

International applications



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Focus of this talk

- “Processes used by nine health and care professional regulatory bodies in the UK to register applicants trained and applying from outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)”
- A rapid review by the Professional Standards Authority
- October 2013
- Available on our website

Our sector: who we oversee

- Nine statutory regulators: General Chiropractic Council, General Dental Council, General Medical Council, General Optical Council, General Osteopathic Council, General Pharmaceutical Council, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland
- Health professionals in the UK, and social workers in England
- Register size ranges from just over 2,000 to just under 700,000
- Fees from £76-£800 per annum
- Higher education institution courses quality assured 2-150
- Number of allegations of unfitness to practise: 28-3,540
- Voluntary occupational registers

- (figures from Performance Review 2012-13)

The Authority: strategic objectives

- Reporting clearly and openly on the effectiveness of regulatory bodies in the regulation of health and social care professionals, in the interests of patients and the public
- Building evidence and promoting debate in order to identify best practice in health and care professional regulation and registration and to influence the wider field of regulatory policy
- Contributing to the improvement of occupational standards and practice in health and social care by ensuring the Professional Standards Authority is an independent, authoritative, effective, value for money organisation acting in the public interest
- Enhancing public confidence in unregulated health and care occupations by creating a reliable and effective accreditation scheme for voluntary occupational registers, promoting quality in education and training, registration and standards of conduct

Our functions

- Annual performance review of the regulatory bodies
- Review the outcomes of final fitness to practise cases and refer to Court if we consider the outcome unduly lenient
- Audit the initial stages of fitness to practise cases
- Assist the Privy Council in the exercise of their appointment powers in respect of regulators' councils
- Promote good practice and right-touch regulation
- Share research and knowledge
- Arrange discussions, seminars, an annual symposium of regulatory leaders
- Advise the Secretary of State and Ministers
- Monitor policy in the UK and internationally
- Maintain close contact with the UK government health departments
- Accredite voluntary registers

Why did we do a review?

- Ministerial request
- Letter received in August 2013
- “To review the processes used by the nine regulators whom we oversee for registering international applicants, that is, those trained and applying from outside the European Economic Area (EEA)”.
- To ask the regulatory bodies to provide assurance as to their level of confidence
- To highlight any areas of concern
- To highlight any recent changes

First steps

- We seconded a member of staff of one of the regulators who works in this area
- Compiled information available on the nine regulators' processes from websites
- Put together a description of the processes of each and sent them, with questions, to each regulator
- We gave them a few weeks to respond, which they all did
- We were then left with a detailed account of the processes for each – hundreds of pages of detailed description
- How did we make sense of them?

‘Dimensions of assurance’

- Seven COMMON areas:
- The applicant’s English language ability
- The applicant’s identity
- The applicant’s academic qualification
- Proof of the applicant’s registration overseas
- Any requirements for the applicant to provide evidence of experience or practice overseas
- Any additional training, adaptation programme or exam required to be taken in the UK
- The currency of documents or decisions in the process
- A number of other internal processes or requirements that are not common to all regulators

Language ability

- Mostly the academic version of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).
- Four dimensions: speaking writing reading listening
- Average score required
- Different requirements for different professional groups – the highest is for speech and language therapists
- In some cases, language ability is proved by the ability to pass an exam that is in English

Identity checking

- Originals or certified copies
- Photographic evidence
- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Documents to prove the reasons for a change of name for example marriage or civil partnership
- All documents cross-checked to ensure consistency
- Cross checking with other documents including academic certificates
- Use of passport scanner and the Keesing global documents database

Proof of overseas qualification

- Either a recognised qualification or a qualification which meets specific requirements relating to hours of study and content of curriculum
- Applicant must produce original certificate, certified copy, the academic transcript giving a detailed breakdown of modules and scores
- Many regulators engage with the UK's NARIC – National Academic Recognition Information centre – counterfraud advice and training
- In a few cases applicants can put forward details of a combination of training and practice evidence for individual assessment

Proof of overseas registration

- Applicants must produce, or arrange for, a 'certificate of good standing' from the regulator or register-holding organisation
- Has not been suspended, disqualified or prohibited
- Go back about five years
- In some cases, direct from applicant, in other cases the UK regulator will correspond directly with the overseas regulator – additional assurance?
- An opportunity to cross check details – triangulation of evidence

Evidence of experience and practice

- In some cases a period of practice is specified
- Employer reference must be produced
- Detailed CV including roles and responsibilities

Additional training/adaptation/exam

- In some cases there is a specific examination for non-EEA applicants, or an adaptation programme, or both
- Or applicants must pass a UK exam

Other checks and internal processes

- GP medical records
- Police record checks
- Professional insurance cover
- Character references
- Requirements that all translated documents be translated by an 'authorised translator' (eg a university)

- Single member of staff attached to a particular case throughout the process
- Internal and external audit of processes
- Monitoring of trends in fitness to practise concerning non-EEA registrants

Currency of documents and other decisions

- Time limits on the currency of documents and decisions
- IELTS results valid for two years
- Time limits on proceeding to registration after fulfilling examination and adaptation requirements
- Certificate of professional good standing from 'home' regulator no more than three months old

Limitations

- Paper-based exercise
- Descriptions of process not performance
- What are the underlying risks that these activities are seeking to eliminate, reduce or manage? How do the risks differ from one profession to another?



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