



Hybrid Hearings Guidance

Introduction

1. The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) facilitates some Fitness to Practise Hearings where certain parties are present at our Hearings Centre and some parties participate remotely via videolink. This guidance is aimed at hearing parties to set out how these hybrid hearings are facilitated and the procedure they will follow. This guidance also includes steps to ensure information security is maintained.

Remote participants

Requirements

- Device with webcam and microphone and internet/Wi-Fi connection.
- Quiet and private location to participate from where the hearing can't be overheard.

Hearing preparation

2. The committee secretary (the secretary) will invite you to a videolink test prior to the hearing date. It's recommended you participate in the test so any issues can be dealt with beforehand.
3. You will also be sent the papers electronically via secure email in advance of the hearing, please ensure you can open the documents and let the secretary know of any issues. All hearing papers are confidential and it's important these papers are not shared with anyone outside the appropriate parties who are part of the same hearing. Witness statements must not be shared with other witnesses. You may wish to use two devices at the hearing, one to connect to the videocall and one for the hearing documents, although one device is workable. You should ensure any device you use is fully charged.

Joining the hearing

4. When taking part in a hearing remotely you should sit alone in a quiet room. You should make sure the hearing and any private conversations can't be overheard. You may want to take extra measures such as wearing headphones to achieve this. Be mindful of any personal items near and behind you as these may be visible to the other attendees.
5. You should join the hearing at the given time using the link the secretary sends you. Participants will be given times to join the videocall depending on their role and the stage of the hearing. If there's likely to be a long delay the secretary will inform you of this and may give you a later time

to join. The secretary will ensure everyone can see and hear each other as they join and ask people to mute microphones when not speaking.

6. If any party indicates on the day of the hearing that they want a private discussion with another party the secretary will allocate a private room, or if one party is remote this can take place in the hearing room and other parties will be asked to leave. The secretary will ensure everyone is ready for the hearing to start.
7. The secretary will tell remote participants to contact them if they're having connection problems and the hearing will adjourn until its resolved.

In-person participants

Access to Citi building

8. All visitors will be required to sign in at Citi's Reception on the ground floor and will be given a day pass. Its recommended that face masks are worn in the reception area. Visitors are required to bring with them at least one form of valid proof of identification. The following will be accepted: passport, driving license and/or bank card.
9. Once you have signed in Citi staff will notify the GPhC and ask you to wait in a designated area until a member of staff comes to collect you. If you haven't already signed the declaration form sent to you beforehand, you will be required to do this if it's your first visit to the building. You will be escorted to the Hearings Centre on the 25th Floor. GPhC passholders don't have to sign in at Citi reception and can go straight to the lift area.

Arriving on the 25th floor

10. Face masks are recommended in the reception area. A member of staff will greet you and take you to your designated area. The 25th Floor operates on a one-way system as indicated by yellow arrows on the walls.

Room allocation

11. For the duration of the hearing all attendees will have either a private room or breakout area allocated. All rooms are equipped with hand sanitiser and room capacity limits are displayed on the doors.

Facilities on 25th floor

12. Toilets are located on the 25th floor outside of the Hearing area. Water and tea and coffee facilities are available. Visitors will need to bring their own lunch, shops and supermarkets in Canary Wharf are open.

Hybrid Hearing procedure

13. The secretary will ensure all required remote participants are on the videocall at the start of the hearing and ensure all in-person participants are in the hearing room. The chair should introduce themselves, ask each attendee (both in-person and remote) to introduce themselves and announce if there are any observers present. The chair should confirm the registrant's full name and registration number. The chair should confirm everyone has all the hearing papers.

14. The chair and secretary must ensure regular breaks are taken at suitable points, taking into account the hearings scheduled time. During short breaks it's best for remote participants to remain on the videocall but turn your camera off and mute yourself. For longer breaks remote participants can exit the videocall. The chair must clearly announce to parties what time they should return before any break.

Giving evidence

15. When someone gives evidence they must read out the affirmation wording if remote or an oath can be taken if they're in person. The secretary will ensure the relevant person has access to the wording or can read out the wording line by line for them to repeat back.
16. Introductions should be made for any new witness. The process of giving evidence should be explained by the chair.
17. The secretary will ensure the case presenter and witness can speak privately before giving evidence if the witness is remote. If they're present at the Hearings Centre this conversation can take place in a private room.
18. When a witness has finished giving evidence the chair will confirm that they're released from their oath/affirmation and that they won't be required further.

In camera

19. When private deliberations need to take place the committee and legal adviser will go into a private room, or if any of them are remote this will happen in the hearing room and other parties will be asked to leave.
20. For longer decisions which need to be handed down at that stage (for instance, decision on facts, impairment or sanction) the chair must announce a 'not before' time so parties know they won't need to return until at least a certain time. The secretary can liaise with the committee whilst in camera and keep the other parties updated on the return time.

Determination

21. The chair must ensure that the other committee members and legal adviser receive the draft determination, this can be printed or emailed by the secretary. Once they've read the draft, the committee and legal adviser must convene to go through amendments and agree the final version.
22. The chair must then send the final version to the secretary.

Handing down decisions

23. Each decision of the main stages (facts, impairment, sanction) of a Principal Hearing, and the final decision at other types of hearing, must be handed down when announced either in person or emailed if remote. The secretary will ensure all required hearing parties are present for this.
24. The chair will confirm the hearing is continuing. The chair will announce the decision and say a copy of the written determination will be given to parties or emailed. The secretary will hand down or email the determination to the registrant, representative and case presenter. The parties should be given time to read the determination and make any comments to the committee.

25. If the hearing is continuing, then the next stage will commence. If that's the end of the hearing the chair must announce that then everyone can leave, the secretary will ensure that any remote parties have left the videocall.
26. If you have printed paper copies of hearing papers or have any paper copies of notes made throughout the hearing you should shred these after the hearing or hand them to the secretary if in person. Any electronic copies of papers should also be deleted from your device following a hearing.

Observers

27. As a starting point, all GPhC Principal and Principal Review Hearings are held in public, except for health cases. Any interested parties can contact the hearings team and be given details for how to access an in person or remote hearing to observe.
28. The secretary will inform all hearing parties before a hearing starts if there are any observers.