

HSMP Forum's submission

Hon'ble Committee Members

We write to highlight the plight of overseas dental graduate candidates who have been left in the lurch after they enrolled with Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) England for The Licentiate in Dental Surgery (LDS) examination.

We have been approached by these candidates. "HSMP Forum" is a not-for-profit campaigning organisation and has been lobbying the legislature, executive and judiciary by challenging unfair policies. The organisation's aim is to support and assist migrants under the world-renowned British principles of fair play, equality and justice and believes in challenging any unfair policies which undermines migrants' interests.

Many students who have cleared a part of the LDS exam have been told that the results are not valid, while candidates preparing for the first part of the exam were told at short notice that the exam has been cancelled indefinitely. This is believed to be on account of issues between the Royal college of Surgeons and [The General Dental Council](#). Such a confusion and disruption exposes the shallowness of the system and makes a mockery of the time and resources put in by the candidates.

Aspiring to practise in the UK these dental candidates enrolled for the LDS exam, which is believed to be the oldest existing dental qualification in the United Kingdom and until recently, was legally authorised by the GDC, as an appropriate test of skills for overseas qualified dentists.

The two-part LDS exam consists of a theory and practical component and candidates are expected to clear both in order to obtain the qualification.

Approximately, 150 such candidates have taken the LDS Part 1 (majority since April 2010) and have been waiting for the announcement of the Part 2 exam for almost a year now. A 'diet' of part 2 was conducted once but was withdrawn at the behest of the GDC and the results were withheld while citing quality assurance issues (without actually disclosing the exact issues concerned). Candidates who were preparing for the next 'diet' in September

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2010 were informed 10 days prior to the scheduled date that the exam was postponed 'indefinitely'. Since then the exams have been suspended on the instructions of GDC to RCS.

It is believed that the GDC conducts a similar exam (ORE) and the reason for the indefinite delay is very likely to be a conflict of interest between the two organizations.

It is understood that when an institute is granted permission to conduct examination and award a certificate, it is granted for a certain specified period of time so that the enrolled students are not affected or "become a subject for a trial," even if there are discrepancies or scope for improvement regarding the standard of the examination or the institute. This is to ensure that the current batch of candidates is not deprived of their earnings or results and overall their aspirations to practice in the UK.

It is difficult to imagine students studying BDS (Bachelor in [Dental Surgery](#)) in a UK university saddled with uncertainty and delays for more than a year with their future in a limbo. This is because the dental schools in UK have the permission to continue with ongoing courses and make improvements in upcoming examinations without causing any disturbance to the students.

However, this has not happened in the case of the overseas candidates. The reason cited by the GDC for withholding Part-2 results was in line of poor standard of examination. Surely the candidate should not have to pay for it. Candidates have paid upfront fees for a year and taken a number of courses to prepare for the practical exam, which adds up to a substantial investment, including the hard work and time involved. They were working in accordance to an exam calendar, which was announced but never followed.

Since these candidates have been brutally disrupted mid-way without being given an opportunity to complete their examination, it seems they were made a 'subject of trial', which is unfair and irresponsible on the part of the authorities concerned.

Finally in Nov-Dec 2010, the RCS informed all candidates that a pilot (dummy) exam was to be conducted in January 2011 and soon after a date would be announced in Jan 2011 for the Part-2 exam. However, once again, they came up with an apology and confessed that they could not finalise the dates for the pilot exam with GDC and will have to wait till the

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end of 2011. Soon after this, the candidates were informed that they would be receiving all their documents and [exam application form](#) along with the examination fee very soon.

We feel the candidates have been victimized and this is in violation of the [Human Rights Act](#) in addition to defeating their reasonable expectation. The situation reeks of dirty bureaucracy between the two governing bodies at the expense of careers of number of well-qualified dentists who have migrated to the country in a hope of better future.

These dentists form a healthy population of tax paying citizens and at a time when dentists are in short supply, the least the training body can do is to ensure that the candidates get a fair deal and their qualification at the earliest so that they can join the workforce.

More than the time and money, it is the morale of these candidates, which has taken a severe beating as they bear the brunt of two feuding authorities. Having come this far towards obtaining their qualification, the candidates expect

- Either a clear announcement of examination dates from RCS for LDS part 2 or
- Expect the GDC to conduct a final exam on its own similar to ORE-2 for all candidates who have already spent a year preparing for the part 2 component of the qualification.

We request that you conduct necessary inquiry in this matter. We will also be able to provide further submissions and information to assist you in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Amit Kapadia
Executive Director (Chairman)