

Attending a virtual hearing

Fitness to practise fact sheet

This fact sheet explains how to participate in a virtual hearing using Microsoft Teams, which is an application that allows multiple users to attend audio or video conference calls.

At the hearing

You will join the hearing by following the instructions provided in the Microsoft Teams invite. The Hearings Officer will tell you when to join, and keep you updated on the hearing's progress.

At a virtual hearing all participants take part through the Microsoft Teams application. Hearings may occasionally be hybrid, meaning that some parties attend physically in one location whilst the rest attend remotely via videoconference.

You can find a detailed explanation of the hearing process in the Information for Witnesses document and HCPTS website.

Giving evidence

When giving evidence, you are required to take an Oath or Affirmation before you start. If you are attending virtually and choose to take an Oath, you need to have a copy of the relevant holy book with you.

Questions

You will be asked questions by the HCPC presenting officer, the registrant or their representative (if present), and the panel. The purpose of the questions is to make sure your account is accurate and to test your evidence. You can refer to your witness statement and relevant exhibits in the hearing bundle. Take your time to answer any questions and you can request a short break if you need one. A legal assessor will be present and they can intervene if the line of questioning or tone is inappropriate. Once questions are finished you'll be released from your Oath or Affirmation.

Deliberation

When it needs to make a decision, the panel retires to a separate virtual room to deliberate in private. The decision will then be written up by the independent legal assessor.

Technical requirements

To participate on Microsoft Teams, please make sure you have:

- A compatible device: The device must have a camera and microphone so that live video and audio are available.
- An internet connection which allows the videoconference link to work throughout the hearing. A minimum download speed of 8mb and upload of 512kps is recommended. Variables that could impact the connection speed are others on the same network using streaming services during the hearing.
- A suitable environment which is quiet and without distractions.

Connecting to the hearing

A few days before the hearing is due to sit, the Hearings Officer will send you the invite to join the hearing via Microsoft Teams. The invitation will be sent to the email address on file for you, unless you have told us that we should use another email address.

If you would find it helpful to have a Microsoft Teams test call before the hearing, this can be arranged through the Hearings Officer.

After the hearing

The Hearings Officer can assist you with any immediate concerns or questions after the hearing. They will send the panel's written decision to the hearing participants by email. The decision is also likely to be published on the HCPTS website in accordance with the **Fitness to Practise Publication Policy**.

Jargon buster

Health and Care Professions Tribunal Service (HCPTS) The fitness to practise service responsible for arranging and conducting hearings.

Panel

Three people who consider and decide on the Allegation. Panels consist of a panel chair, registrant panelist, and lay panelist. The Panel are independent of the HCPC and HCPTS.

Panel chair

The panel member who leads the hearing.

Registrant panelist

The panel member registered with the HCPC in the same profession as the registrant about whom the fitness to practise concern has been raised.

Lay panelist

The panel member who is not part of any profession which the HCPC regulates.

Legal assessor

A lawyer who gives advice on matters of law and procedure. They are independent from the panel but may assist in drafting its decision.

Scheduling / Listings Officer

A team member who schedules HCPTS hearings

Hearings Officer

A team member who facilitates HCPTS hearings

Affirmation

A promise made before giving evidence that you will tell the truth.

Oath

A promise to tell the truth which is sworn using a holy text.

Deliberation

When the panel retires to a separate room to make a decision.

Cross-examination

The legal process whereby the opposing party asks questions of a witness

Appendix A

Guide to joining a hearing on Microsoft Teams

In order to access Microsoft Teams you will need to accept the invitation emailed to you.

