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9 January 2023

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I am writing in response to your question to the General Dental Council on 15 December 2022.

We understand the impact that delays in registration can have. We are working on reducing current volumes before the end of year. Over recent months, we have been experiencing a sustained high workload across our registration teams due to changing timelines in UK graduations. This has come at a time when the registration teams have been operating with higher-than-normal vacancy levels.

The two main challenges that UK registration has faced relate to recruitment and quality of applications received. In relation to recruitment, the summer proved to be a particularly challenging time, reflecting the wider employment market in which we operate. The UK Registration team was operating with a 42% reduction on their usual complement. This 3-month period of June to August coincided with the DCP ARF, and deadlines for Vocational training (VT) and Dental foundation training deadlines (DFT). Appointments for these vacancies in UK registration were made as of 29 September.

Whilst this is helpful in the longer term, it has a negative short-term impact. Our existing staff have been required for training these new starters, who (as one would expect) were unable to process a full caseload straight away. The combination of these impacts is that processing of applications does not occur at our expected levels.

Normally we train staff across our registration and customer service operations teams, which would give us agility and flexibility in being able to move staff around when a peak of applications come in. Unfortunately, the staff vacancies were spread across the majority of our registration teams, which were carrying one or two headcount vacancies during this period, so we did not have our normal levels of agility.

Our normally successful recruitment approaches did not secure the workforce we needed in the current market and to address this, many alternative recruitment methods were explored with limited success. We have now adopted a programme of regular Recruitment assessment centre events to ensure we are periodically testing the market and refreshing our pool and have finally returned to normal headcount levels, with minimal vacancies.

Additional temporary resource had also been agreed in the support teams, meaning we can move more experienced staff into UK registration. In the interim, due to a significant influx of UK DCP applications, well above our forecasts, we also trained seven staff members from the wider Registration and Corporate Resources Directorate to process UK DCP applications to assist with managing workload pressures. This has enabled experienced members of the team to focus on applications to restore to the register (which are more complex and time intensive owing to the necessity to consider CPD requirements). We have also facilitated Saturday overtime for registration staff, which continues to date, with intermittent 'off' weeks to reduce the risk of staff fatigue. The focus of overtime has been to progress new applications only, reducing the backlog and application processing times.

We took the deliberate preventative step of accepting applications earlier to avoid delays to UK dentist registration having a knock-on effect on Vocational Training (VT) in Scotland and Dental Foundation Training (DFT) in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. To ensure circa 1,000 UK dentist graduates were registered in time for VT on 1 August 2022 and DFT on 1 September 2022, we actively communicated with UK BDS providers in May 2022, detailing the application process for students and requesting that they provided their application in advance of receipt of final University pass lists. We also made administrative improvements to receipt of pass lists and provision of character references which improve the experience of education providers and applicants. The applications were then assessed and placed on hold, pending receipt of the final pass list. Once the pass list was received, the Registration team had already undertaken the bulk of the work (ID checks, declaration checks, requested and received any outstanding information etc) and so were able to expedite the final steps for registration. We can confirm that all UK qualified dentists (who provided completed applications or did not require further health or character assessment), were registered ahead of VT/DFT deadlines.

Recently we have received large numbers of new UK DCP applications that have not been of sufficient quality, meaning they were not able to be processed as soon as they were received, with many missing supporting information. This was mainly around providing the correct certificates of their qualification. To address this and assist applicants, we wrote to the four main providers in November, requesting support in preparing dental nurses to register with the GDC. We included an updated checklist to facilitate more applications that are right first time.

Delays can also occur where an application is not complete, necessary supporting documentation has not been supplied, or if there are any concerns raised which require further assessment before an applicant is considered for registration.

We are now within our normal processing times for any new UK DCP application received and our focus is on clearing remaining restorations before the end of the Dentist ARF. To avoid delay in processing restorations we would advise that registrants pay particular attention to the CPD requirements, details are included in the restoration application form and further details here [Enhanced CPD guidance for professionals](#) for more information.

In relation to the current Annual Renewal process for dentist registrants, there is no discretion on the 31 December date. Because this date is an unalterable deadline, we make considerable efforts to ensure Registrants have ample opportunity to meet it. There are a number of reminders sent to support registrants in completing their Annual Renewal by 31 December 2022, enabling them to be retained to the Register for 2023, including the Annual Renewal Notice and up to nine personalised reminders across December. The latter are multi-channel reminders via mail/email and SMS, an additional newsletter and social media content throughout the period. A small minority of registrants do fail to meet the relevant requirements by 31 December each year, leading to their removal from the Register for non-payment of the Annual Retention Fee. We would encourage registrants to engage with the Annual Renewal process in the build up to Christmas to ensure that their name is retained to the Register for 2023 in good time.

Whilst the above steps have put us in a better position to process applications in a more timely manner, it remains the case that the best way to avoid having to restore to the Register is to renew registration ahead of the deadline. We focus our effort on preventative steps by opening the renewal window at least 6 weeks in advance of the deadline, and communicating extensively with registrants, as set out above. Renewing via eGDC can take less than 5 minutes. We also

recommended that registrants set up direct debit for future collections (deadline for this year, has passed to set up a DD), and can take advantage of payment by instalment to spread the cost across the year. We are likely to see an influx of restorations following the closing of the dentist ARF collection. which will unfortunately impact processing times.

Yours sincerely,



Gurrinder Soomal
Chief Operating Officer
General Dental Council