International Medical Graduates

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Glossary of Terms

1. AoMRC - Academy of Medical Royal Colleges ([www.aomrc.org.uk](http://www.aomrc.org.uk))
2. BMA - British Medical Association ([www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk))
3. CDU – Career Development Unit
4. CoS – Certificate of Sponsorship
6. EEA – European Economic Area
7. GMC - General Medical Council ([www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org))
8. IELTS - International English Language Testing System
9. IMG - International Medical Graduate
10. MEE - Medical Education England ([www.mee.nhs.uk](http://www.mee.nhs.uk))
11. MMC - Modernising Medical Careers ([www.mmc.nhs.uk](http://www.mmc.nhs.uk))
12. MTI – Medical Training Initiative ([www.aomrc.org.uk](http://www.aomrc.org.uk))
13. NACPDE - The National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education
14. NACPME - The National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Medical Education
15. NHS employer’s ([http://www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org))
16. PLAB (Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board)
17. RMLT - Resident Labour Market Test
18. UKBA – United Kingdom Borders Agency ([www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk))

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Introduction

The Oxford Deanery welcomes international doctors and dentists (the latter are included in the following pages where the term "doctor" alone appears). There is a long tradition of postgraduate training in Britain of overseas-qualified medical professionals, including those who have come to this country as refugees or are seeking asylum. Over the recent years there have been key changes in the composition and numbers of international medical graduates which are discussed in this report.

For the purposes of this document an international medical graduate is defined as

1. Doctors/dentists who have an acceptable overseas qualification and who are nationals of countries outside the UK, the EEA and Switzerland
2. Doctors/dentists who have completed their graduate medical schooling in the UK but are nationals of countries outside the UK, the EEA and Switzerland

Structure of Postgraduate medical training in the UK

Postgraduate training is overseen by a total of 14 Deaneries, which cover specified geographical areas. The Oxford Deanery currently includes five major hospital Trusts: Oxford University Hospitals (including the Horton Hospital, Banbury), Buckinghamshire Healthcare (High Wycombe and Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury), Royal Berkshire (Reading), Heatherwood and Wexham Park (Slough) and Milton Keynes. The total population served is around 2.5 million. Major organisational changes are underway in relation to postgraduate training nationally, and the exact future of Deaneries beyond April 2013 remains under review. The reader is advised to consult the website of Medical Education England (MEE) (www.mee.nhs.uk) for up-to-date information.

Postgraduate Training in Britain for IMGs – trends

International medical graduates constitute 32% of the medical workforce with more than one-in-three hospital doctors and one-in-five general practitioners having qualified overseas.¹

Figure 1 shows the number (all grades of doctors including consultants, and General Practitioners) of overseas doctors on the General Medical Council register on 31 December 2011.
In 2006, there were major changes in the immigration laws which have led to a substantial change in the demographics and numbers of international medical graduates applying. The House of Commons Health Select Committee's report 2012–13 entitled “Education, training and workforce planning” has highlighted a need to ensure that effective workforce planning is in place to prevent over-reliance on doctors who qualified overseas. Any NHS organisation wanting to employ a doctor from outside the EEA has to prove that the post could not be filled by a doctor who qualified in the UK or the EEA. There are exceptions to this rule which are explained in the section on visa tiers.

The number of doctors coming from India has dropped from a peak of 3,641 in 2004 to current levels of around 500 a year. On the other hand, From 2010 to 2011, there was a 29% increase in the number of doctors joining the register from Greece and Spain which are up from 282 to 365 and from 124 to 159 respectively. In the future, there are likely to be fewer doctors coming to the UK from Indian subcontinent and increasing numbers coming from the EEA generally and from Eastern Europe in particular.

Competition for postgraduate training remains intense, not only in the traditionally highly competitive specialties such as surgery and internal medicine, but across the board, including in general practice (GP). The reader seeking to enter the UK for postgraduate (or undergraduate) medical training is advised to seek the latest advice from the UK Borders Agency website (www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk) before making any decision based on the information given here. The relevant visa categories (Tiers 2, 4 and 5) for non-UK/EEA migrants are summarised below, and are explained in more detail in the web-pages linked to this site.
Information about the selection and recruitment process for postgraduate training, including the timing of entry, can be found on the Modernising Medical Careers website, [www.mmc.nhs.uk](http://www.mmc.nhs.uk). This website should in all cases be consulted carefully before making any enquiries from individual Deaneries, Hospitals, and Royal Colleges, other organisations or individual consultants, as the answers to many frequently asked questions can be found through this website and its associated links.

**International Medical Graduate - Visa Categories (Immigration "Tiers")**

Visa categories are divided into various Tiers by the UKBA. A brief description of the Tiers is given below. Please note that Tier I has been abolished and Tiers 2, 4 and 5 are the relevant categories applicable to international medical graduates.

Resident Labour Market Test is designed to test if there are UK/EEA doctors/dentists available/applied to the job in question. Details of the RMLT are available on the NHS employer’s website ([http://www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)).

### Foundation Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Tier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK medical and dental school graduates</td>
<td>Tier 4 UK Foundation Programme Office (medical) and the Yorkshire and Humber SHA (dentistry) are responsible for sponsorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International medical and dental graduates</td>
<td>Tier 2 (general): Skilled worker, Resident Labour Market Test applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Completed Foundation Programme, moving specialty training or other medical posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Tier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK medical and dental school graduates</td>
<td>Tier 2 (general) – resident labour market test not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International medical and dental graduates</td>
<td>Tier 2 (general) – resident labour market test applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors on Medical Training Initiative (MTI).</td>
<td>Tier 5 The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) administers the scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical attachments.</td>
<td>Outside of points-based system. Visitor visa category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary workers, including locums, filling gaps in the skilled labour</td>
<td>Tier 2 (general): skilled worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Different tiers for different work categories

**Tier 2**
This tier is open for IMGs if the post fulfils the RMLT. The applicant must have a job offer and have sufficient points to be eligible for this visa category. There is a current country-wide limit of 20,700 individuals in this visa category. A "Certificate of Sponsorship" (CoS) is required, provided either by the Deanery (the Oxford Deanery is registered as a sponsor) or by the Lead Trust in some other Deaneries. The CoS lasts for 3 years, and can be extended for 2 years. An application for permanent resident status can be made after 5 years.

Separate regulations are in place for nationals of Bulgaria and Romania ("A2 Nationals"). Nationals from these countries need to apply for an “accession worker card” details are available via the UKBA website (see above).

**Tier 4**
Foreign nationals who are graduates of UK medical schools are granted Leave to Remain under a Tier 4 visa, for the duration of the FP (2 years after qualification). The sponsor for doctors under this visa Tier is the UK Foundation Programme Office. A supporting letter from the Deanery is required to obtain this visa and should be applied for well in advance of taking up the first FP post.

**Tier 5**
This visa category comes under the UKBA heading of "Youth Mobility and Temporary Workers", and is only relevant, as far as doctors and dentists are concerned, to those entering the UK on the MTI Scheme (see below). The sponsor is the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

**Coming to work in the UK**
If you are an IMG who is from outside the UK/EEA and thus do not have right of UK residence, you will require firstly to confirm that your primary medical qualification is accepted by the GMC for registration as a medical practitioner. Guidance on this can be obtained from the GMC's website [www.gmc-org.uk](http://www.gmc-org.uk).

Assuming that your primary qualification is registrable with the GMC, the usual route into postgraduate training for IMGs is still via the PLAB (Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board) examination, for which a prerequisite is a pass in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test. Details of the requirements can be found on the GMC website, and by following the related web-links.

The flowchart below summarises various routes to coming and working in the UK. The rules covered in the chart are not exhaustive and a candidate is advised to contact the relevant body for detailed information especially if your circumstances do not fit clearly in the boxes on the flow chart.
Further information is available by contacting the relevant College or Specialty Association (e.g. Royal College of Surgeons, Royal College of Physicians, etc.), whose addresses and websites will be available through your local British Embassy or Consulate, or British Council office, if you are still in your home country. They can also easily be found through any major search engine such as Google. These Colleges and Specialty Associations will give you more detailed information and advice about training opportunities and career choices in their fields.
Figure 3. Working in the UK – routes and visas

**Non UK/EEA passport**

**IMG - UK medical school**
- Apply for a Tier 4 visa to enter foundation training

**IMG - non UK Medical School**

**Foundation Programme**
- Applying within 2 years of completion of medical school
  - F1 posts: you must have a right to work. The foundation school does not sponsor doctors for F1 posts as these posts are usually oversubscribed by UK/EEA doctors and therefore do not meet the RMLT. If you have right to work you must still be eligible for GMC registration (via PLAB).
  - Tier 2 visa granted for a period of 3 years. Doctor/dentist must continue to be in a training post to extend Tier 2 visa

**Foundation Programme**
- Applying > 2 years post completion of medical school
  - F2 posts - Individual Deaneries or trusts may advertise for F2 posts. These posts may meet the RMLT criteria (i.e. no suitable UK/EEA doctor found) and may be able to sponsor a doctor for a Tier 2 Visa. You have to be eligible for GMC registration (usually via the PLAB exam.)

**Post foundation - post graduate training**
- ST programme: Eligible to apply if have GMC registration (usually via passing the PLAB examination and applying to a post which meets the RMLT)
  - Applying via the MTI programme: Eligible if you have 3 yrs of postgraduate experience in your home country. The royal college acts as a sponsor for Tier V visa and your GMC registration (i.e. you are exempt from PLAB)
There is also much useful information available from the International Department of the British Medical Association (BMA), which can be contacted on international.info@bma.org.uk. Virtually all medical posts and training programmes are advertised in the Careers section of the British Medical Journal (www.careers.bmj.com). The BMA also publishes a very useful document entitled: "Working and Training in the United Kingdom National Health Service - a guide for International Medical Graduates (IMGs)", available through its website www.bma.org.uk.

Individual Deanery websites around the country will also be able to provide further more localised information. Contact details for all the UK Deaneries are available from the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans (COPMeD), through their website at www.copmed.org.uk.

Please note that The Oxford Deanery (and others) cannot make direct arrangements for training posts or programmes in the NHS, as these are advertised nationally and are appointed as a result of competitive interview. Nor can the Deanery offer research posts, for which application must be made directly to an individual department. Clinical attachments, or observerships (see below) can only be arranged by making direct contact with individual consultants, or sometimes through the Clinical Tutor or Director of Medical Education in each Trust (hospital). These provide a useful introduction to working in the NHS, and may be helpful to obtain a UK referee when applying for jobs.

Clinical attachments

Enquiries are regularly received about the possibility of undertaking clinical attachments in the Oxford Deanery. It is certainly very useful to have done a clinical attachment (observership) for a few weeks prior to working in the UK for the first time, but the only way to arrange this is by direct contact with a consultant (or GP). There is no centralised system for making these arrangements, and the advice given to applicants is to get in touch with the Clinical Tutor in the Postgraduate Centre of a hospital in the area preferred for the attachment. The Clinical Tutor (or sometimes the Postgraduate Centre Manager) should be able to advise as to which consultants might be able to help. Contact details for the Clinical Tutors can be found on the main Deanery website. The Deanery itself is unable to arrange clinical attachments for you.

You should note that some hospitals may make a charge for such observerships, and all will require payment for accommodation, which is not normally provided by the hospital itself.

Medical Training Initiative

The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is a scheme designed to enable a small number of International Medical and Dental Graduates to enter the UK to experience training and development in the NHS for up to two years – before returning to their home country.
Under the scheme a number of places (currently a maximum of 750 overall) are made available for the training and development of overseas doctors and dentists – using training capacity not required for planned UK/EEA training numbers.

Employers do not sponsor this scheme; instead these posts are approved by Deaneries and the relevant Medical or Surgical Royal College. The management of the MTI is a joint approach between the Medical Royal Colleges, Postgraduate Deaneries, NHS Trusts and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC), with support from the Department of Health. The National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Dental Education (NACPDE) manages all dental posts.

The MTI scheme accommodates overseas postgraduate doctors (known as International Training Fellows) coming to the UK for a maximum of two years for further training. It covers the schemes and arrangements sponsored or administered by the Medical Royal Colleges (e.g. the Overseas Doctors Training Scheme, or ODTS) and similar organisations (e.g. Commonwealth Scholarships), as well as established fellowships in different specialties.

The training must be of high quality with appropriate supervision, learning opportunities, assessment and appraisal. The presence of the fellow must not adversely affect the training opportunities of existing trainees on the programme. Salary must be provided at the level of at least the UK minimum wage, and if any service activities are undertaken by the fellow these must be remunerated at standard NHS rates. Entry to the UK is under a Tier 5 visa (sponsored by the AoMRC), and doctors on the scheme are exempt from the PLAB examination.

A supporting form provided by the AoMRC, signed by the supervising consultant and the Deanery must accompany any application. The form must also be completed by the Medical Personnel department of the employing Trust.

Application must be made from overseas, and the doctor must return overseas at the end of a maximum of two years. Time spent on the MTI Scheme does not count towards residence status in the UK for settlement purposes. There are also regulations regarding the length of time before the doctor is permitted to return to the UK. Further details of the scheme are available from the AoMRC (for doctors) and NACPDE (for dentists). The contacts are:

MTI Scheme
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
35-43 Lincolns Inn Field
London WC2A 3PE
Email: MTI@aomrc.org.uk
www.aomrc.org.uk

MTI Scheme (Dentists)
Induction Courses

The Oxford Deanery no longer runs Induction Courses specifically for IMGs. The Wessex Deanery does still run these courses, normally twice a year, on the Isle of Wight, and is happy to accommodate any new IMGs (from Europe or outside) who might benefit. The contact is Lyn Elderfield at lyn.elderfield@iow.nhs.uk. There is not yet any formal induction process for MTI trainees (International Training Fellows), but the GMC and BMA are considering setting up an electronic system. The contact at the AoMRC for the MTI Scheme is Carol Sheppard (carol.sheppard@aomrc.org.uk). There is more information via the AoMRC website.

The BMA's very useful document entitled: "Working and Training in the United Kingdom National Health Service - a guide for International Medical Graduates (IMGs)", available through its website, should also be consulted.

In addition, each Trust runs its own locally-based Induction Programme, normally on the first day or two days at the start of the new appointments (in the first week of August). Attendance at this is compulsory, as it will provide all the vital local information about working in that particular Trust.

Refugee Doctors

The Oxford Deanery also provides help for refugee and asylum-seeking doctors based in the Oxford area, through the Oxford Refugee Health Professionals Support Project. This was established in 2002, and since then has assisted several dozen health professionals, including doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives, to start retraining with the goal of using their healthcare skills in NHS employment.

The Project can help by providing assistance with preparation for the IELTS and PLAB exams, career guidance, and advice on CV presentation and interview skills. In some cases it has been possible to arrange further support through communication skills courses, clinical attachments, and employment in paramedical posts as a stepping-stone to obtaining full professional jobs in the future. Several Project members are now in full-time employment as doctors in the NHS.

The Project is overseen by the Associate Postgraduate Dean for IMGs, and is administered through Refugee Resource, an Oxford-based charity serving refugees and asylum-seekers in a variety of ways. In the first instance,
Support from the Deanery

The Deanery's Associate Director for Overseas Doctors (IMGs), Dr Amit Gupta has responsibility for matters specific to doctors who have qualified outside the UK, whether in the EEA countries or elsewhere, or whose nationality does not allow automatic right of permanent residence in the UK. These include:

* guidance regarding visa status
* career guidance in relation to overseas status
* advice in connection with training and non-training posts
* assistance with the Medical Training Initiative Scheme
* provision of induction for IMGs
* advice to doctors enquiring from overseas about postgraduate training
* support for refugee and asylum-seeking doctors in the Oxford area
* representing the Oxford Deanery on the COPMeD subgroup of Associate Deans responsible for IMGs, which meets several times a year to discuss issues relating to their entry to and postgraduate training in the UK.

All enquiries must be made either in writing to the Oxford Deanery or by email to amit.gupta@oxforddeanery.nhs.uk, (but not by telephone or fax).

Once you have started your training with us, the Oxford Deanery's Career Development Unit (CDU) offers a comprehensive range of career advice, guidance and support for all doctors working in the Oxford Deanery. This includes the provision of information about or contacts for specific medical specialties, to help doctors choose their most appropriate career path. The CDU can also help with mentoring and confidential coaching for doctors who for whatever reason finds they are in personal or career difficulty. The CDU can be contacted on cdu@oxforddeanery.nhs.uk.

It should be noted that the information and guidance given in these pages is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. The right for overseas citizens to work in the UK is governed by legislation which may change form time to time, and is ultimately a matter for Parliament and the Courts. The Oxford Deanery accepts 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 strongly advised to ensure that your personal situation is covered by the advice taken from these pages. You must also check the current position using the contact details (websites, etc.) provided.
Dr Amit Gupta (Associate Dean, Oxford Deanery) October 4 2012

Dr Amit Gupta
Associate Postgraduate Dean for IMGs and SAS Doctors

Revised October 2012

References