

Mr A Kapadia
Executive Director and Chair
Highly Skilled Migrant Programme Forum

02 September 2011

Dear Mr Kapadia,

Licence in Dental Surgery examination of the Royal College of Surgeons of England

Following some recent developments in relation to the Licence in Dental Surgery (LDS) examination, I thought this might be an appropriate opportunity to bring you up to date since the submission in May of your petition signed by members of the HSMP Forum. Since then, we have been working closely with the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS Eng) in their efforts to develop an improved LDS examination and I believe progress has been made.

As you will be aware, it is a statutory duty of the General Dental Council (GDC) to undertake quality assurance of all routes to registration. This includes the BDS degrees offered by the UK dental schools, the GDC's own Overseas Registration Examination and the LDS offered by the RCS Eng. This quality assurance protects patients by making sure that training courses and exams are robust enough to ensure that only those who are fit to practise pass and are eligible to join the GDC register.

As you may be aware, the LDS had not been offered for several years until 2010 and the GDC inspected the first sitting of a revised version of the exam. The GDC inspectors were not satisfied that the exam was sufficiently robust and we have been working with the College since then to bring the LDS up to the required standard.

The GDC is very much aware of the difficulties and frustrations experienced by LDS candidates and appreciates that they are in an unfortunate position. Both the RCS Eng and the GDC are keen to resolve the difficulties as efficiently as possible. Accordingly the RCS Eng has revised important aspects of the LDS examination and carried out a pilot of the examination in August which was observed by GDC inspectors. We are in the process of reporting back to the RCS Eng on the findings from that process. The inspectors noted many positive developments in the pilot examination and we are optimistic that once any further actions have been agreed a new examination could be offered. Of course, a pilot examination is not the same as a real examination and the GDC will be required to inspect any new examination.

We understand that at some point in the near future a new examination will be offered, but the timing of that is a matter for the RCS Eng..

I hope you will be encouraged by these developments and I suggest you and your HSMP Forum colleagues keep in touch the RCS Eng for further developments.

Yours sincerely



Elynn Gilvarry
Chief Executive and Registrar