

FAQs for doctors

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Opportunities for overseas qualified doctors

What opportunities are there for an overseas-qualified doctor to work in the UK?

Competition for training posts is high, particularly in certain specialties and in certain parts of the country. Training posts in the popular specialties and in popular places are likely to be filled by resident doctors from the UK or European Economic Area (EEA). There may be opportunities in service grades (consultants, specialty doctors) supporting the NHS service delivery.

Doctors and dentists who wish to work in the UK from outside the EEA will need to meet the requirements of the UK Border Agency immigration rules under the [points-based system](#).

All doctors who wish to practise medicine in the UK will need to be both registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and hold a licence to practise. For more detail, see our [information for doctors](#).

Where do I look for jobs in the NHS?

Once you have confirmed your registration status and are in a position to apply for jobs, you need to visit [NHS Jobs](#), the online recruitment website for the NHS which advertises medical vacancies.

You should be aware that whilst there is some demand for doctors in [certain medical specialties](#), if you are not eligible to practise either as a fully qualified consultant or GP, then competition for junior doctor posts can be very fierce. Prospective recruits should not assume that there is a guarantee of either a training post or job in the NHS.

Licence to practise

Do I need a licence to practise?

Yes – the licence to practise applies to all doctors in the UK whether they are working in the NHS or independent sector, either on a full or part time, permanent or locum basis. You will need to have a licence to practise before you can apply for your GMC registration regardless of the type of registration you require.

Registration

What are the types of GMC registration?

There are three main types of registration - specialist registration, full registration and provisional registration. For more general information, see our [information for doctors](#).

The [registration section on the GMC website](#) will help you assess the type of registration you may be eligible to apply for.

Contact details for the GMC are available on their [website](#).

How do I register with the General Medical Council (GMC)?

The GMC regulates doctors. To be entered on the appropriate medical register you must submit the following documents to the GMC:

- Primary medical degree
- Specialist or family medicine certificate from the GMC (or confirmation from either the Specialist Training Authority, Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice or Postgraduate Medical and Education Training Board that your training and experience is equivalent)
- Certificate of good standing from your regulatory authority (the organisation you are registered with to practice medicine in your own country)
- Proof of nationality - passport or identity card
- Registration fee
- Pre-registration identity check (you must make a personal visit to the GMC offices)

These must be original documents with certified translations into English.

Applicants who register with the GMC must also demonstrate competence in the English language by achieving a specific mark in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

The GMC can be contacted by emailing gmc@gmc-uk.org or calling the contact centre on 0161 923 6602 (inside the UK) or +44 161 923 6602 (outside the UK).

GP Register

What is the GP Register?

A register of all those eligible to work in general practice (apart from doctors in training such as GP registrars) in the UK health service.

Who needs to be on the GP Register?

Doctors must be on the GP Register to be eligible to work as GPs in the NHS in the UK. This includes locums but excludes doctors in training such as GP registrars. Entry to the GP

Register is evidence that a doctor's qualification is acceptable in the UK.

What is the purpose of the GP Register?

It will provide a number of benefits. In particular employers, contracting authorities, patients and the public have access to the national register of doctors who are eligible to work as GPs.

How is this different from the Specialist Register?

The GP Register focuses on doctors who are eligible to work as general practitioners and is separate from the Specialist Register. To be appointed as a consultant in the NHS in the UK, a doctor must be on the Specialist Register.

How do I apply to get on the GP Register?

GPs who have not followed a GMC-approved training programme can apply under Article 11 of [The General and Specialist Medical Practice Order](#) for a Certificate confirming Eligibility for General Practice Registration (CEGPR) which will enable them to be entered on the performers' list of their primary care organisation. It will also enable them to be entered on the GP Register established by the GMC.

The [GMC website](#) details the evidence required to allow your request for GP registration to be assessed.

If you do not hold full registration and want to join the GP register, you should make your application for full registration when you make your application for GP registration.

Do locums need to be on the GP Register?

Yes, if they work or wish to work as a GP in the NHS.

Specialist Register

Am I eligible to work as a consultant in the NHS?

All consultants working in the NHS must be on the Specialist Register (SR) of the General Medical Council (GMC). European doctors have automatic rights to be entered on the SR if you meet the following criteria:

- Nationality - you are a national of one of the following:
 - a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA)
 - Switzerland
 - or you are married to an EEA national who is exercising his/her EU rights of free movement within the EEA. This means that your spouse must be coming to the UK to take up employment.
- 2. You hold a primary medical degree from a member state within the EEA.
- 3. You hold a specialist qualification/certification from a state within the EEA for a specialty which exists within the UK.

Non-European doctors need to apply to the GMC to have their training and experience assessed under the appropriate criteria. If you are successful, the GMC will send a 'statement of eligibility for registration'. After this, you are eligible to apply to the GMC for entry on the Specialist Register. For further information visit the [GMC website](#).

Approved Practice Settings (APS)

What is an approved practice setting (APS)?

Approved practice settings (APS) are organisations which the GMC has approved as suitable environments for new fully registered doctors.

An APS is an organisation that has systems for the effective management of doctors and systems for identifying and acting upon concerns about a doctor's fitness to practise. They also have systems to support the provision of relevant training or continuing professional development, and systems for providing regulatory assurance.

APSs include environments both within and outside the NHS. More information about this is available on the [GMC's website](#).

What is the purpose of approved practice settings?

The purpose of introducing approved practice settings (APS) is to provide public protection. It requires new and fully registered doctors or those who haven't worked in the UK for more than five years, to work within a supportive environment where quality assured systems aimed at improving standards are in operation. This will help to ensure that in the small minority of cases where problems arise; there is a better prospect of them being detected early.

How do I know if an organisation is an APS?

This information is available from the [GMC's website](#).

Does the APS requirement apply to the independent sector?

Yes, if the doctor's registration requires them to work in an approved practice setting.

Does an international medical graduate (IMG) have to work in an APS?

Yes, by law all doctors granted full registration for the first time and taking up a new job (UK graduates as well as IMGs) or returning to the register after a prolonged absence from UK practice are required to work initially within an approved practice setting.

Do EEA graduates need to work in an APS?

EEA graduates are strongly advised to work in an APS when they first take up employment in the UK under full registration. The GMC also advises EEA doctors restored to the register after prolonged absence from UK practice to work initially in an APS. This will ensure that they work in environments with appropriate supervision and appraisal arrangements or assessments.

IELTS and PLAB

I need information about the IELTS test and the PLAB test.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

Non-EEA applicants applying for registration must satisfy the GMC that they have the necessary competence of English language. Doctors must take the Academic Version of the IELTS test and achieve an overall score of 7.0, with minimum scores of 7.0 in speaking and 6.0 in listening, reading and writing sections.

Information about the format of the test as well as addresses of UK and overseas IELTS test centres and application forms are available on the [IELTS website](#).

Professional Linguistic and Assessment Board (PLAB)

The PLAB test is the main route by which international medical graduates (IMGs) demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to practise medicine in the UK.

All applications for PLAB exams must be made online through the [GMC website](#). If you are unable to apply online you should contact the GMC for an application form on +44 (0)161 923 6602.

Part 1 of the test can be taken in some overseas countries (listed on the [GMC website](#)), but part 2 of the test can only be taken in the UK. You must pass part 2 of the test within three years of the date you passed part 1.

What happens if an applicant's PLAB pass has expired?

If your pass in the PLAB test has expired, you will be required to demonstrate capability for practice in one of the following ways:

- re-taking both parts of the PLAB test
- having a current offer of sponsorship from an approved sponsor
- having an acceptable postgraduate qualification (PGQ).

If an applicant considers there are exceptional reasons why they should not provide objective evidence in one of the forms above, they will be required to submit a written statement explaining why these standards should not be applied to them. They will also be required to provide details of the objective evidence they wish the GMC to consider as demonstrating their capability for practice in the UK. All such applications will be referred for advice from a Registration Panel.

Can IMGs get exemption from PLAB?

IMGs applying for provisional registration must pass the PLAB exam in order to register.

Doctors applying for full registration may demonstrate their medical knowledge and skills in one of the following ways:

- you have passed the PLAB test
- you have sponsorship by a medical Royal College or other sponsoring body for further postgraduate training
- you hold an acceptable postgraduate qualification
- you are eligible for entry in the Specialist or GP Register

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 (internship).

International Medical Graduates

Does an international medical graduate (IMG) have to work in an APS?

Yes. All doctors granted full registration for the first time and taking up a new job (UK graduates as well as IMGs) or returning to the register after a prolonged absence from UK practice are required to work initially within an approved practice setting.

Do IMGs need an offer of employment to apply for registration?

There is no longer a requirement for IMGs to have an offer of employment in order to obtain registration with the GMC.

What type of registration can international medical graduates (IMGs) hold?

IMGs can apply for provisional or full registration depending on the nature and extent of their postgraduate experience. If they have satisfactorily completed either Foundation Year 1 (F1) in the UK or a period of postgraduate clinical experience that provides an acceptable foundation for future practice as a fully registered medical practitioner, they can apply for full registration. If not, they can apply for provisional registration.

IMGs will be required to demonstrate their medical knowledge and skills, knowledge of English, and fitness to practise before they are registered.

Applicants who meet the criteria for full registration are not eligible for provisional registration.

How do IMGs move from provisional registration to full registration?

IMGs applying for full registration who have previously held provisional registration will already, as part of their application for provisional registration, have satisfied the registrar of their knowledge of English and will have an acceptable primary medical qualification. When applying for full registration, they will generally not be required to satisfy these requirements again. They will, however, as with all other applications for full registration, be required to submit fresh evidence of their fitness to practise in the form of a completed character declaration and certificates of good standing, if appropriate. In addition, they will, in the same way as UK/EEA graduates, be required to submit evidence that they have completed F1 (in full or add F1 above) to a satisfactory level.

Training

What is the difference between hospital posts with educational approval and posts without educational approval?

Posts must have educational approval from the local Postgraduate Medical Deanery to be credited towards the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). Posts without such educational approval cannot automatically be counted as relevant postgraduate medical experience when applying for subsequent educationally-approved posts.

Observerships

What is a UK observership?

An observership (also referred to as a clinical attachment) is an unpaid placement with a hospital consultant in an NHS trust. These placements give an overseas-qualified doctor the opportunity to observe clinical practice within his/her specialty. These placements should assist overseas-qualified doctors in gaining a better understanding of how the NHS works and how postgraduate medical training is carried out in the NHS.

How do I arrange an observership?

There is no formal mechanism for arranging these placements. Doctors must arrange observer status themselves by writing directly to the NHS trust of their choice. Applications should be addressed to the Specialty Clinical Director or the Postgraduate Clinical Tutor (if it is a teaching hospital). Applications should include a letter explaining why you wish to arrange an attachment and a copy of your curriculum vitae (CV).

Hospital addresses and details of medical personnel can be found in the Medical Directory which is available in the reference section of UK public libraries and should be available for consultation at most British Council offices overseas. Details of NHS trusts can be found on www.nhs.uk

You will need to apply for a business visitor visa through the [UK Border Agency](#) to take up an observership in the UK. There is a specific category in the immigration rules for these posts. A restriction has been introduced on the amount of leave that can be granted specifically to undertake clinical attachments to 6 weeks at a time (or 6 months in total) as they are designed to be filled for short periods only. This is in line with the purpose of these posts, for overseas doctors to familiarise themselves with UK working practices.

Royal College exams

I require information about the UK Royal College examinations and whether I am eligible to take the membership examinations.

You will need to contact the relevant UK Royal College which are listed on:

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges [website](#)
- GMC [website](#)

What induction courses are available?

Induction courses are designed to support international doctors new to working in the UK. The courses provide an in-depth cultural introduction and can help medical graduates gain employment in this country. The courses are managed by the deaneries and information will be posted on their websites. In addition, some deaneries also supplement their courses with handbooks which are available to download from the deanery websites.

A list of deaneries and their contact details can be found at www.copmed.org.uk. We recommend contacting the deanery of your choice and ask about mechanisms induction.