

Virtual Fitness to Practise events: A guide for panel members and legal assessors

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Virtual Fitness to Practise Events: A guide for panel members and legal assessors

Our guide introduces you to virtual events and how we run them. Before attending your first virtual event we'd like to invite you to read this guide carefully. At the end of our guide you'll find information about how to contact us if you have any questions about virtual events.

This guide contains useful information. Among other things, you'll learn:

- basic information about virtual events;
- how we'll notify you of a virtual event;
- information about sending and share information electronically;
- information about how to join a virtual event;
- tips for preparing for a virtual hearing; and
- how to run a virtual event

Our legislation sets out our powers and how we can run our virtual events. You can see our legislation and our fitness to practise rules [here](#). If you have any questions we'll be happy to answer them.

You can also find information about the fitness to practise process in our guidance library [here](#).



Introduction

What are virtual fitness to practise events?

They're a type of hearing or meeting that take place by using technology. When we say 'virtual event,' we mean that the event will take place using a video and audio conferencing system. The event could be a hearing or a meeting.

When we hold a virtual event, everyone taking part will do so from a location outside of our offices and hearings venues. As a panel member or legal assessor, you can attend the event from your home or a private office.

To hold virtual events, we use a system called 'GoToMeeting'. This allows everyone to see and hear each other. It also provides additional functionality like the option of sending messages and screen sharing.

Screening sharing will most likely be used by our panel secretary. They'll be able to share their screen with you so that you can see the draft determination being edited in real time.

If you're sending a message through GoToMeeting, you can send it to one person or everyone. We'd invite you to use this function as you need it but to be careful and check who you're sending messages to. GoToMeeting automatically saves a log of all conversations through the messaging function. This is disclosable on request.

How do they work?

When we hold a virtual event, we expect panel members and legal assessors to attend by video. It's best practice that all parties are able to see you as well as hear you.

You'll need access to an internet enabled computer, tablet or smartphone. We recommend joining the virtual event on a computer or tablet. We'll send you an internet link that you'll use to join the event. Each event will have a unique link.

If we need to send you paper work, such as hearings documents, we'll send these to you by 'Egress Switch.' Egress Switch is our secure email system that allows us to send confidential information to you in a secure way. All panel members should have an Egress Switch account.

Once you've joined a virtual event, it'll be run in the same way that we run our face to face events.

What types of virtual events are you currently holding?

We're currently holding Investigating Committee Interim Order events and Fitness to Practise Committee Interim Order events and Substantive Order Review events.

Setting up a virtual event

Notifying you

You'll be allocated to the virtual event by our Panel Allocation Team. They'll let you know what event they'd like to allocate you to and the date and times of that event.

We may notify you by telephone, by email or both.

Before the virtual hearing or meeting, a member of our team will be in touch. They'll provide you with instructions on how to join the virtual event through GoToMeeting. Make sure you keep these safe as you'll need them to join the virtual event.

Receiving paperwork for a virtual event

Sending you the documents you need: Using Egress Switch to send and receive documents and private emails

For every hearing or meeting there's going to be documents you'll need. This could be case papers, on table papers, hearing administration documents, the draft determination, etc.

Protection of our hearings and meetings documents is important to us. We want to ensure that you have all the documents you need while protecting the private and sensitive information that might be in those documents or emails. If you're sending and receiving documents or emails we'll need you to use Egress Switch to ensure they're protected at all times.

We expect all panel members and legal assessors to have access to and use their Egress Switch account when sending and receiving our documents.

For more information on using Egress Switch, please see our guide: Virtual Fitness to Practise events: [A guide to Egress Switch and GoToMeeting](#).

You can find further information about Egress Switch by visiting our website [here](#).

Joining a virtual event

Using GoToMeeting

If we allocate you to a virtual hearing or meeting, you'll need to use GoToMeeting to join that virtual event.

GoToMeeting will allow you to see and hear the other attendees. They'll also be able to see and hear you. Its best practice for all panel members and legal assessors to use the video functionality of GoToMeeting. It's important that all attendees are able to see you as well as hear you.

You can access GoToMeeting by using a computer, tablet or smartphone. We recommend that you use a computer or a tablet to access the virtual event.

For more information on using GoToMeeting, please see our guide: Virtual Fitness to Practise events: [A guide to Egress Switch and GoToMeeting](#).

Preparing to join a virtual event

Before you join the virtual hearing

It's important that you're ready to join the virtual hearing and that you're prepared for the hearing to start once you've joined.

To ensure a smooth virtual hearing and to reduce delays,

We recommend:

- Checking the date and start time of the event;
- That you have access to the hearings documents and any additional documents you need;
- That you have a pen and paper to make notes;

- Using two devices if you have them available to you. One for joining the virtual event and one for accessing hearings document;
- That the device you're going to use to access the virtual event is connected to the internet or mobile phone network, and is fully charged or connected to a power outlet;
- Having access to a headset with a microphone. This can make the audio clearer. Many smartphones come with earphones that have a built in microphone that can be plugged in to your computer or tablet; and
- You're in a location that's comfortable, private and free from interruptions.

We want you to be comfortable when you're attending a virtual event. We think it's important to think about where you'll be sat and how practical it'll be for long periods of time. When you're appearing on camera, it's important to be aware of where you're setting up. It might be worth considering what'll be in the background and if this might be distracting, cause offence or look unprofessional.

The virtual event.

The morning of the event: Joining and pre virtual event conversations

Our panel secretary will coordinate the event that you're joining and they'll be your first point of contact throughout it. Please make sure you follow their instructions on when to join or leave an event.

When our panel secretary needs to contact you, on the morning of the event, or the day before if they're running a test, they'll do this via the telephone and/or email. We recommend that you have access to your telephone and your email account for the whole day of the event.

We'll aim to start our events at the usual time. We know delays can occur. If you're delayed please tell our panel secretary so they can let everyone else know. If you're delayed, on the morning of the event, and you don't have the panel secretaries contact details you can contact our Panel Allocation Team or Panel Support Team to let them know. We'll find out who your panel secretary is going to be and let them know you're delayed.

Before we start an event, we know it can be helpful for the attendees to have a conversation. Doing this allows our attendees to talk about any issues they may have or to explain things to each other. We know this is important and it can help reduce delays to the virtual event. Our panel secretary will coordinate any pre-event conversations as well as check that everyone can access the event through their chosen means using GoToMeeting.

When our panel secretary contacts you, they'll let you know what time they'd like you to join the virtual event. The time you join will depend on who you are. Please do not join the virtual event until the time our panel secretary asks you to.

Joining if you're the chair or a panel member

Our panel secretary will coordinate any pre-hearing conversations before you're invited to join the event. Our panel secretary will make sure you're kept up to date with the pre-event conversations and any delays to the start time.

Our panel secretary will let you know if there any delays, the reason for this and an estimated start time.

Our panel secretary will let you know if there are any additional documents to put before you. If there are, they'll make sure these are seen by our case presenter and the legal assessor before they're given to you.

Our panel secretary will invite you to join once the pre-hearing conversations between everyone else are complete. When you join the virtual event, you'll have the opportunity to talk about anything before the hearing starts.

Joining if you're the legal assessor

Our panel secretary will contact you and ask them to join the virtual event. You'll usually stay connected to the virtual hearing link and take part in all pre hearing conversations. This allows you to talk to everyone, answer questions and resolve any issues before the hearing starts.

Starting the virtual event

When the virtual hearing is ready to start, our panel secretary will invite everyone to join you in the virtual hearing.

Our panel secretary will tell the chair when everyone has arrived. They'll tell the shorthand writer they can start to record the hearing. They'll then hand the hearing over to the chair.

If you're the chair, you'll remind everyone that the event is taking place virtually. You'll also check that everyone can see and hear.

If you're the chair, we recommend:

- Asking everyone to mute their microphone until they need to speak.

If you're the chair, you'll open the virtual hearing by doing introductions. You'll introduce yourself and state your role. Then, you'll ask everyone else to say their name and what their role is. If the nurse, midwife or nursing associate is present, the chair will ask them to state their full name and their NMC PIN. If the nurse, midwife or nursing associate doesn't know their NMC PIN, this can be read out for them.

If you're the chair, you'll tell everyone why the virtual event is taking place. You might read out the allegation the panel will be considering or the order being reviewed. You'll tell everyone what decisions the panel could make and that there will be a written determination of the panel's decision.

Before the panel starts to consider the case, if you're the chair, you'll make sure that everyone is ready to begin and they have everything they need.

If you're the chair, we recommend:

- Stating what documents the panel has;
- Providing an exhibit number for each document;
- Asking the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or their representative and the case presenter to refer to the exhibit number and page number when talking about a particular document;
- Checking that all other attendees have the same documents;
- Asking if there are any documents missing or any additional documents to be given to the panel; and
- Asking if there are any questions at this point.

The hearing will then be conducted in the same way that we conduct our face to face events.

Moving to make the decision

When you're ready to make a decision, you'll do it in private.

If you're the chair, you'll tell everyone that the panel is going in private to make their decision. You'll ask our panel secretary to provide a provisional time for everyone else to return. Our panel secretary will update everyone with a more definite time once you've made your decision.

Our panel secretary will ask everyone else to leave. If someone has not managed to leave the event in a reasonable amount of time, our panel secretary will remove them from it. Our panel secretary can also lock the virtual hearing, this will prevent anyone else from joining during decision making.

Decision making

When you're ready to make your decision please wait until our panel secretary has advised you that everyone who should have left has left.

We recommend taking a short break at this point. If you're taking a comfort break, the chair will tell everyone how long this will be. You can pause your camera and mute your audio while taking a break and do not have to leave the virtual hearing. When you return, remember to resume your camera and your microphone as you need it.

The chair will manage the decision making.

The chair will ask each panel member for their decision and reasons.

Once a collective decision has been reached the chair will relay the final decision and full reasons to our panel secretary. Our panel secretary will make a note of the panel's decision and reasons.

We recommend:

- Having access to our [fitness to practise guidance library](#) and [The Code](#).

If you're the chair, you'll ask our panel secretary how long it will take them to draft the determination. Our panel secretary will tell you what time they think the draft will be ready and then provide a further estimated returning time for everyone else.

Our panel secretary will then draft the determination. During this time you can leave the virtual hearing.

When our panel secretary has finished the draft determination, they'll email it to you using Egress Switch. Please keep an eye on your email.

We recommend:

- Downloading the draft determination to your computer or tablet;
- Using a different colour text when editing so you can quickly see the changes you've made; and
- Deleting any versions of the determination that you have at the end of the event.

When our panel secretary has sent you the draft determination they'll ask you to re-join the virtual hearing when you're ready to start amending the determination. Our panel secretary will keep the virtual hearing open for your return.

When you've returned, the chair will coordinate the amendment of the determination. Our panel secretary can share their screen with you. This will allow you to see them edit the draft determination as you're making changes to it. If you want to see the draft as it is being edited, just ask our panel secretary to share their screen.

We recommend:

- Going through the determination page by page and paragraph by paragraph where necessary;
- Speaking clearly and slowly so that everyone can hear the proposed changes you want to make; and
- Making amendments through the chair.

Once the amendments have been made, you can ask to see the amended version of the determination. Further changes to the determination will be coordinated by the chair. When you're satisfied that the determination reflects your decision and reasons, the chair will ask our panel secretary to invite everyone else back.

Announcing the decision

When you're ready to announce the decision, our panel secretary will contact everyone else and ask them to return.

Our panel secretary will invite the shorthand writer to return first. This is so that when everyone else has returned, the decision can be announced. Next, our panel secretary will invite everyone else to return.

Our panel secretary will tell the chair when everyone has returned. They'll tell the shorthand writer that they can start to record the hearing. Our panel secretary will then hand the hearing back over to the chair.

If you're the chair, you'll remind everyone that the event is taking place virtually. You'll make sure that everyone can see and hear.

If you're the chair, we recommend:

- Asking everyone to mute their microphone until they need to speak.

If you're the chair, you'll announce the panel's decision and then ask our panel secretary to send the determination to the case presenter and where present the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or their representative.

If you're the char, we recommend:

- Asking if the case presenter and where present the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or their representative have received the determination before ending the hearing.

Once our case presenter and the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or their representative confirm they've got a copy of the determination, the chair you can close the hearing.

We recommend:

- That our panel secretary, panel members and legal assessor remain in the virtual hearing to discuss any issues that need to be fed back to us.



Virtual event tips

Tips for the chair

- Make sure that everyone can see and hear you. Check that your camera and microphone are on before you start talking;
- Make sure that everyone who is expected to attend has attended and make introductions;
- If the nurse, midwife or nursing associate is attending by telephone, ask if they're alone or if they have support. Ask if they're in a private location;
- Make a point to ask if anyone has questions before moving on, do this often;

- Make sure documents are exhibited and given an exhibit number;
- Check that everyone has everything that they need, case papers etc.;
- Set out the purpose of the hearing and the panel's powers;
- If you're not talking mute yourself and ask others to do the same;
- Keep an eye on those who have attended, they may be trying to get your attention;
- Coordinate the other panel members in answering questions and during decision making. Say their name and ask them if they have any questions. Say their name and ask them for their decision and reasons;
- Coordinate breaks as they're needed or requested and give clear instructions about how long breaks will be and when everyone should return by;
- If a witness has been called to give evidence, repeat the same instructions and introductions as at the start of the hearing. If the panel retires to consider and formulate questions, clearly explain to everyone what the panel is doing and how long the break will be;
- Announce the decision on the record, read out any conditions imposed if making a conditions of practice order and ask our panel secretary to email the determination to the case presenter and, if present, the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or their representative; and
- Thank everyone for their attendance and efforts.

Tips for panel members

- Follow the directions of the chair. Wait for the chair to say your name and invite you to ask questions before asking questions. Wait for the chair to say your name and invite you to give your decision and reasons; and
- When making changes to the draft determination, direct these to the chair.

Tips for everyone

- Please follow the instructions of our panel secretary, they're there to ensure that the virtual event runs smoothly;
- If you're not talking please mute yourself and remember to unmute yourself when you're ready to talk or invited to talk;
- If the nurse, midwife, nursing associate and /or their representative is appearing via telephone, it can be helpful to say your name again before you start talking;
- Speak clearly and slowly so that everyone can understand everything you're saying;
- Only ask one question at a time;
- If you're referencing a document, say the exhibit number and the page number of the document that you want everyone to look at;
- If your connection drops out this will be noticed by our panel secretary and everyone will be asked to pause until you return. If you do lose connection just re-join the using the same link;
- We know technical problems can be frustrating, keep calm and we'll do our best to resolve your issues;
- Some technical issues are beyond our control. If you've experienced issues please let our panel secretary know and we'll do our best to find out why the issue happened and how it might be resolved;
- We know it can be tiring to sit a computer for long periods of time. We want you to be as comfortable as possible. If you need a break, just say so;
- If you're appearing on camera, please dress appropriately;

Contacting us

If you have any questions, please look the table below to help you decide who you should contact:

Team	Contact details
Panel Allocations team	panelallocationteam@nmc-uk.org
Panel Support team	panelsupportteam@nmc-uk.org

You can also find general contact details on our website [here](#).



Version log

If we make changes to our guide we'll put them here. We'll let you know what section or sections of the guide changed and what date we made that change. This will help you find any new information.

Just so you know, we first published this guide on 4 May 2020.

What's changed?	What pages is that on?	What date did we make that change?