Registration update on the international Test of Competence based process and common application errors in EU and non-EU applications

This update follows the email highlighting common application issues (sent in November 2014). The Test of Competence based international (non-EU) process has been in place for seven months and operating fully for three months (following UK Visas and Immigration changes in March 2015). Below we update you on current process and timings. We recognise the current vacancy levels within the UK health sector and while this is not of the NMC's making we are committed to working with all parties to ensure processes are as efficient as possible in supporting the resourcing required. However, this cannot be at the expense of maintaining public safety and public confidence.

The change in process was introduced to enhance public protection through robust and objective assessment of competence and also to provide a streamlined route to registration. The end-to-end time for registration very much depends on decisions made by the individual (on the amount of preparation they wish to undertake and any domestic arrangements they need to make to move to the UK, including meeting UK visa requirements) and the Trust/employer in terms of support they wish to provide. The process now allows a period of 2–12 weeks for familiarisation and preparation in the UK prior to the practical test of competence, should employers wish to offer such arrangements. This is not an NMC requirement but this flexibility was introduced with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) in response to requests from employers.

We offer a dedicated employer helpline (set up in January 2015) to answer process questions about the non-EU Test of Competence and registration process. The number is **020 7681 5954**. However, it is also recognised that issues do sometimes arise on individual applications and if employers have specific queries about any particular applications, they should raise them directly with the NMC. Employers should email International.Recruitment@nmc-uk.org with details (full name, PRN and date of birth) of the applicants affected and we will be happy to investigate and advise.

We are also aware of occasional concern about capacity meeting potential demand arising from there being only one UK based test centre (University of Northampton). The quality, consistency and control of the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) is key to the assurance that can be derived from the process, therefore the model has always been to have a maximum of two or three approved test centres.

The current facility is provided under a contractual arrangement and provides capacity for over 4,000 OSCEs per year, with contingency plans to increase that capacity if required. This is over four times the current non-EU registration and exceeds the projections of the Department of Health and UKVI (in terms of the number of visas they expect to issue).

Once we have evaluated the current model and its operation, we intend to go out to tender for an additional test centre(s) later in 2015, depending on the forecast demand.

As of 8 June 2015 the computer based test has been taken 1,595 times. The overall pass rate was 75 percent with 1,204 passing the test. 673 applicants are at various stages of submitting their full application and documents. There are 260 complete applications currently being assessed by the NMC. We are typically completing these within six weeks.

47 applicants have been authorised to sit the OSCE with six applicants having sat the exam. There was a pass rate of 83 percent with five out of six passing.

Common errors and issues

Signatures – EU and non-EU

Signatures on the application and declaration forms must be consistent with all signatures on supporting documentation. If we find irregularities in any documents, a statement confirming all signatures will be required. This must be verified by a witness for whom details must also be provided.

Certified copies – EU

For EU applicants each document we require must be certified by an approved authority to confirm that the original is authentic and the copy is accurate. If originals are not in English we will also need an official translation. We will not accept photocopies of certified documents; therefore the actual copy that has been certified must be submitted. The authorities from which we can accept certification are shown in the guidance to applicants and listed on our website. Non-EU applicants must present original documents prior to registration.

Transcripts of training – EU and non-EU

We often receive training transcripts that do not provide sufficient details of individual theory and clinical training and the subject areas required to allow assessment. We also receive non-EU training transcripts which list only the subject areas in credits rather than hours. On these occasions the application will be held while we seek the required information.

Supporting documents for nursing or midwifery post-registration experience

Applicants are required to declare full employment and registration history and provide registration certificates and verifications to cover all dates of practice. Applications will be delayed where periods of unregistered practice are identified as we are required to investigate these.

Incomplete forms – EU and Non-EU

We regularly receive application forms from applicants that do not include all the required documents or forms that are not fully completed or signed.

How you can help

To ensure your employees can be registered quickly please remind applicants to:

- submit the actual certified copy of the required documents, not a photocopy of certified documents;

- submit certified copies of native language versions with the official English translations if necessary;

- review applications before submission to ensure all sections of forms and declarations have been fully completed, signed and dated as required; and

- check that all documents are enclosed – use the checklist and information provided in the application pack or on the website.