

Meeting date: 27/04/2026

GLADD Representative in attendance: Dr Duncan McGregor

## **GLADD Statement at General Medical Council (GMC) Strategic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum (SEDIAF), April 2026**

Today I would like to raise concerns about the Royal College of Psychiatrists' decision to host an international examination centre in Qatar, and the implications this has for the integrity of the MRCPsych examination. This decision attracted criticism from a large number of College members at the time, yet the College has, regrettably, failed to engage with those concerns in a constructive way.

Both sexual orientation and gender identity feature explicitly within the MRCPsych examination syllabus. This reflects the standards expected of psychiatrists practising in the UK: that they demonstrate an understanding of, and a non-discriminatory approach towards, patients of minority sexual orientations and gender identities.

Qatar, however, has well-documented legal and cultural practices that actively suppress the rights and equality of LGBTQ+ people and women. Human Rights Watch has reported "cases of severe and repeated beatings and sexual harassment in police custody" involving people detained on suspicion of being homosexual or transgender. Consensual same-sex relations are punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment, while the autonomy of women is also substantially constrained by legal restrictions on decision-making.

In this context, there is a serious question as to whether mental health issues relating to sexual orientation, gender dysphoria, or HIV status can be discussed and assessed openly, safely, and to the standard required by the syllabus. When a person risks imprisonment for conduct such as "instigating" or "enticing" another man to commit an act deemed "sodomy or immorality", how can a candidate's attitudes, understanding, and clinical approach to sexual orientation be reliably assessed against the standards expected of psychiatrists practising in the UK?

The GMC is responsible for ensuring that postgraduate examinations meet the standards set by approved postgraduate curricula. In its guidance, Excellence

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by design: standards for postgraduate curricula, it sets out its role in the quality assurance of postgraduate examinations.

Given the significant legal and cultural barriers outlined above, there is a legitimate concern that a higher-than-usual threshold of quality assurance is required in order to ensure equivalence, validity, and fidelity to the approved curriculum. I would therefore welcome a meeting with the GMC Education and Standards team to discuss these concerns, what assurance has been sought regarding the delivery of the MRCPsych examination in this setting, and what role the GMC can play in ensuring that the Royal College of Psychiatrists protects both the integrity of its examinations and the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ patients.