our monitoring has required the provider to provide significant amounts of evidence to demonstrate how programmes meet the GDC Standards for Education. Since 2022, we have reduced the need to provide supporting documentary evidence.

We have adopted an improved risk-based approach that seeks to identify actual or potential risks in the delivery of programmes. The EQA team worked in conjunction with the Research

and Development team, to review how we will monitor programmes in the longer term, drawing on the experience of other regulators alongside a desktop review of published evidence. This has enabled us to improve the way we conduct regular monitoring, with the introduction of a risk model which identifies the level of risk associated with a programme. This risk framework will not determine the overall outcome, however, will be a consideration during assessment of provider responses.

Previously, AOs were monitored under a separate process, at an alternative time, however the revised process incorporates all aspects of monitoring together. AOs will however complete specific survey questions which are more relevant to their structure. The assessment of the responses will be conducted in the same manner.

General Monitoring (GM) is now supported by new processes to provide a comprehensive monitoring web that covers the entire life cycle of a programme. From 2023 onwards, GM will be supplemented by Additional Monitoring (AM) and Progress Monitoring (PM).

This guidance details the process and our expectations of you as an Education Provider or AO.

General monitoring process

The monitoring process for each academic year will apply to all education providers and AOs except for the following:

- Those Education Providers or AOs subject to an inspection in the previous academic year
- Those Education Providers or AOs with a planned inspection in the current academic year

All education providers and AOs who are due to be monitored will be sent an email with a link to a SmartSurvey monitoring questionnaire in October. The questionnaire contains approximately 35 questions that cover:

- background and contextual information about the programme
- changes made or due to be made to different elements of the programme
- issues, concerns, and challenges affecting the programme within the past 12 months

The questions in the survey are designed to give the GDC an overview of how the programme is presently performing and the recent and/or current challenges. The questions have been designed to elicit information relating to the Standards for Education, which has meant that the number of questions has reduced. Documentary evidence will not be routinely requested with the questionnaire.

As we will not require documentary evidence, you must ensure that adequate detail is provided in your response. Responses are risk assessed, and should there not be sufficient detail, this may result in additional monitoring or inspection activity. Please ensure that all aspects of the questions are answered. There are clear prompts as to what you should include in your response.

You can save and return to the survey, should you need to continue at a later date. We will provide a word version of the questions for drafting, if you would prefer to gather all the information before accessing the link and uploading your responses from your draft. Before submitting your response, ensure you have completed all questions.

Each education provider or AO will have an assigned member of the EQA team whose details will be included when you are contacted with the questionnaire link. You will be given approximately eight weeks to complete the questionnaire. If you are unable to return your questionnaire by the deadline, you must notify your assigned EQA team member using their contact details which will be provided in the email containing the questionnaire.

Once your monitoring questionnaire has been received, it will be assessed by the EQA team and two of our Education Associates (EA). All EAs are appointed through an open and competitive recruitment exercise and are trained in GDC EQA processes.

The evidence provided in response to the information gathering questions will be scored against a risk matrix to assess the level of risk posed to patient safety and compliance with the Standards for Education.

Once the evidence has been reviewed, one of the following outcomes will be recommended:

- No further action
- Additional monitoring required
- Inspection in the next academic year
- Urgent inspection in the current academic year
- Time elapsed inspection

Further information on these outcomes is given below.

No further action

This means that we have identified no or low level of risk to your programme and you will not be subject to a planned inspection during the next academic year.

You will continue to be subject to routine monitoring in future.

Additional monitoring

This means that we have identified some risk to your programme but cannot determine the outcome based on the information provided.

A meeting will be arranged for a discussion to take place between the GDC and your programme team and may also include one or both EAs responsible for assessing your monitoring questionnaire (depending on the type of potential risk identified). This meeting will be held remotely. Verbal evidence will be gathered at the exploratory discussion and documentary evidence may be requested as well, either at or following the discussion. The need for documentary evidence will be decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the potential risks identified. Any requests for additional documentary evidence will be clearly communicated to you.

Time elapsed inspection

If there has not been an inspection conducted in some years, we will decide whether a time elapsed inspection will take place the following year.

The inspection will be conducted by a panel that will consist of member(s) of the EQA team and EAs. Whilst there, a series of meetings will normally take place with both students of the programme and staff. The inspection will result in a published report which will include your observations and an action plan.

Inspection in the following academic year

This means that we have identified a significant level of risk to your programme, and the decision has been made to conduct an inspection within the next academic year.

Inspection duration, scope, and remit are dependent on our analysis. Programme inspections can be up to two days in length. We may also request that you provide us with the dates of

your final summative assessments should it be necessary for us to observe either your final examinations or the supporting decision-making process. The inspection will be conducted by a panel that will consist of member(s) of the EQA team and EAs. Whilst there, a series of meetings will normally take place with both students of the programme and staff. The inspection will result in a published report which will include your observations and an action plan.

Urgent Inspection

This means we have identified a high level of risk to your programme, and the decision has been made to conduct an inspection in the current academic year. An urgent inspection may be followed by a regular inspection in the following academic year to review action plans, progress against such plans and to explore any lower-level concerns not addressed at the urgent inspection. The inspection will normally be held within six weeks of you being notified of the outcome to discuss the current situation regarding the concerns or issues identified.

Progress monitoring process

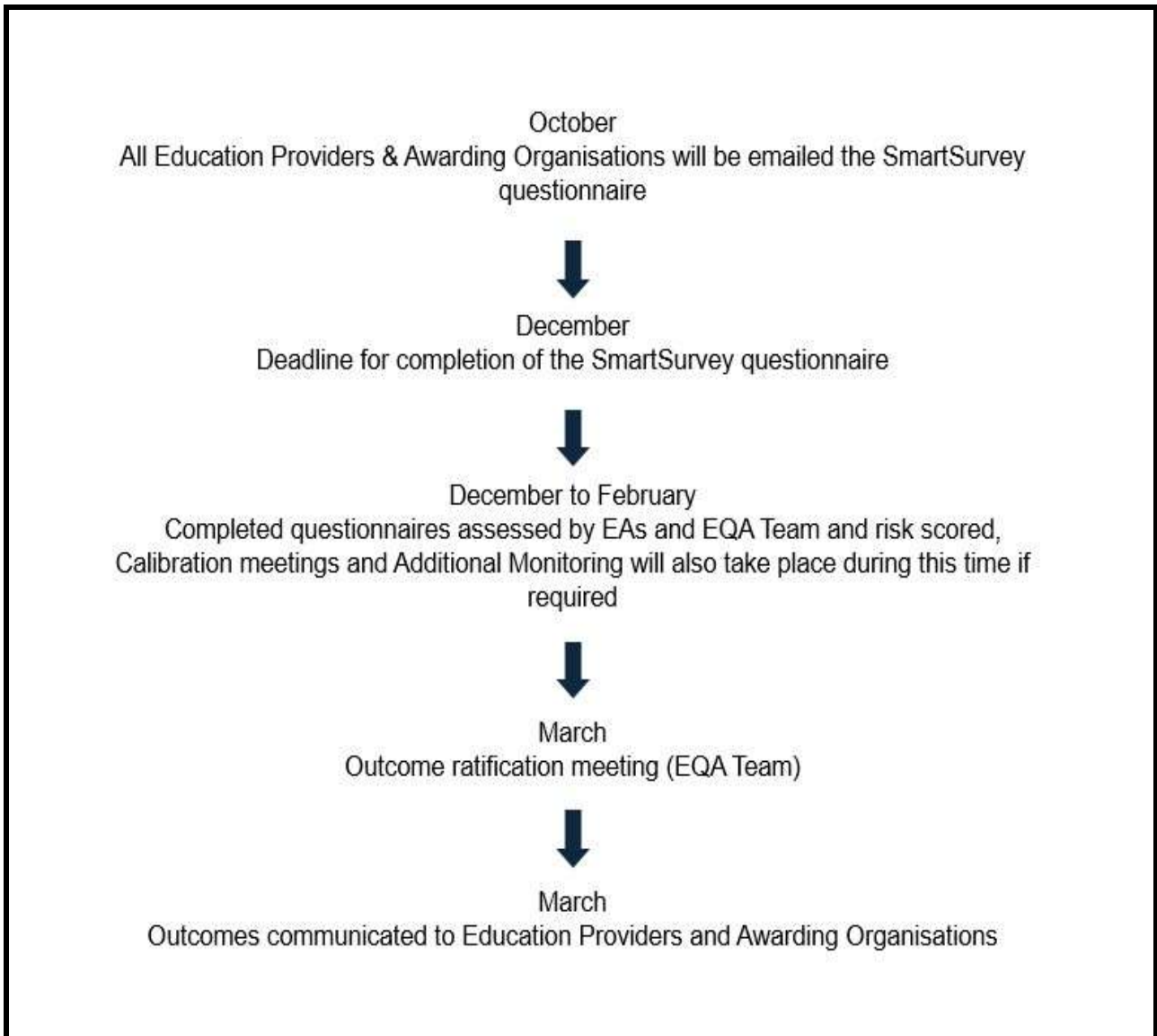
Progress monitoring is used by the EQA team in the following instances:

- To follow up on inspection report actions
- To check in with new programmes or programmes who have completed a recent programme modification
- To check in on inactive approved programmes

If you are subject to progress monitoring, this will be communicated to you via the allocated EQA Lead.

Key dates

A timeline for the monitoring process is given below. Please note that this may be subject to revision.



Next steps

You will be contacted with the link to the monitoring questionnaire in October. If your institution or organisation has not heard from a member of the EQA team, then please email qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org and this will be considered. You will receive a word version of the survey. This is for drafting purposes only and your responses must be submitted via the Smart survey link.

Feedback

The GDC is committed to improving the way we collaborate with you and would appreciate any ideas you may have of how our EQA procedures, documentation and communication methods can be improved.

A feedback survey link will be sent to you following the monitoring process, but you can also email us at qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org or telephone on 020 7167 6110 with your feedback.

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