

GCC Test of Competence

External Examiner's Annual Report

Period: January 2021 – December 2021

Results

Date of TOC	Results
January Out of 2 candidates, both ultimately passed.	Number of candidates: 2 Pass: 0 Fail: 0 Further Evidence Required: 2 Passed after submitting further evidence: 2
February Out of 3 candidates, 3 passed first time.	Number of candidates: 3 Pass: 3 Fail: 0 Further Evidence Required: 0
March 1 candidate was assessed and passed after submitting further evidence.	Number of candidates: 1 Pass: 0 Fail :0 Further Evidence Required: 1 Passed after submitting further evidence: 1
April Out of 3 candidates, all 3 ultimately passed.	Number of candidates: 3 Pass: 1 Fail: 0 Further Evidence Required: 2 Passed after submitting further evidence: 2
May 1 candidate was assessed and failed.	Number of candidates: 1 Pass: 0 Fail: 1 Further Evidence Required: 0

<p>June</p> <p>Out of 3 candidates, all ultimately passed.</p>	<p>Number of candidates: 3</p> <p>Pass: 2</p> <p>Fail: 0</p> <p>Further Evidence Required: 1</p> <p>Passed after submitting further evidence: 1</p>
<p>July</p> <p>Out of 5 candidates, 3 passed and 2 failed.</p>	<p>Number of candidates: 5</p> <p>Pass: 3</p> <p>Fail: 2</p> <p>Further Evidence Required: 0</p>
<p>September</p> <p>Out of 4 candidates, 3 ultimately passed and 1 failed.</p>	<p>Number of candidates: 4</p> <p>Pass: 0</p> <p>Fail: 1</p> <p>Further Evidence Required: 3</p> <p>Passed after submitting further evidence: 3</p>
<p>October</p> <p>Out of 3 candidates, all 3 ultimately passed.</p>	<p>Number of candidates: 3</p> <p>Pass: 1</p> <p>Fail: 0</p> <p>Further Evidence Required: 2</p> <p>Passed after submitting further evidence: 2</p>
<p>November</p> <p>Out of 9 candidates, 7 ultimately passed and 2 failed.</p>	<p>Number of candidates: 9</p> <p>Pass: 3</p> <p>Fail: 2</p> <p>Further Evidence Required: 4</p> <p>Passed after submitting further evidence: 4</p>

Please provide comment on the results in this period.

There were 34 candidates assessed during the period January 2021 -Dec 2021, by 14 assessment panels. This number of candidates has substantially increased, compared with the last 3 years (25 in 2020, 21 in 2019, 21 in 2018). This is the highest number of candidates since 2015.

Due to changes made since Covid 19 restrictions, all 34 assessments were undertaken online using the Microsoft Teams platform. Once again, the assessors and the GCC administration team should be commended for their adaptability, assuring that the process could effectively continue online. At present, the intent is to continue

online during 2022, and to review the situation by the end of the year. TOC assessment panels are now held monthly, rather than 4 times a year, which appears to be more effective than before.

Of the 34 candidates, 13 (38%) passed on the first occasion, 6 failed (18%) with a further 15 (44%) required to submit further evidence. Of the latter group, all have subsequently passed with a resulting total of 28 (82%) of applicants eligible to apply for registration.

Last year, potential concerns were noted around whether the online assessments were impacting on the number of first-time pass rates (FTPR). It was noted at the time that the numbers were too small to make true comparisons. Compared with last year, the percentage of FTPR has increased from 22% to 38%, and percentage of fails has decreased from 39% to 18%. This is in keeping with previous figures between 2017-19 of 36% FTPR and 28% fails. It appears therefore that this year's online outcomes broadly reflect pre-pandemic face to face assessment outcomes at this stage.

In terms of the candidate's country of qualification, 16 candidates originally qualified in South Africa, 10 in the USA, 2 in Spain, 2 in Italy, 2 in Canada, 1 in Australia and 1 in Denmark.

The age range spanned from 25-59. The number of those who had qualified within the previous 2 years, was 15. Of the latter, 4 passed first time, 9 had to produce further evidence, and 2 failed. Three candidates had been qualified more than 20 years and two of these failed the assessment.

The 6 fails included 4 from the USA, 1 from Spain and 1 from South Africa.

Out of the 16 South African applicants, 9 passed first time, with 1 fail. In comparison, of the 10 USA applicants, there was only one first time pass and 4 fails. As per last year, it appears that the USA candidates were less successful on first application than others.

One of the panels identified evidence of two applicants who appeared to have colluded and copied information from each other. Since then, a new plagiarism and collusion policy has been drafted, and more explicit emphasis has been placed on the website, regarding the responsibility of the applicant in only submitting their own work.

Analysis of Documentation

Panel Member Recording Sheets (TOC Form A)

A sample (20) of TOC Forms (A) were reviewed. These are completed by all assessors, and are used as a preparatory checklist, for note taking during the interview, and for assessors to record their observations throughout.

Of those sampled, due process appears to have been followed. The documentation is particularly used as a checklist and assessment preparation tool, enabling the specific focus of the panel's questions to be agreed. Some assessors also provide comprehensive notes taken throughout, and a good summary overall of the applicant's strengths and weaknesses. There are some assessors however who mainly use the form for preparation and their own notes, rather than recording any summary. There are also a number of assessors who have not completed or returned forms to the GCC team, despite

<p>reminders. It was agreed at the October review meeting, that all are expected to complete and return these. This should therefore improve during 2022.</p> <p>The chair does usually provides a comprehensive TOC Form A, and TOC Form B. in addition some chairs appear to collate the assessor forms alongside their own and the Form B. This is good practice from these chairs, as there is then a clear record of the whole process.</p> <p><i>At the next assessor meeting it would be useful to remind assessors that all are expected to complete and return TOC Form A, as a complete record of the process. The good practice from some chairs (in collating and returning all records) may also be worth establishing as part of the process.</i></p>
Chairs Reports / TOC Form B
<p>A sample (15) of Chairs Reports, including a sample of pass/fail and further evidence forms, were reviewed. Comparisons made with available TOC form As identified that the preparation/interview process and notes made, followed due process. The Chairs' reports summarised the process and outcomes well, and comprehensive feedback was provided for applicants</p> <p>A sample of further evidence from a selection of applicants was also reviewed, with additional feedback from chairs. The process appears to work well. All candidates who provided this additional evidence subsequently passed.</p> <p>Once again, the chairs should be commended on the quality of their record keeping, and the time and energy committed to the process.</p>
Result Letters from CER
<p>The Chief Executive and Registrar letter is now usually a standard outcomes letter, advising the candidate as to whether they have passed, are required to provide further evidence, or have failed, and next steps. The attached chairs report gives the detail around the outcome, and rationale for the decision.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and Registrar letter is clear, and the attached chairs report provides a comprehensive rationale, as discussed above.</p>

Assessment Panel Operation

TOC Pre- Meetings
<p>The April TOC process was observed throughout. Both pre meeting and assessments were online. 3 candidates were assessed.</p> <p>The pre meeting was coordinated well, all assessors had prepared diligently in advance, and a comprehensive discussion around each candidate's application was held. Distribution of questions was agreed, and a plan formulated for the assessment. All assessors worked well together.</p> <p>There was some initial confusion around where the current Question Bank and Ethical Questions could be found. This was rectified at the time, and these are now easily accessible via Folders in Microsoft Teams.</p>
TOC Interviews
<p>All 3 TOC assessments went well. The chair introduced each session and informed the candidate of the structure of the interview. One candidate struggled to hear some of the</p>

questions (due to some online interference), however the panel were happy to repeat or rephrase questions.
All panel members appeared conscientious and vigilant in reviewing the evidence, interviewing the participant, and agreeing the assessment outcome.

Assessor Performance Appraisals

Confirm whether appraisals have been completed for all TOC Assessors and highlight any overall issues that have arisen.

There were 17 assessors during 2021, all of these took part in the appraisal process. There were 12 Male and 5 female assessors during this period. Every assessment panel had at least one female assessor. There were 7 chairs, one of whom is female.

Issues raised related to the TOC process included:-

- The majority felt that the sharing of TOC Form As before the pre meeting, with the chair 'pulling together' main issues raised/ potential questions, was helpful and made the process 'more efficient'. There were others who felt that this preparation could pre-empt the discussion in the pre meeting and prevent the in-depth discussion previously experienced. The change in process does not appear to affect the robustness of the process nor equity for candidates.
- The majority state that the online process is now working well. There are still mixed views on future application. The majority now accept that for the candidate it is better, particularly by removing the need to travel. Some stated that it would be helpful to have some mode of inter panel communication whilst doing the assessment.
- Some assessors would still like to meet face to face as a panel, both to undertake the pre meeting and to be in the same room when undertaking the assessment.
- Online assessments time- several assessors stated that the online assessments are taking more time, either due to the odd connection issues or the need to clarify further points from different assessors. This has led to the occasional lack of break time between assessments. The length of time needed was also noted in the candidate feedback forms.
- There appears to be a lack of time allocated to a panel debrief re process. Obviously, the panel are discussing the candidates at the end of the sessions, however since going online it appears that not all are taking time to debrief how the sessions went. This may be due to the extended length of time needed in the online process.
- As noted above (in the documentation session) There is still some confusion around the use of TOC form A. Some of the newer assessors are seeking clarity around how and when this should be completed by themselves and returned to the office.
- There is a perception that certain questions in the question bank may be utilised more than others in the bank, whilst others are not used.

These issues need to be discussed at the 2022 TOC assessor review meeting.

A recent round of recruitment has resulted in 8 new assessors, including 1 chair. As it stands, in the first 9 months of 2022, there will be 25 assessors, 13 male and 12 female. Of these there are now 8 chairs, 2 of whom are female.

5 assessors including 4 chairs, are due to end their second term of office in October 2022. Leaving 20 assessors, within which there will only be 4 remaining chairs. In 2023, a further 5 assessors (including 2 chairs) are due to leave. By the end of 2023, there may be 15 assessors, including only 2 remaining chairs, unless new chairs are appointed.

The loss of the experienced chairs/assessors could significantly impact over the next 18 months. ***During this period new assessors, particularly chairs, will need to be continuously recruited, trained, and established into the TOC system. Current established assessors should be encouraged to apply for chair positions.***

Candidate and Assessor Feedback

Assessor Feedback Forms

All assessor feedback forms were reviewed, and peer feedback used as part of the assessor appraisals. Any issues noted, were raised, and discussed in appraisals, and are noted in the section above.

Candidate Feedback Forms

(E.g. Any significant and/or frequent issues highlighted.)

13 Candidate feedback forms were reviewed. The majority were happy with the process, including the online interview process. Only 1 candidate stated they would have preferred face to face, as they felt they may have performed better face to face.

One candidate stated they had had problems using Microsoft Teams, and internet connections. They suggested it may be helpful to ask candidates to download Teams pre interview.

One candidate discussed in detail, their view on the differences between the expectations and practices of North American chiropractors. If this is the case, this could potentially account for the lower FTPR's of candidates from the USA.

A couple of candidates offered lower scores around "I was told how the interview would be structured". One stated it would be useful to know in advance of the interview how this would be structured.

3 candidates commented on the length of the interview, one stating that it was nearly 2 hours in length.

Some candidates expressed technical difficulties when completing the online TOC application. Last year's report noted the same issue. It was recommended in that report that –

"It may be useful over the next year to undertake a test run of the online application process to quality assure the process".

As this is an ongoing issue, ***it is recommended that over the next year, either an assessor/chair or member of the GCC staff, tests the template for useability.***

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints and Appeals for this period.

There were no complaints or appeals during this period.

Review and Evaluation of the Process

Please provide comment on the annual review meeting.

The TOC assessor review meeting was held online in October 2021. 12 of the 17 assessors attended.

Developments made to the TOC process during 2020 were discussed and noted: -

- Updates to the Evidence of Practice Questionnaire (EPQ), as per requests from assessors at the last meeting.
- Guidance on remote interviews, and access to Microsoft Teams learning tools.
- Standard wording for chairs to start and end the assessment
- Review of TOC Form A.

Overall, the TOC team (including staff and assessors should be commended for actions taken during difficult times).

At this meeting the following issues were raised: -

- The online process – As per last year’s discussion, there were differing views regarding online assessments. Whilst noting that some assessors would prefer to meet at least as a panel to undertake the assessments, it was agreed for 2022 that all assessments would continue online. A review will take place at the next assessors meeting.
- Incomplete candidate documentation - This appears to be an ongoing issue, where some candidates are not providing adequate records to enable the panel to judge competence. This often resulted in the need for further evidence to be provided either pre or post assessment. Chairs were asked to advise the office if the candidate’s documentation was incomplete pre assessment. Further guidance has also recently been given online for candidates.
- GCC paper free policy – some assessors find it difficult and/or costly to print the candidate documentation. The majority are adapting to an online process, and candidate documentation has been amalgamated into one document for assessors, which appears to help. This documentation by candidates is however lengthy and detailed, and some assessors may need to continue to print at home.
- A discussion took place around the potential impact of remote interviews on those with protected characteristics. There was a perception that equality of opportunity had improved with online interviews. It was questioned however whether those with hearing problems may find it more difficult. It was agreed that the GCC would review the impact of remote assessments, particularly around those with hearing issues, and produce an Equality Impact Assessment.
- TOC form As- it was noted that all assessors should complete and return the forms, as this is a record of the assessment process. The chairs also submit TOC form Bs.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, 2021 was a busy year for the TOC assessment team, with 34 candidates assessed this year. The highest number of applicants since 2015. Of these 28 were ultimately eligible to apply for registration.

The main issue arising during these assessments this year, was where two candidates were suspected of copying and colluding with each other. Fortunately, both were assessed by the same panel, and the assessors and chair were observant and vigilant in

spotting this. Since then, a new collusion/plagiarism policy has been drafted, and is awaiting approval by the Education Committee in March.

The observation of the TOC process and review of documentation shows that due process is being followed. The process appears effective in assessing competence, and demonstrates that the assessors are as conscientious and professional as ever.

All 17 assessors were appraised, with no issues around individual performance, although several process issues were raised for further discussion at a future review meeting.

All assessment panels now have at least one female assessor on the panel, showing that the gender imbalance identified 3 years ago, has now been addressed by ongoing recruitment. There are still difficulties in recruiting female chairs. There are a significant number of assessors (10), including 7 experienced chairs who are all due to leave over the next 18 months. Whilst recruitment is ongoing, and 8 assessors were recruited recently, only one of these was a chair. The loss of this experience, expertise and tacit knowledge is quite significant, at a time when the number of panels and assessments are increasing.

The online process appears to be working well, although there are still a number some assessors who would prefer to meet as a panel face to face. This will be reviewed at the next meeting.

It was agreed that an equality impact assessment would be undertaken, to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged by the introduction of an online process.

Feedback from candidates was mainly positive, however there are some who are still struggling with the online template.

Recommendations

1. Ensure the collusion and plagiarism policy is approved and in place as soon as possible.
2. Remind all assessors that they are required to complete and submit form A as a record of the process. Consider whether chairs should collate these alongside the form B.
3. Review the issues raised from the assessor appraisals, at the next TOC review meeting.
4. Continue to recruit, train, and establish new assessors, particularly chairs. Encourage current assessors to apply for chair positions.
5. Following candidate feedback over the last two years, the online application should be tested by either an assessor/chair or a member of GCC staff to assure useability.
6. Share with the TOC team the outcome of the Equality Impact assessment.

Overall, this has been an extremely busy year for the TOC assessment team, with an increased number of panels and assessments. All involved should be commended for their inputs and effort during a difficult year.

Signed



Date: 01/03/2022

GCC response to the Test of Competence External Examiner's Report

Below is the response and actions to the suggestions and recommendations made by the External Examiner in her 2021 annual report.

Recommendation	Response	Planned Action (if applicable)
Ensure the collusion and plagiarism policy is approved and in place as soon as possible.	Having a policy in place to cover possible plagiarism or collusion is important and we would like to thank the External Examiner for drafting the policy.	For approval by the Education Committee on 30 March 2022.
Remind all assessors that they are required to complete and submit form A as a record of the process. Consider whether chairs should collate these alongside the form B.	It is an important aspect of the quality assurance process that all assessors complete the forms to ensure transparency and fairness of process.	Remind assessors to send through Form A after the TOC interview. Additionally, consider the process for provision of Form As at the TOC review meeting in October.
Review the issues raised from the assessor appraisals, at the next TOC review meeting.	We will review the issues raised and, where discussion is needed, include those in the agenda for the review meeting.	Review issues and include on review meeting agenda where needed.
Continue to recruit, train, and establish new assessors, particularly chairs. Encourage current assessors to apply for chair positions.	We recognise the need to both refresh and augment the pool but also that the first cohort of assessors come to the end of their term this year. New assessors have indicated their desire to become chairs once they have sat on panels as assessors and gained experience.	Conduct a recruitment round in late 2022. Implement a mentor programme for those eligible aspiring to be a chair.
Following candidate feedback over the last two years, the application template should be tested by either an assessor/chair or a member of GCC staff to assure useability.	A number of issues were reported during 2021, but not all have been resolved. Given the small number of TOC applications received other processes, such as new applications, retention and CPD, have taken priority. Additionally, we will review feedback provided by candidates to ensure these are taken into account too.	Review feedback to determine issues before passing back to developers to resolve

<p>Share with the TOC team the outcome of the Equality Impact assessment.</p>	<p>It is important that we consider the impact of the move to online interviews. We moved to using remote interviewing out of necessity at the beginning of the pandemic and need to understand if, and how, the process impacts on candidates.</p> <p>An assessment will be undertaken during 2022.</p>	<p>The Equality Impact assessment will be shared with those involved in the TOC.</p>
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