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## **WORKING AND TRAINING** **IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

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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 publication:

<b>APS</b>	Approved Practice Setting
<b>BAPIO</b>	British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
<b>BIDA</b>	British International Doctors' Association
<b>BMA</b>	British Medical Association
<b>CCT</b>	Certificate of Completion of Training
<b>CESR</b>	Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration
<b>CCGs</b>	Clinical Commissioning Groups
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>GDC</b>	General Dental Council
<b>GMC</b>	General Medical Council
<b>GPs</b>	General Practitioners
<b>HSMP</b>	Highly-Skilled Migrant Programme
<b>IMGs</b>	International Medical Graduates
<b>LDS</b>	Licence in Dental Surgery
<b>MTI</b>	Medical Training Initiative
<b>NACPDE</b>	National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education
<b>NACT</b>	National Association of Clinical Tutors
<b>HS</b>	National Health Service
<b>ORE</b>	Overseas Registration Exam
<b>PLAB</b>	Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board
<b>RLMT</b>	Resident Labour Market Test
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

## 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.

## 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 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.

This web-based guidance, originally published in 2010 and updated in 2014, is free to download and is aimed primarily at overseas-qualified medical and dental practitioners. It has been produced by NHS Employers with input from the following organisations:

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

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 currently no visa or other immigration restrictions on working in the UK, other than for Croatian nationals.**

**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 General Medical Council/General Dental Council 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, Sweden and the United Kingdom. While Switzerland is not in the EEA, Swiss nationals have the same rights as EEA nationals.

## THE NHS IN ENGLAND

The NHS is the world's largest publicly funded health service, dealing with over one million patients every 36 hours. It employs more than 1.3 million people and annual expenditure is around £105 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 clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). The CCGs receive some 60 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.

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 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 career and training roles offered in these hospitals.

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](#).

The [NHS Medical Careers website](#) gives details of the specialties and various roles of doctors in the NHS, and the [NHS Careers website](#) gives details of dental careers available in the NHS.





## WHY WORK IN THE UK?

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 and dental training outlined 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.



## 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. This information was originally published by the Department of Health as part of a good practice guide for employers. It has been updated for this guide.

### Advice for IMGs thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK

Topic	Content	Information Sources
General information about the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Brief history of Britain/EU</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.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office</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/news">www.bbc.co.uk/news</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport">www.bbc.co.uk/sport</a>
General UK Government information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Access links to Government web pages</li></ul>	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>
British taxation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Taxation</li><li>– National Insurance contributions</li><li>– Old age pension benefits</li></ul>	<a href="http://www.hmrc.gov.uk">www.hmrc.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension">www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension</a>
Public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Local councils</li><li>– Social security</li></ul>	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council">www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council</a> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions</a>

*continued overleaf*

## Advice for IMGs thinking about working or training in the NHS in the UK *continued...*

Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rail network</li> <li>– Air travel and airports</li> <li>– London Underground (tube)</li> <li>– Buses</li> <li>– Coaches</li> <li>– Driving licence</li> <li>– Motoring associations</li> <li>– Bringing your own car to the UK</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.nationalrail.co.uk">www.nationalrail.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.heathrowairport.com/about-us">www.heathrowairport.com/about-us</a> <a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk">www.tfl.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://http://traveline.info">http://traveline.info</a> <a href="http://www.nationalexpress.com/home.aspx">www.nationalexpress.com/home.aspx</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.gov.uk/browse/driving">www.gov.uk/browse/driving</a> <a href="http://www.highways.gov.uk">www.highways.gov.uk</a>
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.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/compare-best-bank-accounts">www.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/compare-best-bank-accounts</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> </ul>	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">www.education.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx">www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx</a> <a href="http://www.ucas.com/index.php">www.ucas.com/index.php</a>
Shopping, supermarkets and sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Shopping</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/consumer_e.htm">www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/consumer_e.htm</a> <a href="http://www.shopsafe.co.uk">www.shopsafe.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>– Relevant embassy contact details</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.police.uk">www.police.uk</a> <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office</a> <a href="http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk">www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office</a>
Career options for spouse/ children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Opportunities for employment in healthcare or other careers</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/finding-job">www.gov.uk/browse/working/finding-job</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.jobs.nhs.uk">www.jobs.nhs.uk</a> <a href="http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk">www.nhscareers.nhs.uk</a>



## OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

There are many medical and dental roles in the NHS. The need for doctors and dentists varies by specialty and geographic location and fluctuates over time. Over the long term, the UK aims to train as many doctors and dentists as it needs, but the outflow of UK doctors and dentists to other countries provides opportunities for doctors and dentists from elsewhere in Europe and from overseas.

The NHS has a dedicated [NHS recruitment website](#), and many 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 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.

[NHS Jobs](#) enables doctors and dentists 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.

The shortage occupation list is an official list of occupations for which there are not enough resident workers to fill vacancies across the UK. The list is reviewed periodically. At the time of publication there was a shortage of consultants in the following specialties:

- emergency medicine
- haematology
- old-age psychiatry.

In addition, there was a shortage of non-consultant, non-training medical staff in the following specialties:

- anaesthetics
- general medicine specialties delivering acute care services (intensive care medicine, general internal medicine (acute), emergency medicine (including specialist doctors working in accident and emergency))
- rehabilitation medicine
- psychiatry.

For an up-to-date list of the shortage specialties see our web pages on [shortage occupations](#). The posts listed above are not the only posts available to IMGs, as there will also be local shortages of other specialties depending on the location. See more information about immigration requirements on page 13 of this guide.

To work as a doctor in the UK in any healthcare employment, successful applicants must be registered with a licence to practise with the [General Medical Council](#) (GMC) and, if from outside the EEA, will also have to satisfy the UK's immigration rules.



## GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

All doctors wishing to work in any capacity in the UK, whether in the NHS or elsewhere, must be registered and licenced to practise with the GMC. The licence needs to be revalidated periodically if the doctor wishes to continue to practise in the UK. Revalidation is based on regular evaluation of all practising doctors (using a structured annual appraisal) against agreed professional standards in the workplace. The GMC takes a decision, normally every five years, as to whether a doctor's licence to practise should be renewed.

The GMC sets the professional standards that doctors must uphold in the publication [\[2\] Good Medical Practice](#). The GMC also sets the [\[2\] standards for 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.**

There are two categories of registration to work as a doctor in the UK: provisional registration and full registration. Provisional registration enables doctors to participate in and complete the first year of the Foundation Programme (Foundation year one, or F1) only. The law does not allow provisionally registered doctors to undertake any other type of post.

In addition, for a doctor to work as a general practitioner (other than in a training capacity) or take an appointment to a substantive consultant post in the NHS they must be on the GP or specialist registers held by the GMC.

### GMC language requirements

On 25 June 2014 a change in the law gave the GMC new powers to check the English language skills of doctors in the UK. The GMC can direct any doctor working in the UK to undergo a language assessment, should a serious concern be raised about their ability to communicate effectively in English. In addition to this, the minimum score the GMC will accept in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has increased. A score of at least 7.0 in each of the four areas tested (speaking, listening, reading and writing), and an overall score of at least 7.5 are required.

### GMC registration requirements – 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. 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. 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 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**

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.

Doctors can apply for full registration if they 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. If they have not, they may only apply for provisional registration.

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 sufficient score in the professional and linguistic assessments board (PLAB) test. This is 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. Fees are payable for both parts
- 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.

An acceptable level of proficiency in the English language could be demonstrated by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), administered by the British Council in several countries. For more information, refer to the [British Council website](#).

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](#).

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 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.

## GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL (GDC) REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

### Eligibility for registration

Full registration without assessment of qualifications is available to the following dentists:

- those with a UK dental qualification
- those who have successfully passed the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) or the Licence in Dental Surgery (LDS)
- those with a qualification gained before 01/01/01 from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia with the exception of BChD MEDUNSA, BDS awarded between 01/01/97 to 31/12/00 and BChD Western Cape awarded before 31/12/97
- exempt persons with a scheduled dental qualification from the EEA.

### Eligibility to apply for individual assessment of knowledge and skill

If a dentist does not meet the criteria for full registration, they may be eligible to have their qualification assessed. If the assessment is successful, their name will be entered onto the Dentists Register. However, registration is not guaranteed under this route. The following dentists may be eligible to apply for individual assessment of knowledge and skill:

- Exempt persons who have qualified overseas, but whose qualification has been accepted in another EEA Member State, qualifying them to practise in that State as a dentist. The GDC can consider all dental qualifications, knowledge and experience wherever acquired in the assessment
- Exempt persons who have qualified overseas and whose qualification has not been accepted in another EEA Member State. The GDC can only register an individual whose basic dental training meets relevant European standards.

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

- The overseas registration exam (ORE) is a two-part exam that tests the clinical skills and knowledge of dentists who are not eligible for registration or assessment. Applicants are able to 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.

More details about GDC registration can be found on the [GDC website](#) and dentists can complete the [route to registration questionnaire](#) to find out which route they need to take to register.



# IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to professional registration with the General Medical Council (GMC) or General Dental Council (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.

## Doctors and dentists who are EEA nationals – no immigration restrictions

Doctors and dentists who are EEA nationals have the right to work in the UK, although nationals from Croatia may be subject to worker authorisation. This means that they are only able to work in the UK if they hold a valid accession worker authorisation document or if they are exempt from authorisation. Exemptions from the scheme are set out on the [UK Home Office website](#).

## 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 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 Home Office. There are four tiers within the points-based system to enter the UK to work, train or study. Three of these are relevant to doctors and dentists. For more information on immigration rules, see:

- [the NHS Employers website](#)
- [the UKCISA website](#)
- [the BMA website](#).

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

This tier is now closed to new applicants except for specialised routes which do not apply to doctors or dentists. Anyone who already holds a Tier 1 (General) or the previous highly skilled migrant programme (HSMP) visa is able to extend their stay based on the rules and criteria that were in place at the time they were first granted in this category.

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

Tier 2 is the employer-led route within the system that allows UK employers to recruit individuals from outside the UK and EEA by sponsoring individual migrants to fill vacancies. There is a test called the resident labour market test (RLMT), which ensures vacancies are offered first to UK or EEA nationals. The RLMT does not apply if:

- the job you are applying for is on the shortage occupation list, or
- you are already on a Tier 2 (General) visa, which is the visa given to skilled workers, and you are applying for a different job but staying with the same employer/sponsor, or



- the job you are applying for is paid more than a set amount (currently £153,500 pa) or
- you have already been working under a National Training Number (the number doctors are given when they start specialty training) and are applying to continue a training programme using the same number.

More information on the RLMT is available on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website and [here](#).

This tier can provide immigration permission for those with a job offer from a sponsoring employer who has recruited the overseas worker to a role on the shortage occupation list or 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.

Note: Non-UK / EEA nationals who have graduated from a UK medical or dental school will have an exemption from the RLMT when moving from their Foundation Programme (in Tier 4) directly into specialty training (in Tier 2). This is a one-off exemption when switching from Tier 4 to Tier 2.

For Tier 2 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. The permission to enter the UK is linked to the sponsored employment offer. Other work cannot be undertaken, except for supplementary work in the same occupation for up to 20 hours a week outside the normal working hours of the sponsored employment, or for voluntary work. If any other new employment is sought a new certificate of sponsorship from the new employer or sponsor will be required.

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 and prospective earnings)
- points for maintenance (available funds to support themselves and their dependants in the UK)
- points for evidence of English language competence.

For many doctors and dentists 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 [Home Office \(UK Visas and Immigration\) website](#). Further information can also be found on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

If the application is successful, individuals will be granted leave to enter or remain in the UK for up to three years, or in some cases visas can be granted for up to five years. See the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website for more information. This should be sufficient time to complete basic specialty training. After this period further sponsorship under Tier 2 would be required and the resident labour market test would need to be met, apart from in situations where the RLMT does not apply as mentioned above when describing Tier 2.

A doctor who undertakes a series of posts with Tier 2 sponsorship 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 (MTI)**

Under Tier 5, permission to enter the UK can be granted to overseas nationals coming to undertake exchanges or education and training initiatives authorised by Government departments. The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is the scheme operated in the NHS for doctors and dentists.

Under this scheme there are a number of opportunities made available for the training and development of overseas doctors and dentists. 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 local education and training boards (LETBs) / 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 (AoMRC). Further Medical Training Initiative scheme information is on the [AoMRC website](#).

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 from outside the UK under the points-based system described above if they wish to resume working in the UK in another post.

The Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons (England) administers the Tier 5 Medical Training Initiative scheme for dentistry. 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. The [National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education](#) (NACPDE) provides the day to day running of the scheme for dentists.

### **Biometric residence permits**

All individuals from a country from 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 whilst 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 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.

### 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/EEA doctors and dentists.



## 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 in the UK may change in the coming years as a result of the [Shape of Training review](#).

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](#).

Access to UK training programme posts for non-UK/EEA doctors and dentists 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).

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. Non-UK / EEA nationals who have graduated from a UK medical or dental school will have an exemption from the Resident Labour Market Test when moving from the Foundation Programme (in Tier 4) directly into specialty training (in Tier 2). Refugees in the UK and the partners/civil partners or spouses of doctors with suitable immigration permission or UK ancestry may also qualify, depending on the conditions attached to their stay. The Medical Training Initiative scheme may also offer some UK training posts under Tier 5.

### 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
- be currently studying medicine in the final year at a UK medical school and currently have a Tier 4 student visa
- have the right to work in the UK at the time of application and will continue to have a valid right to work at the time of starting the Foundation Programme

Applicants outside of the EEA will only be able to apply for the Foundation Programme if there are vacancies that are not filled by eligible candidates as part of the national recruitment. These vacancies could then be advertised with sponsorship offered under Tier 2 to doctors outside the EEA, but only if the Resident Labour Market Test can be satisfied.

### Specialty training

Eligibility for specialty training, the timetable for applications and other key information is contained on the [UK 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.

Other non-UK or non-EEA nationals are subject to the Resident Labour Market Test, except for where the RLMT does not apply as described above in the section on Tier 2. If there is no suitable UK or EEA national candidate for the post, Tier 2 sponsorship may be available for three years, or in some cases up to five years. This is usually provided by the regional office of [UK Health Education England](#) which manages the training programme, and not an individual employer.

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. There is a risk a further such post may not be available. Trainees holding Tier 2 sponsorship should be aware that if changing sponsor they will only be eligible for appointment to roles/training programmes that meet the Resident Labour Market Test. A RLMT is not required if continuing with the same sponsor.

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

These are posts specifically designed to offer training and development to doctors and dentists from overseas doctors in posts lasting up to two years. See page 13 describing Tier 5. See the [UK NHS Employers website](#) for information on the MTI scheme

### Specialty doctor and other posts

These posts 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 still be required.

Within the UK these posts will usually include some 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.

The Tier 1 (General) visa is now closed to new applicants. Anyone who already holds a Tier 1 visa 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 RLMT has been met and no suitable UK/EEA doctor or dentist could be found, or to a post named on the shortage occupation list.

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

## 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 [🔗 Home office 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.

The BMA has published the memorandum of understanding [🔗 Breaking down barriers: supporting ethnic minority doctors](#). This memorandum sets out the pledge to take action to support career progression of BME (black and minority ethnic) doctors.





## PAY AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Current national salary scales for medical and dental staff are published in [NHS pay and conditions circulars](#) on the NHS Employers website. National salary scales are reviewed by the independent Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body. NHS Employers and the British Medical Association began negotiating a new contract for junior doctors and possible changes to the consultant contract in late 2013.

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 can currently 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.

### Specialty doctors

Specialty doctors currently earn from £37,176 to £69,325 basic pay (2014/15 rates). The basic contract is for 40 hours per week.

### Consultants

Consultants currently earn from £75,249 to £101,451 basic pay (at 2014/15 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 clinical commissioning group (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 Health and Social Care Information Centre website](#).

Salaried GPs earn between a minimum of £54,863 and a maximum of £82,789 (2014/15 rates).



### Trust doctors

Some employers will offer posts on their own terms and conditions of employment. Doctors are advised to seek confirmation 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. 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 clinical commissioning group (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 in to a dental practice. Dental trainees in hospital posts currently earn a basic salary between £28,076 and £39,092. Salaried dentists can currently earn a basic salary between £38,095 and £81,480, 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 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 parents with young children, but an increasing number of other doctors are expressing other well-founded reasons for wanting to work flexibly.

The NHS is committed to supporting a good work-life balance for all NHS employees. 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. Individuals will need to consider how their immigration status will be affected when considering flexible working. It should be noted that individuals with Tier 4 immigration status can work full time only. Individuals with Tier 2 immigration status will need to make sure that any reduction in hours does not cause their salary to drop below £20,500 per annum.



## GOOD PRACTICE IN EMPLOYMENT

Overseas doctors and dentists 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 or dentist, 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. 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 General Medical Council 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.

The GMC has a range of explanatory guidance and learning materials on its [🔗 website](#). The GDC also has a range of guidance on its [🔗 website](#).

NHS Careers publishes the induction handbook [🔗 Welcome to the medical team](#) 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](#).



## 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 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)? Can you afford the costs of these tests and associated travel?		
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.		
Does your self assessment under the points-based system indicate you will qualify for immigration 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?		



# IMMIGRATION ROUTES SUMMARY



# USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

## NHS Careers

- [Information for international healthcare professionals](#)
- [Medical careers and specialty advice](#)

## CIPD

- [Employing overseas workers](#)

## BMA

- [Guide for doctors new to the UK](#)
- [Becoming a doctor](#)
- [Coming to work in the UK – immigration FAQs](#)
- [Immigration](#)
- [Refugee doctors](#)
- [Immigration services](#) (available to BMA members)
- BMA Careers: [advice for overseas doctors thinking about working in the UK](#) (online learning module)

## GMC

- [Welcome to UK Practice online tool](#)

## Support networks

- [BAPIO](#) – British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
- [BIDA](#) – British International Doctors' Association
- [BAMA](#) – British Asian Medical Association

## Useful books

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

## NHS Employers

The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS 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.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

## Contact us

For more information on how to get involved in our work,  
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NHS Employers



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