Draft Council paper on a UK licensing assessment

Issue

1 Council is due to consider the issue of a UK licensing assessment at its meeting on 2 June 2015. We have drafted a paper for Council’s consideration along with a brief business case.

Recommendations

2 The Strategy and Policy Board is asked to consider:

   a The draft Council paper and business case, at Annex A, and how it might be received by Council.

   b To identify any changes that should be made to the drafts.
Draft Council paper on a UK licensing assessment

3 The draft paper at Annex A on taking forward work on UK licensing assessment (UKLA) is intended for Council’s consideration at its meeting on 2 June 2015.

4 We aim to seek Council’s approval for further development of proposals for a licensing assessment for doctors wishing to hold a licence to practise in the UK.

5 In September 2014 Council gave approval in principle for the work to look at the feasibility of introducing a UKLA. Council agreed it would consider the issue again in June 2015.

6 Council received an update report in April 2015 which summarised our activities and engagement activities since September 2014.

7 The draft at Annex A introduces a short draft business case to set out our developing perspective on the potential of UK licensing assessment.

8 This is an opportunity for the Board to consider the draft Council paper and business case and to identify changes that could be made before they are presented to Council.
Supporting information

How this issue relates to the corporate strategy and business plan

9 Strategic aim 1: ‘We will consider whether to introduce a national registration examination for both UK and international medical graduates.

If you have any questions about this paper please contact: Martin Hart, Assistant Director, Education and Standards, mhart@gmc-uk.org, 020 7189 5408; or Ben Griffith, Policy Manager, bgriffith@gmc-uk.org, 020 7189 5283.
Draft Council paper: Taking forward work on a UK licensing assessment
Executive Summary

Council gave approval in principle for a national licensing examination in September 2014. We have since been engaged in a thorough programme of preliminary evidence gathering, policy development and engagement. We have developed a business case including a ‘straw man’ setting out provisional conclusions on key issues. In the second phase we intend to work with a range of expert advisers to develop the format of the assessment, confirm the governance arrangements and work towards piloting the examination.

Recommendations

a To note the business case and the completion of the preliminary phase of work.

b To agree that we should continue to develop proposals and report back to Council in 12 months with a worked up model for approval subject to consultation.
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Issue
1 To seek Council’s approval for further development of proposals for a licensing assessment for doctors wishing to hold a licence to practise in the UK.

Background
2 In September 2014 Council gave approval in principle for the work to look at the feasibility of introducing a UK licensing assessment (UKLA). Council agreed it would consider the issue again in June 2015.

3 Council received an update report in April 2015 which summarised our activities and engagement activities since September. We have since received the report of the literature review that we commissioned into licensing assessments in comparable countries. [add link]

Business case
4 On the basis of our investigations and engagement, we have developed the attached short draft business case to set out our developing perspective on the potential of a UK licensing assessment. The business case follows the Treasury model which has five sections:

a The strategic case, setting the context and objectives
b The economic case, an appraisal of the options
c The financial case, the affordability of the proposals
d The commercial case (to be developed in due course)
e The management case, or achievability.

5 The UK licensing assessment must enhance patient safety and help to improve the quality of care and treatment provided by doctors.

6 This is not to suggest UK medical graduates are currently poorly prepared. But in a changing context both in the UK and overseas, the establishment of a transparent, validated and universal standard for entry to British medicine offers the prospect of clarity and certainty in the otherwise increasingly complex, confused and demanding world in which medical education must operate.

7 In this light, we have developed a ‘straw man’ option for a UKLA, but this will be developed and refined further in the build up to implementing and delivering the assessment, with full engagement and consultation.
Our provisional analysis suggests the favoured approach for initial implementation might be an assessment:

a. Taken by UK graduates and IMGs. It would be desirable also to cover European nationals and we will continue to explore options.

b. Focused on clinical competencies and competencies linked to patient safety and healthcare quality in the context of UK clinical practice.

c. With several parts, the last taken by conclusion of the first year after graduation for UK graduates.

d. Intended to determine eligibility for licensing, but with a performance score made available to candidates.

Preliminary financial analysis suggests that requiring UK graduates to take a test similar to part 1 of the current PLAB exam would cost in the region of £1 million pa. If UK graduates took a test similar to part 2, that could cost in the region of £6 million pa. If the exam had further parts, that would increase the cost. However, these provisional costs are gross and do not take account of examination fees to be paid by the candidates.

We would implement the assessment in a staged approach. Given a fair wind, it would ‘go live’ for IMGs in 2019. There would be two years of substantial pilots before the assessment also went live for UK graduates in 2021.

The development would be subject to performance management as established at the GMC for major projects.

We suggest that the assessment should be directly run by the GMC, given our responsibility for setting the standards required for doctors to be registered with a licence to practise. We would draw on extensive external expertise to develop, deliver and oversee the assessment.

Next steps

Council is asked to consider whether we should continue to work towards implementation of a medical licensing examination in the UK, testing the ‘straw man’ in the business case and considering the implications further.

There is considerable interest in what we are planning to do, and we would seek to harness this interest through engaging both UK and international expertise as we move to develop the assessment.
15 We intend to report back to Council in 12 months with a worked up model for approval subject to consultation.

Papers as annexes or links

The draft business case as an annex

A link to the published research report