

**Agenda Item 24**

**Enclosure 22**

**Paper ETC 22/03**

## **Education and Training Committee**

**TESTS FOR COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH**

**from the Secretary**

**for information**

**PRESCRIBED REQUIREMENTS FOR AND TESTS OF KNOWLEDGE OF, ENGLISH**

Part III 12(1)(c)(iii) of the Health Professions Order (HPO) directs the Council and Education and Training Committee (ETC) to prescribe requirements as to the knowledge of English for applicants seeking to be included on the Register who have not qualified on an approved UK course and do not hold the nationality of a European Economic Area (EEA) country.

Part IV 15 (5)(d) directs the ETC to approve tests for this knowledge, and Part IV 16 1(c) and (2) allows " visitors " to visit and report on both the tests and any institutions running them.

The Council consulted on this over July to September 2002. The proposals put forward were :

" 5.2 In addition, the Council must regard someone as having an approved qualification if :  
..... [ they ] are either exempt from, or meet, the Council's English language requirements .....

5.3 The Council believes that it is important to test English competence in order to protect both patients and potential registrants, by ensuring that key elements of effective communication between the health professional and patient (i.e. a common language) are in place. Overseas applicants' knowledge of English will be tested through adequate completion of a written application form in English and successful completion of any test of competence that the Committee considers appropriate, which would also be conducted in English. In addition, the Committee proposes to set out possible options available to potential registrants to enable them to demonstrate their language skills. These will be in place by the date on which the relevant provisions of the Order come into force. "

The responses were :

" A majority of the responses that discussed how we could assess competence in English agreed with our proposals. However, respondents also sent us suggestions for this, including the use of role play, and the use of tests of written and spoken English (the ' Cambridge ' proficiency test, international English Language Testing System test at level 17 or 8, and the standards set by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were all suggested). There was no agreement on whether the test should take place in the UK or in the applicant's home country, or in both countries. Other comments on this subject included the need to assess both profession-specific language and conversational English, a reminder that we cannot rely on the application form alone as the applicant may have had help, and concerns that the particular needs of speech language therapists for excellent competence in English and for all health professionals to understand medical terms must be taken into account. We were also recommended to make use of work done by other regulators such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the General Medical Council (GMC), and bodies such as the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education and Skills, and the British Council, and to keep the process as simple as possible. The WLB argued that some practitioners in Wales, such as speech and language therapists, must have their Welsh language proficiency assessed. "

Proposals will now be worked up for the March meetings of the Registration Committee and ETC.