1. **Guidance for those who are interviewing staff, complainants or others**

1.1 Interviewing staff (academic, administrative, clerical, clinical, technicians or any other) and complainants is an important part of a fitness to practise investigation.

1.2 The investigator or interviewee may or may not wish to have in attendance a third party (such as another member of academic staff). Any third party must have no involvement in the case and cannot be a possible witness. Third parties should not answer questions on behalf of the interviewee.

1.3 It is helpful for the interviewer to prepare a list of questions in advance. Questions should usually be open and not leading. A question should not suggest any particular answer and should not convey the interviewer’s own opinions.

1.4 It is important that a record of the meeting is made, and experienced investigators may be able to do this themselves. Alternatively they may have present someone capable of preparing a detailed note of what has been said, to include both the questions asked and the answers given. Another option is to make an audio recording of the interview, which can then be transcribed and sent to the interviewee for approval and signature.

1.5 The note of what has been said should be sent to the interviewee for his/her approval that this is a correct record of what was said. A hard copy signature confirming this should be obtained, and attached to the record of the interview. A signature of the note taker is helpful and provides further confirmation of the process that was followed.

1.6 Interviews should be conducted in person, wherever possible. But there will be a few occasions, such as when a member of staff has left their post and lives/works in another area, when the only practical method is to conduct the interview by telephone. In this situation one could operate some kind of conference call arrangement to enable a note taker to record the interview.

1.7 The investigator should explain that he/she has been instructed by the Faculty to conduct a fitness to practise investigation because concerns have been raised. The interviewee must be made aware that a note will be taken, that he/she will be given a copy of the notes for checking and that a copy of the confirmed notes will be made available to the student concerned and to those considering the case if it is referred to a fitness to practise committee. It is suggested that in addition the interviewee is reminded of not only the need to maintain confidentiality in respect of the matter but also not to discuss his/her evidence with others who may also be witnesses. There may be obvious exceptions (where such dialogue is part and parcel of the interviewee’s professional educational duties) but generally confidentiality within the process is an important ingredient.

1.8 Interviewees cannot, other than in very exceptional circumstances, remain anonymous. An integral feature of fairness and natural justice is that someone accused of doing something wrong must know (i) the identity of the person making the accusation (ii) the details of the accusation. Prospective complainants must be aware that for this reason it is very difficult to act upon anonymous complaints.

1.9 Generally the interviewee will know something of the background, but if this is not the case this should be recorded. It may or may not be necessary to briefly explain the background. The investigator must not contaminate the interviewee’s evidence by saying what other witnesses have said, and care should be taken to avoid giving information to an interviewee that might influence their own evidence.

1.10 It is helpful to obtain basic information about the interviewee, such as (in the case of a health professional/members of staff):

1.10.1 Name and duration of present post

1.10.2 Duration of professional practise, and proportion of that time involving student teaching
1.10.3 Any special role within the education programme (e.g. interviewer of applicants to the programme, examiner, specific responsibility for part of the programme)

1.10.4 Date and/or time period of contact with the student, and information about that contact (e.g. NHS Consultant responsible for supervising a 6 week clinical placement, academic adviser for years 1-5 of the programme)

1.10.5 Stage of the programme when there was an interaction with the student

1.11 The interviewee should be asked to confirm whether they know the student under investigation socially, in order that potential conflicts of interest are identified at the outset and to avoid potential embarrassment to both interviewee and student.

1.12 Details of the interviewee's experience and contact with the student, with dates and contemporaneous records or other documentation such as emails sent to, or received from, the student, where possible.

1.13 Where possible, obtain specific examples of problems or behaviours seen/experienced by interviewee, with an explanation of why the behaviour was a problem and obtain information about what feedback, advice or warnings were given to the student.