

Nursing and Midwifery Council Legally Qualified Chairs

Frequently Asked Questions

Closing Date:
11.30am Monday 5 October 2026



What is a Legally Qualified Chair?

A Legally Qualified Chair combines the responsibilities of the current Panel Chair and Legal Assessor roles. The LQC will chair Fitness to Practise hearings, manage proceedings, ensure all parties are treated fairly and respectfully, and provide legal advice to the panel on points of law, evidence and procedure. They play a key role in working as part of the panel to reach clear, reasoned and legally robust decisions that protect the public and maintain confidence in the professions we regulate.

Why is the NMC introducing Legally Qualified Chairs?

This forms part of wider Fitness to Practise reform. The NMC believes combining the role of Chair and Legal Assessor will improve efficiency, consistency and case management while maintaining fairness and legal robustness. It removes duplication within the hearing process and aligns the NMC with approaches already used successfully by a number of other healthcare regulators.

How does this role differ from the current Legal Assessor role?

The key difference is that the individual will not only advise on legal issues but will also lead and chair the hearing. This creates a more integrated leadership role where legal expertise, hearing management and decision-making come together. The role requires both strong legal skills and the ability to lead proceedings effectively.

How many appointments are being made?

The NMC is seeking to appoint approximately 140 Legally Qualified Chairs. This reflects the scale of the Fitness to Practise caseload and the desire to build sufficient capacity and resilience into the panel member workforce.

Who can apply?

Applications are welcomed from solicitors, barristers and advocates who meet the eligibility requirements. The NMC is keen to attract candidates from a diverse range of legal backgrounds and values transferable skills, legal judgement and public service motivation.

Do I need ten years' PQE when I submit my application?

Not necessarily. Candidates may apply if they have at least nine years' PQE at campaign close, provided they will meet the ten-year requirement by the time appointments are made. This ensures strong candidates are not excluded due to timing.

What are the professional standing requirements?

Applicants must be in good standing with their professional regulator, have no unresolved fitness to practise or disciplinary matters and hold a valid practising certificate at appointment. These requirements help maintain confidence in the integrity of decision makers

Do I need previous regulatory experience?

No. While regulatory experience may be beneficial, it is not an absolute requirement. The NMC will assess applications against the published competencies, including legal expertise, hearing leadership, judgement and communication skills. Comprehensive induction and training will be provided.

What hearings will I be involved in?

Legally Qualified Chairs will either chair Fitness to Practise hearings where concerns have been raised about a nurse, midwife or nursing associate's fitness to practise or Interim Order hearings which will decide whether a temporary measure should be imposed while a fitness to practise investigation or hearing is ongoing. These hearings play an important role in protecting the public and maintaining confidence in the professions.

Are hearings virtual or face-to-face?

Both. The NMC operates hearings virtually via Microsoft Teams and in person, primarily in London and Edinburgh. Successful candidates should be prepared to undertake both formats.

How much time do I need to commit?

The NMC anticipates that candidates will generally make themselves available for at least 15 sitting days each year. However, there may be opportunities to undertake considerably more hearing days depending on availability and operational demand. Some current Panel Chairs or Legal Assessors sit on more than 100 days per year.

Is the 15-day commitment mandatory?

No. It is intended as a benchmark rather than a contractual obligation. The expectation reflects the level of participation that typically helps individuals maintain the skills, knowledge and confidence required to undertake the role effectively.

How much preparation is involved?

Preparation requirements vary according to case complexity and documentation volume. Legally Qualified Chairs are expected to review hearing papers thoroughly, identify relevant legal and procedural issues, consider case management requirements and ensure they are prepared to lead proceedings effectively.

How important is EDI in this role?

EDI is a core aspect of the role. Legally Qualified Chairs are expected to create inclusive hearing environments, recognise the needs of diverse participants, challenge inappropriate behaviour where necessary and support fair decision-making free from bias or discrimination.

What happens during the assessment process?

Candidates will be assessed against the published competencies and behaviours, alongside the NMC values of Integrity, Fairness, Respect, Equity and Effectiveness. Assessment takes place through both application and interview stages.

What can candidates expect at interview?

Interviews are expected to last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted by a panel of three. Questions will focus on the published competencies, and candidates will also be asked to provide oral responses to scenarios.

Will the scenario exercise be provided in advance?

Yes. Candidates will be given advance notice regarding the oral scenario component to allow appropriate preparation.

What makes a strong application?

Strong applications provide clear evidence against the role competencies through specific examples. Candidates should clearly explain their personal contribution, actions taken, judgement exercised and outcomes achieved, rather than relying on generic statements.

Can examples be drawn from outside legal practice?

Yes. Examples can come from professional, voluntary or personal experiences. However, responses should demonstrate the competencies being assessed and should include evidence of legal skills and professional capability where relevant.

What training will successful candidates receive?

The NMC will provide a comprehensive induction programme consisting of online learning and live training sessions. Ongoing development opportunities will also be available throughout appointment.

When will training take place?

Training is scheduled for March 2027 for existing Panel Chairs and September and October 2027 for all other applicants. Candidates must successfully complete induction before they can sit as a Legally Qualified Chair.

What support is available for candidates requiring adjustments?

The NMC is committed to making reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment and appointment process. Candidates requiring support are encouraged to discuss their needs as early as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made.

What due diligence checks are undertaken?

Recommended candidates will be subject to pre-appointment checks, including references, professional background checks and social media reviews. These checks provide assurance regarding suitability for appointment.

Can AI be used in the application process?

AI may be used for preparation, research and interview practice. However, candidates should submit authentic applications based on their own experience and must not use AI during assessments or interviews. The NMC is looking to assess the individual candidate's experience, judgement and communication skills.

What is the most rewarding aspect of the role?

Many individuals find the role rewarding because it directly contributes to public protection, supports fair outcomes for registrants and helps maintain confidence in nursing, midwifery and nursing associate professions. The role also provides an opportunity to continue developing hearing management and decision-making skills.

Why replace Legal Assessors if the current model works?

The NMC recognises the value that Legal Assessors have brought to the process. However, the proposed model is intended to streamline proceedings, reduce duplication and support more consistent hearing leadership. The aim is not to reduce legal oversight but to integrate legal expertise directly into the chairing function.

Does combining the roles create a risk to fairness or independence?

The NMC's view is that fairness is strengthened by having an experienced legal professional leading the hearing and providing procedural direction throughout. Legally Qualified Chairs will remain responsible for ensuring proceedings are fair, impartial, evidence-based and free from bias. Decisions will continue to be made collectively by the panel.

Will former Legal Assessors be preferred?

The selection process is competency-based and open to all eligible applicants. Previous Legal Assessor experience may provide relevant examples, but all candidates will be assessed against the same published criteria.

How will the NMC support candidates who are new to healthcare regulation?

The NMC is actively seeking applications from across the legal profession and recognises that not all successful candidates will come from a regulatory background. Comprehensive induction, guidance, policy resources and ongoing support will be provided to help appointees develop confidence in the role.

How demanding can hearings be?

Hearings can involve sensitive matters, complex evidence and individuals who may be self-represented. The role therefore requires resilience, empathy, sound judgement and the ability to remain balanced and professional under pressure. A key aspect of the role is ensuring all participants understand the process and have an opportunity to engage effectively.

What would you say to someone unsure whether they are experienced enough?

Candidates should consider the published competencies carefully. The NMC is seeking strong hearing leadership, sound legal judgement, effective communication and a commitment to fairness. If an individual can evidence those qualities, particularly through substantial legal experience, they should feel encouraged to apply.

What would make someone an outstanding Legally Qualified Chair?

An outstanding Legally Qualified Chair combines excellent legal judgement with humanity. They lead hearings confidently, ensure all parties are treated with dignity and respect, help panels reach clear and legally robust decisions, and always keep public protection, fairness and confidence in the professions at the forefront of their decision making.

Why is it important that the NMC are seeking a diverse pool of Legally Qualified Chairs?

It is about both the quality of our decision-making and confidence in the process. We regulate a very diverse professional population and serve an equally diverse public, so it is important that we attract LQCs from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences. Different perspectives can strengthen discussion, challenge unconscious bias and help ensure our hearings are fair and inclusive. It also helps build confidence that the people making important regulatory decisions better reflect the communities affected by them.

Can I save and return to the application form?

Yes. Each section of the form features a "Save" option. When you click this for the first time you will be prompted to create a Jotform account or enter an email address for a link to return to your completed form. Jotform is the tool that the application form is hosted on.

Do I need to hold a practicing certificate at the time of my application?

No. A valid practicing certificate is only required at the time of appointment, not application.

Will I be paid for preparation time?

Yes. A preparation fee is applicable and will be confirmed pending Appointments Board approval.

How to apply

The closing date for applications is **11:30am on Monday 5 October 2026**.

Visit www.inclusiveboards.co.uk/nmc-lgc to submit an application form.

Please note, as part of the application process you will need to:

- Complete all of the questions as fully as possible on the online application form. This will include questions about how you meet the eligibility and competencies, as well as your suitability for the role you are applying for. If you require an alternative format to apply please contact nmcruitment@inclusiveboards.co.uk
- Submit an up-to-date CV of **no more than two pages** when prompted. This will be assessed at the written application stage only.
- Complete the diversity information form when prompted. Please note that providing diversity monitoring information is optional and will be treated in strictest confidence. The information you provide in this section will not be used as part of the selection process or be seen by the interview panel and will only be used by the NMC for monitoring purposes. The NMC values the diversity of the people on their Register and has to ensure their processes are fair and accessible to them all.

Please note that we will not be able to consider incomplete applications, or applications received after the deadline.

You will also be asked to provide information on:

- Conflicts of interest and previous conduct.
- Significant political activity.

