

General Pharmaceutical Council

Fitness to Practise Committee

Principal Hearing

Remote videolink hearing

8-10 June 2026

Registrant name: Abbas Zulfikar Karimjee

Registration number: 2236253

Part of the register: Pharmacist

Type of Case: Misconduct

Committee Members: Rachel Forster (Chair)

Hannah Fleetwood (Registrant member)

Fahmina Begum (Lay member)

Legal Adviser: Michael Levy

Committee Secretary: Evie Davies

Registrant: Present and represented by David Morris,
Counsel and Susan Hunneyball, Solicitor,
Gordons Partnership who was also in
attendance

General Pharmaceutical Council: Represented by Ayshe Sevdan, Case Presenter

Facts proved: Allegation 1 proved by certificate of conviction

Allegations 2-6 proved by admission

Fitness to practise: Impaired

Outcome: 4-month Suspension Order

This decision including any finding of facts, impairment and outcome is an appealable decision under *The General Pharmaceutical Council (Fitness to Practise and Disqualification etc. Rules) Order of Council 2010*. Therefore, this decision will not take effect until **8 July 2026** or, if an appeal is lodged, once that appeal has been concluded.

Particulars of Allegation

You a Registered Pharmacist,

1. On 26 March 2024, were convicted at Bolton Magistrates' Court for the following offence:
 - 1.1 on 22 September 2023, at Bolton drove a motor vehicle [...] when the proportion of a controlled drug, namely Cannabis, in your blood, namely 3.2ug, exceeded the specified limit. Contrary to section 5A(1)(a) and (2) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.
2. Failed to declare the conviction at paragraph 1 above to the General Pharmaceutical Council ("GPhC") within 7 days as required by Rule 4 (2)(a) of The General Pharmaceutical Council (Fitness to Practise and Disqualification etc. Rules) Order of Council 2010.

3. On or around 11 December 2023, when completing your GPhC registration application, incorrectly answered “no” to the question *“Are you currently under investigation by any regulatory body (other than the GPhC) or criminal enforcement authority (e.g. police or NHS Counter Fraud Service) in the British Islands or elsewhere?”*.
4. Your behaviour in paragraph 3 above was dishonest in that you:
 - 4.1. knew that you were under investigation by the police for alleged “drug driving” on 22 September 2023 having been stopped by the police that day;
 - 4.2. answered “no” knowing that information was incorrect; and
 - 4.3. intended to mislead the GPhC into believing that you were not under investigation.
5. On or around 18 November 2024, when completing your GPhC registration renewal declaration, you incorrectly answered “Yes – previously informed” to the question *“Have you previously been convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence in the British Islands or elsewhere (which, if committed in England, Scotland or Wales would constitute a criminal offence) or have you previously agreed to be bound over to keep the peace by a Magistrates’ court in England or Wales?”*.
6. Your behaviour in paragraph 5 above was dishonest in that you:
 - 6.1. knew that you had not previously informed the GPhC about your conviction;
 - 6.2. answered “yes – previously informed” knowing that the information was incorrect; and
 - 6.3. intended to mislead the GPhC into believing that you had already declared the conviction.

By reason of the matters set out above your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your:

a) conviction; and

b) misconduct.

Documentation

Document 1 – Council’s hearing bundle – Conviction

Document 2 – Council’s hearing bundle – Misconduct

Document 3 – Council’s Combined statement of case and skeleton argument – Stage 1 conviction

Document 4- Council’s Combined statement of case and skeleton argument – Stage 1 misconduct

Document 5 – Council’s Combined statement of case and skeleton argument - Stages 2 and 3

Document 6 – Registrant’s bundle

Document 7 – Additional character reference

Witnesses

Registrant – Gave evidence at the impairment stage of the hearing

Determination

Introduction

1. This is the written determination of the Fitness to Practise Committee at the General Pharmaceutical Council ('the Council').
2. This hearing is governed by *The Pharmacy Order 2010* ('the Order') and *The General Pharmaceutical Council (Fitness to Practise and Disqualification etc. Rules) Order of Council 2010* ('the Rules').
3. The statutory overarching objectives for these regulatory proceedings are:
 - a. To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
 - b. To promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated by the Council; and
 - c. To promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions.
4. The Committee also has regard to the guidance contained in the Council's *Good decision making: Fitness to practise hearings and outcomes guidance* as revised March 2024.
5. A Principal Hearing has up to three stages:

Stage 1. Findings of Fact – the Committee determines any disputed facts.

Stage 2. Findings of ground(s) of misconduct and impairment – the Committee determines whether, on the facts as proved, a statutory ground for misconduct is established and, if so, whether the Registrant's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

Stage 3. Outcome – the Committee considers what, if any, outcome should be applied if the Registrant's fitness to practise is found to be impaired.

Service of Notice of Hearing

6. The Committee was satisfied that there had been good service of the Notice of Hearing ('Notice') in accordance with Rules 3 and 16 of the Rules.

Background

7. The Registrant completed his pharmacy degree in 2023 and was registered with the General pharmaceutical Council on 1 February 2024. These allegations arise from an incident, which occurred whilst he was a pre-registration pharmacist, when the Registrant was stopped by the police whilst driving his vehicle, on the 22 September 2023.

Conviction – Allegation 1

8. The Registrant was driving a BMW in Bolton on the A666 St Peters Way when the police stopped him and noticed a strong smell of cannabis coming from the car. A roadside drugs test was conducted by the police which tested positive for cannabis. The Registrant was taken to Bolton police station where two blood samples were obtained for analysis. The analysis showed that the amount of cannabis in his system was 3.2ug, above the prescribed limit of 2ug. The Registrant received the written charge in February 2024 and pleaded guilty on 26 March 2024. He was also disqualified from driving for 12 months and ordered to pay a financial penalty.
9. The Conviction is confirmed by the Certificate of Conviction pursuant to Rule 24(4) of the Rules. The Committee therefore found Allegation 1 proved.

Misconduct – Allegations 2-6

10. Allegation 2 deals with the Registrant's failure to declare his conviction. Allegations 3, 4, 5 and 6 deal with dishonesty relating to the Registrant's inaccurate completion of

his GPhC registration application on 11 December 2023 and his GPhC registration renewal declaration on 18 November 2024.

11. A registrant is required to notify the Registrar in writing if they are convicted of any criminal offence within 7 days of the conviction occurring, pursuant to Rule 4(2)(a) of the Rules. Having reviewed the Council's registration records, no record could be found of receiving any communication from the Registrant regarding his conviction.
12. Registrants are required to complete a registration application to register as a pharmacist by applying through an online portal. The application required the Registrant to answer several questions, including *"Are you currently under investigation by any regulatory body (Other than the GPhC) or criminal enforcement authority (eg police or NHS Counter Fraud Service) in the British islands or elsewhere."*
On 11 December 2023, the Registrant responded "no" to this question.
13. Registrants are also required to complete a fitness for practise declaration on renewal of their registration each year. The Registrant was required to answer "yes" or "no" to a number of questions regarding his fitness to practise including *"Have you previously been convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence in the British islands or elsewhere....."*.
On 18 November 2024, the Registrant answered "yes" to this question, but also indicated that he had previously informed the Council of this conviction.

Registrant's response

14. The Registrant admitted all of the allegations.
15. The Registrant admitted that he had been dishonest in his communication with the Council.

16. He said in his written response,

"On 22 September 2023, I made the irresponsible decision to drive after using cannabis. I understand that this was wrong and unacceptable. I also recognise that my handling of the matter afterwards was poor and did not reflect the level of professionalism, honesty, and integrity expected from a pharmacy student. Looking back, I understand that fear, embarrassment, and panic driven anxiety about the consequences influenced the way I dealt with the situation. Rather than addressing matters openly and responsibly, I avoided properly confronting them."

He also said in his written response,

"18. After it was confirmed that I had passed the pre-registration exam, I had to complete my initial submission to register as a pharmacist. I knew that the form asked whether I was under investigation. At the time, I stupidly persuaded myself that it was alright to answer 'no' to this question because I had not had a formal letter, email or phone call from the police to say I was under investigation or had a conviction.

19. Deep down I knew that as I had admitted to the police that I had used cannabis they would investigate the matter further. I had recently passed my exams, and I was on the brink of registering as a pharmacist. I knew that there was an ongoing process with the police and I was concerned about the consequences for my future career if I informed the GPhC of this. Again, I am sorry. My submission was dishonest. I should have answered 'yes' to this question

Registration Renewal

22. In February 2024, approximately two months after I had completed my first submission, I received the written charge in the post and contacted my insurer, as already outlined above.

23. On 18 November 2024, I submitted my next declaration upon the first renewal of my registration. By this time, I had contacted my insurer to request advice, but I had still not heard back from them.

24. When I completed this submission, I was asked whether I had any convictions and I answered 'yes – previously informed'. I previously told my solicitor that I chose this option because I had contacted the PDA insurance team and believed that they would have notified the GPhC. This explanation was not true. Although I had initially contacted the PDA when I received the written charge, I had not told them of my subsequent conviction. Nor did I believe that the PDA would notify the GPhC. The submission was again a stupid attempt to conceal my failure to disclose my conviction. I therefore accept that it was wrong and misleading to answer "yes – previously informed". I was avoiding the truth because I was afraid of the professional consequences. This was dishonest. I should have answered the question accurately and dealt with the consequences openly. I fully accept I did not do so and would like to apologise for that. My thought process was immature and avoidant. I was worried that if I declared the conviction properly my registration and career could be at risk. Rather than face that honestly as I should have done, I chose an answer which allowed me to try to avoid scrutiny. It was a failure of honesty and candour towards my regulator. I am still to this day very uncomfortable and embarrassed about that."

17. In the light of the above, and by the application of Rule 31(6) of the Rules, the admitted factual particulars were found proved.
18. The Committee went on to consider whether the facts found proved amounted to misconduct.
19. The Committee took into account the submissions made by Ms Sevdan and Mr Morris.
20. It also heard evidence from the Registrant.
21. Mr Morris submitted that the Registrant accepted that his actions amounted to misconduct and that his fitness to practise was currently impaired.
22. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

Decision on misconduct

23. When considering whether the particulars found proved amounted to misconduct the Committee took into account the *Good Decision making guidance*. / Fitness to Practice hearings and Outcomes Guidance 2024 (The Guidance)
24. The Committee considered whether the Registrant had breached any of the Council's Standards for Pharmacy Professionals (May 2017). The Committee determined that there had been a breach of Standard 6, pharmacy professionals must behave in a professional manner. They must be trustworthy and act with honesty and integrity.
25. The Committee bore in mind that the Standards may be taken into account when considering the issues of grounds and impairment but that a breach of the Standards does not automatically result in a finding of misconduct (Rule 24(11) of the Rules).
26. The Committee found that the facts found proved involved a failure to inform the Council of the criminal conviction and two incidences of dishonesty – relating to inaccurate and misleading information provided to the Council regarding the offence in both the registration application and the registration renewal declaration. The Committee found these acts to be serious, repeated and were intended to mislead the Council. The Committee found that these actions prevented the Council from fulfilling its duty to protect the public by not being able to assess the risk to the public posed by the Registrant due to not having the information necessary to do this. This could have placed members of the public at harm and could undermine public confidence in the profession and the Regulator. The Committee also found that fellow practitioners would find the Registrant's actions to be deplorable and significantly below the standard expected of a Pharmacist.
27. The Committee therefore found that the facts found proved amount to misconduct.

Decision on Impairment

28. The Committee went on to consider whether the Registrant's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

29. The Committee took account of the guidance given to the meaning of ‘fitness to practise’ in the Council’s publication *“Good decision-making”* (Revised March 2024). Paragraph 2.12 reads:

“A pharmacy professional is ‘fit to practise’ when they have the skills, knowledge, character, behaviour and health needed to work as a pharmacist...safely and effectively. In practical terms, this means maintaining appropriate standards of competence, demonstrating good character, and also adhering to the principles of good practice set out in our various standards, guidance and advice.”

30. The Committee also considered the following factors, as referenced in the case of *Council for Healthcare, Regulatory Excellence v NMC and Grant* (2011) EWHC 927 (Admin) and Rule 5(2)(a-d), which refer to whether the Registrant’s conduct:

- a) presents an actual or potential risk to patients or to the public;*
- b) has brought, or might bring, the profession of pharmacy into disrepute;*
- c) has breached one of the fundamental principles of the profession of pharmacy;*
- d) means that the integrity of the registrant can no longer be relied upon.*

31. The Committee found that limbs a, b and c were engaged in terms of the Registrant’s past actions and b and c remain engaged.

32. The Committee also applied the test set out in *Cohen v GMC* (2008) EWHC 581 (Admin) as to whether the Registrant’s actions were remediable, had been remedied and whether the risk of repetition in the future was highly unlikely.

33. The Committee found that the Registrant’s actions in terms of the conviction and his dishonesty had posed a potential risk to patients and the public, had brought the profession of pharmacy into disrepute and had breached one of the fundamental principles of the profession.

34. The Committee took into account the reflections provided by the Registrant and the evidence he provided to it. The Committee heard that **PRIVATE**. He admitted, and the Committee found, that he had made very poor decisions which led to his conviction which were then compounded by him not facing his responsibilities and not acting with candour and integrity towards his regulator in terms of his failure to disclose his conviction and his subsequent dishonest representations to the Council.
35. However, the Committee also heard that since that time, the Registrant has accepted the gravity of these matters. He has faced his responsibilities and has fully admitted his actions. The Registrant has provided candid reflections of what he has learnt, he openly accepts that he should not have acted in the way that he did. He has apologised and explained that his actions are a source of regret and embarrassment to him. The Committee found that he showed genuine remorse. He has shown significant insight into what went wrong, the triggers which caused the misconduct and the conviction and has taken steps to remedy the misconduct.
36. The Committee heard that the Registrant has undertaken study into the effects of cannabis and has informed himself of the impact of driving whilst under the influence of cannabis. In a response to a direct question from the Committee, he told them that he no longer uses cannabis and that this had been a one-off incident which he regrets.
37. The Registrant told the Committee that he has put in place much better coping strategies **PRIVATE**. He also now has other outlets for his stress, in that he has a more active lifestyle outside of his work. He told the Committee that he would no longer resort to using illegal self-medication.
38. He said in his written response,
*“My personal circumstances are now very different, and I have had a lot of changes in my lifestyle and responsibilities, including qualifying as a pharmacist and **PRIVATE**. I am a more mature person, and I am committed to my career as a pharmacist. I have*

reflected on my conduct at this time, and I deeply regret my dishonesty. I have reflected deeply on my actions in 2023 and 2024, and I am ashamed of my conduct at that time and deeply regret it. Through reflection on these events, I developed and gained knowledge and insight into the seriousness of my dishonesty I now fully understand how my dishonesty damages public trust in pharmacists. If their pharmacist has behaved dishonestly they may be deterred from seeking his help, advice and treatment for their health problems.”

39. The Committee found the Registrant to be credible and accepted that he has learnt from the incidents and has remedied his actions. It decided that there is no risk on public protection grounds in the future.
40. However, in terms of the public interest, the Committee found the matters are serious and that a member of the public would find that there is a need to make a finding of impairment in this case in order to uphold professional standards, maintain public confidence in the profession and the regulator and to send a message to fellow practitioners that such behaviour will not be tolerated.
41. The Registrant also openly accepts that his dishonesty towards his regulator is serious and had the effect of undermining public confidence not only in him but in his profession and in the effectiveness of the regulator and that the public interest requires a finding of impairment.
42. The Committee therefore finds the Registrant’s current fitness to practise to be impaired on public interest grounds and not impaired on public protection grounds.

Decision on Outcome

43. Having found impairment, the Committee went on to consider the matter of outcome. The Committee’s powers are set out in Article 54(2) of the Order. The Committee should consider the available outcomes in ascending order from least

restrictive, take no action, to most restrictive, removal from the Register, in order to identify the appropriate and proportionate outcome that meets the circumstances of the case.

44. The purpose of the outcome is not to be punitive, though a sanction may in fact have a punitive effect. The purpose of the outcome is to meet the overarching objectives of regulation, namely the protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence and the promotion of professional standards. The Committee is therefore entitled to give greater weight to the public interest over the Registrant's interests.
45. The Committee had regard to the Council's 'Good decision making: Fitness to practise hearings and outcomes guidance' to inform its decision.
46. Ms Sevdan, on behalf of the Council, indicated the views of the Council in relation to outcome:
 - That to take no action, offer advice or a warning would be insufficient to address the seriousness of the matters concerned;
 - That Conditions of Registration were neither appropriate or workable as the conduct does not relate to clinical issues or involve areas needing further training;
 - That a Suspension Order was necessary to mark the seriousness of the matters;
 - That Removal from the Register would be neither necessary nor proportionate in this case.
 - That in all the circumstances a Suspension Order of 6 months would be the least restrictive order for addressing the concerns and would also be adequate to reflect the gravity of the conduct.
47. Mr Morris, on behalf of the Registrant, accepted that the only realistic outcome given the circumstances of this case, was a period of suspension.

48. Further, he highlighted the remorse, apology, action taken by the Registrant, and the insight shown as well as the Registrant's open and honest approach to dealing with this hearing. He also referred to testimonials, all of which had been given in the knowledge of the allegations and the Registrant's full admission to them. He submitted that the testimonials attested to the deep shame and remorse felt by the Registrant about his actions but also highlighted a change in attitude as a result of the regulatory process. The Registrant has reflected deeply and now fully recognises the seriousness of the matters and why they have been raised. Mr Morris also indicated that Suspension was the appropriate outcome and one that the Registrant himself recognises as the appropriate course of action in his case. In terms of the length of a suspension order, Mr Morris submitted that a period of less than the 6 months originally put forward by the Council before the commencement of the hearing would be appropriate, given the full admissions made by the Registrant at this hearing and his candour and openness shown to the Committee.
49. The Committee took into account the submissions made by Ms Sevdan and Mr Morris.
50. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.
51. The Committee first considered what, if any, aggravating factors there may be and identified the following:
- a. Repeated dishonest conduct
 - b. Repeated failures to provide accurate information to the Council over a prolonged period of time, despite several opportunities provided to correct the information. It was not an isolated incident;
 - c. Misconduct directed towards the Council concerning information which the Council required in order to properly discharge its statutory functions,
 - d. Degree of deliberate action
52. The Committee identified a number of mitigating features including:

- a. The Registrant **PRIVATE** at the time he was in court and the incident occurred pre-registration, when the Registrant was a trainee pharmacist;
 - b. Although there was a potential risk to the public by the Registrant's actions, the conduct did not relate to his clinical practice and had not put patients at risk and there is no evidence patient safety was compromised;
 - c. The Registrant has expressed remorse and has apologised for his conduct;
 - d. The Registrant made full admissions in relation to his dishonesty.
53. The Committee then considered which outcome would be the most proportionate and least restrictive in order to address the concerns raised and satisfy the public interest. It decided that given that the matters involve a criminal conviction, a failure to declare the conviction and two further acts of dishonesty towards the Council, to take no action or to give a Warning would not be sufficient to address the seriousness of the concerns, nor would such outcomes address the public interest.
54. The Committee next considered whether to impose Conditions of Registration. A Conditions of Registration Order would allow the Registrant to practise albeit with restrictions. The Committee decided that that conditions were not appropriate in this case as the concerns do not relate to clinical matters or the requirement for further training but instead involve attitudinal issues which could not be addressed by Conditions of Registration.
55. The Committee next considered whether a period of suspension would be a proportionate outcome. The Committee noted the Council's guidance which indicates that suspension may be appropriate where:
- "The Committee considers that a warning or conditions are insufficient to deal with any risk to patient safety or to protect the public or would undermine public confidence. It may be required when necessary to highlight to the profession and to the public that the conduct of the registrant is unacceptable and unbefitting a member of the pharmacy profession. Also, when public confidence in the profession demands no lesser sanction."

56. In all the circumstances, the Committee decided that a Suspension Order would be fair and proportionate in this case. A Suspension Order recognises the gravity of the facts found proved, upholds standards and maintains confidence in the profession and the regulator by sending a message to the public and the profession that such behaviour will not be tolerated. The Committee decided that a period of 4 months suspension would be the appropriate and proportionate length of time for the Order, recognising the admissions and insight provided by the Registrant and his changed attitude whilst also satisfying the public interest.
57. The Committee did consider whether the outcome of Removal should be applied. Repeated dishonesty together with a criminal conviction put the misconduct at the more serious end of the spectrum and breach the fundamental standards required of a Pharmacist. However, the Committee had sight of positive testimonials of those who know the Registrant well and who attested to his changed attitude. The Committee noted that some of those testimonials came from family members, albeit two of whom were registered pharmacists. There was a further independent positive testimonial from a community pharmacist who had worked with the Registrant for the past 3 years. He said that he believed that the Registrant “is a capable, reliable, and trustworthy pharmacist who is able to practise safely and professionally.” The Committee therefore took into account the public interest need of keeping a good pharmacist in the profession.
58. Therefore, given the full admissions, positive testimonials, insight and the changed attitude of the Registrant together with the mitigating factors previously identified, the Committee concluded that the sanction of Removal would be disproportionate in this case.
59. The Committee therefore directs that the Registrar suspend the Registrant for a period of 4 months.

60. This concludes the determination.