

Action being taken on doctor scheme

A number of steps have already been taken on recommendations of the Working Party on unregistrable doctors in a bid to get the scheme off the ground as quickly as possible.

The Medical Council has named Sir Albert Rodrigues to be the Chairman of the Licentiate Committee of the council and consultations with the British Medical Association, the Hongkong Medical Association and the University of Hongkong are taking place on the appointment of the remaining members of the Licentiate Committee.

The main functions of the committee will be to determine the eligibility of candidates and to be responsible for all the arrangements related to the grant of the licence proposed in the Working Party's report.

It will be assisted in this by sub-committees, and membership of these bodies will not be confined to members of the council.

The Medical Council has invited the head of the Orthopaedic Surgery Department, University of Hongkong, Professor Arthur Yau, to be Chairman of the Examination Sub-committee, the Director of Post-graduate Medical Education at the University of Hongkong, Professor Cecil Lewis, to be Chairman of the Externship Sub-committee, and Mr John Swaine, QC, to be Chairman of the Review Sub-committee. Mr Ian Young has been appointed Secretary of the Licentiate Committee.

Staffing proposals have been submitted to the secretariat and it is hoped that applications will soon be invited for the post of Administrator (Licentiate).

The administrator will carry overall responsibility for the general running of the licentiate



Sir Albert

and will be Chairman of the Credentials Sub-committee.

The Working Party's report, which was published at the end of August, is now on sale in both English and Chinese and can be bought from the Government Publications Centre at \$10 a copy.

The report proposes that unregistrable doctors who wish to practise in Hongkong should be eligible to take a three-part examination and serve a period of 18 months externship during which they would receive refresher training and their clinical expertise would be assessed.

Those who successfully pass the examination and satisfactorily complete the externship would be eligible to become licentiates of the Medical Council of Hongkong and as such, to practise in Hongkong subject to the same conditions as registered medical practitioners.

The report recommended that no candidates should be exempted from the examination.

Concerning unregistrable doctors now working in the Government medical service, in the University of Hongkong and in registered clinics, the Working Party concluded that while such experience would be relevant and useful to those taking the examination it should not exempt them from the need to do so.

The proposed examination, the report said, should be so designed that it should present no particular problems for adequately trained and experienced candidates including those for whom textbook study might no longer be easy.

As the maintenance of standards must be paramount, the Working Party considered that any person who could not or did not successfully take the proposed examination should not be granted the licentiate.

As regards externship, however, the report noted that the Medical Council would have discretion to exempt any candidate who has been serving in the Medical and Health Department or at the University of Hongkong from all or part of the prescribed period of externship after considering the posts the individual had filled and his overall proven competency.

More generally, the report recommends that the Medical Council have authority to reduce the period prescribed for externship in individual cases.

The report further indicates that those unregistrable doctors at present practising in the Medical Department or in the clinics should not be prevented from continuing with their present employment, even if they should attempt the examination and fail.

It is hoped to hold the first examination in 1976 and the preparatory work, including the drafting of legislation, is being carried out with all possible speed.