

LCQ17: Licensing Examination of Medical Council of Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

It is learnt that in the past two years, the various parts of the licensing examination (LE) administered by the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK) were repeatedly cancelled due to the epidemic. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of candidates who passed LE and obtained the practising qualifications in each of the past 10 years;

(2) whether it knows the respective numbers of candidates who completed the various parts of LE (namely Examination in Professional Knowledge, Proficiency Test in Medical English, and Clinical Examination) in each of the past five years;

(3) whether it knows the number of candidates who were affected by the cancellation of LEs in the past two years, and whether the authorities and MCHK have provided such persons with the necessary support; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that MCHK has cancelled the Clinical Examination originally scheduled for this month on the grounds of the epidemic again, and quite a number of medical practitioners are concerned that the cancellation of the examination by MCHK when the epidemic has subsided will further delay the manpower supply of medical practitioners, whether the Government has gained an understanding from MCHK about the biggest difficulty faced by it in holding the examination this month as scheduled; and

(5) whether it has assessed the impacts of repeated cancellation of LEs on the manpower supply of medical practitioners; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

As a statutory professional regulatory body, the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK) acts in accordance with its functions under the law, including the conduct of Licensing Examination (LE) to enable non-locally trained doctors to obtain full registration in Hong Kong.

In consultation with the MCHK, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan is as follows:

(1) The numbers of candidates who passed the LE of the MCHK in the past 10 years (i.e. for the period from 2012 to 2021) are as follows:

Year	Number of candidates
2012	47
2013	46
2014	74
2015	40
2016	41
2017	53
2018	51
2019	53
2020	0 (Note)
2021	34 (Note) (Only the relevant number of candidates in the 2021 LE (Second Sitting) is included)

(2) The LE of the MCHK comprises three parts, namely Part I: Examination in Professional Knowledge; Part II: Proficiency Test in Medical English; and Part III: Clinical Examination. The Clinical Examination covers four disciplines, namely medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology and paediatrics. Candidates must pass Part I and Part II before applying to sit for Part III.

The numbers of candidates who sat for the various parts of the LE of the MCHK and the numbers of those who passed the examination in the past five years (i.e. for the period from 2017 to 2021) are as follows:

Year	Part I: Examination in Professional Knowledge		Part II: Proficiency Test in Medical English		Part III: Clinical Examination	
	Number who sat the examination	Number who passed the examination	Number who sat the examination	Number who passed the examination	Number who sat the examination	Number who passed the examination
2017 (First Sitting)	109	31	45	40	63	27
2017 (Second Sitting)	116	29	44	44	63	26
2018 (First Sitting)	122	24	52	48	54	25
2018 (Second Sitting)	117	40	56	46	56	26

2019 (First Sitting)	145	53	80	58	70	21
2019 (Second Sitting)	124	18	69	61	70	32
2020 (First Sitting)	Examination cancelled					
2020 (Second Sitting)						
2021 (First Sitting)	106	42	60	60	Examination cancelled	
2021 (Second Sitting)	73	27	28	19	68	34

(3) Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the MCHK cancelled the two LEs originally scheduled for 2020, Part III: Clinical Examination of the 2021 LE (First Sitting) and Part III: Clinical Examination of the 2022 LE (First Sitting).

For the two LEs (Part I and Part II) originally scheduled for 2020, each received about 150 applications from eligible candidates. Even if the two examinations were not cancelled, due to the epidemic development, various quarantine requirements and border control restrictions, the actual number of candidates coming to Hong Kong for the examinations might have been smaller than that number.

For Part III: Clinical Examination, four sittings were cancelled, namely the 2020 LE (First and Second Sittings), the 2021 LE (First Sitting) and the 2022 LE (First Sitting). As the MCHK cancelled these examinations before the application periods, there was no information on the respective numbers of candidates.

According to the MCHK's current guidelines on the validity of passes, candidates who have passed Part I and Part II may apply to sit for Part III: Clinical Examination up to five times within five years. In addition, a candidate who has passed three out of the four disciplines in Part III in one go can retain those passes for one further attempt for the failed discipline in either of the following two scheduled sittings.

As the two LEs scheduled for 2020 and Part III: Clinical Examination of the 2021 LE (First Sitting) and the 2022 LE (First Sitting) were cancelled, the MCHK has accordingly extended the validity of relevant passes obtained by the candidates in different parts of the LE.

(4) and (5) Having regard to the drastic deterioration of the epidemic situation in the fifth wave of the COVID-19 in Hong Kong, and the need to safeguard public health and safety while ensuring the smooth operation of LEs, the MCHK has decided to cancel Part III: Clinical Examination of the 2022 LE (First Sitting) scheduled for May 2022.

The Government has been closely monitoring the supply of doctors and adopting a multi-pronged approach to address the shortage of doctors in our healthcare system. Apart from continuously increasing the number of local medical training places, the Government has also been actively seeking to attract qualified non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong through various means, including improving the LE arrangements; enhancing the attractiveness of limited registration; promoting the various registration pathways to persons residing outside Hong Kong and amending the Medical Registration Ordinance (Cap. 161) to create a new pathway for non-locally trained doctors to obtain full registration in Hong Kong as an alternative to the current pathway of passing the LE, subject to certain criteria being met. The Government also announced the first batch of 27 recognised medical qualifications in end April 2022.

The Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the MCHK to ensure that it will continue to conduct the LE regularly for qualified non-locally trained doctors to obtain full registration in Hong Kong.

Note: Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the MCHK cancelled the two LEs originally scheduled for 2020 as well as the 2021 LE (First Sitting).