

Nigel Clarke
Chair of the General Pharmaceutical Council

26 February 2021

Dear Nigel

Issues relating to the March sitting of the GPhC registration assessment

The current trainees are the future of our profession and we all need to ensure that they have the best chance of success in the registration assessment reflected through fair and equitable processes that give due consideration to their wellbeing.

We are writing to express our serious concerns about the arrangements for the forthcoming registration assessment. We have heard from many of our members that their experience of trying to book a place in a Pearson Vue centre has been fraught with issues. This has understandably caused them considerable anxiety and stress.

The main issues that we have been made aware of are:-

- The distribution of booking emails does not appear to have been synchronised resulting in some trainees receiving these hours later than their colleagues, or in some cases the next day. Those receiving later emails have found there is more likely to be reduced availability in test centres
- Trainees report a range of start times for their assessment ranging from 8am to 3pm
- Some trainees have been unable to book a test centre within a reasonable distance. This appears to be particularly acute in Scotland where some trainees have had to book test centres in England. For some this means travelling hundreds of miles and having to book overnight accommodation during a pandemic.

We urge the GPhC to address these issues immediately, specifically:

- All trainees to have access to a test centre within a reasonable distance (i.e. not beyond the distance they would usually have been expected to travel to take the GPhC registration assessment and in line with government Covid 19 guidelines). We have previously written to you seeking increased flexibility so that more trainees can take the assessment at home. We repeat this request particularly for those that have had to book centres that are far from their homes. In addition, we ask that you secure additional capacity in areas where there has been insufficient provision.
- Confirmation of the window of start times for assessment papers on both assessment days and an assurance that the integrity of the paper will not be compromised by any late sittings.

This cohort of trainees has had an extremely challenging experience to date with a disrupted preregistration experience followed by working during a pandemic often under pressure and managing emotionally and professionally challenging situations. Whilst much of this has been an unavoidable result of the pandemic a significant proportion of it could have been prevented. They have been made to wait patiently for 9 months to take the assessment. At the same time a large proportion are revising whilst also juggling a busy job providing care to their patients. We have previously written to you about our concerns with the way this has been managed. Many are now



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faced with a poor experience whilst attempting to book a test centre at a location which is within a reasonable travel time. This is unacceptable and shows little compassion for the circumstances many of these trainees have been experiencing.

Given the long lead time to arrange this assessment, we are unclear how these issues have arisen. We hope that the GPhC will undertake a full scale and public review of the process so that lessons can be learned and we can build confidence that those taking the June assessment can be assured they will not have a similar experience.

Kind Regards



Sandra Gidley
President
Royal Pharmaceutical Society



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