

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:

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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 type="checkbox"/> (Please specify).....
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify).....

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.

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.

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 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.

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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."