

Broad themes of the review and members of the working group

Aim of the review

The review will make sure that the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test continues to be an effective, objective, fair, and non-discriminatory method to test whether international medical graduates have the knowledge and skills needed to work as doctors in the UK. This review will ensure that all our key interest groups continue to be confident in this method for assessment.

Key tasks

The key tasks of the review are to consider and make recommendations to Council on four broad themes.

Theme 1: Ensuring standards

- To review whether the knowledge and skills demonstrated by a pass in both parts of the PLAB test continue to be equivalent to those of doctors who have successfully completed the first year of the Foundation Programme.
- To examine whether there should be a limit on the number of attempts at passing the test to ensure public confidence in the standards of practice in the UK.
- To review whether the periods of validity of passes in both parts of the PLAB test are appropriate.

Theme 2: Content

- To review whether the blueprint (which sets out the scope and content of the PLAB test in terms of the topics, skills and procedures) is consistent with the outcomes for provisionally registered doctors described in *The Trainee Doctor* (which replaces *The New Doctor*).

- To consider the extent to which the PLAB test could (and should) further assess knowledge and application of the values and principles of *Good Medical Practice*.

Theme 3: Confidence

- To review the reliability and validity of the PLAB test.
- This will include examining whether:
 - a the scoring systems and standard setting reflect best practice
 - b the Part 1 written examination and Part 2 objective structured clinical examination stations are fit for purpose and reflect current examination and assessment best practice
 - c the test reliably and accurately differentiates between candidates who meet the required standards of both parts of the test and those who do not.
- To review whether the PLAB test and its administration remain compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This will include the processes for appointing panel members and examiners and for dealing with complaints by candidates.

Theme 4: Outcomes

- To examine whether international medical graduates granted full registration after passing the PLAB test are more or less likely than other cohorts of doctors to experience difficulties in medical practice in the UK.
- This will include:
 - a examining existing research on the experiences of graduates making the transition to the workplace
 - b examining any evidence of disparity between the success rates of UK medical graduates and international medical graduates in postgraduate examinations and assessments
 - c examining the implications of any further research on parts a and b that is needed as part of the review.

Members of the working group

Dr Kathy Boursicot – Reader in Medical Education and Head of Assessment,
St George's, University of London

Mr Ian R Cumming OBE (chair) – former Chief Executive of NHS West Midlands (until October 2011), National Director for Quality (Department of Health (England), from October 2011), Chief Executive of North Bristol NHS Trust (from April 2012)

Professor Jane Dacre – GMC Council member (medical)

Dr Sue Davison – GMC Council member (lay)

Professor Derek Gallen – National Director UK Foundation Programme and Postgraduate Dean (Wales Deanery)

Dr Alison Graham – Medical Director, NHS Lanarkshire, and Chair of the Scottish Association of Medical Directors

Ms Roswyn Hakesley-Brown CBE – Chair, Board of Trustees, Patients Association

Dr Abrar Hussain – trainee psychiatrist (registered with a licence to practise, passed the PLAB test in 2004)

Professor I C McManus – Professor of Psychology and Medical Education, University College London