

# WORKING AND TRAINING IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

A GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL  
AND DENTAL 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)
- British Medical Association (BMA)
- Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT)
- Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR)
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)
- European Economic Area (EEA)
- General Dental Council (GDC)
- General Medical Council (GMC)
- General Practitioners (GPs)
- International Medical Graduates (IMGs)
- Licence in Dental Surgery (LDS)
- Medical Training Initiative (MTI)
- National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education (NACPDE)
- National Association of Clinical Tutors (NACT)
- National Health Service (NHS)
- Overseas Registration Exam (ORE)
- Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB)
- United Kingdom (UK)

## 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 web links provided.

# 1. Introduction

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 you 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.

This web-based guidance, originally published in 2010 and updated in 2021, is free to download and aimed primarily at overseas-qualified medical and dental practitioners. It has been produced by NHS Employers with input from the following organisations:

- British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO)
- British International Doctors' Association (BIDA)
- British Medical Association (BMA)
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- General Dental Council (GDC)
- General Medical Council (GMC)
- Health Education England (HEE)
- Home Office
- National Association of Clinical Tutors (NACT)
- NHS England and Improvement (NHSE&I)
- NHS London/London Postgraduate Medical LETB
- Revalidation Support Team (RST)

## Implications of the UK's departure from the European Union

The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020, following the result of the EU referendum in June 2016. On 1 January 2021, a new points-based immigration system came into effect.

## Doctors in the European Economic Area

If you are an EEA national, see the section below, which explains the rights of EU citizens.

If you are an EU citizen who started living and working in the UK before the UK's departure from the European Union, you and your family will be able to continue living in the UK following the exit via an application under the [EU Settlement Scheme](#). There is no change to the rights and status of EU citizens who arrived before 11pm on 31 Dec 2020. The deadline for applications to the EU settlement scheme is 30 June 2021. Details are available on [GOV.UK](#)

To be able to work, EEA doctors and dentists will need to be able to evidence a level of training or certification equivalent to UK medical qualifications, be registered with the UK's GMC/GDC and be able to communicate effectively in the English language.

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

The EEA includes EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. It allows them to be part of the EU's single market. Switzerland is not an EU or EEA member but is part of the single market.

## **The new points-based immigration system for everyone outside of the UK**

On 1 January 2021, a new points-based immigration system replaced the one that the UK has managed inward migration with since 2008. It applies to everyone from outside of the UK (excluding the Republic of Ireland) wishing to live and work here.

The new immigration system is aimed at attracting and prioritising highly skilled migration, which includes doctors. It includes the fast track health and care visa (skilled worker route, the old Tier 2), which has been open for applications from 4 August 2020. You can read about the new system in NHS Employers' dedicated web section.

## **2. The NHS in England**

The NHS is the world's largest publicly funded health service, engaging with over 1 million patients every 36 hours. It employs more than 1.2 million people and annually spends around £150 billion. The services the NHS provides are organised into primary care and secondary care.

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 the NHS 111 telephone service.

Secondary care includes emergency treatment and planned elective specialist hospital care, usually following referral from one of the primary care services.

The NHS in England is organised locally by CCGs. CCGs receive over 50 per cent of the NHS's funds and are responsible for using this money to purchase primary and secondary care services for their local population.

Doctors in primary care usually work as GPs and are employed by individual and independently run GP practices, which have a contract with the local CCG 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 CCG or another organisation, which will have a contract for providing primary care and other services to patients.

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 training and career roles offered in these hospitals.

The devolved administrations in the UK comprise Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and each run their local NHS services separately. The structure, scale and history of the NHS is described in more detail on the [\*\*NHS website\*\*](#).

The [\*\*NHS Health Careers website\*\*](#) provides details of the specialties and various roles of doctors and dental careers in the NHS.

### **3. Why work in the UK?**

The NHS is one of the most developed health systems in the world. It has a reputation for delivering high-quality services 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:

- The opportunity to experience working 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 and dental training outlined in this document.
- Access to research.
- Good standards of pay, reward and working conditions.
- Acquiring new skills.
- A diverse population and health needs in which to gain experience.

### **4. Advice for international medical and dental graduates**

Whether you intend to come to the UK for a short period or wish to stay longer there are a 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 immigration procedures will take time.

The following table signposts to useful sources of information that will help overseas doctors and dentists to prepare for life in the UK.

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

Topic	Content and information sources
General information about UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Brief history of Britain/EU</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Government System</u></a> (Houses of Parliament and <a href="#"><u>monarchy</u></a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Cultural diversity</u></a></li> </ul>
General UK Government Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access links to <a href="#"><u>government web pages</u></a></li> </ul>
British taxation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Taxation and national insurance contributions</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>State Pension benefits</u></a></li> </ul>
Public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Local councils</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Social security</u></a> (Department for Work and Pensions)</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Rail network</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Air travel and airports</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>London underground</u></a> (tube)</li> <li>• Buses – each county has its own bus service</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Coaches</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Driving licence</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Driving and transport in the UK</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Driving in the UK on a non-UK licence</u></a></li> <li>• Motoring associations – (<a href="#"><u>RAC</u></a> &amp; <a href="#"><u>AA</u></a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Bringing own car to UK</u></a></li> </ul>
Banking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Requirements for opening UK bank accounts</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Information about major banks and comparing the account suitable for you</u></a></li> </ul>
Education, schools, further and higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Department of Education</u></a> – state run schools</li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Private schools</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>University</u></a></li> <li>• Further education – <a href="#"><u>UCAS</u></a></li> </ul>
Shopping, supermarkets and sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Shopping</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Supermarkets</u></a></li> </ul>

Emergency services and other important contact details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency services 999 – <a href="#"><u>Police, Ambulance, Fire rescue</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>NHS 111</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>Home Office / immigration</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>Relevant embassy contact details</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>Citizens Advice</u></a></li> </ul>
Career opportunities for spouse/children in healthcare or other careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#"><u>Advice and support from GOV.UK</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>Advice and guidance for job seekers</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>NHS Jobs</u></a></li> <li><a href="#"><u>Health Careers</u></a></li> </ul>

## 5. Opportunities available

There are many medical and dental roles in the NHS. Vacancies vary by specialty and geographic location and change over time. The UK aims to train as many national doctors and dentists as it needs, but there are lots of opportunities for international doctors and dentists. **13.8 per cent** of NHS staff say that their nationality is non-British, representing around 200 different nationalities.

The NHS has a dedicated recruitment website, [\*\*NHS Jobs\*\*](#) and most medical and dental positions are advertised here. Medical journals such as the [\*\*British Medical Journal\*\*](#) and [\*\*British Dental Journal\*\*](#) may also carry advertisements on their websites.

Overseas doctors and dentists interested in working in the UK should investigate the opportunities available using NHS Jobs and other sites before making any firm commitments, arrangements or incurring any expense. Many NHS trusts have [\*\*dedicated recruitment websites\*\*](#) which also explain what it's like to work in the trust and live in the local area.

The [\*\*Shortage Occupation List\*\*](#) is an official list of occupations for which there are not enough resident workers to fill vacancies across the UK. In 2019 the government accepted the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) recommended expansion of the shortage occupation list, which now includes all medical practitioners. For an up-to-date list of the shortage specialties see the NHS Employers' web pages on [\*\*shortage occupations\*\*](#).

To work as a doctor or a dentist in the UK in any healthcare employment, successful applicants must be registered with a licence to practise with the regulators; [\*\*GMC\*\*](#) or [\*\*GDC\*\*](#) and satisfy the UK's immigration rules. See more information about immigration requirements in section eight of this guide.

All primary care practitioners wishing to provide NHS primary care services are required to be on the [\*\*Performers List for England\*\*](#).

## 6. GMC registration requirements

All doctors wishing to work in any capacity in the UK, whether in the NHS or elsewhere, must be registered and hold a licence to practise with the GMC. Doctors must engage with the revalidation process in order to maintain the licence to practise and continue to practise in the UK. Revalidation is based on an annual cycle of appraisal and review, which provides assurance that doctors remain up-to-date and fit to practise. The GMC decides, normally **every five years**, whether a doctor should be revalidated and maintain their licence to practise.

The GMC sets the professional standards that doctors must uphold in the publication **Good Medical Practice**. The GMC also sets **the standards** for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training.

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

There are different types of registration which allow doctors to work in different posts in the UK.

### Provisional registration

**This registration** enables doctors to participate in and complete the first year of the UK Foundation Programme (Foundation year one, or F1) only. The law does not allow provisionally registered doctors to undertake any other type of post.

### Full registration

Holding **this registration** along with a licence to practise allows doctors to either move on to the second year of the Foundation Programme (F2) in an approved training programme, or to work in unsupervised medical practice in the NHS or UK private practice.

### Specialist and GP registration

**This registration** allows eligible doctors to take up appointment in any fixed term, honorary or substantive consultant post in the NHS excluding foundation trusts. **GP registration** is required in order to work as a general practitioner (other than in a training capacity) in the UK health service. To start work in **general practice in the UK**, doctors also need to complete a number of processes including being on the **national performers list**. Some of these are handled by organisations other than the GMC.

### GMC registration requirements from 1 January 2021 onwards – doctors within the EEA

Within the EEA there is mutual recognition of equivalent training and qualifications and the right to free movement of workers between member states. There are interim arrangements in place for continued recognition in the UK for up to two years (four for Swiss nationals). The UK government is considering future arrangements and will announce these in due course. Doctors who obtained their qualification in an **EEA country**, are currently eligible for full registration if they have either of the following:

- a formal qualification listed in [The Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications](#)
- an acceptable **primary medical qualification** from outside the EEA with evidence of an acceptable internship or clinical experience.

Doctors will need to apply and provide evidence of their identity and qualifications. They will also need to provide summary source of their qualification, demonstrate English language competence and have appropriate insurance. Their ability to communicate effectively in the English language will be checked by a prospective employer as part of the appointment process. They will also need evidence from their national professional licensing authority that their practise 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.

The [GMC's website](#) has information on what the UK leaving the EU means for doctors from Europe already working in the UK, and for those who may wish to do so in the future.

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

Doctors with an acceptable primary medical qualification from outside the EEA, must be able to prove that they have enough clinical experience to practise medicine in the UK. Doctors can do this in one of four ways:

- A pass in the professional and linguistic assessments board (PLAB) test. This is an examination of language skills and medical competence in two parts. Part one can be taken overseas. Part two must be taken in the UK. Fees are payable for both parts.
- Sponsorship by a [GMC approved sponsor](#), 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](#).

Doctors can apply for full registration if they have an acceptable primary medical qualification and have satisfactorily completed either Foundation Year 1 in the UK, or a period of pre-graduate or postgraduate clinical experience (for example, an overseas internship) that meets the [GMC's criteria](#).

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.

The GMC has provided information on the different ways you can demonstrate your knowledge of English. Take a look at the [GMC's website](#) for further information.

All doctors (including UK graduates and international medical graduates) who are new to full registration and are 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 that are approved by the GMC as suitable for doctors new to full registration. Most NHS employers will have APS status.

EEA graduates are encouraged to ensure they work in an [approved practice setting](#) when they first take up employment in the UK under full registration.

## 7. General Dental Council (GDC) registration requirements

All applicants can use the route to [registration questionnaire](#) to find out about how they may apply for registration with the GDC.

### Eligibility for registration

Eligibility for full registration, on the basis of a qualification that is already held, is available for the following people:

- Those with a [UK dental qualification](#).
- Those who have successfully passed parts one and two of the [Overseas Registration Examination](#) (ORE) or [License in Dental Surgery](#) (LDS).
- Those with a [recognised overseas diploma](#)
- Those who hold a [relevant European diploma](#) up to two years from 1 January 2021. This is part of the [UK government's legislation](#) to ensure that the recognition of professional qualifications is not disrupted by the UK's exit from the EU.

### Swiss nationals, UK nationals settled in Switzerland, and their non-EEA national spouses and dependents

Swiss nationals, UK nationals settled in Switzerland, and their non-EEA national spouses and dependents who are not eligible for registration through any of the routes above may also be eligible to have their qualification assessed under the [Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement](#).

If you feel you fall under this category, please contact [assessments@gdc-uk.org](mailto:assessments@gdc-uk.org) and include the following: your nationality, where you have obtained your primary dental qualification and if you have worked as a dentist in an EEA state for three or more years since qualifying.

### Dentists who do not meet any of the above criteria

- The [Overseas Registration Examination](#) (ORE) is a two-part exam that tests the clinical skills and knowledge of dentists who are not eligible for registration or assessment. Applicants can apply for full registration once

they have passed ORE.

- **Temporary registration** allows dentists who are not eligible for registration or assessment to practise dentistry in supervised posts for training, teaching or research purposes, for a limited time.

## 8. Immigration requirements

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 Home Office, and there are several routes under which doctors and dentists may qualify. The following section outlines the routes available for doctors and dentists. This information is correct at the time of publication but applicants should refer to the [Home Office website](#) for the latest information.

### Individual immigration rights

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 and dentists who may have such individual rights are advised to check the Home Office website and contact them for individual or general advice. Visit the Home Office website for information on [UK ancestry](#) and for information on [family members of EEA citizens](#).

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

For doctors and dentists from outside the UK after 1 January 2021 and without an individual immigration right as described above, permission to enter and work in the UK is determined under rules set by the Home Office. For more information on the current immigration rules and points based immigration system see NHS Employers' [web pages](#).

The Home Office introduced a new immigration system that fully came into effect on 1 January 2021.

It applies to everyone from outside of the UK (excluding the Republic of Ireland) wishing to live and work here. The new immigration system is aimed at attracting and prioritising highly skilled migration which includes doctors.

### Health and care visa

The health and care skilled worker visa ensures individuals working in eligible health occupations with a job offer from the NHS, social care sector or employers and organisations which provide services to the NHS, who have good working English, are incentivised to come to the UK.

Applications are fast-tracked by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and the aim is to process them within three weeks, providing biometric information has been made available.

## Fees

Health and care visa applicants pay a lower application fee and this reduction also applies to partners and dependants. A visa for up to three years is £232 and a visa for more than three years costs £464. Full information including fees is available at [GOV.UK](#)

## Eligibility

A full list of eligible professions for the health and care visa and their standard occupational classification (SOC) code can be found in the [\*\*UK Points-Based Immigration System: Further Details\*\*](#) document (PDF). The list reflects the current skills threshold. The list of professions will be updated in line with the launch of the new skilled worker route.

Health and care visa applicants must meet the same requirements as those required for the skilled worker route. The skilled worker route will see the cap suspended and the resident labour market test no longer applies. Applicants must meet the following mandatory criteria in addition to passing the relevant UK criminality checks, they must have:

- a job offer from an approved employer sponsor
- a job at the appropriate skill level (RQF 3 or above – A-level equivalent)
- the ability to speak English to the level set appropriate to the role.

## Tradeable Points

A total of 70 points are required to be eligible to apply; some characteristics are tradeable. Meeting the mandatory criteria above will earn the applicant 50 points; they must obtain a further 20 tradeable points through a combination of points for their salary, a job in a shortage occupation or a relevant PhD.

## Healthcare occupations and salary threshold

National pay scales will be used to determine the salary going rate for 20 health occupations, including medical practitioners. The £25,600 general salary threshold will not be applied for this group; however, the minimum salary floor will be £20,480. This group will not have access to tradeable points as they will not need other points to offset the £25,600 threshold.

This table outlines the characteristics, whether they are tradeable or fixed and the number of points they attract:

Characteristic	Tradeable	Points allocated
Job offer by approved sponsor	No - mandatory	20
Job at the appropriate skill level (RQF 3 and above)	No - mandatory	20
Speaks English at the required level	No - mandatory	20

**Tradeable points** (may only score from one entry from the “salary” section and the “other” section

### Salary

Salary of £20,480 (minimum) to £23,039 or at least 80% of the going rate for the profession (whichever is higher)	Yes	0
Salary of £23,040 to £25,599 or at least 90% of the going rate for the profession (whichever is higher)	Yes	10
Salary of £25,600 or above or at least the going rate for the profession (whichever is higher)	Yes	20
Salary of at least £20,480 Listed health/education job and meets the relevant national pay scale	Yes	20

### Other

Job in a shortage occupation (as designated by the MAC)	Yes	20
Education qualification: PhD in subject relevant to the job	Yes	10
Education qualification: PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job	Yes	20
Applicant is a new entrant to the job market (as designated by the MAC)	Yes	20

Case studies outlining different eligibility scenarios can be found in the government’s [UK points-based immigration system: further details](#) statement from page 19.

## Eligibility checklist

- Valid certificate of sponsorship.
- Job which meets the appropriate skill level.
- Evidence of knowledge of English language.
- One or more of the other tradeable characteristics to reach the 70 points.
- Demonstrate ability to travel and travel history over the preceding five years.
- Valid tuberculosis test results (if from a listed country).
- A criminal record certificate from any country where the migrant has lived for 12 months or more in the last ten years, if working with vulnerable people.

## Biometric residence permits

All individuals from a country outside the EEA or Switzerland applying for permission to stay in the UK for more than six months (from 1 December 2012) must apply for a biometric residence permit. This is a card that holds your details along with ‘biometric information’ such as fingerprints and facial image. It also shows your immigration status and your entitlements while you are in the UK. This standardises the documentation all migrants use, making it easier for employers to check the migrants’ right to live, work or study in the UK.

## UK residency

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 Temporary Worker 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. The Home Office web pages on [visas and settlement](#) have further information.

## Avoiding illegal employment

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 (amended 2008) makes it 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 and dentists will be expected to produce appropriate documentation on request.

For more information take a look at NHS Employers’ employment checks [web page](#).

## Other employment checks

Alongside checks on immigration status for doctors and dentists 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 doctors and dentists.

## 9. Access to UK training for overseas doctors and dentists

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’ training lasting six or seven years (three years for GP training), or may be split into core (basic) and higher speciality training, which generally last for two-to-three years and three-to-four years respectively. The structure of postgraduate medical training changed in the UK as a result of the [Shape of Training](#) review. The shape of training review looked at potential reforms to the structure of postgraduate

medical education and training across the UK. The aims of the review were to:

- continue to train effective doctors who are fit to practise in the UK
- provide high quality and safe care
- meet the needs of patients and service now and in the future.

Career structures and training for dentists in the UK is different to doctors. After completing dental school in the UK, newly qualified dentists who want to work in the NHS need to undertake one year of dental foundation training/vocational training in an approved dental practice under supervision. Dentists may then choose to work in a dental practice, or in hospital posts. For further information on career structures and training for dentists, visit the [NHS Careers website](#). There is also useful advice on the [COPDEND website](#) and on the [BDA website](#).

## Foundation Programme

The UK Foundation Programme undertakes national recruitment annually. Full details on eligibility can be found on the [Foundation Programme website](#).

Applicants within the national recruitment need to:

- be a UK (or EEA national until 1 January 2021)
- be currently studying medicine in the final year at a UK medical school and currently have a student visa
- be eligible to obtain the valid right to work in the UK from the time of starting the Foundation Programme and for the duration of training, i.e. two years plus shadowing period, as determined by the employing organisation (minimum of five days prior to official commencement in post).

## Specialty training

Eligibility for specialty training, the timetable for applications, and other key information is contained on the website for [medical specialty training \(England\)](#).

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.

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.

Posts that are not filled as part of national recruitment are typically advertised 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

[Medical training initiative](#) posts are specifically designed to offer training and development to doctors from predominantly low income and lower-middle income countries lasting up to two years. Doctors then return to their home



countries where their patients and colleagues can benefit from the skills and experience they have obtained in the UK.

## Specialty doctor and other posts

These posts cover all posts that are not part of a formal UK postgraduate training programme. For all such posts, GMC registration and a current licence to practise will still be required.

Within the UK these posts will usually include opportunity for professional development, regular appraisal and the benefits of NHS employment, such as generous leave, competitive levels of pay and access to the NHS Pension Scheme.

Doctors will only be able to take up a post with sponsorship from an employer under the skilled worker route.

Specialty doctor and other trust doctor vacancies are usually advertised on [NHS Jobs](#), a website dedicated to NHS vacancies, and in medical journals such as the British Medical Journal or British Dental Journal.

## 10. Employment rights and pledges

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.
- Rights to equal pay for equal work.
- The right to be treated equally and fairly and without discrimination.
- The right to request flexible working.
- The right to safe working conditions, the right to raise grievances.
- The right to not to be dismissed from your employment unfairly.

Details of the full range of statutory employment rights can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

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 enable staff to fulfil their potential.
- Support and opportunity to maintain your health and wellbeing.
- Involvement of staff in decisions affecting them and input into improving services.

## 11. Pay and terms and conditions

Current national salary scales for medical and dental staff are published in [pay and conditions circulars](#) on the NHS Employers' website. National salary scales are reviewed by the independent [Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body](#).

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.

### Junior doctors

Junior doctors earn a basic salary and have the opportunity of additional earnings depending on their work patterns. At the time of writing, the basic salary for doctors in training starts at £28,243 but increases as doctors progress through specialist training up to £52,036 (2020-2021 rates).

Additional earnings are based on any extra hours above a 40-hour standard working week, for full-time staff, and the intensity of the work required.

### Specialty doctors

Specialty doctors currently earn from £41,158 to £76,751 basic pay (2020-2021 rates). The basic contract is for 40 hours per week.

### Consultants

Consultants currently earn from £82,096 to £110,683 basic pay (at 2020-21 rates). They can be paid for additional duties and may be eligible for Clinical Excellence Awards, which reward outstanding performance. The basic contract is for 40 hours per week.

### General practitioners

Many GPs are self-employed and hold contracts, either on their own or as part of a partnership, with their local CCG. The profit of GPs varies according to the services they provide for their patients and the way they choose to provide these services. Most self-employed GPs would expect to earn between £80,000 and £120,000. Up-to-date average profit for self-employed GPs can be found on the [NHS Digital](#) website.

Salaried GPs earn between a minimum of £60,455 and a maximum of £91,228 (2020-21 rates).

### Trust doctors

Some employers will offer posts on their own terms and conditions of employment which will often mirror or be very similar to the national terms and conditions described above. Doctors are advised to seek confirmation on the pay and conditions of these posts before accepting an appointment.

## Dentists

Dentists who wish to work in the NHS must undertake a VDP/dental foundation year. Currently the basic salary for this year is £30,132 per annum (2020-2021 rates). After this, dentists can work in dental practices which are small businesses owned by an experienced dentist or partnership of dentists. There is no formal career structure in this route. Many dentists are self-employed and hold NHS contracts, either on their own or as part of a partnership, with their local CCG. The profit of dental practices can vary according to the services they provide for their patients and the way they choose to provide these services. Alternatively, after the VDP/dental foundation year, dentists may choose to work in hospital posts instead of going into a dental practice.

Dental trainees in hospital posts currently earn a basic salary between £38,694 and £52,036 (2020-2021 rates). Salaried dentists can currently earn a basic salary between £41,766 and £89,333 (2020-21 rates), depending on their competence, managerial responsibility, and service complexity.

Subject to completing training in certain specialties, dentists may also become hospital consultants.

## Flexible working

For a variety of reasons, doctors may want to apply for permission to work or train flexibly at some stage in their career.

The NHS is committed to supporting a good work-life balance for all NHS employees and flexible working is a key focus of the NHS People Plan. Doctors can request flexible working arrangements as early as when negotiating the contract of employment.

Flexible working can be performed through a reduction in working hours or perhaps through job-sharing. 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 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. Training posts will need to be at least 50 per cent whole-time equivalent. Doctors here under the skilled worker visa should be aware that the NHS will stop sponsoring them if they take a career break, which will affect their immigration status. These doctors would need to qualify to stay in the UK in another way if they wish to remain in the UK during a career break.

## 12. Good practice in employment

Overseas doctors should be supported, especially on arrival when they are new to the UK and the NHS. NHS Employers has produced an international recruitment toolkit designed to support NHS staff who are leading and delivering international recruitment.

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, for example, information about accommodation, the local community, financial support, immigration, tax, family, and social life.
- 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's history, examination and local documentation). This may, if appropriate, include a period of 'shadowing', mentoring or close supervision and support. All doctors who are about to start in Foundation Programme year 1 undertake a paid period of at least four days' shadowing immediately prior to the start of their employment.
- Access to a named individual to provide initial and ongoing support and guidance.
- Regular monitoring of progress, appraisal and development.

The GMC has a Welcome to UK Practice online tool, which is a scenario-based tool available for all doctors. The aim of the tool is to give doctors an insight into their knowledge of the GMC's core guidance, Good Medical Practice, and how it applies to their daily practice. By answering questions within the case studies, doctors are able to generate feedback and references to further guidance. A Welcome to UK Practice workshop is also available for doctors who gained their primary medical qualification outside of the UK, and registered with a licence to practise within the last 12 months.

The GMC has a range of explanatory guidance and learning materials on their website. The GDC also has a range of guidance on its website.

NHS Careers publishes the induction handbook Welcome to the Medical Team (PDF) for doctors new to foundation training each year and the BMA provides its own targeted careers information, which is regularly updated and accessible from the BMA website.

## 13. Checklist of considerations

Some checks for IMGs to consider before proceeding.

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/GDC registration? Most posts will require full registration.

Will you need to sit tests set by the **professional and linguistic board** (PLAB) and the **international English language testing system** (IELTS) or the **Occupational English Test** (OET)?

If you do not need to sit the professional and linguistic board (PLAB) test, do you have the appropriate evidence of your postgraduate qualifications? You can check what evidence you will need with the GMC or visit the **website**.

Does your self assessment under the points-based system indicate you will qualify for **immigration** if you obtain employer sponsorship under the skilled worker route? 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? The **Medical Training Initiative scheme** provides an entry route for overseas doctors wishing to train and develop skills in the NHS, for a maximum of 24 months, before returning to their country.

## 14. Useful contacts and websites

### Health Careers

- Information for international healthcare professionals
- Medical careers and specialty advice

### Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

- Employing overseas workers

### British Medical Association

- Guide for doctors new to the UK
- Becoming a doctor
- Refugee doctors
- Immigration services (available to BMA members)
- BMA careers: advice for overseas doctors thinking about working in the UK (online learning module)

### General Medical Council

- Welcome to UK Practice online tool
- Joining the medical register

### Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

- Medical Training Initiative

### Support networks

- BAPIO – British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
- BIDA – British International Doctors Association

### Useful books

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

## NHS Employers

NHS Employers supports organisations to develop effective approaches to reward to support their workforce priorities and challenges. We keep employers up to date with the latest developments in reward and provide guidance to help employers communicate and reinforce the value of their reward offer. Our Total Reward and Engagement Network provides an opportunity for colleagues from across the NHS to develop and share their reward knowledge and experiences.

The NHS Pension Scheme is a key part of the reward offer for employees in the NHS and we provide tools and resources to help employers promote the value of the scheme and carry out their local administration responsibilities.

## Contact us

More information about the [medical pay and workforce team](#).

If you have any questions, email us at: [medicalworkforce@nhsemployers.org](mailto:medicalworkforce@nhsemployers.org)

[@NHSEmployers](#)

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