

Education and Training Committee, 24 November 2016

Professional referee requirement – European mutual recognition and international applications.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Registration Department is to introduce significantly updated application forms for registration for the UK approved, European Mutual Recognition (EMR) and international routes to registration¹.
- 1.2 Applicants will now have the ability to complete these forms using a computer rather than having to print them off and fill in with pen. Once completed the form can be printed, signed and posted to us. Those wishing to complete the whole form by hand rather than using a computer, will be allowed to do so.
- 1.3 The forms have also been edited to make them easier to complete and process. These changes have seen the EMR and international application forms reduced from 45 pages (including guidance notes) to 19.
- 1.4 As part of this redesign, it was decided to remove the optional requirement for a professional reference for EMR and international applicants, and subsequently to remove the professional reference form from the new application forms.

2. Current approach

- 2.1 The scrutiny of EMR and international applications is first and foremost based on an assessment of the relevant qualification obtained outside of the United Kingdom. In that assessment we seek to establish whether an applicant's professional training provides a level of proficiency required for practice of a given profession in the UK.
- 2.2 If the qualification alone does not demonstrate an ability to meet the relevant standards of proficiency (SOPs), we will next take into consideration an applicant's additional training and any professional experience they may have. It is only at this point that a professional reference may become relevant.

¹ European Mutual Recognition (EMR) is the term used for those applicants who have the rights to apply under Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. International, where referring to applicants, refers to those who have obtained a relevant qualification outside of the United Kingdom and do not have those rights.

- 2.3 At present all applicants are requested to submit at least one professional reference form within their application.
- 2.4 Those applicants who are newly qualified graduates, moving to the United Kingdom to begin their professional careers, may not have yet worked in a relevant professional environment. In these cases, due to a lack of professional experience, an applicant will usually use a course tutor as a professional referee. The information they then provide relates to the clinical or practice placement that was undertaken as part of their qualification and is already covered as part of the course information submitted as part of the application. This duplicates the information and provides no added value. In other cases, a professional referee can be provided from a manager or supervisor of an unrelated profession, such as from a summer or part time job undertaken during or after studies.
- 2.5 References are often completed as a personal recommendation that the individual should be accepted to the Register, rather than an objective overview of the applicant's professional experience.
- 2.6 Applications that are sent without a professional reference are currently returned as incomplete. This does add a significant amount of time and cost to the processing of an application where it is returned to the applicant and then, from them, back to the Registration Department.

3. Benefits of the new approach

- 3.1 We think that information about professional experience is valuable supplementary information in the process of scrutinising EMR and international applications, and we will continue to encourage the applicants to submit it with their applications.
- 3.2 Based on observations and the feedback from registration assessors who support us in scrutinising these applications we however believe that it is more effective to put the emphasis onto the applicant to provide the detail of their professional experience including any clinical placements undertaken in their own words and understanding. Doing this will allow the applicant to demonstrate how they reflect on their role, as well as the level of autonomy they have.
- 3.3 Removing the professional reference will bring the EMR and international applications forms in line with the UK approved programme route applications.

Decision

The Committee is asked to agree the removal of the professional reference form from the EMR and international application forms.

Resource implications

By removing the need for a professional reference the number of applications returned as incomplete will be reduced, meaning a reduction in resource needed to process these forms.

Financial implications

By removing the need for a professional reference, the number of applications returned as incomplete will be reduced, meaning a reduction in postal costs.

Appendices

None.

Date

15 November 2016.