

## PUBLIC HEARING

### Registration Appeals Committee

25 July 2025

**Name:** HATOOR, Mohamad

**Case number:** CAS-210773-W1L5B0

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**General Dental Council:** Leila Tai, Counsel  
Instructed by Sushuma Chandrasekhar, IHLAS

**Registrant:** Present  
Unrepresented

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**Outcome:** Appeal dismissed

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**Committee members:** Peter Watson (Lay) (Chair)  
Pooja Pattni (DCP)  
Sulaman Anwar (Dentist)

**Legal adviser:** Trevor Jones

**Committee Secretary:** Paul Carson

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Mr Hatoor,

1. This is an appeal against the registrar's decision not to grant you registration on the DCP register under the title of Dental Therapist. The issue on appeal is whether you have the necessary knowledge of English in accordance with the requirements of section 36C(6)(aa) of the Dentists Act 1984 (the "Act").

*Background*

2. You are a British Citizen by birth and informed the Committee that you live between the United Kingdom, where your family reside, and Iraq, where you practise as a Dentist.
3. You qualified in 2004 with the degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery from the College of Dentistry, University of Baghdad, Iraq. The degree was taught in English. Between 2005 and 2006 you completed your vocational training in Iraq and have since practised there except for periods when you have returned to the UK to be with your family. You informed the Committee that you communicate with your patients mainly in Arabic, except for approximately 4-5 patients a month where you communicate in English. You stated that your clinical records, prescriptions and referrals are all written in English.
4. On 24 February 2023 you applied for registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) as a Dental Therapist, relying on your overseas qualification as a dentist and the provisions of section 36C of the Act (as in force at the time) which require you to satisfy the registrar of a number of matters, including, so far as is relevant to this appeal, "Matter D".
5. Among the requirements specified under Matter D is a requirement that you have '*the necessary knowledge of English*'. Section 53(1) of the Act defines the necessary knowledge of English for these purposes as being '*(b)... a knowledge of English which, in the interests of the person and the person's patients, is necessary for the practice of a profession complementary to dentistry in the United Kingdom.*'
6. In accordance with section 36CA of the Act, the GDC has published corresponding guidance: 'Evidence of English language competence: Guidance for applicants' – July 2017 ('the Guidance').
7. The Guidance provides that: '*You must be sufficiently fluent in written and spoken English to communicate effectively with patients, their relatives, the dental team and other healthcare professionals in the United Kingdom.*' The following four types of evidence are set out in the Guidance as being likely to be accepted by the GDC for this purpose:
  - Type 1: An International English Language Testing System (IELTS) certificate with an overall average score of 7 (and no less than a minimum of 6.5 in any of the modules).
  - Type 2: A recent primary dental qualification that has been taught and examined in English.
  - Type 3: A recent pass in a language test for registration with a regulatory authority in a country where the first language is English.

- Type 4: Recent experience of practising in a country where the first language is English.

8. Paragraph 23 of the Guidance defines 'recent' as meaning evidence relating to English language competence that is less than two years old at the point of the application being submitted to the GDC.

*Your application and appeal*

9. In support of your application, you relied upon your academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) results in January 2025 in which you obtained an overall band score of 7 with modular scores of 8 for speaking, 7 for listening, 6 for reading and 6 for writing. Your overall IELTS score met the threshold prescribed by the Guidance but your scores for the reading and writing modules each fell short of the threshold by 0.5.

10. The GDC wrote to you on 25 February 2025 refusing your application, explaining that:

*'You advised you sat an academic IELTS in March 2021 and email [sic] dated 21 November 2024 was sent to you requesting a copy of the IELTS certificate for verification to be provided. You subsequently replied to this email advising the test center where you took the exam is not recognized [sic] by the British Council and you have booked a test for 11 January 2025. You provided an email dated 24 January 2025 with regarding your academic IELTS result with a TRF reference number [...] confirming you received a score 7.0 overall, a copy of your IELTS certificate was requested but not provided.*

*The TRF reference number [...] was used to verify your IELTS results, unfortunately this does not meet our criteria as you have not scored a minimum of 6.5 in the reading and writing categories.*

*In order to demonstrate that you have the necessary knowledge of English we require a successful academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) result confirming a minimum overall score of 7 and no less than 6.5 in each of the four sections. as you scored 6.0 in both the reading & writing categories you have not provided evidence of successful academic IELTS.'*

11. It is against this decision which you appeal. You lodged your appeal on 27 March 2025 in which you asserted that you possess the necessary knowledge of English to practise as a Dental Therapist and that the registrar had failed to take into account factors, other than the IELTS test, which indicate that you have the necessary knowledge of English. You set out the following factors for consideration on appeal:

- you are a British citizen by birth and completed your education in English. Therefore your proficiency in the language is more than enough and/or sufficient for professional practice;
- the overall IELTS score met the required threshold, in particular in listening and speaking;

- the slightly lower scores in reading and writing are not a reflection of your ability to comprehend or express yourself in English but rather were as a result of time constraints and specific techniques required for the IELTS examination;
- these factors do not diminish your competency in a real world professional setting;
- you are willing to offer additional evidence if an opportunity is given to re-sit the IELTS examination.

*The hearing 25 July 2025*

12. The Committee met today to hear your appeal.
13. You provided the Committee with the results of a further academic IELTS examination which you took on 10 July 2025. These results gave an overall band score of 7 with modular scores of 8.5 for speaking, 6.5 for listening, 6.5 for reading and 6 for writing.
14. Accordingly, your scores for the speaking and reading modules had each increased by 0.5 whilst your score for listening had decreased by 0.5. Your score for writing remained unchanged at 6. It is therefore now only the writing module for which you fail to demonstrate a minimum score of 6.5 required by the Guidance.
15. The Committee heard oral evidence from you on affirmation.
16. The Committee had regard to the submissions made on behalf of the registrar by Ms Tai and to those which you made on your own behalf.
17. Ms Tai submitted that the decision of the registrar had been reached correctly in accordance with the Guidance. She submitted that you do not demonstrate the necessary knowledge of English in accordance with the requirements of the Guidance and that your appeal should therefore be dismissed.
18. In anticipation of a secondary submission from you for the Committee to remit the case to the registrar with the direction that you be given a further period within which to resit the academic IELTS examination in the hope of obtaining a higher score, Ms Tai submitted that there is nothing in law which prevents the Committee from giving such a direction. However, she submitted that such a direction would be unprecedented and would circumvent the purpose of the hearing, which is to decide the case on the basis of the evidence available today.
19. You submitted that you demonstrate the necessary knowledge of English for the purposes of registration with the GDC as a Dental Therapist. You referred the Committee to your British Citizenship, to the fact that you were born in this country and visit often, that your Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree was taught in English and that there is only a marginal shortfall in your IELTS score of 0.5. You referred the Committee to the variable nature of IELTS results, citing the marginal differences in your score from January 2025 and July 2025 as an example. You also stated that the written module component of the IELTS examination tested your ability to comprehend and write about subjects for which you had no prior knowledge, including scenarios such as the Blue Stones in Wales, or the Economy of Japan in the 1960's. You stated that you would have scored far higher on the written module had you instead been

asked to write about clinical matters within your knowledge, which is what would be relevant to registration as a Dental Therapist.

20. Accordingly, you submitted that your appeal should be allowed. If the Committee were to be against you on that point, you made a secondary submission that the Committee should exercise its power under paragraph 4(8)(d) of Schedule 4A to the Act to remit the case to the registrar with the direction that you be given a further period of six months or so within which to resit the academic IELTS examination in the hope of obtaining a higher score.

### *Decision*

21. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

22. The Committee first had regard to the requirements of the Guidance. Whilst the Guidance is not binding, the Committee could identify no basis on which to depart from its clear and carefully formulated terms. The Guidance provides an objective means of assessing English competency to ensure that the overarching objective of the GDC is met and that all applicants for registration are assessed equally within a clearly stated framework.

23. The Committee determined that you do not meet the requirements of the Guidance, as you do not demonstrate a minimum score of 6.5 for the writing module of the IELTS examination. The Committee acknowledges that the shortfall in this modular score is marginal but the fact remains that you do not meet the minimum threshold allowed by the Guidance. To waive that threshold would result in an inconsistent application of the Guidance and would deprive the Council of any objective means of meeting the overarching objective when assessing whether an applicant had the necessary knowledge of English for the purposes of registration.

24. The onus is on you to demonstrate that you have the necessary knowledge of English and you have been unable to do so to the standard set out in the Guidance.

25. The Committee had regard to the wider factors on which you rely but concluded that these do not meet the requirements of the Guidance. Being a British Citizen and regularly visiting the United Kingdom is not sufficient to establish the necessary knowledge of English for the purposes of professional registration with the GDC. Whilst your Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree was taught in English, this was more than two years ago. You have recent experience of practising in Iraq but English is not officially the main language in that country. Other than a small number of patients, you communicate with your patients in Arabic.

26. Accordingly, the Committee regrettably determines that you do not satisfy Matter D in respect of the necessary knowledge of English. Your appeal therefore falls to be dismissed.

27. The Committee had regard to whether to instead remit the case to the registrar to allow you more time within which to resit the IELTS examination. The Committee determined that such a direction would be inappropriate, as it would circumvent the purpose of the hearing, which is to decide the appeal on the basis of the evidence currently available. The Committee noted that you had already taken the IELTS examination again earlier this month but did not meet the required threshold. The Committee acknowledges that

there might be a marginal variability in IELTS results from one examination to another but that could be said of any type of test.

28. Accordingly, your appeal is therefore dismissed.