

GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL

GDC

protecting patients,
regulating the dental team



www.gdc-uk.org

GDC Consultation

Introducing a requirement of prior clinical experience for entry to the new statutory examination for overseas (non-EEA) dentists

The deadline for response is **5.00pm on Friday 1st June 2007**

Please reply to:

Stephanie Lenn
Clinical Experience Consultation
General Dental Council
37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ

You can also reply by email to clinicalexperience@gdc-uk.org

Introduction

In order to protect the public, the GDC must be satisfied that its registrants are fit to practise in the UK. We must ensure that the method of assessing overseas applicants for registration only allows safe dentists to practise in the UK. The process must be consistent, transparent and equitable.

Under the Dentists' Act 1984, the GDC is required to provide a 'statutory examination' for overseas dentists. In this context, overseas dentists include all non-EEA dentists, who do not hold a first qualification in dentistry from the UK.

The Council has recently reviewed the statutory examination and, following a public consultation¹, a new examination format to replace the existing statutory examination, the International Qualifying Examination (IQE), has been agreed. In order to be a successful gatekeeper to the Dentists' Register – and hence protect the patient – it is essential the new examination is robust.

The new examination will introduce the use of modern assessment methods utilising actors and dental manikins. This will replace the current clinical examination which requires each candidate to see two patients. Using these methods will ensure a standardised examination which will systematically cover all key areas and allow increased transparency in marking.

Since the new examination will no longer include a test involving the direct treatment of patients, the Council has recognised that a new entry requirement for the examination will need to be introduced to avoid the risk that candidates could gain registration without ever having practised on a patient. For this reason of patient protection, we are proposing to introduce a new entry requirement to the examination of prior clinical experience. We are now consulting on the details of the implementation of this requirement.

Please note that the proposal to require evidence of clinical experience will not affect current candidates on the IQE, even if they choose to transfer to the new examination. Transitional arrangements will exist for current candidates.

For further details on the new examination, please refer to Annex A or the GDC website: www.gdc-uk.org

Evidence of previous clinical experience

We are proposing to introduce a requirement of 1600 hours prior clinical experience for non-EEA dentists. This must be time spent personally treating patients in the dental chair. We are proposing that this experience could include experience gained in the form of the primary dental qualification, post-qualification work experience, or a combination of both.

We would like to hear the views of current candidates, potential candidates, registrants, patients and others who may be affected by our proposal for prior clinical experience for entry to our statutory examination for overseas dentists. **We would therefore be grateful for your comments on the questions set out on pages 3 to 6.**

¹ The proposal approved at the Council meeting of 5 December 2006 can be found on the GDC website: www.gdc-uk.org

Who are you?

In order for us to understand the context in which you are replying to this consultation, please indicate the perspective from which you are replying.

I am replying as a (please tick the boxes that apply to you)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Member of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dental Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Current IQE candidate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential candidate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a professional association | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify)..... |
| On behalf of a consumer association | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify)..... |
| On behalf of an education provider | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify)..... |
| On behalf of a regulatory body | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (Please specify)...RPSGB..... |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify)..... |

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this consultation.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. It also regulates pharmacy technicians on a voluntary basis, which is expected to become statutory for England and Wales under anticipated legislation.

The primary objectives of the Society are to lead, regulate, develop and represent the profession of pharmacy.

The Society leads and supports the development of the profession within the context of the public benefit. This includes the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, it promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums.

RPSGB Response 31 May 2007

The Society has responsibility for a wide range of functions that combine to assure competence and fitness to practise. These include controlled entry into the profession, education, registration, setting and enforcing professional standards, promoting good practice, providing support for improvement, dealing with poor performance, dealing with misconduct and removal from the register.

The RPSGB is similar to the GDC in that once a pharmacist is on the Society's register the Society cannot limit a pharmacist's practise to a specific field or to a supervised environment. From day one on the register the pharmacist could be the person in charge of a retail pharmacy business and solely responsible for the provision of all pharmaceutical services from a community pharmacy.

What do you think?

Introduction of prior clinical experience

We plan to introduce a new entry requirement for the statutory examination of prior clinical experience for all non-EEA dentists who seek registration on the GDC Register. The key purpose of this is to ensure patient protection as the new examination will not include a test on a patient.

1. Do you agree that the GDC should introduce a requirement of prior clinical experience, for the reasons outlined in this document?

✓ Yes No

If you answered no please explain why.

The model for registering dentists in the UK is similar to that which the Society has developed for pharmacy technicians in that qualification and registration can happen more or less simultaneously. The work experience criteria for pharmacy technicians state that relevant work experience can be experience gained either during the training period and/or post qualification. Assuming that all dental qualifications include the requirement for some clinical experience it would seem reasonable for clinical experience to be gained either during or post qualification. This would put the applicants on a par with those undertaking the BDS final exams.

Definition of clinical experience

We recommend that the definition of clinical experience, for these purposes, should be as follows:

The overseas dentist must have clinical experience where they have personally treated patients in the dental chair. The number of hours of this clinical experience will either be hours spent by the overseas dentist undertaking appropriate investigations and administering dental treatment during their dental degree, during post-qualification experience, or a combination of the two. It will not include time observing other dentists or assisting other dentists/dental students in undertaking diagnosis/treatment planning or provision of treatment.

2. Do you agree with the definition?

Yes No ✓

If you answered no please explain why.

See response to question 1

We would recommend that the GDC consider developing criteria for

- *The currency of clinical experience e.g x no. of hours/weeks/days out of the last y years.*
- *The minimum number of hours of clinical experience which should be undertaken post-qualification.*
- *What 'clinical experience' means – a more detailed description of what constitutes clinical experience is required – some indication of the investigations and dental treatment which must have been undertaken perhaps.*

How we plan to implement the requirement of prior clinical experience

We propose that 1600 hours be the appropriate level of clinical experience required. This is approximately one year's experience, based on a 35-hour working week.

We are proposing that this experience could include hours from the primary dental qualification, post-qualification work experience, or a combination of both.

3. Do you agree with the proposed amount of hours of experience (1600 hours)?

✓ Yes - With the proviso that it should be current. No

If you answered no please explain why.

4. Do you agree with the principles of how such experience could be obtained?

✓ Yes No

If you answered no please explain why.

See response to question 2

We recommend that the GDC should consider specifying the quality of the clinical experience expected not only the total number of hours. e.g. the nature of the investigations and treatments which must have been undertaken together with the nature of evidence which would satisfy the GDC that appropriate clinical experience had been undertaken

The Society is of the view that a period of supervised clinical experience in the UK either prior to sitting the international qualifying examination or prior to registration would be desirable. Safe and effective clinical practice is inextricably linked to knowledge of the operational details of clinical governance, local NHS requirements and to the ethical and legislative framework of dental practice in the UK. To work safely and effectively in the UK an overseas qualified dentist must know the permitted activities of the different members of the dental team, a knowledge of the organization and provision of healthcare in the community and in hospital and an understanding of patients' rights, particularly with regard to confidentiality and patient consent. Supervised clinical practice in the UK would provide this framework of knowledge.

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The deadline for responses is 5.00pm on **Friday 1 June 2007**. Please note that we cannot guarantee that any responses received after the deadline will be considered.

Annex A

Outline of the new statutory examination for overseas dentists

The two parts of the new examination will be taken consecutively.

Part 1 is designed to test the application in theory of a candidate's knowledge to clinical practice. It will consist of two written papers undertaken at a computer, with each paper lasting three hours. The style of question will be Extended Matching Questions (EMQs) and Single Best Answer questions (SBAs).

The purpose of Part 2 is to test the candidate's ability to practise clinical skills safely. It will be in four sections:

- (a) An Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).
- (b) A practical examination on a dental manikin. Candidates are required to perform three procedures during a period of three hours.
- (c) A diagnosis and treatment planning exercise.
- (d) An examination in medical emergencies.

Current entry requirements

Current entry requirements for the IQE include:

- An original or certified qualifying degree certificate which is recognised on the World Higher Education Database or on an approved degrees list;
- A certificate of good standing, issued by the registration authority of the country/region in which the applicant qualified, which states that the applicant has a right to practise dentistry and has not been suspended or prohibited as practising as a dentist;
- A current valid passport;
- An original or certified IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Test Report form with an overall score of 7.0 with a minimum of 6.5 in each of the four individual sections.

Requirement for requisite knowledge and skill

Under the Dentists Act, a dentist from outside the EEA must satisfy the criteria of having 'requisite knowledge and skill' in order to be registered. It is the GDC's view that clinical experience treating patients falls within the 'requisite knowledge and skill' in the Act. This is because the level set for the new examination as approved by Council is as follows: "The overseas dentist should be able to prove that his or her clinical skills and knowledge are at the level required for success in a final examination of a UK BDS/BChD programme. The breadth of clinical skills and knowledge that the assessment covers will derive from the framework for the undergraduate dental curriculum in the UK ('The First Five Years') including the learning outcomes."