

# Working and training in the National Health Service

– a guide for international medical  
graduates thinking about working  
or training in the UK

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# Abbreviations

## The following abbreviations are used in this guidance document:

Approved practice setting	(APS)
British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin	(BAPIO)
British International Doctors' Association	(BIDA)
Certificate of completion of training	(CCT)
European Economic Area	(EEA)
General Dental Council	(GDC)
General Medical Council	(GMC)
General practitioners	(GPs)
Highly-skilled Migrant Programme	(HSMP)
International Medical Graduates	(IMGs)
Medical Training Initiative	(MTI)
National Association of Clinical Tutors	(NACT)
National Health Service	(NHS)
Primary care trust	(PCT)
Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board	(PLAB)
Specialty doctors and associate specialists	(SAS doctors)

# 1. Introduction

1.1 Every year doctors and dentists from all over the world come to the United Kingdom (UK) to work or train in the National Health Service (NHS). The rules governing the right to enter and work in the UK as a doctor or dentist can be complex. This guide and information has been produced to make doctors and dentists from outside the UK aware of the opportunities available and to help them understand the immigration processes and requirements. It includes details of sources of further information and where to check for up-to-date details of immigration and other requirements.

1.2 This web-based guidance is free to download and aimed primarily at overseas-qualified medical practitioners. It has been produced by NHS Employers with input from the following organisations: :

- Department of Health (DH)
- British Medical Association (BMA)
- General Medical Council (GMC)
- General Dental Council (GDC)
- British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO)
- British International Doctors' Association (BIDA)
- National Association of Clinical Tutors (NACT)
- NHS London/London Postgraduate Medical Deanery.

1.3 The guide is primarily targeted at overseas doctors from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), commonly known as international medical graduates, or IMGs for short.

**For doctors and dentists who are European Economic Area citizens there are no visa or other immigration restrictions on working in the UK (other than for Bulgaria or Romania nationals). However, to be able to work, such doctors and dentists will need to be able to evidence a level of training or certification equivalent to UK medical qualifications and be registered with the UK's General Medical Council.**

1.4 The EEA countries include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

## 1.5 Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure that this guidance is accurate and up-to-date at the time of publication, the right for overseas citizens to work in the UK is governed by legislation which may change from time to time, and is ultimately a matter for Parliament and the courts. The authors accept no responsibility or liability where the content of this guidance is relied upon and later found to be inaccurate, or legislation is changed. You are advised to check the up-to-date position using the contact details provided.

## 2. The NHS in England

- 2.1 The NHS is the world's largest publicly funded health service. In England it employs around 1.4 million people and annual expenditure is around £90 billion. The services the NHS provides are organised into primary care and secondary care.
- 2.2 *Primary care* is generally the first point of contact for patients, through general practice, general dentistry, pharmacy and other services, such as walk-in patient clinics and services and NHS Direct, which is a nurse-led telephone advisory service.
- 2.3 *Secondary care* includes emergency treatment and planned elective specialist hospital care, usually following referral from one of the primary care services.
- 2.4 Major changes in how healthcare services are commissioned in the future are expected following consultation on the Government's health white paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, published on 12 July 2010. However, the NHS in England is currently organised locally by primary care trusts (PCTs). These trusts receive some 80 per cent of the NHS's funds. They are responsible for using these to purchase the primary and secondary care services for their local population.
- 2.5 Doctors in primary care usually work as general practitioners (GPs) and are employed by individual and independently-run practices, which have a contract with the local PCT for providing NHS care to patients. The terms of this contract, and payments to the practice, are set nationally. A proportion of the payment to the practice is based on the quality of the services provided. Sometimes doctors might be employed directly by a PCT or another organisation, which will have a contract for providing primary care and other services to patients.
- 2.6 In secondary care, doctors are employed by hospitals providing acute, specialist or mental health and some community services to patients. There will be a wide range of career and training roles offered in these hospitals.
- 2.7 The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland run their local NHS services separately. The structure, scale and history of the NHS is described in more detail on the NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/pages/about.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/pages/about.aspx)
- 2.8 There is also a useful **Department of Health** guide written by doctors for doctors undergoing training in the UK.
- 2.9 The NHS Medical Careers website gives details of the specialties and various roles of doctors in the NHS [www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk)

# 3. Why work in the UK?

3.1 The NHS is one of the most developed health systems in the world. It has a reputation for delivering a high quality of service and excellence in research, training and development. There are a number of potential benefits to working in the UK for doctors and dentists from overseas:

- experience of work in the national healthcare system in the UK
- training and development – including the opportunity to pursue UK medical and dental Royal College qualifications, subject to the limitations on access to UK medical training outlined in Section 7 below
- access to research
- good standards of pay and working conditions
- opportunity to experience living and working in the UK
- acquiring new skills
- a diverse population and health needs in which to gain experience.

# 4. Advice for international medical graduates

## Advice for international medical graduates thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK– important things to consider

Whether you intend to come to the UK for a short period or wish to stay longer there are number of important considerations. It is essential that plans are made as early as possible, as obtaining a job and the necessary professional registration and completing immigration procedures will take time.

The following table signposts useful sources of information that will help overseas doctors to prepare for life in the UK. This information was originally published by the Department of Health as part of a **good practice guide for employers**, and is intended to support the induction process for new consultants and GPs recruited from abroad.

**Table 1: Advice for IMGs thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK**

Topic	Contents	Information Sources
General information about UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief history of Britain/EU British</li> <li>• Government System (Houses of Parliament and monarchy)</li> <li>• Politics and political parties</li> <li>• Cultural diversity</li> <li>• Sports and entertainment</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">www.fco.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.parliament.uk">www.parliament.uk</a> <a href="http://www.royal.gov.uk">www.royal.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.britishcouncil.org">www.britishcouncil.org</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk">www.bbc.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.skysports.co.uk">www.skysports.co.uk</a>
General UK Government information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access links to Government web pages</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a>
British taxation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept of taxation</li> <li>• National insurance contributions and number</li> <li>• Old age pension benefits</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk">www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk">www.thepensionservice.gov.uk</a>
Public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public utilities funded by general taxation</li> <li>• Local councils</li> <li>• Social security</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ukonline.gov.uk">www.ukonline.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk">www.dwp.gov.uk</a>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rail network</li> <li>• Air travel and airports</li> <li>• Buses</li> <li>• Taxis/licensed minicabs</li> <li>• London underground</li> <li>• Driving licence and tests</li> <li>• Motorways</li> <li>• Motoring associations</li> <li>• Bringing own car to UK</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.rail.co.uk">www.rail.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.baa.com">www.baa.com</a> <a href="http://www.thetube.com">www.thetube.com</a> <a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk">www.tfl.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.dvla.gov.uk">www.dvla.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.rac.co.uk">www.rac.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.theaa.com">www.theaa.com</a> <a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.highways.gov.uk">www.highways.gov.uk</a>

**Table 1: Advice for IMGs thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK** *continued*

Topic	Contents	Information Sources
Banking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements</li> <li>• Supporting documents</li> <li>• Information about major banks</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.banks.uk.com">www.banks.uk.com</a> <a href="http://www.compare-online-banks.co.uk">www.compare-online-banks.co.uk</a>
Education, schools, further and higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State schools</li> <li>• Private schools</li> <li>• University</li> <li>• Further education</li> <li>• Fees</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">www.education.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk">www.universitiesuk.ac.uk</a> <a href="http://www.ucas.ac.uk/getting">www.ucas.ac.uk/getting</a> <a href="http://www.ukprivateschools.co.uk">www.ukprivateschools.co.uk</a>
Shopping, supermarkets and sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High street shopping</li> <li>• Supermarket chains</li> <li>• Grocery</li> <li>• Newsagents</li> <li>• Off licence shops</li> <li>• Twice yearly major sales</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ofc.gov.uk/Consumer">www.ofc.gov.uk/Consumer</a> <a href="http://www.shopsafe.co.uk">www.shopsafe.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.uk-shopping-guide.co.uk">www.uk-shopping-guide.co.uk</a>
Emergency services and other important contact details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency services 999</li> <li>• Home Office/immigration</li> <li>• Local council</li> <li>• Education authorities</li> <li>• Relevant embassy contact details</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk">www.homeoffice.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.police.uk">www.police.uk</a> <a href="http://www.london-fire.gov.uk">www.london-fire.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk">www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk</a> <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">www.fco.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.info4local.gov.uk">www.info4local.gov.uk</a>

**Table 1: Advice for IMGs thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK** *continued*

Topic	Contents	Information Sources
Relocation assistance	<p>Induction arrangements for consultants.</p> <p>Assistance offered in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocation of personal effects (and return if the contract is a fixed term)</li> <li>• Practical support with finding accommodation</li> <li>• Opening bank accounts</li> <li>• Support with domestic needs</li> <li>• Outline of childcare provision</li> <li>• Finding suitable schooling for children</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4095516">http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4095516</a></p>
Career options for spouse/children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline of local opportunities for employment, or to continue training in healthcare or other careers</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk">www.nhscareers.nhs.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/childcarecoordinators/search.asp">www.dh.gov.uk/childcarecoordinators/search.asp</a>  <a href="http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk">www.childcarelink.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.fish4.co.uk">www.fish4.co.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.totaljobs.com">www.totaljobs.com</a>  <a href="http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk">www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</a></p>

## 5. Opportunities available

- 5.1 There are many medical roles in the NHS in around 60 specialities. The need for doctors varies by specialty and geographic location and fluctuates over time. Over the long term the UK aims to train as many doctors as it needs, but there is always an outflow of UK doctors to other countries providing opportunity for doctors from elsewhere in Europe and from overseas.
- 5.2 The NHS has a dedicated recruitment website, [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) and many medical positions are advertised here. Medical journals such as the British Medical Journal also carry advertisements [www.bmjcareers.co.uk](http://www.bmjcareers.co.uk)
- 5.3 Overseas doctors interested in a period working in the UK should investigate the opportunities available using NHS Jobs and other sites before making any firm commitments or arrangements or incurring any expense.
- 5.4 The **NHS Jobs** website allows doctors to search for posts for which immigration sponsorship is more likely to be available, because UK or EEA doctors have not been found in response to earlier advertisements. During 2010, many NHS organisations have reported that they need good quality 'middle grade' doctors – those that have completed or nearly completed basic specialty training or equivalent – particularly in specialties such as paediatrics, accident and emergency medicine, anaesthetics and obstetrics and gynaecology.
- 5.5 To work as a doctor in the UK in any healthcare employment, the successful applicant must be registered with the GMC and, if from outside the EEA, will also have to satisfy the UK's strict immigration rules.

# 6. GMC registration requirements

6.1 All doctors wishing to work in any capacity in the UK, whether in the NHS or elsewhere, must be registered and licensed to practise with the GMC. The licence will need to be revalidated periodically if the doctor wishes to continue to practise in the UK. The GMC also sets the professional standards that doctors must uphold and, in the near future, will set the standards for both undergraduate and postgraduate education and training.

**If a doctor does not have registration with the GMC and a licence to practise they cannot practise medicine in the UK.**

6.2 There are two categories of registration to work as a doctor in the UK, provisional registration and full registration. In addition, for a doctor to work as a GP (other than in a training capacity) or appointment to a substantive consultant post in the NHS they must be on the GP or specialist registers held by the GMC.

## **GMC registration requirements – doctors within the EEA**

6.3 Within the EEA there is mutual recognition of equivalent training and qualifications and the right to free movement of workers between member states. Doctors who are citizens of another EEA country and have completed their basic medical training are therefore entitled to full registration with the GMC in the UK. Doctors will need to apply and provide evidence of their nationality and qualifications, and their English language proficiency will be checked on appointment by a prospective employer. They will also need evidence from their national professional licensing authority that their practice is not impaired or subject to any proceedings. Doctors may also apply to join the specialist or GP registers, provided they have the requisite equivalent training and qualifications.

## **GMC registration requirements – doctors from outside the EEA**

6.4 For doctors outside the EEA, whether to apply for provisional or full registration, and GP or specialist registration, will depend on the nature and extent of a doctor's postgraduate experience.

6.5 Doctors who have a recognised medical degree and have satisfactorily completed either foundation year 1 in the UK or a 12 month period of similar postgraduate clinical experience (for example, an overseas internship) that, in the GMC's view, provides an acceptable foundation for future practice as a fully-registered medical practitioner, can apply for full registration. If they have not, they may only apply for provisional registration.

6.6 The GMC will require evidence to support applications for registration demonstrating that the doctor:

- holds an acceptable primary medical qualification
- has the requisite knowledge and skills for registration
- is not impaired from practise
- has the necessary knowledge of English.

Doctors may demonstrate their medical knowledge and skills in one of the following ways:

- A pass in the professional and linguistic assessments board (PLAB) test – an examination of language skills and medical competence in two parts. Part 1 can be taken overseas. Part 2 must be taken in the UK. Both of these have costs associated with them.
- Sponsorship by a medical Royal College or other sponsoring body for specific further postgraduate training – where suitability has been determined by the sponsor who is approved for that purpose by the GMC.
- An acceptable postgraduate qualification.
- Eligibility for entry in the specialist or GP registers.

6.7 An acceptable level of proficiency in the English language may be demonstrated by the international English language testing system, administered by the British Council in several countries. For more information refer to [www.britishcouncil.org/learning-ielts](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-ielts)

6.8 Doctors applying for full registration must also submit evidence that they have satisfactorily completed either foundation year 1 in the UK or a period of postgraduate clinical experience that provides an acceptable foundation for future practice as a fully registered medical practitioner. Further details are available on the GMC website [www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/imgs.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/imgs.asp)

6.9 All doctors (including UK graduates and international medical graduates) who are new to full registration and taking up a new job, or restoring their names to the register after a prolonged absence from practice, are required to work within an approved practice setting (APS). These are workplaces approved by the GMC as suitable for doctors new to full registration. EEA graduates are also encouraged to ensure they too work in an approved practice setting when they first take up employment in the UK under full registration. Most NHS employers will have APS status.

# 7. Immigration requirements

7.1 In addition to professional registration with the GMC or GDC, any doctor or dentist wishing to work in the UK must satisfy immigration requirements and have permission to work. The immigration rules are set by the UK Border Agency, and there are several routes under which doctors may qualify. The following section outlines the routes available for doctors. It is however important to recognise that the UK is currently undergoing a review of the levels of non EU economic migration. The current intention is to reduce the overall figure of net migration to the UK. The NHS values the contribution made by international medical graduates to service provision and will continue to offer training opportunities to successful applicants but it is possible that the number of posts will reduce between 2011 and 2014. Updates on the migration review and its implications for applicants will be posted on the NHS Careers website [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)

## Doctors who are EEA nationals – no immigration restrictions

7.2 Doctors who are EEA nationals have the right to work in the UK, although nationals from Bulgaria and Romania are required to obtain an ‘accession card’ confirming eligibility to work and doctors from the A8 accession states are required to register with the Worker Registration Scheme when they take up their first post in the UK. More details and information about how to apply are available from the [UK Border Agency](#) website.

## Individual immigration rights

7.3 Certain non-EEA nationals who are the spouse or partner of an EEA citizen may also have the right to enter and work in the UK. A right to entry may also be conferred by ancestry. Doctors who may have such individual rights are advised to check the UK Border Agency website and contact them for individual or general advice on:  
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/ukresidency/eligibility/unitedkingdomancestry>

## General immigration permissions – points-based system and sponsorship

7.4 For doctors from outside the EEA and without an individual immigration right as described above, permission to enter and work in the UK is determined under rules set by the UK Border Agency. There are currently five tiers within the points-based system to enter the UK to work, train or study, three of which are relevant to doctors.

### Tier 1 – highly skilled individuals who can contribute to growth and productivity

7.5 This part of the points-based system allows highly-skilled migrants to apply for permission to work or train in the UK *without a job offer*. The applicant needs to gain points for different criteria to be accepted into Tier 1 (General). An individual can self-assess their eligibility by using the points-based calculator on the UK Border Agency website:  
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/pointscalculator>

7.6 Each applicant needs to gain points awarded in the following areas:

- attributes (age, qualifications, previous earnings and work experience in the UK)
- points for evidence of English language competence
- points for available funds.

If the applicant fails to meet the required level of points, the application will be rejected.

7.7 Applicants to advertised posts holding a Tier 1 (General), highly-skilled visa should be treated in the same way as UK or EEA nationals applying for posts, providing they have no restrictions applied on their visa that prohibit them from undertaking that particular post.

7.8 Doctors who have Tier 1 (General) permission to enter the UK to work are prevented from working in recognised postgraduate training positions in the UK that lead to the award of a certificate of completion of training (CCT). They can however switch to Tier 2 to take up advertised positions where the resident labour market test is applied.

**Tier 2 (General) – the sponsored skilled worker category**

7.9 Tier 2 is the employer-led route within the system that allows UK employers to recruit individuals from outside the UK and European Economic Area (EEA) by sponsoring the individual migrant to fill vacancies that cannot be filled by a UK or EEA worker (referred to as the 'resident labour market test'). This tier replaces the earlier 'work permit' application system.

7.10 This tier can provide immigration permission for those *with a job offer* from a sponsoring employer who has recruited the overseas worker, having tried unsuccessfully to recruit within the UK and EEA. The recruitment might be either to approved training or to non-training posts, provided the employer has advertised for a set period and been unable to recruit a suitable UK/EEA worker. The employer will issue a certificate of sponsorship (an electronic reference number) confirming that they have recruited the worker, who then must use this number to apply for permission to enter the UK under Tier 2. The permission to enter the UK is linked to the sponsored employment offer and other work cannot be undertaken. If any new employment is sought a new certificate of sponsorship from the new employer will be required.

7.11 To be eligible, applicants are required to meet a minimum number of points in the following areas:

- attributes (including points for the sponsorship/job offer, qualifications, prospective earnings)
- points for maintenance (available funds to support themselves and their dependants in the UK)
- points for evidence of English language competence.

- 7.12 For many doctors wanting to come and work in the UK under Tier 2 it is anticipated that sponsorship and an employment offer from the NHS and the earnings that go with it, together with GMC registration, will allow sufficient points to be achieved. However, employing organisations and individuals can self-assess their eligibility by using the points-based calculator on the UK Border Agency website  
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/pointscalculator>
- 7.13 If the application is successful, individuals will be granted leave to enter or remain in the UK *for the duration of the post*. This can be for up to three years. For a doctor who takes up a training post this should be sufficient time to complete basic specialty training where programmes usually last two to three years. Beyond three years, further sponsorship under Tier 2 would be required (i.e. that the resident labour market test was still satisfied) in order to continue. A doctor who undertakes a series of Tier 2 posts may be in the country for a sufficiently long enough period to qualify for residency, normally after five years.

#### **Tier 5** Temporary workers Government authorised exchange – Medical Training Initiative

- 7.14 Under Tier 5, permission to enter the UK can be granted to overseas nationals coming to undertake exchanges or education and training initiatives sponsored by Government departments. The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is the scheme operated in the NHS for doctors. Under this scheme there are a number of opportunities made available for the training and development of overseas doctors. These places are made available using capacity within the UK that is not required for UK/EEA planned training. Unlike Tier 2, employers do not sponsor these schemes. Instead they have to be approved by the NHS locally, through deaneries, and by the Medical Royal College for the specialty. They may be linked to the award of a college certificate, examination or other qualification. Programmes can also be tailored to individual doctors' development needs. Doctors' sponsorship is being provided through the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. See further Medical Training Initiative scheme information at  
<http://www.aomrc.org.uk/medical-training-initiative.html>
- 7.15 For dentistry, the UK Border Agency has agreed that the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons (England) should administer the Tier 5 Medical Training Initiative scheme. The faculty's National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education is funded to provide overseas dentists with information and advice on postgraduate dental education and training in the UK.
- 7.16 Permission to enter the UK to take up Medical Training Initiative posts is granted for up to two years and at the end of the period the doctor is required to return home. They cannot at that stage apply to switch to a different visa, but must re-apply under the points-based system described above.
- 7.17 The Medical Training Initiative scheme is developing and early examples under the current scheme are described in a booklet published by **Skills for Health**.

## **ID cards for foreign nationals**

7.18 The identity card scheme for foreign nationals means that overseas workers entering the UK will now be issued with ID cards. These will evidence their identity and their right to work permissions.

## **UK residency**

7.19 Foreign nationals working in the UK can apply for residency or indefinite leave to remain usually after five years in the UK. However, time spent in the UK under the Tier 5 Medical Training Initiative scheme cannot count towards that five year calculation. Workers under Tier 5 are expected to leave the UK after a maximum of two years.

## **Avoiding illegal employment**

7.20 Under Section 21 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 it is a criminal offence to knowingly employ a person who requires, but lacks, immigration permission to work in that particular role. Employers will have to check and copy specific original documentation to make sure that permission is valid, and doctors will be expected to produce appropriate documentation on request.

## **Other employment checks**

7.21 Alongside checks on immigration status for doctors from overseas, prospective employers will also need to check employment history, references and whether there are any relevant criminal records, as they do equally for all UK/EEA doctors.

# 8. Access to UK training for overseas doctors

## General

- 8.19 UK training for doctors consists of the foundation programme (two years hospital and community-based training immediately following completion of a medical degree), followed by specialty training (for example, as a GP or surgeon). Specialty training may be 'run through' lasting six or seven years or split in to core (basic) and higher speciality training, which lasts for two to three years and three to four years respectively.
- 8.20 Access to UK training programme posts for non-UK/EEA doctors is restricted under the UK's immigration rules predominantly to those circumstances where the resident labour market test is met and no suitable UK/EEA applicant is available (as specified under Tier 2 of the immigration rules).
- 8.21 There are a few exceptions to this, including non-UK/EEA graduates of UK medical schools who are allowed to enter the Foundation Programme in order to ensure they can complete the training they started in the UK and qualify as a doctor. Additionally, doctors who already hold HSMP/Tier 1 status that was granted before 6 February 2008 remain eligible to undertake training positions. Tier 1 status granted after 6 February 2008 does not allow access to UK training programme posts. Refugees in the UK and the partners/civil partners or spouses of doctors with suitable immigration permission or UK ancestry may also qualify. The Medical Training Initiative scheme may also offer some UK training posts under Tier 5.

## Foundation Programme

- 8.22 The UK Foundation Programme undertakes national recruitment annually. Full details on eligibility can be found on the Foundation Programme website [www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk](http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk)

Applicants within the national recruitment need to be:

- a UK or EEA national
- a student of a UK medical school in their final year of study and be eligible to apply for immigration permission on that basis (currently under the postgraduate doctor and dentists visa)
- have the right to work in the UK at the designated point of application which remains valid until the start of the Foundation Programme in the following August.

Vacancies that are not filled by eligible candidates above as part of the national recruitment may be advertised later, and sponsorship under Tier 2 can be offered to doctors outside the EEA if the resident labour market test is then satisfied.

## Specialty training

- 8.23 Eligibility for specialty training, the timetable for applications, and other key information is contained on the website for medical specialty training (England):

[http://www.mmc.nhs.uk/specialty\\_training\\_2010.aspx](http://www.mmc.nhs.uk/specialty_training_2010.aspx)

Only UK, EEA nationals and doctors whose immigration status currently entitles them to work as a doctor-in-training in the UK are eligible to apply for and take up specialty training as part of initial national recruitment.

- 8.24 Other non-UK or non-EEA nationals are subject to the resident labour market test. The labour market test means that they can only be considered if there is no suitable UK or EEA national candidate for the post, in which case Tier 2 sponsorship may be available for up to three years. Note that three years may not be sufficient time to complete a whole specialty training programme, in which case completion would be dependent upon securing another period of sponsorship in a suitable post (or example, in a further advertised post offering the right training for which there was also no suitable UK/EEA applicant). There is a risk a further such post may not be available.
- 8.25 Posts which are not filled as part of national recruitment are normally advertised subsequently, either as part of further national recruitment, or locally. The relative popularity of training posts can vary by geography or specialty and applicants will need to bear this in mind.

## Medical Training Initiative

- 8.26 These are posts specifically designed to offer training and development to doctors from overseas doctors in posts lasting up to two years. See section 7 above describing Tier 5.

## Career grade posts: other opportunities for work

- 8.27 These posts include those with titles such as trust doctor, clinical fellow, specialty doctor and consultant, amongst others. They cover all posts that are not part of formal UK training leading to the award of a certificate of completion of training (CCT). For all such posts, GMC registration and a current licence to practise will be required.
- 8.28 Within the UK these posts will usually include some opportunity for professional development, regular appraisal and the benefits of NHS employment including generous leave, competitive levels of pay and access to a final salary pension scheme.
- 8.29 Doctors with Tier 1 (General) permission to enter the UK can compete with UK/EEA nationals for any career grade posts. Doctors without Tier 1 status will only be able to take up a post with sponsorship from an employer under Tier 2 (for example, where the resident labour market test has been met and no suitable UK/EEA doctor could be found).
- 8.30 Career grade vacancies are usually advertised on NHS Jobs <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk>, a website dedicated to NHS vacancies, and/or in medical journals such as the British Medical Journal <http://www.bmj.com>

# 9. Employment rights and pledges

9.1 Employees in the UK are protected by certain minimum statutory employment rights. These include: maximum working hours of an average of 48 hours per week; strict hours controls and rest breaks; minimum time off; a national minimum wage and rights to equal pay for equal work; the right to be treated equally and fairly and without discrimination; the right to request flexible working; right to safe working conditions; the right to raise grievances, and not to be dismissed from your employment unfairly. Details of the full range of statutory employment rights can be found at:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/index.htm>

9.2 In addition, the **NHS Constitution** includes a number of pledges beyond these legal rights to provide a high-quality working environment for staff including:

- a clear role and responsibilities that offer rewarding employment
- personal development opportunities and support to succeed
- support and opportunity to maintain your health and well-being
- involvement of staff in decisions affecting them and input into improving services.

# 10. Pay and terms and conditions

- 10.1 Current salary scales for medical staff are published in medical and dental pay circulars available on the **NHS Employers** website. Salary scales are reviewed annually by the independent Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body. The figures below should be used for guide purposes only.
- 10.2 Doctors applying for posts should seek details of the pay and terms and conditions that apply before accepting an appointment. All NHS employees and GP contractors are entitled to join the **NHS Pension Scheme**.
- 10.3 **Junior doctors (training and some trust equivalent posts)**  
Junior doctors earn a basic salary and will usually be paid a supplement. This supplement is based on any extra hours above a 40 hour standard working week, for full time staff, and the intensity of the work required. The most common banding supplement is 40-50 per cent of basic salary.
- 10.3 **Specialty doctor and associate specialists (SAS doctors)**  
See [www.nhsemployers.org/sas](http://www.nhsemployers.org/sas) for more details of contract terms.
- 10.4 **Consultants and specialists**  
Consultants currently earn in a range from £74,000 to £175,000, dependent on length of service and payment of additional awards based on performance or additional duties. The basic contract is for 40 hours per week.
- 10.5 **General practitioners**  
Many GPs are self employed and hold contracts, either on their own or as part of a partnership, with their local primary care trust (PCT). The profit of GPs varies according to the services they provide for their patients and the way they choose to provide these services. Most GPs would expect to earn between £80,000 and £120,000.
- 10.6 **Trust grade and clinical fellow posts**  
Some employers will offer posts on their own terms and conditions of employment, usually offering similar pay and conditions to those outlined above. Doctors are advised to seek confirmation before accepting an appointment.
- 10.7 **Flexible working**  
For all sorts of reasons, doctors may want to apply for permission to work or train flexibly at some stage in their career. Flexible working is often associated with women with young children, but an increasing number of other doctors are expressing other well-founded reasons for wanting it. The NHS is committed to supporting a good work-life balance for all NHS employees. Today, flexible working can be performed through a reduction in working hours below the standard 40 hour week or perhaps through job-sharing as a trainee or senior doctor or working as a part-time salaried GP. Hours reductions below the standard working week will result in a pro-rata adjustment to basic pay levels, but a flexible worker will be entitled to the same statutory employment rights as their full-time equivalents. Another way to work flexibly through a career pathway is to consider requesting a career break, perhaps to travel and work in overseas healthcare settings, or experience a spell in research or academic medicine.

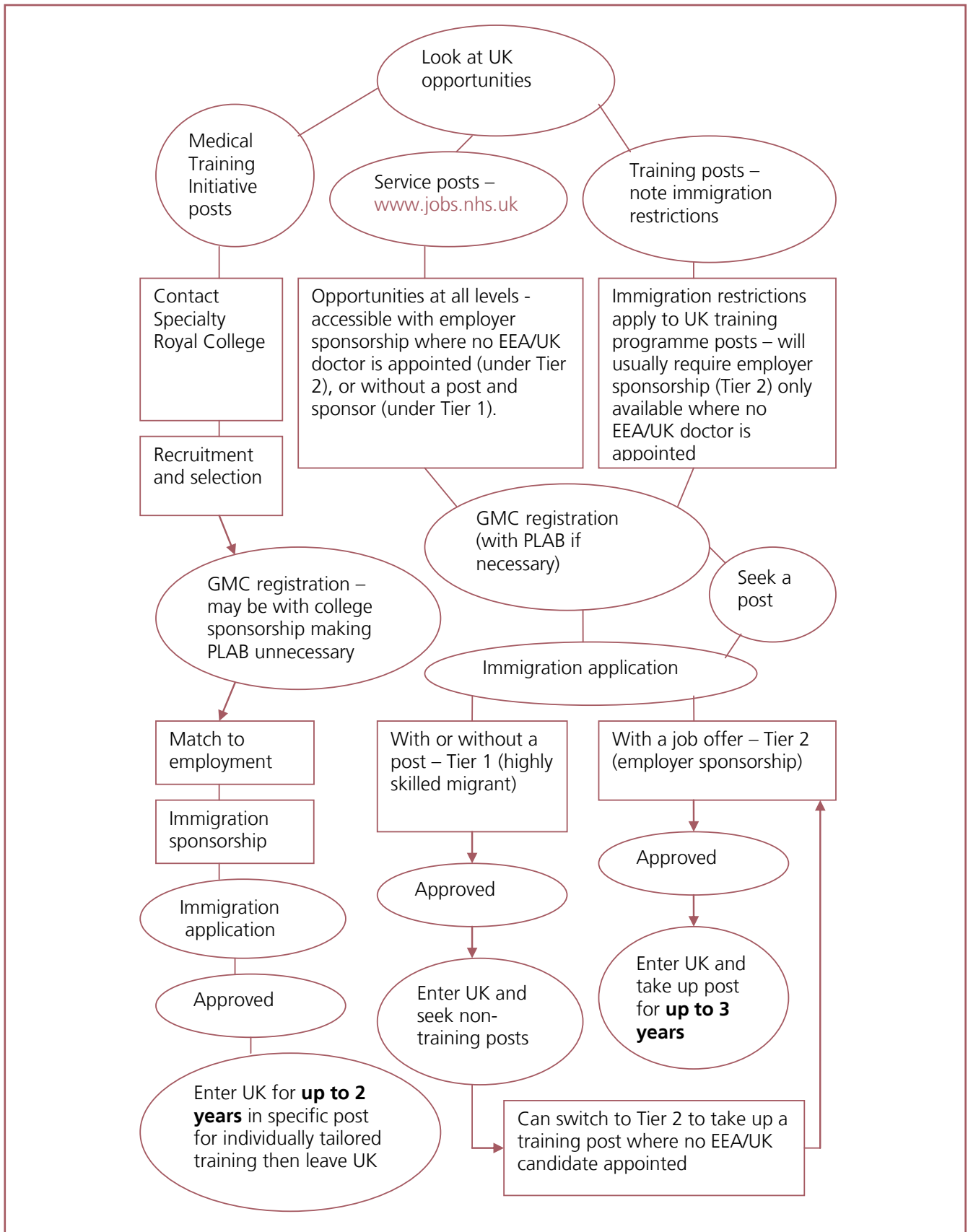
# 11. Good practice in employment

- 11.1 Overseas doctors should be supported, especially on arrival when they are new to the UK and the NHS. It may be helpful for you to be aware of the following good practice that employers may follow:
- A clear job description and, if appropriate, a training and learning agreement agreed at the outset
  - Support on initial arrival in the UK – covering issues such as accommodation, local environment, immigration, tax, family and social life and so on. Are there other employees or a network that can provide professional or social support?
  - Good induction on arrival into work. This must include how the NHS works, the employer's part in the NHS, duties of a doctor, employer procedures and rules, arrangements for clinical governance (patient safety, clinical errors, clinical risk management, complaints and litigation), orientation and support.
  - Practical induction appropriate to the role and department (including familiarisation with taking a patient history, examination and local documentation). This may, if appropriate, include a period of 'shadowing', mentoring or close supervision and support.
  - Access to a named individual to provide initial and ongoing support and guidance.
  - Regular monitoring of progress, appraisal and development.
- 11.2 The Department of Health published an **induction checklist** in 2004 as part of a good practice guide. The guide is intended to help NHS employers as they prepare induction programmes for new consultants and GPs recruited from abroad.
- 11.3 NHS Employers has also published an **induction handbook for doctors new to foundation training** in 2010 and the BMA provides its own targeted information, which is regularly updated and accessible from the **BMA website**.

# 12. Checklist of considerations

Some checks for you to consider before proceeding	
	Tick
Have you checked that there are roles and work available in the NHS that you want to do?	
Are you suitably qualified for the roles you have identified?	
Have you assessed whether you will be able to obtain GMC registration? Most posts will require full registration.	
Will you need to sit tests set by the professional and linguistic board and the international English language testing system? Can you afford the costs of these tests and associated travel?	
If you do not need to sit the professional and linguistic board test, do you have the appropriate evidence of your postgraduate qualifications? You can check what evidence you will need with the GMC.	
Does your self assessment under the points-based system show that you will qualify for immigration rights without employer sponsorship under Tier 1? If so can you afford to support yourself coming to the UK to look for work without a job offer?	
Does your self assessment indicate you will qualify for immigration only if you obtain employer sponsorship under Tier 2? You will need to find a job before immigration sponsorship is given – have you registered with NHS Jobs and for suitable vacancy alerts?	
Are you in need of further training and development and interested in a placement of up to two years? Have you looked into the Medical Training Initiative scheme?	

# 13. Immigration routes summary chart



# Useful contacts and websites

## **NHS Careers:**

Information for international healthcare professionals

[http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore\\_oversea.shtml](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore_oversea.shtml)

Medical careers and specialty advice: [www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk)

## **CIPD:**

Employing overseas workers

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/intlhr/empfn.htm?IsSrchRes=1>

## **BMA:**

Guide for doctors new to the UK

[http://www.bma.org.uk/images/GuidedoctorsnewUK\\_tcm41-146814.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/images/GuidedoctorsnewUK_tcm41-146814.pdf)

Becoming a doctor

[http://www.bma.org.uk/images/Becoming%20a%20Doctor%202010\\_tcm41-188217.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/images/Becoming%20a%20Doctor%202010_tcm41-188217.pdf)

International medical graduates – signposting resource

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/comingtoug/IMGintro.jsp>

Coming to work in the UK – Frequently asked questions

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/immigration/internationalfaqs.jsp>

Clinical attachment guidelines for international medical graduates

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/comingtoug/clinicalattachmentguidelines.jsp>

Immigration information

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/immigration/index.jsp>

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/immigration/guidedrsnewUK.jsp>

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/immigration/UKimmigrationsystemoverview.jsp>

Refugee doctors

[http://www.bma.org.uk/international/refugee\\_doctors/index.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/international/refugee_doctors/index.jsp)

[http://www.bma.org.uk/international/refugee\\_doctors/refugeedrinitiative.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/international/refugee_doctors/refugeedrinitiative.jsp)

There are also immigration services available to BMA members

<http://www.bma.org.uk/international/immigration/bmaimmigrationadvice.service.jsp>

## **Support networks:**

BAPIO – British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin <http://www.bapio.co.uk>

BIDA – British International Doctors' Association <http://www.bidaonline.org.uk>

UKAID – United Kingdom Association of International Doctors <http://www.ukaid.org>

British Asian Medical Association <http://www.thebama.co.uk>

## **Useful books:**

“How to Survive in Medicine” (2010) by Jenny Cozens and Jamie Harrison, published by BMJ-Wiley's

## NHS Employers

supporting • promoting • representing

NHS Employers represents trusts in England on workforce issues and helps employers to ensure the NHS is a place where people want to work. The NHS workforce is at the heart of quality patient care and we believe that employers must drive the workforce agenda. We work with employers to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

NHS Employers is part of the NHS Confederation.

## Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email [getinvolved@nhsemployers.org](mailto:getinvolved@nhsemployers.org) **[www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)**

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