

Experiences of the TOC

To help people taking the Test of Competence, we have spoken to three recent candidates who have passed the test to get their views of what it is like to take the test, and to ask what advice they would give to future candidates.

Some common themes came out of all of the discussions:-

- taking the TOC represents a major challenge
- you are going to have to devote a significant amount of time to both making your initial application and to 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 takes a long time to collate.

You can read their comments on the TOC below – we strongly advise you to do so before starting your application, as they provide a lot of useful information that will help your application be successful.

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

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

Rohan Jhanji

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 CoP and SoP 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.

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.

Quinton Hohls

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 CoP and SoP. The panel ask a lot of questions about how you would apply them to your practise, 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.

Terry Holmes

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

Rohan Jhanji

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.

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

Quinton Hohls

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* to obtain 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.

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.

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

Terry Holmes

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.

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,

Rohan Jhanji

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.

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.

Quinton Hols

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.

How long did it take to complete your application?

In all, it took around three months.

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

Terry Holmes

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 also that I was equally familiar with the CoP and SoP. I also paid particular attention to ensuring that I understood the principles of evidence based practise.

Something I found really useful was ‘googling’ the main requirements of the CoP and SoP. 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

Rohan Jhanji

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 CoP and SoP 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.

Quinton Holhs

- Pharmacology
- Biomechanics
- Orthopaedics
- Radiology
- Clinical protocols

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

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!

Terry Holmes

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.

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.

Rohan Jhanji

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.

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.

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 CoP and SoP you will have problems and struggle to answer the questions. You will also need a good understanding of issues such as neurology

Quinton Hohls

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.

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

Terry Holmes

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 CoP and SoP* 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.

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.

Rohan Jhanji

and orthopaedics, as the Panel quizzed me on those as well.

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.

Quinton Holhs

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.

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.

Terry Holmes

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.

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 go pass the second time.

Secondly, the time I spent with a chiropractor in the UK was incredibly

Terry Holmes

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.

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