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**HEARING AID COUNCIL**

**OBJECTIVE STRUCTURED  
PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS.**

**OSPEs 2007(1)**

**MODERATOR'S REPORT  
OCT 2007**

**G R Kirk**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the ninth report to the Hearing Aid Council on the HAC examinations (written examination, practical examination and early resits for the practical examination) and will focus on only the practical examinations comprising the 2007(1) examination cycle. An earlier report looked at the Written Examinations for 2007(1).

The McLauchlan Review of the HAC OSPEs was completed in March 2007 and subsequently considered by the Examining Body and the Council. Many of its reviews have been accepted. The recommendations and proposed changes to the existing OSPEs will be phased in with some of the changes being made to this current examination cycle. Further details can be found in the relevant Chief Examiner's Report but it can be briefly said here that the main physical changes in this cycle were the removal of Station 3 (Pure Tone Audiometry Error identification) and Station 14 (Communication Errors). This meant that only 10 Stations were now required instead of the original 12. In order to keep disruption to a minimum, existing pathways were used which meant that each candidate would have 5 rest stations. The marking schemes for Stations 5 & 6 were simplified in line with the McLauchlan Review. There were some other minor organisational changes to Stations 9 & 12 but no material changes to any of the remaining OSPE stations.

Procedures carried out were similar to those used by the Moderator to produce reports on previous examinations and includes comments from the invigilator's team, candidates, their trainers and members of the examining team.

The Hearing Aid Council's "**Protocol for Conducting Examinations**" - approved by Council 29.09.2005 (PFCE) was the guide document for running these examinations and will be used as the basis for this report. This set of practical examinations was slightly different in that some resit candidates were allowed to take their appropriate resit OSPEs during the first main OSPE examination. This produced the need for some careful planning of candidate pathways which all seemed to flow well on the examination sessions. Once again, it is to the credit of the examining team, invigilators and the partnership between Hearing Aid Council staff and staff from Anglia Ruskin University that these examinations went smoothly during this period of change.

## 2. MAIN EXAMINATIONS – OSPEs (11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> June 07)

- a) This was the fourth time that the practical examinations were held in the format of **Objective Structured Practical Examinations** (OSPEs). Once again, from the candidates' point of view, the OSPEs ran without any serious mishap.
- b) A full examiners' meeting took place on the evening of Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2007 in Milton Keynes.

- c) 108 candidates attended the OSPEs in 8 sessions over 5 days in the Abbey Suite of the National Hockey Stadium, Milton Keynes. Individual arrangements were made for 5 candidates.
- d) The Invigilator, Sue Gray, has provided detailed written comments about the practicals. A copy of the Invigilator's report on the main OSPE is attached to this report.
- e) The Chief Examiner has provided a full and detailed report on the OSPEs and the resits with comments from each examiner on each station. Some additional comments are outlined below.
- f) An analysis and overview of the pass rates for the 12 stations over the OSPEs from 2005(2) to 2007(1) inclusive is attached. Note that only 10 stations are examined in the 2007(1) data. Furthermore, as there was a mix of first attempt OSPE candidates and resit candidates, the figures are not straightforward and must be interpreted with care.
- g) As is common practice, all stations were marked at the end of each session, pooled during the examiners' meetings each day and stored on the Chief Examiner's and Moderator's computers.
- h) An analysis of each of the 10 examined OSPE stations was carried out and frequency plots for each station are attached to this report. Stations 1, 2, 5, 6, 10 & 13 show pleasing and anticipated results. However, the remaining Stations 7, 9, 11 & 12 show puzzling and worrying data. Attention needs to be paid to the examiner's comments for those stations.

### 3. OSPE RE-SITS – 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> JULY 2007

As is customary, an examiners' meeting took place on the Sunday evening before the resits 29<sup>th</sup> July 2007. Further discussion took place on the further changes needed to prepare the OSPEs for full implementation of the McLauchlan Review and to update stations 5 & 6 with respect to software and hearing aids.

- (a) The OSPE resits were planned for 61 candidates retaking 138 sessions over 3 sessions. Resits took place in the Cranfield Suite of the Hilton Hotel, Milton Keynes.

STATION	ST1	ST2	ST5	ST6	ST7	ST9	ST10	ST11	ST12	ST13
No CANDS	5	11	4	11	22	21	7	17	20	20

- (b) There were no changes to the OSPE stations or marking schemes.
- (c) The resits were planned well and run efficiently without mishap.
- (d) A report on the OSPE resits from the Invigilator, Sue Gray, is attached to this report.

#### 4. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

A total of 48 candidates were interviewed by the Moderator over the two OSPE sessions. Of these, 19 had requested to speak to the Moderator. Many of the queries were similar and were concerned with practicalities at stations. However, more serious comments and allegations have been made during and after this examination cycle. 3 candidates made specific adverse comments on examiners' behaviours and their comments made during their examination sessions. One candidate asked for a pathway that specifically excluded an examiner. I asked the candidates for more information to be sent to me, in confidence, so that any further action could be considered. No information has been received.

An allegation has also been made that candidates have sabotaged an examination station after they have attempted it. This is a very sad and worrying allegation but no further details have been forthcoming.

One candidate arrived at the examination not knowing which station or stations s/he had to resit!!

A comment was made by one candidate that they were not allowed to use an insert phone for masking during station 11.

One candidate thought there was negative marking on Station 12 and sought advice from the Moderator.

Making notes at rest stations caused some confusion must not be used during actual station assessments.

General comments on the change of venue for the resits were very positive.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

**The changes to the OSPE stations and the relocation of the resit examinations have been implemented and delivered efficiently and without mishap to any candidate.**

**There remain worrying results and trends from Stations 7, 9, 12 and 13.**

**Further changes to the contents of the OSPE changes should now be planned for future OSPEs to incorporate the following changes:-**

- a) Software and hearing aid upgrades for stations 5 & 6.**
- b) Redesign of current Station 2 to reflect McLauchlan's recommendations.**
- c) Layout and labelling of stations with a consideration of the number of rest stations.**
- d) Revision of the Candidate Information and Guidance leaflet and other web documents.**

**The benefits of any further investment of skill, time and energy in the development of the OSPE stations must be balanced against the future of the OSPE process and the Hearing Aid Council examinations.**

## **Invigilators Report – MAIN OSPEs - June 2007**

1. Once again from an invigilators point of view these exams ran well. Most candidates arrived on time and with the correct documentation. It would have been helpful if there had been some kind of indication that the 3 candidates that failed to turn up for the written exam may not turn up for the practical exam. The cloakroom arrangements worked well and all sessions started on time or early.
2. The documentation provided by Anglia Ruskin University was excellent and the pathways for the first 7 sessions worked well. The problem of the pathways for the dyslexic candidates was spotted early enough to be rectified, and the 5 candidates appreciated the new pathways. When all 5 candidates were in the rest station together the amount of time allowed to read the instructions could be tailored to fit the need, (this was done once and the candidates had 8 mins at the rest station) The information for the dyslexic candidates was collected and collated the day before so that it was ready for them to read at the start of the exam. Rest stations were amalgamated in the centre of the room for this last session.
3. Security in the stadium was very poor, and could have caused a problem. A couple of people were allowed to view the room unsupervised before the exams started one morning.
4. The sealed answer boxes were often opened before the end of the exam.
5. There were no headphones for candidates at rest station 4. Candidates can hear what is being said at stations 5&6.
6. The number of candidates who do not wish to have their ear examined has increased, and it is very fortunate that both Brenda and Bill are prepared to be examined. Without their assistance it would be a problem.
7. More candidates than ever before are making notes in the rest station and then taking and using them in the examined stations. For the first time ever candidates asked if they could make notes in the waiting area whilst the first 2 candidates were being examined, This is unfair on the 2 candidates who start early and therefore do not get a chance to use this period for note making. I will alter my welcome and instruction to candidate's speech to inform them that whilst they can make notes at a rest station they cannot use them in the examined stations.
8. The policy on what to do in the event of a fire needs to be looked at. It would be useful if there were 2 folders with the names and addresses of all candidates, examiners and invigilators and on what days they were attending. One folder could be lodged with the reception desk of the venue and one list kept by a member of the examining team.
9. Name badges were not worn by everybody. Is this a problem?
10. A difficult situation occurs when new boxes are delivered into the exam room in the middle of an OSPE and stations are packed away as soon as they are finished.
11. One candidate asked if negative marking was used at any of the stations and a sign was put in station 2.
12. On the Friday I was asked to change the pathways for 2 candidates to allow 2 examiners to, leave early. These were changed whilst they were waiting in the welcome area before the introductory speech. All the candidates had been checked and were ready for the start. It was mentioned that the Moderator had seen the changes suggested, and I was led to believe that if it could be arranged it was acceptable. I had little time to consider the implications for the exam (by changing the stations the observation program was impossible to follow.
13. Minor problems with candidates are noted on the time logs for each day.

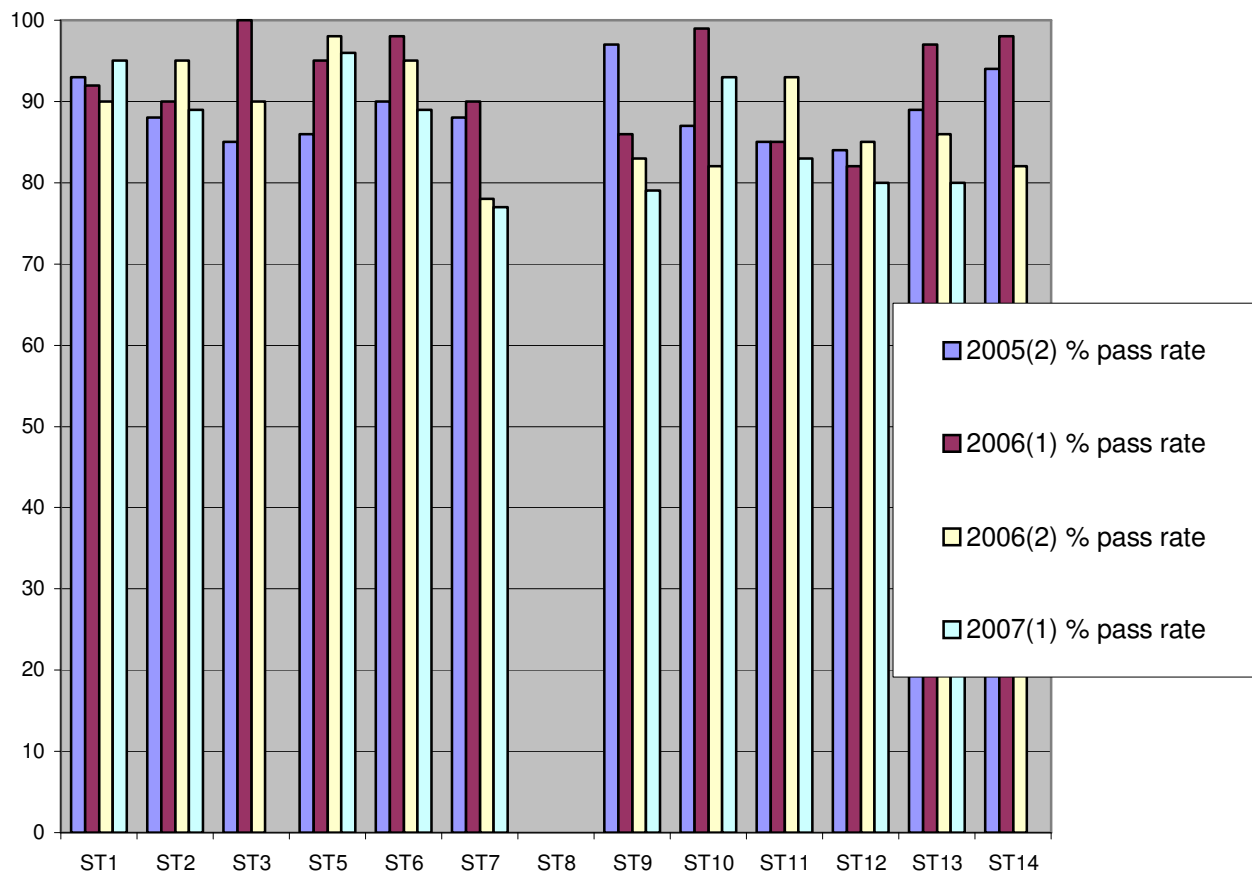
**Sue Gray June 2007**

## Invigilators Report – RESIT OSPEs - July 2007

- 1 The new venue at the Hilton worked well from the invigilators point of view; the only problem we encountered was that it was impossible for the invigilator in the waiting area to communicate with the main room. With forward planning we could have solved this with a mobile phone set to vibrate instead of ringing as we do for the extra dyslexic candidates in the written exam.
- 2 The screens around each station need to be positioned so that the unstaffed stations that are supervised by the invigilators can be easily seen (we did move the screens around station 13 for this reason)
- 3 The documentation provided by Anglia Ruskin was excellent, and the pathways worked well. The candidates are asked to put their date of birth on the security sheets, but we were unable to check these as they did not appear on the address list that we cross check with.
- 4 Most candidates arrived on time and with the correct documentation
- 5 The cloakroom and waiting area worked well, although it was very difficult to monitor the trips to the toilet as there were a lot of candidates and some were waiting for the Moderator, some for luggage as well as the movement to and from the exam sessions. At least 90% of candidates did visit the toilet during the session, which is why it may be advisable to have rest stations in a full OSPE. The idea of having the rest stations away from the main exam room seemed to be popular with the candidates, and it would cause fewer disturbances for the candidates being examined.
- 6 The number of candidates unable to be an ear causes problems and it was fortunate that Brenda, the Moderator, the chief examiner and Stuart Holland were prepared to help out.
- 7 My opening speech was modified to include the fact that whilst they could make notes on their flight paths these notes could then **not be used in the examined sessions**. One candidate did ask for blank paper in the waiting area so that s/he could make extra notes but s/he was advised to just use the back of the flight path.
- 8 Station 9 needs to be sited away from a cold air conditioning vent as this was delaying the setting of the material. Candidate \*\*\*\*\* was allowed an extra 1 min to compensate for this
- 9 Stuart Holland and Layla Mearns were escorted into the exam room on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July by the Moderator and introduced to those examiners and invigilators present.
- 10 Provision for the dyslexic candidate seemed to be very adequate as s/he was observed not to use all of the rests periods to read the instructions.
- 11 Candidates only sitting station 6 were asked in the waiting area which hearing aid they would be working on and this cut down on the delays between sessions.
- 12 I am still concerned about the provisions made for checking on candidates in the event of a fire. (As I indicated in the report for June 2007)
- 13 Overnight security of the exam room needs to be considered. On Tuesday morning when we arrived in the waiting area at 8.45am there was a candidate already in the room. All the doors to the exam room were open.
- 14 Minor problems with candidates are logged on the time sheets.

**Sue Gray August 2007**

## FIRST TIME PASS RATES FOR EACH STATION OVER 4 OSPE CYCLES



### Note

Station 3 & Station 14 were withdrawn for 2007(1) examinations  
 Station 8 is a rest station but was an examined station in earlier OSPEs.

# CANDIDATE MARKS FREQUENCY COUNTS FOR EACH OSPE EXAMINATION STATION 2007(1)

