European Registration Process for genetic counsellors and genetic nurses

This document outlines the process of registration for genetic counsellors and genetic nurses in Europe, as per the steps shown in Figure 1.

Section 1. Eligibility to register – Master level education

All registered genetic counsellors and registered genetic nurses should be educated at Master level; for genetic counsellors this should be a Master degree in genetic counselling, for genetic nurses a Master degree in genetic nursing.

Master level degrees for training and education of genetic counsellors and genetic nurses should comply with the recommended core curriculum. Graduates of those courses that do not comply may not be eligible for registration, or may be asked to complete additional practical experience or provide additional proof of competence (above what is normally required) before they can be registered.

Section 2. Registration requirements

A new graduate does not have the competence to work autonomously as a genetic counsellor or genetic nurse within the multi-disciplinary team. A period of two years (or equivalent if the practitioner works part-time) of practice within a genetic healthcare environment should precede registration to enable practitioners to develop all the competences approved by the ESHG. This practice could be undertaken in one or more departments, as long as the professional was involved in provision of genetic counselling.

Registrants who practice within one specialist area of genetics (for example, oncogenetics or cardiogenetics) will be required to have some experience in general genetics and manage at least ten cases outside their specialisation (see case log requirements in Section 3.

Section 3. Assessment of competence and registration process

Assessment of competence and suitability to be placed on the European register of genetic nurses and counsellors must be made by experienced genetic nurses and genetic counsellors. Due to the different needs of each professional group, one part of the register will be designated for genetic counsellors and one for genetic nurses.

Where no national registration system exists, an assessment of the individual's competence will be made before they can be registered. The assessment strategy below has been based on the model suggested by Miller[5], which states that the level of clinical competence is shown by the ability of the practitioner to demonstrate skill in relation to clinical cases. Each section of the process below is designed to

examine professional ability in relation to the competences for genetic counsellors. Assessment will be based on the applicant satisfactorily submitting all of the following:

- **References**

A minimum of two structured references. One should be from a senior colleague, either a registered genetic counsellor or registered genetic nurse, or a senior medical geneticist who has worked closely with the applicant during the two year period of preparation for registration. The first referee should have been present as an observer during at least two consultations undertaken by the counsellor and provide a short report on the counsellor's competence related to those observations.

The second reference should be from the applicant's line manager. Where the line manager does not work in the department with the applicant, a third reference from a senior colleague will be required. The references should address the ways in which the applicant:

a) works within the European genetic counsellor Code of Ethics.

b) manages a clinical caseload

c) has access to and uses both counselling and clinical supervision

d) maintains their professional knowledge and skills

e) interacts with members of the multi-disciplinary team.

Form B will be used for the references.

- **Case log**

A case log of at least 50 cases, demonstrating the applicant's competence. The case log must be verified by the applicant's manager or a senior colleague. Form C will be used to record the case log. The initial contact with the family must have taken place no more than 3 years before the application for registration date. Cases seen by the registrant during the master's course cannot be used.

- **Case studies**

Two case studies focusing on a) use of counselling skills and b) ethical aspects of practice. Each case study is to be between 2000 and 2500 words. The case studies may be written in the applicant's preferred language and professionally translated into English (both the original and the translated copy should be submitted). Instructions for writing the case studies are included in Appendix 1.

- **Scientific essays**

Two short scientific essays, focused on a single gene disorder and a chromosomal abnormality. Registrants will be asked to write an explanation of the underlying mutation or abnormality and the method of laboratory testing used to support diagnosis of the condition. See Appendix 1 for more details.

- **Continuing Professional Development Record**

A record of Continuing Professional Development undertaken in the previous two years. The applicant must have at least 30 hours of continuing education per year. Of these hours, 10 must be taken via sources external to the department (such as conferences or educational courses). The remaining hours may include: private study of journal articles (up to 5 hours), journal clubs, departmental seminars and preparation for teaching.

Continuing professional development will be recorded on Form C and should be signed by the departmental manager.

Section 4. Grandfather clause

There are a number of experienced health professionals working as genetic counsellors currently. For those genetic counsellors and genetic nurses working in a country where there is no current system of registration on 1st June, 2013, we will introduce a Grandfather clause for the limited period of five years (i.e. until 2018). The following arrangements will apply:

a. Genetic counsellors who have completed a two-year Master degree in genetic counselling (which included practice placements) and have worked as a genetic counsellor for at least three years full time (or equivalent part-time) are eligible for European registration after completing a reduced portfolio, comprising a case log of 50 cases (verified by a senior colleague), and references from a manager and senior colleague.

b. Genetic counsellors who have undertaken a one year course in genetic counselling and have worked as a genetic counsellor for at least four years full time (or equivalent part- time) are eligible for European registration after completing a reduced portfolio, comprising a case log of 50 cases (verified by a senior colleague), references from a manager and a senior colleague and two case studies.

c. Genetic counsellors who have not undertaken as specific course in genetic counselling and have completed five years of experience (full time (or equivalent part-time) are eligible for European registration after completing a full portfolio and a written multi-choice questionnaire (MCQ) examination to assess knowledge of

genetic science. The examination will be conducted online and the applicant must be supervised during the examination by a senior colleague.

Similar arrangements for genetic nurses will exist.

Section 5. Registration by an applicant already registered in a European Country

Where a rigorous national system of registration exists, we propose that practitioners who are already registered could apply for entry onto the European register without the need for additional assessment. In such cases, the national registration system will be assessed and approved by the EBMG. In some cases, additional evidence of competence may be required by the European Board. Conversely, national boards may require additional evidence when registering an applicant who already has European registration. Registration at European level will not supersede local registration systems where those exist. Applicants from countries where a national registration system existed before 1st June 2013 will not be eligible for European registration via the grandfather clause.

Section 6. Applications

Registrants will be asked to submit an initial application form (Form A), giving notification of their wish to register by 15th September in each year. Those who are eligible to apply will be asked to submit their full application by 15th January of the following year and will be informed of the outcome of their application by 15th April.

Each application will be assessed by two members of the Board, one from the applicant's country and another member. Where there is any discrepancy in the assessment between the two assessors, the Chairman of the Board will be asked to make a decision. Those registrants who are asked to make minor amendments may resubmit these by 1st September for consideration, no further fee will be charged. Those who need to make major amendments can resubmit on 15th January the following year (a further application fee will be payable).

Section 7. Maintenance of registration

In most cases, registration will be granted for a period of five years. Registrants will then have to renew registration through submission of a record of continuing professional development and two references, from the departmental manager and a senior colleague.

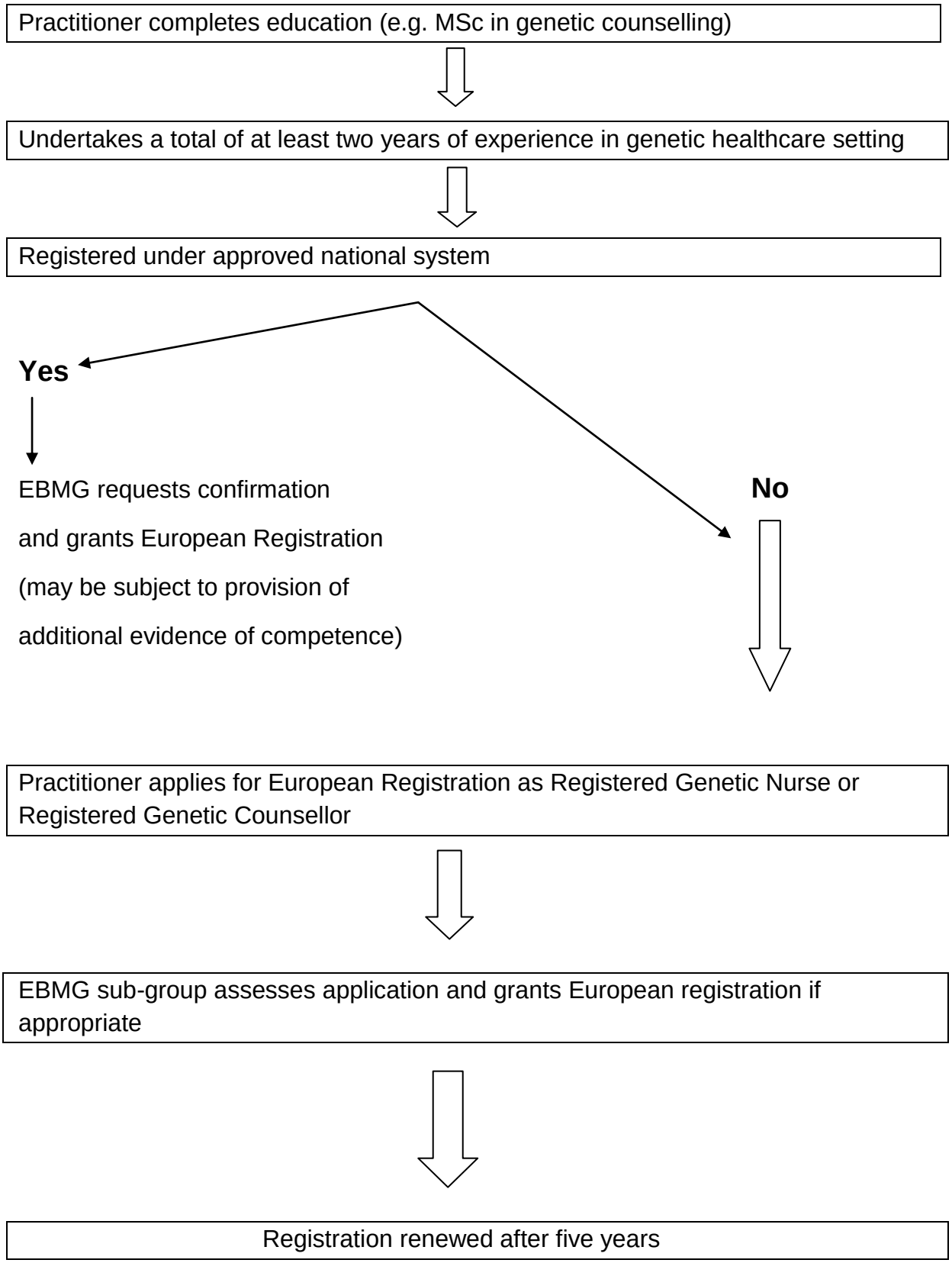
The record of Continuing Professional Development should indicate how the registrant has maintained their learning through at least 30 hours of continuing education per year. Of these hours, 10 must be taken via sources external to the

department (such as conferences or educational courses). The remaining hours may include: private study of journal articles (up to 5 hours), journal clubs, departmental seminars and preparation for teaching.

Section 8. Proposed fees

Application for registration	Includes assessment and initial five year registration cost	During 2013 and 2014 €150 2015 €200
Application for European registration by a person who is already registered under a recognized national system	Includes assessment and initial five year registration cost	During 2013 and 2014 €50 2015 €80
Renewal of registration for five years		2018 €200
		All fees payable to the EBMG.

Figure 1. Flow chart demonstrating process



European Board of Medical Genetics

Appendix 1. Case study and assignment information

Case studies

You must write two case studies. These can be written in your own language and translated into English to a professional standard. Submit copies in both languages.

You must reference all significant statements with current and appropriate references and provide a reference list at the end of the case study. Use the Harvard system of referencing, providing author names and year of publication in the text. The title and reference list are not included in the word count.

The word count for each case study is 2000-2500 words

Case Study 1 should focus on a psychosocial family issue and the way in which it was addressed by the counsellor.

Case Study 2 should focus on an ethical issue, and should demonstrate the applicant's awareness of the ethical issues surrounding genetic counselling, and the principles that underpin practice.

Suggested structure:

A good case study should include:

- A brief introduction to the clinical setting (do not name the institution)
- A description of the case (use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality of all individuals)
- Discussion of the issues in this case, integrated with theory and research evidence related to the case
- Conclusion to the case.

Science assignments

You must write two assignments to demonstrate your ability to apply scientific concepts to practice. Each one should be between 900-1100 words.

Assignment 1. Explain the genetic basis for neurofibromatosis type 1 and the genetic tests commonly used to detect a mutation.

Assignment 2. Explain the most common genetic causes of Prader-Willi syndrome (including an explanation of imprinting) and the genetic tests commonly used to detect the condition.

You must reference all significant statements with current and appropriate references and provide a reference list at the end of the assignment. Use the Harvard system of referencing, providing author names and year of publication in the text. The title and reference list are not included in the word count.