



Board Examination for Foreign Medical Practitioners wishing to practice in SA

Guidelines for Prospective Candidates

Guidelines for prospective Candidates

1. Introduction

The Medical and Dental Professions Board conducts examinations for foreign qualified health professions as outlined in section 15A of the Health Professions Act No 56 of 1974 amended. The Board examination is aligned to the vision of the HPCSA in “Setting healthcare standards for training, and fostering compliance” to ensure “Quality healthcare standards for all”.

In terms of the Health Professions Act No 56 of 1974 section 25(1-3) on registration of persons qualified outside South Africa:

1. The Minister may, in consultation with the council, by regulation provide that any person who holds such qualification as the council may, for the purpose of registration in a category in terms of this subsection, accept by virtue of the fact that such qualification, in the opinion of the council, indicates a satisfactory standard of professional education, may be registered in terms of this section, and thereupon the council may in its discretion, but subject to any regulations which the Minister may make, register such person.
2. The council may require a person who holds a qualification referred to in subsection(1) and who applies for registration in terms of this section, to pass to the satisfaction of the council, on a date and at a place determined by the council, an evaluation contemplated in subsection (3) before persons appointed by the council, for the purpose of determining whether such person possesses adequate professional knowledge and skill and whether he or she is proficient in any of the official languages of the Republic.
3. The council may from time to time determine the nature of the evaluation which shall be conducted for the purpose of subsection (2), and the fees which shall be paid by persons who present themselves for such evaluation, the requirements for admission to the evaluation, and any other matter relating to such evaluation, including the number of attempts.

1.1 Purpose of the examination

The purpose of the Board Examination is to assess the competence and knowledge of applicants for registration as Medical Practitioners in the category of Medical Practitioner, Public Service.

The Examination evaluates:

- clinical knowledge and skills
- ethical and medico-legal knowledge

1.2 Format of the examination

The examination consists of:

- a written paper with two components, testing:
 - clinical knowledge
 - ethical and medico-legal knowledge.
- a practical examination

Only candidates who pass (obtain at least 50%) each component of, the written examination may proceed to the practical examination. This is held within approximately ten to fourteen days after the written examination.

2. Organisational aspects of the examination

2.1 The Examination Sub-committee (Medical)

The Subcommittee for Examinations (Medical) appointed by the Board is authorised to deal with, evaluate and finalise applications of foreign qualified medical practitioners and interns who apply for registration to ensure that only those applicants who comply with the minimum requirements of the Board were registered and to set further requirements to be met in order to comply with the requirements for registration

2.2 When the examination is held

The examination is usually held two times a year in March/early April, and in October/November. It is possible to sit for the written exam in Pretoria, Durban or Cape Town at predetermined locations where suitable exam conditions will be upheld.

The practical exam is held at one of the Gauteng Faculties of Health Sciences / Medicine.

2.3 Examination regulations and rules of conduct

Typical university regulations with regards to exam security, as well as dishonest conduct will apply. **CELL PHONES IN THE EXAMINATION ARE BANNED**

Candidates are required to provide proof of identity in the form of a passport or identity document with a photograph and to sign the registration form.

Candidates may not remove the question paper from the venue.

2.4 Examination enquiries

Web site:

[http://www.hpcsa.co.za/professional-boards/Medical and Dental/Registration/Medical and Dental.html](http://www.hpcsa.co.za/professional-boards/Medical%20and%20Dental/Registration/Medical%20and%20Dental.html)

2.5 APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION AS A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER / DENTIST

E-mail: Naledim@hpcsa.co.za

Examination fees

These are adjusted from time to time, but can be found in the document APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION AS A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER / DENTIST (see 2.4)

3. Candidates

3.1 Eligibility

The following documents must be submitted to the Board at the address provided below:

- The application form, (Form 12) duly completed.
- Copy of degree certificate or other basic qualification in medicine and a sworn translation in English (Copies will only be accepted if certified by an attorney in his/her capacity as a notary public and bearing the official stamp. Copies certified only by a Commissioner of Oaths will not be accepted). Only original translations of the required documents done by a sworn translator and duly sealed and notarised will be accepted. In addition to such English translations, legible copies of the original documents, certified and duly sealed by a Notary Public should be submitted. Alternatively original documents together with copies could be submitted for verification by the relevant Council staff. In view of possible damage or loss of such documents it is not advisable to send such documents by mail.

- Foreign Qualified Health Practitioners who obtained their medical qualifications in any other language except in English to submit their certificate from International English Language Testing System (IELTS) demonstrating their English Proficiency at overall **Band score 6** before their application can be considered to do the examination. The IELTS band 6 indicates that they can use and understand fairly complex language particularly in familiar situations
- Verification of credentials by the Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG): International Credentials Services (to be obtained by the applicant at own cost). The Board recently agreed that the document be submitted together with the application form for writing the board examination. Applicants who fail to meet this requirement will not be permitted to write the examination.
- A personal Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- A recent original Certificate of Status (Certificate of Good Standing), indicating that the applicant is in good standing, issued by the foreign registration authority where the applicant is currently registered issued within the preceding three months.
- A copy of a valid Passport or Identity Document as proof of current citizenship, duly certified by a notary public as indicated above.
- A letter of endorsement in support of the application for registration issued by the Directorate Workforce Management (DWM) of the National Department of Health. Applications should be directed to The Program Manager, DWM, Department of Health, Room 1004 (South Tower), Civitas Building, National Department of Health, Corner Andries & Struben Street, Pretoria CBD, RSA (e-mail: Human1@health.gov.za or Aboob@health.gov.za). Contact numbers 012 395 8687/8680
- Applicants who fail to secure the support of the DWM towards an application for registration or employment will not be eligible for sitting the board examination and for registration with the HPCSA.
- Documentary proof of internship training (signed Form 10A) with details of time spent in different departments, issued by the relevant institution(s) and duly stamped.
- Documentary proof of postgraduate/work experience in medicine issued by the relevant employers. In the case of supporting evidence regarding experience and appointments held, such documents must specify the exact nature and extent of work performed and the periods during which the appointments were held.
- An original academic record or transcript of record issued by the university or educational institution reflecting course content in respect of each year of study (copies of original documents will only be accepted if duly certified by an attorney in his/her capacity as a NOTARY PUBLIC and bearing the official stamp).

*In addition to the above minimum requirements, applicants **may, on request**, further be required to submit the following documentation (in English) to the Board:*

- A detailed curriculum of the applicant's course of study, specifying courses, content of education (theory) and training (practical/clinical), duration and mode of examination/evaluation.

3.2 Address/Enquiries

Duly compiled applications or written enquiries may be sent to:
The Registrar

HPCSA
P O Box 205
PRETORIA
SOUTH AFRICA
0001

The closing dates for new eligibility applications will be Mid December, Mid August annually for the Board examinations in medicine held in March/April, and October/November respectively.

3.3 Registration for the written examination

Upon receipt of written confirmation by the Examinations Sub-committee of the Medical and Dental Professions Board that the applicant is eligible to sit for the Board Examination, he/she must submit the following to the Board:

- Form 79A, duly completed.
- The examination fee of R3300.00(No application form will be accepted without the examination fee)

The examination administrator will allocate each registered candidate an exam number prior to the written exam. The candidate will be informed of the number before the start of the examination, and will keep that number through both written and practical exams:

The HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator will send the requisite study material and guidelines to the registered candidate at least 4 weeks before the date of the written exam.

3.4 Admission to the practical examination

Candidates have to pass (with at least 50%) both components of the written exam separately, in order to be invited to the practical examination.

3.5 Fees and penalties

If an accepted candidate does not present him/herself for any exam, a "re-administration" fee should be charged of R500 in order to allow the candidate to present him/herself at the next exam period. This would be waived if the candidate informed the HPCSA Exam Co-ordinator of his/her inability to attend prior to the closing date.

Payment for a re-take (repeat examination) should be received, at latest, 10 working days prior to the written exam. If the payment does not arrive timeously, the candidate (and their fee) will be held over for the next exam period. The candidate will NOT be admitted to the current exam.

4. The examination

4.1 Scope of the examination

4.1.1 Clinical knowledge and skills

Resources:

- i. A Dhai and D McQuoid-Mason. Bioethics, Human Rights and Health Law Principles and Practice, 2011;
- ii. B Mash, and J Blitz-Lindeque, SA Family Practice Manual, 2nd Revised Ed; (2010)
- iii. B Mash, Handbook of Family Medicine (Oxford Handbook), 2nd Ed; (2006)
- iv. Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Drugs List
- v. South African Department of Health guidelines

The written and practical examination covers the common basic science, general signs, symptoms, management and skills related to the following conditions as is appropriate in the South African District Health System: **(What follows serves only as a guideline and questions outside these topics are possible):**

Child health:

- Fever
- Diarrhoeal disease
- Respiratory illness: Lower and upper respiratory infections
- Resuscitation of the new-born
- Meningitis
- Convulsions
- Malnutrition
- HIV and AIDS
- Common childhood infections: measles, rubella etc.
- Child abuse
- Preventive care: GOBIFFF (Growth monitoring, oral re-hydration, breast-feeding, immunisation, female education, family planning, feeding)

Maternal Health:

- Normal pregnancy and delivery
- Abnormal pregnancy and delivery
- Hypertension in pregnancy
- Ante-partum haemorrhage
- Obstructed labour
- Post-partum haemorrhage
- Contraception
- Abnormal menstruation
- Ectopic pregnancy

Infectious Diseases:

- Tuberculosis
- Malaria
- Meningitis
- Sexually transmitted illnesses
- HIV
- AIDS

Emergency and trauma:

- Basic CPR
- Endo-tracheal Intubation
- Assessment and early management of injuries and fractures
- Sexual abuse

Chronic Illnesses:

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Asthma
- Coronary Heart Disease
- AIDS

Mental Health:

- Assessment of mental health
- Substance abuse

- Acute psychosis
- Depression
- Other acute mental illnesses

Family Health:

- Dysfunctional families: prevention and management

Other acute illnesses:

- Appendicitis
- Acute abdomen
- Acute mental illness
- Pneumonia
- Coma

ENT:

- Upper Respiratory Tract Infection
- Otitis Media
- Tonsillitis
- Sinusitis
- Epistaxis

Eyes:

- Common infections and allergies
- Red eye
- Eye injuries
- Refraction problems
- Glaucoma

Dermatology

- Common skin conditions

Other issues:

- Consultation skills
- Basic counselling skills such as for rape or other serious trauma, bad news, domestic violence, pre and post HIV testing, etc
- Primary health care approach
- District health system
- Teamwork
- Functional Referrals

- Management of resources
- Promotion, Prevention, Curative, Rehabilitation and Palliative Care

4.2 Ethical rules and legal issues

The following are required to be known for the purposes of examination:

Booklets in the Series 'Guidelines for good and ethical practice in medicine, dentistry and the medical sciences'. Medical and Dental Professions Board of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Pretoria.

Booklet 1: General ethical guidelines for doctors, dentists and medical scientists.

Booklet 2: General ethical guidelines for health researchers.

Booklet 3: Ethical and professional rules of the Medical and Dental Professions Board.

- Booklet 4: Professional self-development.
- Booklet 5: Guidelines for making professional services known.
- Booklet 6: Guidelines for the management of health care waste.
- Booklet 7: Policy statements on perverse incentives.
- Booklet 8: Guidelines for the management of patients with HIV infection or AIDS.
- Booklet 9: Guidelines on research and clinical trials involving human subjects.
- Booklet 10: Research, development and use of the chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities of the State.
- Booklet 11: Guidelines on keeping patient records.
- Booklet 12: Canvassing of patients abroad.
- Booklet 13: National Patients' Rights Charter.
- Booklet 14: Confidentiality: Protecting and providing information.
- Booklet 15: Seeking patients' consent: The ethical considerations.
- Booklet 16: Guidelines for the withholding and withdrawing of treatment

The World Medical Association Medical Ethics Manual ISBN 92-990028-1-9

Health Professions Act: No 56 of 1974

- Section 3: Objects of Council
- Section 4: General Powers of Council
- Section 36: Offences by unregistered persons
- Section 56: Death under anaesthetic

Ethical Rules for the Conduct of Practitioners Registered Under the Health Professions Act – No R.717 (Government Gazette – 4 August 2006)

Mental Health Care Act No 17 of 2002:

- Chapter 5: Voluntary, Assisted and Involuntary Mental Health Care

Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act

- Preamble
- Section 5: Consent
- Section 10: Offences and penalties

Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act: No 130 of 1993:

Purpose of Act (Bold typing in the middle of first page.)

Occupational Health and Safety Act: No 85 of 1993

Purpose of the act (Bold on first page.)

Child Care Health Act No 74 of 1983

National Health Act No 61 of 2003:

Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa – Act No 108 of 1996.

4.3 Components of the exam

4.3.1 The written examination

4.3.1.1 Length and format

The written examination is a Multiple Choice examination. There is no negative marking. It has two components. The first component consists of 75 items assessing clinical knowledge, and the second component consists of 25 items testing ethical and legal knowledge. The test is set in English. Examination time is three hours.

4.3.1.2 Making the results known

The results should be obtained one week following the exam either by phoning HPCSA, or by referring to the web page <http://www.hpcs.co.za/hpcs/medical> and dental professions board

The candidates will be informed of the outcome of the written as deciles. Specific marks will not be available.

Successful candidates will need to phone the practical exam co-ordinator on the same day, in order to arrange the day and time of attending the practical exam.

4.3.2 Practical examination

4.3.2.1 Length and format

Clinical knowledge, application, practice and skills are assessed using a practical examination, which consists of stations which follow the commonly used formats of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)/ Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE). It consists of a minimum of 13 stations of at least 5 minutes each. The stations assess a sample of clinical skills needed to function as a medical practitioner in the public service in South Africa. This excludes one station examining ability in the use of the English language. Some stations are done with the examiner present ("manned"), while others may be answered on paper ("unmanned").

Examples of manned stations include but are not limited to:

- Conducting consultations, covering common acute complaints such as sore throat, earache, headache, and common chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension, epilepsy, psychiatric illness etc;
- Conducting an ante-natal consultation,
- counselling a patient regarding issues such as HIV/AIDS, assault, bad news;
- performing certain examination and/or procedural skills such as examination of particular joints, examination of the eye, taking the blood pressure, instructing a patient in the use of a meter dose inhaler, assessing peak expiratory flow rate;
- performing mental health status assessment,
- performing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, endo-tracheal intubation, or other emergency procedures, etc.

Examples of unmanned stations include, but are not limited to:

- writing a prescription,
- discovering errors in a specimen prescription,
- reading an X-ray,
- assessing Road-to-health charts,
- answering questions on immunisation,
- identifying skin or genital lesions
- examining a urine specimen with some related questions, etc.

4.3.1.3 Making the results known

The results should be obtained approx. 2 weeks following the exam either by phoning HPCSA, or by referring to the web page <http://www.hpcsa.co.za/hpcsa/medical> and dental professions board

The candidates will be informed of the outcome of the written as deciles. Specific marks will not be available. If they have been unsuccessful, they are also given their status in regard to future attempts.

Where a candidate wants to know in which areas s/he needs to concentrate in the future, the HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator may refer them to the practical exam co-ordinator, who will tell them which Practical stations they did not pass.

Note: The HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator is not sent the detailed mark sheets of the Practical examination showing the details of the marks for each station.

4.3.1.4 Re-mark

Candidates who have been unsuccessful in the Practical examination and would like to have their papers re-marked may request this in writing from the HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator within a week of the results being released, together with the required fee determined by the University conducting the exam.

4.4.1 Disciplinary measures and procedures

4.4.1.1 Written exam

Any irregularities, or conduct construed as dishonest, is dealt with by the invigilators during the exam (according to the standard university regulations), and reported to the authorities for action.

4.4.1.2 Practical exam

Any irregularities or conduct construed as dishonest during the practical examination that is noticed by any examiner, moderator or administrative assistant will be reported immediately to the authorities for action.

4.5.1 Retakes

In April 2010 the Board RESOLVED that candidates be allowed not more than three (3) attempts within two (2) years to complete writing the Board examination; after three (3) attempts within two (2) years and they have still not passed, candidates will not be allowed to sit for more examinations.