

**Health Professions Council
1 March 2006**

Applications for registration by refugees

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The attached paper provides background information about applications for registration from those who have refugee status or leave to remain.

Decision

The Council is asked to waive the scrutiny fee for applicants in the following categories:

- a) Those with refugee status;
- b) Those with exceptional leave to remain (granted before April 2003);
- c) Those with humanitarian leave to remain (granted on or after 1st April 2003);
- d) Those with discretionary leave to remain (granted on or after 1st April 2003).

The Council will require a Home Office letter confirming that the applicant has refugee status or has leave to remain as described above.

Background information

The attached paper provides background information including the policy of other UK health regulators.

Representatives of the Executive have attended meetings of the Refugee Doctor's Liaison Group set up by the British Medical Association. This group invites participation from other professions and looks at ways in which organisations can support refugee healthcare professionals.

Resource Implications

None

Financial Implications

The scrutiny fee currently required by the Council is £200. It is anticipated that only a very small amount of applications will be made each year from applicants with refugee status or leave to remain.

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2005-12-06	a	POL	COR	Refugee Applications	Final DD: None	Confidential RD: None

Health Professions Council **Applications for registration by Refugees**

Introduction

A refugee is someone who is granted indefinite leave to remain after being recognised under the terms of the Geneva Convention 1951. The definition under the Geneva Convention encompasses individuals who leave their home countries due to fear about persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion.

Those not satisfying the requirements of refugee status can be offered Humanitarian Leave (HL) or Discretionary Leave (DL) if they may be in danger if they return to their home country. These replaced Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) on 1st April 2003.

The application process

The Council's application process for individuals who qualified outside the United Kingdom requires applicants to provide details of their education, training and experience.

Applicants must enclose as much information as possible in support of their application. This includes the requirement that applicants must submit a course information form detailing the academic and clinical content of their course of study. It is additionally a requirement that any supporting documentation has been translated into English.

If an applicant has refugee status the Council currently requires that they provide a Home Office letter confirming that status. If the applicant is unable to provide the documentation normally required of an international applicant, they are asked to provide a letter to explain their circumstances. All the available information is then considered by the Council's registration assessors and a recommendation reached. The assessors may recommend that the applicant attends an oral test of competence in order to better establish their level of skills and knowledge.

The Council currently requires a £200 non-refundable scrutiny fee upon receipt of an application. If the applicant is successful, a fee of £120 for two years registration is then payable.

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The impact upon refugee applicants

The ability of an applicant to meet the Council's requirements for international applications is likely to be adversely affected by the circumstances of their coming to the UK.

The applicant is likely to be unable to return to their country of origin in order to obtain supporting documentation. Their access to funds and resources in order to obtain translations of documents into English or to pay the Council's non-refundable scrutiny fee is additionally likely to be limited.

The following is a real life example which has been brought to the Council's attention where the ability to pay the scrutiny fee has affected a refugee's ability to apply for registration (the individual's name has been anonymised):

Joe is an Iranian national who passed a science degree at Tehran University. He worked for two years gaining experience at Lengehport hospital in Tehran as a Medical Laboratory Scientist. His work experience included microbiology, biochemistry, haematology, urology, parasitology and immunology.

Since coming to the UK and being granted refugee status he has worked in factories. He only recently became aware of what he needed to do to practice in the UK. Although he is currently unemployed and living on benefits he hopes to gain work as a junior laboratory assistant. He is also looking to do more factory work so that he can try and save the money he needs to afford the application and registration fees.

This example illustrates the difficulties faced by applicants who come to the UK as refugees.

The policy of other regulators

A small number of other UK healthcare regulators have arrangements in place to assist refugee healthcare professionals:

The *General Medical Council* requires overseas trained applicants to undertake the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Boards Test (PLAB). Overseas trained Doctors who can prove that they are refugees or have leave to remain (in one of the categories described previously) are eligible for two free attempts at part 1 of the PLAB examination. They are eligible for two attempts of part 2 of the examination for a reduced fee of £215.

The *Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain* waives the interview fee of £445 for applicants who can prove that they have refugee status or indefinite leave to remain.

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Other regulators have arrangements in place for assisting applicants with refugee status. These include asking them to submit a covering letter to explain any gaps in documentation or asking them to attend an interview if they are unable to provide the documentation which would normally be required.

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