

HSMP Forum

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Alan Bennett,
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The Education System Has Failed Us: Dental Students

On behalf of those overseas dental graduate candidates who have been left in the lurch because of the Licentiate in Dental Surgery (LDS) examination, the HSMP forum would like to present this memorandum outlining their hardships on account of inconsistencies in the examination procedure.

“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. As an NGO committed towards fighting for any injustice towards migrants, we have been approached by the candidates concerned with the LDS to support and protest the unfair and unjust treatment meted out to them.

Aspiring to practise in the UK, these dental candidates had enrolled with Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) England 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.

However, those who cleared 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 confusion and disruption exposes the shallowness of the system and makes a mockery of the time and the resources put in by the candidates.

The candidates are expected to clear both the theory and practical aspects of the LDS exam 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 A ‘diet’ of part 2 was conducted once but was withdrawn at the behest of the GDC and the results were withheld while citing quality assurance issues (without actually disclosing the exact issues concerned).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 were informed 10 days prior to the scheduled date that the exam was postponed ‘indefinitely’. Since then the exams have been suspended.

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

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organizations. It is understood that when an institute is granted permission to conduct examination and award a certificate, it covers a certain period which ensures that that the current batch of candidates is not deprived of their earnings or results and overall, their aspirations to practice in the UK.

However, the qualification procedure has now been brutally disrupted mid-way. Without giving them an opportunity to complete their examination, it seems the candidates 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. Once again, the candidates were told that the RCS has not been able to finalise the dates for the pilot exam with GDC and will have to wait till the end of 2011. Soon after this, the candidates were informed that they would be receiving all their documents and the 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 quashing their reasonable expectation. The situation reeks of dirty bureaucracy between the two governing bodies at the expense of the careers of a 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 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 the RCS for LDS part 2 or
- Work out an arrangement with the GDC to conduct a final exam similar to ORE-2 for all candidates who have already spent a year preparing for the part 2 component of the qualification.

This demonstration is a reiteration of concerns of these dental candidates and to prompt you to take remedial measures to resolve it.

Yours Sincerely,

Amit Kapadia
Executive Director (Chairman)