



THE MEDICAL LICENTIATE
SOCIETY OF HONG KONG

香港執照醫生醫學會

Medical Licentiate Society of Hong Kong urges for resuming Licensing Examination

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HONG KONG – Repeated cancellations of examinations needed by non-locally trained doctors to work in Hong Kong are threatening to undermine the excellent reputation of the medical sector here.

The Medical Registration Ordinance places a statutory duty on the Medical Council of Hong Kong to hold licensing exams. However, since the start of the pandemic it has now cancelled five exams citing COVID-19 concerns – two of them written and three clinical, and this is tarnishing its reputation. The latest cancellation, last week, was for the clinical part of the Hong Kong Medical Licensing Exam originally scheduled in May/June this year.

The Medical Licentiate Society of Hong Kong has written to the Medical Council strongly requesting the restoration of the Hong Kong Medical Licensing Exam. The Society also urges for the extension of validity period of the exam results to lessen the impact on the non-locally trained doctors due to the suspended exams.

“This is an unacceptable shirking of responsibility for a professional regulatory body,” said Dr Marcus Marcet, President of the Society. “We would very much like the Medical Council to not only live up to its statutory duty, but also demonstrate clear leadership in finding a way forward despite the pandemic.”

“Unlike the Medical Council, most other medical exam authorities in Hong Kong have already shown the needed competencies in this regard,” added Marcet.

For example, Hong Kong’s two medical schools both successfully carried out their final exams last year and have scheduled the final exams again for this year. It’s worth noting their exams involved real patients screened for COVID-19 and wearing masks and involve a greater number exam candidates.¹ In addition, various specialty colleges in Hong Kong have resumed clinical examinations, which allowed the continuation of specialty training for local doctors. Even in the UK, where the public



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health situation is far worse than here, the PLAB exam (the UK medical licensing exam) has been held. Clinical exams are possible, provided the organising authority is willing to take the initiative and make appropriate arrangements.

Adding to the problem, the Medical Council wants exam candidates to sign a waiver that indemnifies the Medical Council against any liability as a result of their exam cancellations. Dr Marcet noted that since the beginning of 2020, many non-locally trained doctors have left jobs or taken time off to come to Hong Kong to prepare for the Licensing Exam.

“The Medical Licentiate Society, which represents the community of 1200 doctors that have passed the Licensing exam, feels that many high-quality medical professionals from the rest of the world will no longer wish to come to Hong Kong and serve a 3-week quarantine only to face the disappointment of yet another cancelled exam. And now, on top of that, they will be liable for significant financial losses.”

“Recalling early in the pandemic travelers who were stuck in Hong Kong’s airport passenger transit sector, we are now 1 year into COVID-19 and the licensing exam candidates are still similarly stuck in a type of professional transit due to inadequate arrangement of the Medical Council,” explained Dr Marcet. The multiple cancellations are unfair to these enthusiastic doctors who wish to serve the Hong Kong public. They have been facing prolonged unemployment and its resulting financial hardship.

These cancellations are affecting the exam candidates in other ways. For example, some candidates are nearing the expiration of their passing exam results on previous parts of the exam. The Society calls for the 5-year validity period of licensing exam results be extended to directly coincide with the entire duration of all cancelled licensing exams.

We welcome the newly reported format for the Paediatrics exam. A mix of simulated patients and multimedia will apparently be utilized. However, the reform needs to be implemented sooner and the entire Part 3 Licensing Examination should undergo a



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similar update. The changes will enable the exam to be reliably carried out without any further interruptions attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The update also carries the added benefit of standardising the examination experience, akin to how licensing exams are conducted in the US.

A rigorous examination system is the most appropriate and fair way for non-locally trained doctors to gain full registration in Hong Kong. The Licensing Exam approach has helped retain a high standard of medical practice in Hong Kong. The Licentiate Society strongly supports the Licensing exam and has helped numerous non-locally trained doctors to prepare for the exam and beyond. “We will continue backing all exam candidates preparing to take part in the Hong Kong Medical Licensing Exam,” affirmed Dr Marcet.

Reference

1. Staying The Course: Safe In-person Examinations.

<https://medium.com/hkumed/staying-the-course-safe-in-person-examinations-c4dd0996c73e>. HKUMed. Last accessed 11 Jan 2021.

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About the Medical Licentiate Society of Hong Kong

The Medical Licentiate Society of Hong Kong (香港執照醫生醫學會) is an independent, non-profit professional body representing licensed non-local medical graduate doctors in Hong Kong. The Society was founded to support said doctors and to engage with the public and other medical professionals both in and out of Hong Kong. Please visit the Society website (lmchk.org) to learn more about the organization’s ongoing efforts in representing the community of non-locally trained doctors licensed in Hong Kong.
