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REFLEXOLOGY QUALIFICATIONS 2010-11

Dear Potential Reflexologist,

Thank you for your interest in gaining a qualification through Oxford School of Reflexology. This letter explains some of the changes that are currently taking place in the qualification structure for reflexology, and what OSR is doing about it.

The key qualification in reflexology has been the Level 3 Vocationally Related Qualification in Reflexology, administered by the Awarding Bodies Consortium (ABC) exam board. This has been the recognised standard for admission to the Association of Reflexologists (AoR). Both ABC and AoR carried out stringent checks on the standards of training and education delivered by their Accredited Centres, of which OSR was one. OSR took the basic qualification and added extra elements to it, covering those areas of knowledge which we found to be helpful in giving a head start to individuals at the beginning of their professional careers as therapists.

That situation is now changing. There is a new qualification structure which is intended to be common to all exam boards, which means that the ABC qualification may no longer be providing the "gold standard" for reflexology training but instead will be one of many similar qualifications. Because of this, the AoR may also be accepting a much broader range of training courses for membership, since a common level is supposed to be applied for all. But at the time of writing, this effort at standardisation has rendered the qualification framework not simpler but far more confused, with each exam board interpreting the basic criteria in its own way. We have large amounts of confusing and contradictory correspondence from ABC and AoR, and it is unclear how soon a clear picture will emerge of how precisely reflexology qualifications will work.

Where does this leave OSR, and specifically the course you might like to join? We have taken a conscious decision temporarily to step back from training in reflexology, until it becomes clear precisely what the requirements are. We know what education is required in order to produce a skilled and dedicated reflexologist who is fully equipped to start their career; unfortunately, at present what we cannot know is how to arrange that education to fit assessment requirements which remain hazy and uncertain. So, for the time being, we will not be running courses in reflexology.

OSR has always been at the forefront of trying to raise standards in reflexology education. Our Principal, Geraldine Giles, was the AoR's first dedicated Training and Education Officer, and later, as Chair of the AoR, played a key role in developing and pushing through the accredited external qualification now administered by ABC. More recently, Geraldine has served as Chair of the Reflexology in Europe Network (RiEN), again striving for standards in education. Our Main Course Tutor, Denise Hill, was not only a Vice Chair of the AoR but also a key member of the examining team for ABC. Training at OSR has been recognised for its

excellence: a significant proportion of the assessment and client templates distributed as standard by the AoR and ABC were developed here, and at one point OSR was in fact writing the final exam papers for all AoR training centres.

We therefore want in the long term to return to reflexology training, once again taking the "official" qualification and adding to it any elements which we may feel are important but either absent or under-emphasised. But in order for this to happen, the basic structure needs to be clear; and on present performance, this may take some time. In addition, we need firm answers to key questions before deciding which elements of the new structure to adopt - such as, what will be the requirements for joining membership bodies, and whether the interpretation of the new units common to all will prove to be a tightening up of standards or a dumbing down to a lowest common denominator.

It would in theory be possible to run a reflexology course before the end of 2010 using the previous qualification structure, with no change to our course materials or assessment methods. And it has been confirmed that any students trained and assessed under those criteria would be fully qualified and eligible for AoR membership. But we feel strongly that the current uncertainty undermines the status of the existing qualification and does nothing to boost confidence in that qualification. Some training centres may be keen to push students through the closing door before the new criteria are in place, but we are unconvinced that this is fair on the student for the long term.

So it is with regret that we have decided to suspend the course which we were planning to run in September 2010. If and when courses resume, we will make an announcement accordingly.

Our advice to prospective students considering a course in reflexology at this moment would be to wait and see. It appears unfortunately to be the case that if you find a training centre which is positive and confident about what they should be teaching right now, they are misinformed. That situation will change, and we hope sooner rather than later, and when it does we will be delighted to welcome students once again. We are sorry if the fact we are unable to run courses at present is disappointing for you, and believe us, we feel the disappointment keenly as well; but we are sure that this is the right approach to take under the circumstances.

You may have further questions about the above, and if so we are more than happy to answer them to the best of our abilities. The AoR and exam boards will also be able to provide answers, although it has to be said that these are unlikely (particularly in the latter case) to be impartial. We remain open for business, concentrating for now on "post-graduate" advanced short courses in reflexology, and this means that we are here to help if we can.

Yours faithfully,

Nicola Carson-Parker
Course Administrator
Oxford School of Reflexology