

Test of Competence: A Guide for Candidates

**Information and help for candidates
taking the GCC's Test of Competence**

March 2017

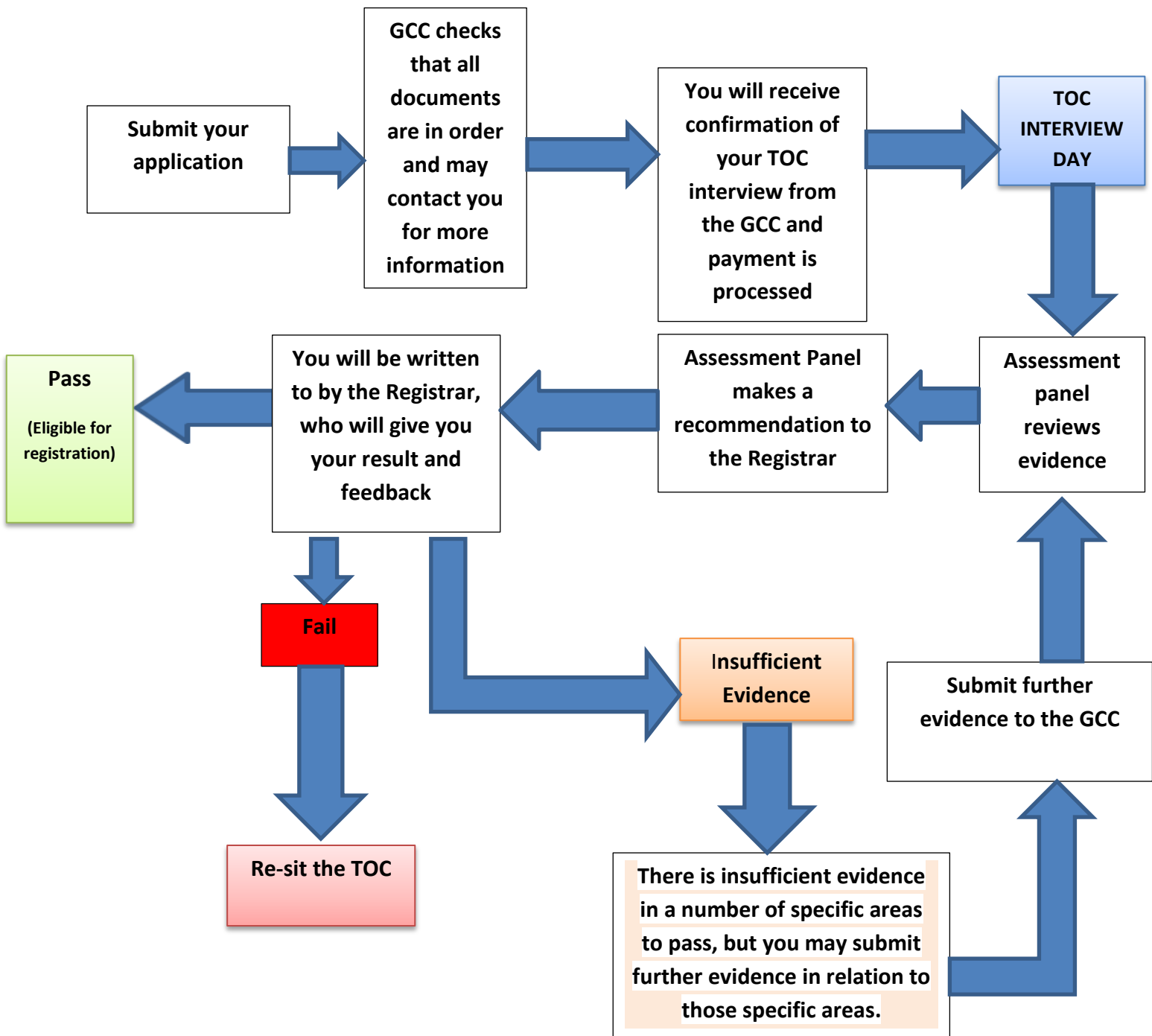
**General
Chiropractic
Council**



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The TOC Process



1. Introduction

To help those taking our Test of Competence (TOC), we have produced this handbook to provide you with help and advice on the TOC process.

Previous candidates who have taken the TOC have reported that it is a challenging process, and that to be successful you will need to devote a significant amount of time to collate the information we require and prepare for the interview.

We strongly advise you to read this booklet before you start to complete the forms. Doing so will ensure that you give yourself the greatest chance of providing us with the correct information when you apply, acquitting yourself well at the interview and passing the TOC.

Note that we are unable to provide you with information on how to complete the form, or help you meet our requirements.

If you wish to work as a Chiropractor within the UK, you are required to register with the GCC before you are able to practise. **If you practise in the UK before being registered with us, you are committing an offence, and legal action can be taken against you.**

2. How to Apply

2.1 Applying for the TOC

Please read all the information below before you complete and submit your application.

To apply for the Test of Competence (TOC) you must:

- provide a letter from the educational institution who awarded you with your chiropractic qualification, giving details of how it meets the registration requirements
- provide details of the modules you completed as part of your chiropractic qualification and the learning outcomes of those modules
- complete an Evidence of Practice Questionnaire
- attach copies of anonymised patient records
- provide a copy of your CV/resume
- provide a copy of the pages from your passport that have your personal details; and
- pay the TOC fee of £2,000 (fill in the final page of the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire - payment will be taken once your TOC interview is confirmed)

To complete your application, all documents listed above **MUST** be submitted electronically and emailed to toc@gcc-uk.org. They must all be emailed to us at the same time - failing to do so will result in your application taking longer to process and as a consequence you may miss your first choice interview date.

Do not bring your application to the GCC office or send the above documents in the post - we will not accept if it you do - and do not send hard copies of information that has been submitted electronically in the post.

You will only be invited to attend a TOC assessment interview once we have all of the documents above and are satisfied that your application is complete.

We accept applications on a first come first served basis. We only have a limited amount of spaces at each interview day, so we encourage you to send us your application as soon as possible to increase your chances of being accepted on your chosen date. All spaces may be filled before the closing date.

When you complete your application you must also enclose a number of other documents. They are:-

- **Letter from the educational institution which awarded your chiropractic qualification**

You must provide us with a letter from the educational institution which awarded you with your chiropractic qualification, giving details of how it meets the registration requirements.

The letter must include:

- your full name
- your chiropractic qualification
- the date you achieved your qualification
- the number of study hours, which can include clinic hours and nominal hours allocated for self-directed learning.

- **Module Information and Learning outcomes**

You must send us a list of the modules that you took as part of your chiropractic degree course and the learning outcomes for each of these modules.

A module is one of the units that together make a complete course. It represents a self contained fraction of a student's workload for the year and usually carries a unique assessment mark. Examples of modules may be 'Anatomy' or 'Pathology'.

Each module will have a learning outcome which you will be able to obtain from the institution that you graduated from. The learning outcome states what you were meant to learn on the module or what you should know or be able to do by the end of the module.

An example is:-

Module Name Medical Examination 1

Learning Outcome:

On completion of this course you should be able to:

- *Communicate with a patient to develop a history of the presenting complaint*
- *Demonstrate an ability to gain a complete physical, social, lifestyle and environmental history to inform the patient presentation*
- *Undertake a structured health assessment using a recognised health assessment framework to inform a management plan for the patient*

This information allows us to identify the differences between the chiropractic degree that you completed and the UK programmes that are approved by the GCC. You should be able to obtain this information from the educational institution that awarded your chiropractic degree.

Submit this information as part of your application.

- **The Evidence of Practice Questionnaire**

The Evidence of Practice Questionnaire provides the GCC with evidence of how you meet the standards in the GCC's Code. You can find the questionnaire at <https://www.gcc-uk.org/registration/test-of-competence/before-the-toc.aspx>

Before filling in the questionnaire you should make yourself very familiar with the GCC's Code. This is because you will need to make sure you meet the standards in the Code before the Registrar grants your registration, and these are the standards you must meet and maintain all the time you are on the Register. You will need to complete this questionnaire and send it to us with your application. The questionnaire forms a key part of your application and will be assessed by the Test of Competence Assessment Panel.

The Evidence of Practice Questionnaire has the following sections:

- Section 1: profile of your caseload
- Section 2: a neuromusculoskeletal case presentation
- Section 3: a case presentation in which the patient was considered unsuitable for chiropractic treatment / was referred to another healthcare practitioner
- Section 4: a case presentation in which you concluded that certain techniques were unsuitable (contra-indicated)
- Section 5: definitions of abbreviations and acronyms that you have used throughout the questionnaire and in your patient records.
- Section 6: application of patient management through the completion of a table showing the different forms of assessment and care you use
- Section 7: learning undertaken in the last three years.

As well as documenting your past or current practice, the replies that you give in your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire should also outline how you would in future ensure compliance with our Code in similar circumstances. You should provide enough detail to give the panel confidence that you understand the actions that you took and can reflect on why you took these particular courses of action and any issues that may have arisen.

- **Anonymised Patient Records**

The [Evidence of Practice Questionnaire](#) requires you to attach anonymised patient records to support your answers to **Sections 2, 3 and 4**. Patient records are compulsory supporting evidence in your application to take the TOC.

Please remember that when submitting your records:

- Each patient record must be submitted as one document rather than as single, individual pages. **Patient records that have not been collated will not be accepted.**
- You must clearly label your records to show which section of the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire each set of records refers to.

If you are an educationist who does not treat patients you can use the clinical cases of chiropractic students that you have supervised rather than ones you have assessed or cared for directly. In this case you must make sure your role and the actions you took in relation to the patient are made clear.

If you are a recent graduate you may use patient notes taken as part of your supervised practical sessions within your course.

We recommend that you obtain real anonymised patient records where possible. We will accept patient records taken while observing or shadowing chiropractic care. You may create patient records based on real cases only if you have exhausted all other options of obtaining real records; however, please ensure that you make explicit on your application that you have not provided real patient records and also be aware that you may be subject to a longer, more intensive, interview process to ensure that you meet the standards.

The GCC provides information for overseas educational institutions and employers who may hold responsibility for the patient records that you wish to submit. This information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2mlcgxz>

The GCC stipulates that patient confidentiality must be protected by anonymising patient records; therefore applicants must ensure that all personal data within the records are redacted or deleted before being submitted to the GCC. All anonymised records are used for the sole purpose of the Test of Competence. The GCC does not use these records for any other purpose, nor does it share them with any third parties.

- **CV / Resume**

You must provide an up-to-date copy of your CV / resume that includes your work history, especially all chiropractic work you have undertaken.

2.2 After we have received your information

Once we have received your completed paperwork, we will check it to make sure it has all the necessary details and has been completed properly. We will contact you if there are any missing parts, or if the information required has not been fully provided - doing so will delay your application.

2.3 Paying for the TOC

Before you sit the TOC you must pay the fee in full.

The current TOC fee is £2,000.

If you complete the form on the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire with your credit card details we will take the fee automatically when your interview is confirmed.

If you do not give us your credit card details, you will receive a request for payment once we have confirmed your interview date.

Please do not attempt to make any payments before the GCC has confirmed your TOC interview. Once you have received confirmation, you will receive a request for payment.

To pay by electronic transfer, make your payment to:

Santander plc

Bridle Road

Bootle

Merseyside

L30 4GB

Account Name: General Chiropractic Council

Account Number: 06989640

Sort Code: 09-07-20

IBAN (Swift) No: GB49 ABBY 0907 20069896 40

BIC ABBYGB2LXXX

Use your surname followed by the letters TOC as a reference so that we can trace your payment.

There are different types of electronic transfer and some can take up to three days to reach our account, so check with your bank that we will receive the money in time.

You will need to ensure that any fees charged by your bank are covered, and that the full amount reaches our account. Fees may be incurred if you are making a payment from an overseas bank account.

You will only be allowed to attend the TOC interview once the full fee has been received by us.

2.4 TOC Withdrawal and Refunds

You should only apply for the TOC if you are confident that you will be fully prepared and you will be able to attend an interview day in London.

If you decide to withdraw your application for the TOC after your place has been confirmed we will refund 50% of your fee (£1000) if you withdraw up to 1 day before the closing date.

If you decide to withdraw your application on or after the closing date, your fee will be non-refundable unless there is an exceptional mitigating circumstance.

In the case of an exceptional mitigating circumstance, a full refund will be given. Our Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances Policy can be found on our website at <http://bit.ly/28GIVhP>.

3. The TOC Interview

After you have sent us the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and supporting documentation, the next step for you is to attend a TOC Assessment Interview. The interview panel will comprise three chiropractors.

We will send you information on the date, time and location of your interview after the closing date for applications has passed and once we have received all of the information that we require. The interview will take place in London.

Previous candidates who have taken the TOC have commented that while the assessors on the panel are friendly and supportive, the interview is challenging and that, to be successful, you are going to need to spend a significant amount of time preparing for it.

You can read about some of their experiences in section six - we strongly recommend that you read what previous candidates say to get an idea of how best to prepare and stand the greatest chance of success. You may also want to consider spending time with a UK based chiropractor to give you an opportunity to see how chiropractic is practised here.

While we use a standardised criteria for the interviews, half of the questions that you will be asked will be specific to the answers that you give in your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire.

3.1 What does the interview cover?

The interview will:

- **Explore the information contained in your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire**

You must be able to explain and/or justify the evidence of how you have practised in the past (while practising in another country or in student clinic) that you have presented in your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire.

- **Investigate how you would address an ethical dilemma**

You will be asked a series of questions based on a hypothetical situation presented to you by the Assessment Panel. These hypothetical scenarios will assess how you prioritise patient wellbeing; handle your professional responsibilities; deal with conflicts of interest; work within professional boundaries; understand and uphold patient consent and confidentiality as well as fulfil the duty of candour.

- **Assess your awareness of the differences between how chiropractic is practised in the UK and elsewhere**

We have analysed the main differences between our criteria and other regulatory authorities, so expect to be asked about issues such as:

- The involvement of patients and carers as partners in the care process and providing feedback on their care and its outcomes, as well as patient involvement in education – in the teaching, learning and assessment of students as well as in programme evaluation
- The use of research evidence in influencing practice
- Applying continuous quality improvement in practice
- Identifying and understanding the implications of on the provision of chiropractic care for a patient on clinically relevant medications, whether prescribed or bought
- Evaluating the chiropractic care given and modifying the care plan as a result, including ceasing care
- The role of chiropractors in the healthcare system in the UK and their relationship with other healthcare professionals
- The nature of professional accountability and ethics in the UK context and the duty to protect and promote the interests of patients, including professional boundaries, raising concerns about others and the various GCC requirements (e.g. the Professional Indemnity Insurance Rules)
- UK legislation including: the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Children Act 2004, Mental Capacity Act, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 and the Amendment 2006, Safeguarding regulations.
- The use of wellness care and how this relates to the need to evaluate and review plans of care.

3.2 At the Interview

Your interview will take place in London. The venues that we use for interviews can sometimes have lengthy queues at reception, so ensure that you arrive in plenty of time since if you are late you will not be able to sit the interview and will forfeit the fee. We advise that you arrive 15 minutes prior to your interview start time.

We do not allow friends or family to wait for you while you are at the interview.

Your interview will last approximately 90 minutes.

You will not be told the outcome of your interview on the day as the assessment panel only agrees a recommendation to be made to the Registrar. It could take up to 7 working days for the Registrar's decision.

When you arrive, we will check the documents we have asked you to bring.

3.3 What must you bring with you?

3.3.1. Identification

We will check your identity before your interview. The following are the only forms of identification we will accept:

- your passport
- your UK Immigration and Nationality Department identification document
- your Home Office travel document
- your UK driving licence
- your EU identity card

Whichever you choose, it must be original, current and include a recent photograph of you.

If the name on your identification document is different from that on the confirmation you receive from us offering you an interview, you must provide original evidence that you are the person named in the letter. We will accept:

- your marriage certificate
- a declaration from the awarding body which granted your primary medical qualification, stating that both names relate to you

If you do not bring one of the documents listed above, or if the document does not include your photograph, you will not be allowed to sit the interview.

We will return your identification document to you after your interview as we need to take a photocopy for our records. We will also require you to complete a feedback form before you leave.

3.3.2. A copy of your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and patient records

You must bring a copy of the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and patient records that you submitted as part of your application.

This is because you may need to refer to them when answering the interview questions.

3.4 What if I am absent or sick on the day of the interview?

If you are unable to attend the interview because of serious illness or another overwhelming problem, we will make a full refund of your fee.

However, for us to refund your fee, you must tell us as soon as possible, and provide the following evidence to us at the GCC office:

- illness - a medical certificate or a letter from a registered medical practitioner on appropriate headed paper covering the day of your interview
- death or serious injury of a family member - a death or medical certificate as appropriate
- immigration difficulties such as refusal of your visa - a document from the UK Border Agency
- Any other difficulty you could have not foreseen - a letter from an appropriate person (such as an employer, for example)

3.5 What if something outside of my control has put me at a disadvantage?

You will need to complete the form you can find on our website at <http://bit.ly/1YtslrT>

3.6 What if I have a disability?

If you have a disability within the scope of the Equality Act 2010, we may be able to make reasonable adjustments to the interview. We may be able to make adjustments to the arrangements if, for example, you have dyslexia, or a visual or motor impairment.

Please read our Reasonable Adjustments Policy for more information which you can find on our website at <http://bit.ly/28GIVhP>.

4. After the Test of Competence Interview

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of your TOC application within 7 working days of your interview.

The outcome will be one of the following three:

1. **Pass** - you have supplied sufficient evidence to be eligible for registration.
2. **Further Evidence Required** - there is insufficient evidence in a number of specific area/s to pass, but you may submit further evidence in relation to those specific area/s (by, for example, submitting further evidence in relation to your development in readiness to practise in the UK (for example on UK legislation) which, if sufficient, will allow registration to be granted.)

If the result of your TOC was found to be 'Insufficient Evidence' you will be asked to provide the further evidence within 6 months of sitting the TOC interview. We will send you information on the areas that you need to address.

Despite this deadline, we have found that applicants who supply this evidence within 3 months of the TOC interview have a much better chance of passing than those who take longer.

3. **Fail** - there is insufficient evidence in the majority of areas and you will need to make a new application and resit the whole TOC again

The GCC does not enter into correspondence on outcomes of the Test of Competence, but does provide feedback to candidates on those aspects of The Code not demonstrated.

After passing the TOC and before we grant you registration, you will need to make sure that your application for registration is complete. Our registrations team will normally get in touch with you once they received notification of your pass.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

5.1 When should I apply for the TOC?

We cannot advise you on the best time to apply. However, you should be aware that you will have to do a significant amount of work to collate the documentation that we require, complete the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and prepare for the interview, so make sure that you give yourself sufficient time to do all of this.

5.2 Can I apply on the closing date of the TOC?

Yes - you can apply right up to the closing date. However, we recommend that you apply as early as possible, as places are limited and are allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis.

5.3 Where is the TOC assessment panel held?

All TOC assessment panels are held in London.

5.4 How do I apply for the TOC?

To apply for the TOC you must:

- provide a letter from the educational institution who awarded you your chiropractic qualification providing details of how your qualification meets our registration requirements
- provide details of the modules you completed as part of your chiropractic qualification and the outcomes of those modules
- complete an Evidence of Practice questionnaire
- attach copies of anonymised patient records
- provide a copy of your CV
- provide a certified copy of the pages from your passport that contain your personal details
- pay the TOC fee of £2,000 by filling in the final page of the Evidence of Practice questionnaire (we will only take payment once the date of your TOC interview is confirmed)

5.5 I no longer wish to take the TOC - can I have a refund?

If you withdraw your application for the TOC after your place has been confirmed we will refund 50% of your fee (£1000) if you withdraw up to 1 day before the closing date.

If you decide to withdraw your application on or after the closing date, your fee will be non-refundable unless there is an exceptional mitigating circumstance.

5.6 What information does the Evidence of Practice questionnaire require?

The Evidence of Practice questionnaire has the following sections that you must complete:

- profile of your caseload
- a neuromusculoskeletal case presentation
- a case presentation in which the patient was considered unsuitable for chiropractic treatment / was referred to another healthcare practitioner
- a case presentation in which you concluded that certain techniques were unsuitable (contra-indicated)
- definitions of abbreviations or acronyms you have used in your documents.
- application of patient management throughout the completion of a table showing the different forms of assessment and care you use
- learning you have undertaken in the last three years

5.7 Who will be on the assessment panel?

The assessment panel will be comprised of three chiropractors. We don't make the names of the chiropractors on the panels known to prevent candidates contacting them directly, but they will introduce themselves when they meet you.

5.8 How are the members of the assessment panels chosen?

Membership of the panels is limited to chiropractors who have been on our register for at least five years. Any chiropractor who meets this requirement may apply to become an assessor, and after applying they are interviewed to determine their suitability. Those who act as panel chairs will have a background in Higher Education.

Those appointed receive training before becoming assessors.

5.9 Can the assessment panel be conducted in my native language?

No. Assessment panel interviews are conducted in English.

5.10 Not all of the supporting information I wish to submit is in English - is that a problem?

If some of your supporting documentation is not in English, then you must provide us with a translation of the documents as well as the original.

5.11 What is the fee for the TOC?

The current fee is £2,000. This is reviewed annually.

5.12 How do I pay for the TOC?

You can complete the form on the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire with your credit card details. We will then take the fee automatically when your interview is confirmed.

If you do not give us your credit card details, you will receive a request for payment once we have confirmed your interview date. This will need to be by electronic transfer, which should be made to:

5.13 Can I practise in the UK while I wait for my TOC assessment panel?

No - you may not practise in the UK until you have both passed the TOC and registered with us.

If you are in the UK ahead of your TOC interview it may be advisable to seek support from your sponsoring employer or from one of the professional associations to help you prepare.

5.14 I have been practising for over 20 years as a chiropractor - does this exclude me from any aspects of the TOC?

No - there are not exemptions from the TOC for experienced chiropractors.

6. TOC Case Studies of Candidates and Assessors

To help people taking the TOC, we have spoken to three recent candidates to get their views of what it is like to go through this process and find out what advice they would give to future candidates.

Some common themes came out of the discussions:-

- **taking the TOC represents a major challenge**
- **you will need to devote a significant amount of time to completing your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and preparing for the interview**
- **you will need to have a good understanding of how chiropractic works in the UK and**
- **you need to start gathering all of the supporting information when you start your application, as it may take a long time to collate**

The three we spoke to are Rohan Jhanji, Quinton Hohls, and Terry Holmes to learn how they found the experience.

Quinton had worked as a chiropractor in a number of countries, while Rohan had just graduated from university. Terry had just arrived in the UK after working as a chiropractor in New Zealand for several years and has a unique perspective, having failed the first time and passing the second time he took the TOC.

6.1 Rohan Jhanji

Rohan had just graduated with a chiropractic degree from a university in Australia when he sat the TOC.

6.1.1 What advice would you give to applicants?

The most important advice is not to underestimate the challenge that the TOC represents. You need to make sure that you are at the top of your game, and that you know the information you gave on your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and the Code inside out.

It is also worth trying to identify weak points in your answers on the questionnaire to work out responses to them. As a result, when challenged by the Panel, you can easily justify the action that you took.

6.1.2 What did you find most challenging about completing your application?

The application form itself was easy to fill in. The difficult part was getting all of the information the evidence of practice questionnaire required, and finding case studies that would survive the interview panel's questioning.

6.1.3 The TOC application form requires you to provide a lot of information on your chiropractic qualification. How did you obtain the required information?

It took me about four weeks to get all of the information together, all of which was obtained from my university in Australia.

6.1.4 A large part of the TOC application is the Evidence of Practice questionnaire. How was your experience completing this?

While the questions in the questionnaire are not difficult, filling it in is time consuming. It is hard to be 100% accurate when you are so reliant on your memory, and when you know you will be quizzed at the interview over any discrepancies.

The questions are also open ended, making it very difficult to know if you have provided enough information. The information also has to be structured in a very logical manner, and I had to justify the action I took – it was difficult to structure my answers in such a way. If I hadn't just left university and so was used to writing in such a style, I feel that it would have been even harder, and would have taken even longer to complete!"

I had a particular problem getting hold of patient records due to privacy and patient confidentiality requirements in Australia. However, the GCC was really helpful in both confirming to my university why the information was required."

It was also difficult to remember to anonymise the information and case studies as well.

6.1.5 How long did it take to complete your application?

It took about a month overall. You have to expect it to take some time – you need to answer the questions in detail so you are not going to be able to complete the questionnaire in one go, while it also takes some time to collate all of the supporting information.

6.1.6 After submitting all of the paperwork, the next step is an interview by a panel of chiropractors. How did you prepare for the interview?

I spent about six weeks preparing for the interview. I realised that the answers I had given on my form were going to come under close scrutiny, so I made sure that I was familiar with my answers and tried to identify any weaknesses that the Panel may focus on.

I also went through all of my notes from university – while I realised that the interview wouldn't concentrate on chiropractic techniques and processes, I wanted to refresh my knowledge to ensure that I wouldn't forget something or make a silly mistake.

I focussed the majority of my attention on ensuring that I had a good understanding of the Code and understanding the differences in the profession between England and Australia. I also ensured that I fully appreciated how the differences between the two systems would impact on how I would work in the UK.

At the interview I was really grilled over the differences between the UK and Australian chiropractic professions, and I'm sure that wouldn't have been successful had I not put the hours in.

6.1.7 What was your experience of the interview day?

I actually enjoyed the whole experience!

Although I was very nervous when I arrived, everyone I met was friendly and professional. The interview panel in particular were really trying their best to put me at ease, and they were really polite and humble.

6.1.8 How did you feel about the interview itself and the types of questions that were asked?

The questions were not difficult, but they were challenging. If you don't have a very good understanding of what is included in both your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and the Code you will have problems and struggle to answer the questions. You will also need a good understanding of issues such as neurology and orthopaedics, as the Panel quizzed me on those as well.

6.1.9 What is next for you now that you have passed the TOC and are registered with the GCC?

I am looking forward to starting work in Glasgow. Taking the TOC has been a great experience – it has really given me confidence that I am now competent to treat patients in the UK.

6.2 Quinton Hohls

Quinton wanted to come to the UK after working in a number of countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia where he was practising when he sat the TOC.

6.2.1 What advice would you give to applicants?

Start early, and study well. Be prepared for a lot of work ahead of the interview, it cannot be done over a weekend; it is a process that takes several weeks of analysing the answers on the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and making sure that you can justify every answer that you gave to the Panel. Your answers will be scrutinised in detail, and you have to be able to refute the panel's concerns confidently.

You should also make sure that you are very familiar with the Code. The Panel ask a lot of questions about how you would apply them to your practice, and how the Code would influence the way you would practise in the UK.

I travelled to London from Saudi Arabia for the interview, and arrived the day before. My advice would be to arrive a couple of days before the interview to get over the journey and give yourself time once again to familiarise yourself one last time with the information in your questionnaire.

6.2.2 What did you find most challenging about completing the application?

I have lived in several counties and soon realised that I faced a major challenge in obtaining the information that the GCC required. I had to spend a lot of time getting in touch with former colleagues and several other agencies to get the information together.

6.2.3 The TOC application form requires you to provide a lot of information on your chiropractic qualification. How did you obtain the required information?

Having contacts at my former university proved invaluable in helping with sourcing the necessary transcripts – results, learning outcomes, syllabi etc.

6.2.4 A large part of the application for the TOC is the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire. How was your experience completing this?

I found that the large amount of information that we have to provide meant I had to start preparing early. While the forms and the questions are not confusing or misleading, they are challenging.

Information on the GCC Website was helpful and informative, as it gave a broad outline of what the examiners were looking for, and how to approach the questions on the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire. However, it was time consuming to justify every step taken with every patient, and to source the necessary supporting information to provide empirical evidence for these steps.

6.2.5 How long did it take to complete your application?

In all, it took around three months.

6.2.6 After submitting all of the paperwork, the next step is an interview by a panel of chiropractors. How did you prepare for the interview?

I spent three months in advance of the interview refreshing my basic knowledge. Areas I looked at included:-

- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Pathology
- Pharmacology
- Biomechanics
- Orthopaedics
- Radiology
- Clinical protocols

I also spent a fair amount of time studying the Code to become familiar with the UK laws governing chiropractic and its place in the UK healthcare system.

6.2.6 What was your experience of the interview day?

When I arrived, I was really nervous, as there was a lot riding on the interview. However, the Panel were really friendly and professional, and as a consequence, my nerves soon evaporated, although I had to be on my toes throughout.

The interview was wonderfully challenging!

6.2.7 How did you feel about the interview itself and the types of questions that were asked?

The questions referred specifically to the answers I had given in my Evidence of Practice Questionnaire – they were not generic ‘what makes a good chiropractor?’ type questions. I had to justify the actions I outlined in the questionnaire, and provide alternative scenarios had the patients presented slightly differently and explain why the alternative treatment would have been appropriate.

The panel members were well prepared and really challenged my answers, asking me to justify the evidence I had given. While they remained firm throughout the interview, they also remained professional and friendly.

6.2.8 If you were to go through the process again, would you have done anything differently?

Yes – I would have got in touch with my former university and other people who could have helped with my application at an earlier stage. They were really keen to help and were supportive, but having lived and worked all over the world collating all of the information I needed took some time, so I should have started the process earlier.

6.2.9 What is next for you now that you have passed the TOC and are registered with the GCC?

Having already worked in Thailand and Mexico as well as Saudi Arabia and my native South Africa, I am looking forward to working in England.

6.3 Terry Holmes

Terry came to the UK after practising as a chiropractor in his native New Zealand for several years. He also has a unique perspective, having taken the TOC twice as he failed the first time he took the test.

6.3.1 What did you find most challenging about completing the application?

Completing the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire is a process that takes a long time. You really need to make sure that you answer the questions on the form, and provide the information that the assessors want.

The first time I applied, I rushed my application, filling it in during the weekend in my spare time and really not dedicating the time required to the task. The second time, I devoted much more time to it to ensure that I addressed the issues that the questionnaire sought, and went that extra mile to ensure that my responses fully explained the action that I took.

The TOC application form requires you to provide a lot of information on your chiropractic qualification. How did you obtain the required information?

It wasn't easy to find and get all of the information that was required. This meant that it took some time to collate

6.3.2 How long did it take to complete your application?

The first time I applied, it took me a couple of months to complete the form, but I only worked on it at the weekend.

The second time round I realised that I was going to have to take a much more professional attitude if I was going to be successful. By now I wasn't working, so I was able to devote myself full time to completing the form. It took a month, effectively working on it full time Monday to Friday, to complete it.

If you want to be successful, you are going to need to give yourself that amount of time to complete the form.

6.3.3 After submitting all of the paperwork, the next step is an interview by a panel of chiropractors. How did you prepare for the interview?

Being an experienced chiropractor in New Zealand, I was pretty confident before my first interview that it would be a mere formality and I would pass easily. So, I didn't spend much time preparing for it, beyond checking the responses in my Evidence of Practice Questionnaire.

The second time I took the test, I devoted a significant amount of time – maybe six hours a day for a month – to preparing for the interview.

I made sure that I knew my responses to the questionnaire inside out and ensured that I was equally familiar with the Code. I also paid particular attention to ensuring that I understood the principles of evidence based practice.

Something I found really useful was ‘googling’ the main requirements of the Code. This took me to some really useful (and sometimes less than useful!) articles that allowed me to put the requirements into context and really expand on the answers I gave in the interview.

I also tried to learn as much as I could about chiropractic in the UK, and the wider health care system. I spent time reading the NHS website, and also the websites of other health related organisations to discover their views of chiropractic and how it can help patients.

I also tried to speak to as many students as I could, and I also spent some time shadowing a chiropractor. This was invaluable, since as well as being able to see how chiropractors work in the UK, after each appointment I was able to discuss what had happened with the chiropractor, and it really increased my understanding of how things operate over here.

6.3.4 What was your experience of the interview day?

The day itself was really well organised. I am lucky – living in Fulham means that I know London well, and knew exactly where I was going. The GCC staff at the venue were really nice and really tried to relax me when I arrived and throughout the test.

6.3.5 How did you feel about the interview itself and the types of questions that were asked?

I was impressed by the professionalism of the panel at both of my interviews. They were friendly, I could tell they were trying to relax me and they were supportive.

Having said that, both interviews were among the most challenging I have had. They were at least as challenging as my university interviews.

The panel of assessors really test you with their questions and methods. You need to really know the Code in great detail, and the depth of questioning that you receive means that you really need to know the examples you give in great detail and expect the actions that you took to be questioned in equal detail.

6.3.6 If you were to go through the process again, would you have done anything differently?

The key difference between my two tests was the amount of preparation that I did.

The first time round I didn't offer the test the respect that it deserved, thinking that the interview was going to be more like a job interview than the detailed questioning I received.

As such, I didn't really prepare for the test in anything like the detail I should have, and so I wasn't surprised that I ended up failing the test. Unfortunately I only realised how much preparation was required after my interview!

The second time I took it, my approach was totally different, and recognising the challenge that passing the TOC posed, I dedicated myself to ensuring that I would pass the second time round and so worked on preparing myself on a full time basis.

6.3.7 What do you attribute your success the second time round to?

Two factors. Firstly, practising chiropractic in the UK has been a dream for a long time, so there was no way I wasn't going to pass the second time.

Secondly, the time I spent with a chiropractor in the UK was incredibly important. This wasn't just because it gave me an opportunity to learn more about how chiropractic is practised in the UK – invaluable though that was – but it really motivated me to pass as it made me realise just how much I wanted to practise in the UK.

6.3.8 What is next for you now that you have passed the TOC and are registered with the GCC?

As soon as my registration has been confirmed by the GCC, I am going to be working for a chiropractor in London where I am living. I'm really happy in the UK, and plan to stay here for the foreseeable future.

6.4 TOC Assessor 1

Having spoken to three applicants for the TOC, we thought that it was time to get the views from the other side of the table on what people need to do to be successful, and so met with TOC Assessors to get their views on what candidates need to do to ensure they are successful.

6.4.1 Why did you want to become a TOC assessor?

Having had a long and successful career as a chiropractor, I wanted to give something back to the profession, and I felt that the TOC assessor role was a really good fit with my skills and experience.

6.4.2 Why do you think that the format of the TOC needed to be changed?

The previous TOC had a fundamental flaw, as it wasn't a genuine test of competence. By asking candidates to carry out a number of procedures, we were able to check that they knew what to do, but we were not able to identify how they would do this in a practice situation or how they would relate to patients and to 'real life' situations.

By giving us the opportunity to explore with applicants how they have dealt with real situations that they have encountered in their career, we can get a much better understanding of how they would practise and any issues that they would need to address before practising in the UK.

6.4.3 What advice would you give to a chiropractor about to start the TOC? What should they do, and what shouldn't they do?

The key thing that you must do is to plan ahead. Applying for the TOC is going to take some time, to get the documents, complete the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and prepare for the interview. You should pay particular attention to how long it may take you to get the documentation that you require.

You should also consider the examples that you give. Ensure that the examples you use are the best you have for each particular situation rather than the first one that comes to mind.

And finally, don't forget that it is all about the patient, and not the chiropractor. Ensure that your answers focus on the benefit to the patient, rather than just about what you did.

6.4.4 When you read an Evidence of Practice Questionnaire, what identifies someone as a good candidate?

Firstly, we don't use the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire to rank candidates or to identify who should and who shouldn't pass – when a candidate walks into the interview, they are all equally likely to pass or fail.

However, we use the Questionnaire to identify issues that we will raise with the candidate in the interview. If reading the form identifies an area of weakness, then we will quiz them on that so we can appreciate the level of understanding they have (or don't have) on that topic.

So when a candidate fills in the form, they should seek to reflect on their style of practice, explaining not just what they did, but why they did it. This will give us a good understanding of the candidate's knowledge of how chiropractic is practised in the UK, and their understanding of the Code.

It is also important to clarify that we are not seeking to assess the treatment that candidates provided per se. Even if something went seriously wrong with the treatment it doesn't mean that they will automatically fail, they will be able to explain what went wrong, what they learnt from it and why they wouldn't do it again.

6.4.5 What common mistakes do candidates make when filling in the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire?

The most common mistake is candidates don't appreciate that the Questionnaire will be read by fellow chiropractors, and so they don't go into the level of detail that we are looking for.

There are also a number of other common mistakes made by candidates such as:-

- Being unable to give a successful rationale for patient and clinical performance
- Weak diagnoses
- Poor documentation
- Poor case history (notes often only saying 'same as before' for example)
- Poor understanding of the natural history of a condition

6.4.6 How much detail should candidates provide?

You should provide enough detail to give the panel confidence that you understand the action that you took and can reflect on why you took that particular course of action and any issues that arise.

Two common mistakes are that candidates often fail to provide any reflection on the action that they took or alternatively provide information that isn't required to hit the word limit. The limit is what it says – you do not have to provide 2,000 word answers (for example) if you can answer the question with fewer words.

6.4.7 After submitting the paperwork, the next step for applicants is to be interviewed by a panel of chiropractors – how do you prepare for the interview?

The assessors receive the documentation several weeks before the interview. We each go through the documentation, and complete a pro forma for each answer that the candidate provides on the evidence to practice form.

The day before the interview, the assessors meet and decide what we are going to ask each candidate and what issue we are going to explore. We don't make any decision on the likelihood of a candidate passing or failing at this stage; instead we just identify issues in the evidence of practice questionnaire that we need to explore more. We also use this time to decide who is going to ask which question, and ensure that we all understand what issues we are trying to explore with the candidate.

6.4.8 How do you identify what questions to ask candidates?

The questions that we ask are determined by the answers that you give on your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire. Expect us to ask proactive questions – ‘what will you do’ – rather than reactive questions about what you did.

6.4.9 What common mistakes do candidates make at the interview?

You can also bring along any further information that you have received since submitting the documentation to the interview, and candidates have often regretted not being able to provide greater evidence or support to their answers by providing such documentation.

The other main common mistake that people make is that they don't listen fully to questions, and so don't actually answer the question that they have been asked.

Last but not least, many candidates are struck with nerves during the interview. That is understandable, but we really try to relax candidates and help them to give their best. So try not to get too nervous (easy to say from my side of the table, I know!) and if you do misunderstand a question, or want the panel to clarify something, please ask us for help – we don't bite!

6.4.10 What makes a candidate stand out at the interview?

The one thing that makes a candidate stand out is an ability to be objective in their answers. We don't mind if you did something wrong, or if you could have done something better, so long as you can show us that you understand why what you did wasn't successful and why you wouldn't do it again in that situation. When we ask why something went wrong, candidates will say “because that is what I was taught” or “that is what my boss makes me do” – that maybe the case, but we want to know why you wouldn't do it now.

6.4.11 Do assessors seek to support candidates through the process, or catch them out?

We very much want to support and help candidates. We do not try to catch candidates out, or ask unwarranted or unnecessarily difficult questions.

We want you to do your best, and all you have to do is demonstrate to us that you are safe to practice in the UK. If you can do that you will be fine – we don't have a set quota of candidates to fail or anything like that, so we try to ask questions that are as clear as possible, and if you don't understand the question or are confused about something, don't hesitate to ask for clarification.

In fact, you should view the interview very positively. We are not trying to catch you out, but to clarify any issues that we don't understand or are unsure of in your form, and the interview is your opportunity to address those concerns.

6.5 TOC Assessor Two

6.5.1 What motivated you to become a TOC assessor?

Two things really motivated me to become an assessor.

Firstly, I really wanted to help ensure that chiropractors coming into the UK are safe to practise and that they won't pose a risk to patients. Allied to that, I was also keen to see standards in the chiropractic profession maintained.

Being an assessor is also a very enjoyable and rewarding process to be a part of!!

6.5.2 What advice would you give to chiropractors about to start the TOC process?

Firstly, they shouldn't fear the TOC. Yes, it is challenging, but you must remember that we are not looking for the world's best chiropractor, just one who meets our standards.

Secondly, you should give yourself plenty of time. You need to allow time to complete the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire fully, answering the question as accurately as you can. Make sure you prove to us that you are both a competent and a safe chiropractor.

And finally, you must do your homework on the Code along with legislation that governs chiropractic in the UK. The more you can tailor your answers to the Code and the way we practise over here, the greater your chances of success.

6.5.3 And what shouldn't people do?

One of the biggest and most frequent mistakes made by candidates is that they leave everything until the last minute. As a consequence, they don't give themselves enough time to learn the Code and put a good set of accurate notes together.

Putting a good set of notes together is important. If your notes convince us that you understand the Code and how it would apply to your practice, the less we will have to question you about at the interview.

6.5.4 When you read an Evidence of Practice Questionnaire (EPQ), what identifies someone as a good candidate?

When I read an Evidence of Practice Questionnaire, I like to see the thought processes that the candidate has used to reach their conclusions.

The answers should be well structured, providing an easy to follow narrative of what was happening in the consulting room, and it should be easy to see how the candidate's thoughts processes resulted in the actions that were taken.

6.5.5 What common mistakes do candidates make when filling out the Evidence of Practice questionnaire?

The most frequent mistake is applicants providing a lack of information. If you don't include something you did in your EPQ, then we can only assume that you didn't do it, and so you will be questioned on the omission at the interview.

Another common mistake is where someone says they have done something in their EPQ but their notes show that they did something else. Such inconsistencies will again lead to intense questioning at the interview.

I would strongly recommend you to check and read through the information you provide us with, and after doing that get a friend to read it through before submission.

6.5.6 How much detail should candidates provide?

Obviously, there is a word count for answers on the EPQ, and you mustn't exceed this. Likewise, it isn't a target, so don't feel that you have to be close to it.

However, if you are under the word count and unsure of including something, put it in!

We won't penalise you for including too much information, but if you omit something that we feel is important, expect to be challenged over it at the interview.

6.5.7 What else can candidates do to ensure that they pass?

The key is to ensure that you understand and explain how our Code would have applied to your previous practise. If you don't understand this – or if you don't make it clear to us that you don't understand it – then you will fail.

It doesn't matter how good a chiropractor you are – you can be one of the best chiropractors in the world, but if you don't know the Code and how it would affect your practise, you will fail.

6.5.8 How should candidates prepare for the interview?

Firstly, re-read your application until you know it backwards.

Secondly, and this is starting to sound like a broken record, but it is an all too frequent mistake, make sure that you re-read and are also familiar with our Code. If you can't apply the Code to the examples contained in your EPQ you are not going to pass – it is as simple as that – so make sure that you fully understand how the Code relates to your EPQ.

6.5.9 How do you identify what to ask candidates in the interview?

We look for inconsistencies between what they claim to have done in the EPQ and what they did do as revealed in their patient notes. If we find any such irregularities, expect to be questioned on them closely.

We also compare the course you passed to get your chiropractic qualification and the GCC's approved degree criteria. If you didn't study something contained in the GCC's criteria, then we will question you on it to ensure that you understand it from other studying.

We also look at the EPQ to spot any conclusions that candidates have made without explaining how they came to those conclusions. In such circumstances, we quiz the candidate to find out why they took the action they did.

And finally, if we become aware that a candidate has practised in a way that we don't here, we would question them to ensure that they understand how we practise in the UK.

6.5.10 What common mistakes do candidates make at the interview?

A common mistake is a candidate trying to justify a way of practising that they have used but that we don't use here. We have no problem with that, so long as you make it clear to us that you wouldn't do the same here. What you shouldn't do – but many do - is defend the action you took. Instead, you should outline what you would do if presented with a similar situation in the UK, and how you would ensure that you complied with our Code and other UK legislation.

The other common mistake is candidates not understanding the legislation that we have in the UK. You will be asked about it, so if you don't know the UK legislation and requirements, you are going to have little chance of passing.

6.5.11 Do you have any further advice for candidates to follow in regards to the interview stage?

You need to know your stuff, and be able to confidently provide a detailed explanation of what you did and how you would deal with a similar situation in the UK. We also like to see candidates demonstrate a broad area of practise by outlining a wide range of conditions that they have treated.

Interviewing a good candidate is a pleasure. The interview becomes more like a conversation between professionals on how chiropractic is practised in different countries than a conventional interview.

7. Useful information and resources

7.1. The Code, supporting guidance and Education Standards

The Code: Standards of Performance, Conduct and Ethics for Chiropractors outlines the standards that chiropractors must meet if they wish to join and remain on our register, and call themselves a chiropractor in the UK. It is crucial that all those wishing to sit the TOC are familiar with and fully understand the principles and standards within the Code and in particular are able to apply it to their practice. The supplementary guidance for the Code sets out best practice, explains processes to follow, provides information about legislation and shows where additional support and advice can be found. The guidance complements the Code, and should be read in conjunction with it. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gcc-uk.org/good-practice/>

As a minimum, candidates are expected to have the same level of knowledge and skill as a newly qualified UK practitioner. The GCC's Education Standards set out the criteria that chiropractic students in the UK must meet in order to qualify. Further information can be found at <http://www.gcc-uk.org/education/undergraduate-education/>

7.2. The Chiropractic Professional Organisations

There are five organisations in the UK who provide support and advice to Chiropractors.

These include the four professional associations which are:

- The British Chiropractic Association (BCA) (<https://chiropractic-uk.co.uk/>)
- The McTimoney Chiropractic Association (MCA) (<http://www.mctimoney-chiropractic.org/>)
- The Scottish Chiropractic Association (SCA) (<http://www.sca-chiropractic.org/>)
- The United Chiropractic Association (UCA) (<http://www.united-chiropractic.org/>)

The profession also has a royal college; the Royal College of Chiropractors (RCC) (<http://rcc-uk.org>)

7.3. Useful Courses and Modules

The Royal College of Chiropractors (RCC) has developed online modules that are primarily designed to assist those preparing for the TOC. These can be found on the RCC's website at: <http://rcc-uk.org/online-learning/>

7.4. Information on Practising in the UK

In addition to the evidence that you present to us in your Evidence of Practice Questionnaire and supporting documents, the TOC will focus on the differences between the GCC's criteria on those of other regulatory authorities around the world. These differences have been identified as:

- The involvement of patients and carers in the care process.
- The use of research evidence in influencing practice
- Applying continuous quality improvement in practice.
- Identifying and understanding the implications for the provision of chiropractic care for a patient on clinically relevant medications (prescribed or bought.)

- Evaluating the chiropractic care given and modifying the care plan as a result, including ceasing care.
- The use of wellness care and how this relates to the need to evaluate and review plans of care.
- The role of chiropractors in the healthcare system in the UK and their relationship with other healthcare professionals.
- The nature of professional accountability and ethics in the UK context and the duty to protect and promote the interests of patients, including professional boundaries, raising concerns about others and the various GCC requirements.
- UK legislation including:
 - the Equality Act 2010; (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>)
 - the Data Protection Act 1998; (<https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act>)
 - the Children Act 2004; (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31>)
 - the Mental Capacity Act; (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capacity-act-making-decisions>)
 - the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37>)
 - the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 and the Amendment 2006 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ionising-radiation-medical-exposure-regulations-2000>); and
 - Safeguarding regulations. (<http://bit.ly/13UhR1W>)

8. Further help and information

If you need any further help or assistance, have a look at our website (<https://www.gcc-uk.org/registration/test-of-competence/>) or contact us at toc@gcc-uk.org