

HPCSA works to clear backlog in foreign-qualified exams

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) expresses understanding and empathy towards foreign-qualified medical doctors facing registration delays due to administrative challenges in South Africa.



Source: [Pexels](#)

“The training received by all foreign-qualified medical practitioners is subject to review to measure compliance and equivalence to the prescribed minimum South African requirements.

“This is to establish whether the qualifications meet the evaluation criteria and allow applicants to practice their profession in the country,” the HPCSA explained on Thursday, 7 September.

A group of jobless doctors, who studied overseas, marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on Wednesday to raise their grievances about their inability to write their board exams so that they can start practising, *News24* reported.

The HPCSA has since explained that the review process considers various elements. This includes the curriculum content, duration of the studies and the recognition of the institution from which training was received by the local regulator and responsible ministry in that particular country.

“Should the review process find that the training was neither equivalent nor satisfactory, registration with the council is denied since a foreign qualification on its own does not guarantee automatic registration.”

The council said an external service provider manages the Medical Board Examinations on behalf of the Medical and Dental Board (MDB).

“Previously, this was conducted by Sefako Makgatho University (SMU) whose contract subsequently expired, following several extensions.

Challenges in procurement

“The HPCSA had already started a supply-chain management process to seek a replacement service provider, with initial bids advertised in March 2022. Unfortunately, only one bidder responded but did not meet the supply chain requirements.”

The statement said another closed bid was advertised to all the universities in July 2022, the same institution was the sole respondent and once again did not meet the requirements.

“As a result, a deviation from normal procurement processes was sought to enable negotiations with the same institution to provide guidance and ensure that requirements are met. This process took longer than anticipated but is now nearing completion.”

To address the registration backlog of foreign-qualified medical doctors, the HPCSA said it was still preparing to conduct both theory and practical board examinations before the end of the year.

The HPCSA has committed to exploring a more efficient and effective approach to medical examinations after consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including the universities with medical school facilities, which will be submitted to the Medical and Dental Board and council for final ratification.

“I would like to apologise to the affected practitioners and assure them that we are working tirelessly to ensure a speedy and permanent solution for all, said HPCSA registrar, Magome Masike.

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