

Hearing scheduling

Fitness to practise fact sheet

The Health and Care Professions Tribunal Service (HCPTS) are responsible for arranging and conducting fitness to practise (FTP) hearings. We recognise that going through an FTP hearing can be a stressful experience and we will do our best to support you through it.

Once the HCPC has informed us that the case is ready to be listed for a hearing, the case will be allocated a scheduling officer in the HCPTS team, who will be responsible for planning the hearing.

The scheduling officer will:

- identify a listing window for the final hearing and ask you, the lawyer representing the HCPC, and any witnesses about any unavoidable commitments during that period;
- send you a pre-hearing form which explains our plans for holding the hearing, such as how long we think the hearing will take and the format of the hearing. We will also ask you to provide us with some information to help with our planning.

The hearing may be virtual (online), in-person, or hybrid (a combination of virtual and in-person). When deciding which type of hearing to list, we will consider:

- the view of the registrant;
- any evidence which suggests the fairness of the hearing may be impacted by its format;
- whether reasonable adjustments or special measures are required and may benefit from a particular format;
- any barriers that might prevent a participant engaging effectively if the hearing is not held in a particular format;
- any features of the case which make it particularly difficult for it to be held in a particular format.

The hearing format is considered on a case-by-case basis, but most are held virtually (online). We have a **virtual hearing fact sheet** which explains online hearings, and a **YouTube video** explaining in-person hearings.

Your scheduling officer will let you know what type of hearing we plan to hold. You can tell us if you would prefer it to be held in another way and we will consider your request alongside the above factors. Please see our **Remote Hearings Guidance** for further information.

If you require reasonable adjustments or special measures, you can also let us know in the pre-hearing form. Witnesses will also be asked about any requirements they may have before the hearing. Examples of requests that we may receive include:

- allowances for regular or frequent breaks;
- late starts or early finishes (our hearings usually take place between 9.30am and 5pm);
- support to connect to the hearing (if you are attending remotely);
- any practical or logistical assistance you may need to help prepare for and attend the hearing.

The Notice of Hearing

When the hearing date is confirmed, the scheduling officer will send you a Notice of Hearing which will provide further information about the hearing. The Notice of Hearing is a statutory document and once issued the date of the hearing cannot be changed by the Tribunal Service. If you want to change the date of the hearing after the Notice of Hearing has been sent to you, you would need to to apply for a **postponement or adjournment**.

You can make this request by email to the email address **ftp@hcpc-uk.org**.

Exchange of documents

We have in place a set of standard directions, which are instructions that both the registrant and the HCPC should aim to follow. This includes the following instructions for when bundles need to be exchanged:

- The HCPC must send the registrant a copy of their bundle of evidence at least 42 days before the hearing. The HCPC will try and send their bundle sooner, so you have more time to prepare.
- The registrant is expected to send their documents to the HCPC at least 28 days in advance of the hearing. We may ask you to tell us when you plan to send your bundle so that we can ensure that the panel has plenty of time to read all documents in advance of the hearing.

Attending without representation

Our hearings are designed to enable registrants to participate with or without representation. If you are planning to attend without representation, you may find the guidance in our **'Information for registrants'** website useful.

We have a dedicated section for registrants which outlines the stages of our hearings with guidance on how to prepare. We also have an **Unrepresented Registrants Practice Note** which provides detail on the panel's responsibilities for ensuring fairness at a hearing when a registrant attends without representation.

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Further information and support

If you have any questions about your hearing please contact the Tribunal Services team on freephone 0808 164 3084, or (+44) 207 840 9817 where a member of the team will be happy to help you.

We have a support service for registrants going through our FTP process. Registrants can contact the free, confidential, and independent service on 0800 587 7396, or **visit our website** for more information.

Information about further support available to you is available on the **useful contacts page** of our website.

Jargon buster

Bundle

A file of documents, including evidence for the case, which is used at the hearing.

Directions

Instructions given by a panel about how to prepare and progress the case

Health and Care Professions Tribunal Service (HCPTS)

The fitness to practise service responsible for arranging and conducting hearings.

Hearing

A meeting of panel members to examine or make a decision on the case.

Hybrid hearing

A hearing which is held both in-person and virtually.

In-person hearing

A hearing which is held by meeting in a physical location

Lay panelist

A panel member who is not a member of a profession that the HCPC regulates.

Listing window

A period given to those involved in the case which explains when we expect to list the hearing.

Notice of Hearing

A document which informs the registrant of the hearing date(s).

Panel

A group of people who examine or make a decision on the case. Panels are usually made up of a panel chair, registrant panelist, and lay panelist. The panel is independent.

Panel chair

The panel member who leads the hearing.

Reasonable adjustments

Changes made to the hearing to ensure that everyone is supported to participate.

Registrant panelist

A panel member who is registered with the HCPC and is from the same profession as the registrant concerned.

Postponement or adjournment

A request to delay or change the hearing date.

Pre-hearing form

A form sent to the registrant ahead of the hearing which tells the registrant how we will list the hearing.

Scheduling officer

A team member who schedules hearings for the HCPTS.

Special measures

Steps that a panel can take to ensure that everyone can participate in the hearing

Statutory document

A document which must be sent by law.

Virtual hearing

A hearing which is held completely online.