

From: Alan Bennett, Chief Executive

Mr Amit Kapadia  
Executive Director (Chairman)  
HSMP Forum

02 June 2011

Dear Mr Kapadia

Thank you for your letter of 20 May. I regret that the situation with the LDS examination is somewhat complex, as I am very happy to explain.

**Outline situation**

The LDS is a College examination of very long standing. After the first sitting of the updated LDS Part 2 in July 2010, an inspection team representing the regulatory body, the General Dental Council (GDC), found the examination insufficient and requested its withdrawal. As our regulatory body, the GDC do have a right to inspect any live examination sitting.

We agreed to work with the GDC to develop and implement an action plan to re-launch the examination. To minimise the risk of candidates suffering a further withdrawn examination, we decided to run a new pilot examination for GDC inspection before running further live sittings. The GDC agreed to this plan, although they do not normally inspect pilot examinations.

It was initially hoped to run the new pilot in January 2011. However, in late December, a senior GDC administrator recommended we delay the pilot and prepare further documentation beforehand. Letting the January pilot date go was a difficult choice for us. Candidates were pressing for early resolution and new examination dates are extremely difficult to book (the College examinations timetable is filled years in advance). Nevertheless we felt it in the best interest of the candidates to delay, if this improved the chance of a successful outcome. All parties provided a number of alternative dates but the earliest date possible for **all** those involved and needed proved to be 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011. This is considerably later than we, and our candidates, would have wished. Especially as we do not know how long after that we shall have to wait for the GDC inspection report.

Further developments gave us more cause for uncertainty. The GDC had originally indicated that they would not seek to remove the registerable status of the LDS at Privy Council if we complied with them by withdrawing the July 2010 examination and agreeing an action plan. However at an open meeting on 24 February, the GDC

stated their intention to take the issue to the Privy Council even though we had complied on both points. Although they have not yet (to our knowledge) gone to Privy Council, the possibility of their doing so still exists and it could lead to a long process of uncertain outcome. This is why we took the step of refunding all LDS examination fees and returning documentation to the candidates.


**In response to specific points made in your letter**

The candidates were not made the subjects of a trial. It is not normal practice for the GDC to inspect a pilot examination, so the LDS was no more a trial than any other examination or course that this regulator inspects. In the light of what has happened, the GDC has agreed to inspect the new LDS pilot, but they do not have an obligation to do so.

The GDC and this College are working together and the College is endeavouring to provide an announcement of examination dates as soon as this can be reliably provided. As the above outline shows, this cannot be done until we receive a favourable report for our pilot examination.

To reduce the delay for candidates who have passed LDS Part 1, we did ask the GDC to consider allowing them exemption from Part 1 of the GDC's own ORE examination. However, the GDC have said that unfortunately they are unable to do this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan Bennett  
Chief Executive