

Nigel Clarke
Chair, General Pharmaceutical Council

By email

9 February 2021

Dear Nigel,

We are writing to raise our concerns regarding the recent communication from the GPhC to 69 trainees informing them that they will not be able to take the March 2021 registration assessment in countries where there is a time difference of more than five hours from the UK.

We have previously raised our concerns regarding the delayed registration assessment and the impact on provisional registrants within GB. We are saddened that we must write to you again, this time in relation to international trainees.

We were astounded that trainees have been given six weeks' notice of this change and are unclear how the inability of the chosen provider to deliver a synchronised assessment overseas was not identified during the procurement process in 2020. Expecting candidates to travel into the UK in the midst of a pandemic is unreasonable, especially to take an online exam. In addition many trainees will be unable to secure the correct visa and there are financial consequences of travel and quarantining, as well as the significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

We have been contacted by many of the trainees affected, some of whom left the UK only because they believed that they could take the assessment in their home country. You will be aware that the consequences of a delay are enormous, particularly for UK pharmacy graduates in Hong Kong who require full UK registration to be able to practise.

The trainees are committed to the profession and have demonstrated initiative in the solutions that they have proposed. These include being prepared to take the assessment at unsocial hours, identifying alternative centres that will allow them to sit such as the British Council in Hong Kong or to take a proctored assessment at home.

It is important that these trainees are not discriminated against and are provided equal opportunities to UK-based trainees. We urge the GPhC to urgently reconsider its position and revisit the balance of risks in the same way as other examination providers have done.

Our Boards are also seeking assurances from the GPhC that the current intake of pre-registration pharmacists will not be subjected to the same level of disruption with their assessment. Confirmation of the date and arrangements for the June assessment would help to allay these concerns.



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We hope that you will view our comments positively and review the current arrangements urgently to ensure that the principles of equality and fairness are upheld. We repeat the request in our previous letter that there should be more flexibility in access to online proctored assessments taken outside of Pearson Vue centres.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Claire Anderson FRPharmS
Chair, English Pharmacy Board



Jonathan Burton MBE FRPharmS
Chair, Scottish Pharmacy Board



Suzanne Scott-Thomas FRPharmS
Chair, Welsh Pharmacy Board