

Sent via email

21 September 2020

Dear Sandra and Regan,

Re: Delayed 2020 registration assessment

Thank you for your letter asking for clarity on when the registration assessment will take place, and for us to consider the impact of the delay on candidates when we make decisions.

Our Council and staff are absolutely committed to holding a robust and fair registration assessment at the earliest opportunity and we are making all possible efforts to achieve this.

We understand the significant stress that candidates have experienced during the pandemic. We greatly appreciate their patience and the enormous contribution they have made to the care of patients and the public at a time of great personal challenge.

Moving the assessment online

We want to give candidates clarity about the date of the assessment as soon as possible but cannot confirm an exact date until we have completed the procurement exercise to identify a supplier to provide the online assessment. We are now in the very final stages of the procurement exercise and expect to be able to give a further update to all candidates by next week. Once the supplier has been appointed, we will work with them at pace to identify when the registration assessment can be held.

We appreciate it has taken some time to get to this point but, given the high stakes nature of the assessment, it is essential that we get this right. We have an important responsibility to candidates to make sure they can have a robust and fair assessment of their knowledge and skills. We also have an important responsibility to patients and the public to make sure that only those candidates with the necessary knowledge and skills can register as a pharmacist and take on the significant responsibilities for people's health and well-being that this role involves.

This is the first time we have held an online assessment and it is a very complex process to move the assessment online. We want to make sure that the new online platform supports all candidates, including those who may need adjustments, to complete the assessment to the best of their abilities.

We recognise that in the current circumstances there have, for example, been very considerable pressures on provisionally registered pharmacists in the workplace; others have faced a range of

challenges of a very unpredictable nature. It is that that has led us to have made clear that we will provide candidates with at least two months' notice so they have the necessary time to prepare.

In your letter, you raise the important question of the equality impact of the assessment process. We can assure you that it is an absolute priority for us to understand, and where necessary mitigate, any impacts of the new online assessment in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. We will be publishing our equality impact assessment for the registration assessment in due course in the interests of transparency, so everyone can see the potential impacts and mitigating actions.

We also have to make sure that conditions are met about the assessment's security, the technological capacity in light of the number of people who will be taking the assessment, confidentiality, and the ability of candidates to prepare and access the assessment. This is important in ensuring everyone has confidence in the integrity of the assessment. There are also legal and other requirements for procurement processes for a contract of this importance that we, as a public body, are obliged to meet to ensure fairness.

Communications

Your letter clearly emphasises the importance of regular communication with candidates. We fully agree with this and have sent out regular emails to candidates whenever there have been updates to share. In our last update to candidates, which went out at the end of August, we gave them an update on the procurement process and promised to provide a further update by the end of September, which we are working on now.

We know that the RPS and the BPSA, along with the PDA, Pharmacist Support and other organisations, are also in regular contact with candidates and giving them significant support, and we greatly appreciate your efforts in this area.

We will continue to provide information to candidates as soon as decisions are made and will provide comprehensive information about how the registration assessment will work in practice as soon as we can. We are very keen to continue to work closely with the RPS and the BPSA in this next phase, to make sure candidates have the support and information they need to confidently sit the registration assessment and prepare to join the pharmacist register.

We are very happy to meet you to discuss this further and will be in touch to arrange this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nigel Clarke', written in a cursive style.

Nigel Clarke
Chair