Guidance for International Medical Graduates (IMGs)

Wessex Deanery

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Guidance

Wessex Deanery welcomes doctors who have qualified outside the UK who wish to come to Britain for postgraduate training. There is a long tradition of postgraduate training in Britain of overseas-qualified medical professionals including those who have arrived as refugees or asylum seekers. Such doctors have made considerable contributions to British medicine and their presence has mutual benefit.

a) Purpose

This guidance aims to ensure that those doctors who have qualified outside the UK and who wish to come to Britain for postgraduate training are aware of the requirements for entry to the UK, the restrictions placed upon them and an outline of the requirements for completing their postgraduate qualifications.

b) Scope

Three linked factors have in recent years had a major impact on recruitment and selection to postgraduate training programmes in Britain.

  i) In the past ten years there has been a massive expansion in student numbers at UK Medical Schools which has doubled the number of “home-grown” doctors.

  ii) There has been a major increase in the number of qualified doctors entering Britain from the European Economic Area (EEA) because of the laws concerning free movement of labour.

  iii) In 2006 the UK Home Office Immigration Regulations abolished the entry category of Permit-free Training (PFT) under which most international medical graduates obtained Leave to Remain in the UK for the duration of their postgraduate training. Leave to Remain is currently only available to non-UK/EEA citizens who have qualified from a UK medical school. In this case a doctor may be recommended by the Deanery for 26 months only to cover the Foundation Programme and two subsequent months of “grace”.

Apart from the small group of UK qualified doctors mentioned in iii) above, all others who hold non-UK/EEA nationality and who do not have right of residence in the UK, require a Work Permit under tier 2 of the new point based visa system.

National Health Service (NHS) employers must apply the Resident Labour Market Test during recruitment and selection to postgraduate training posts. A doctor without the right of residence in the UK can only be appointed if there is no suitable UK/EEA candidate.

The reader is strongly advised to seek the latest advice from the UK Borders Agency website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk before making decisions based on the information above.
Coming to work in the UK

1. First confirm that your primary medical qualification is accepted by the General Medical Council (GMC), the UK’s medical licensing and regulatory organisation, for registration as a medical practitioner. Guidance available at www.gmc-org.uk

2. The usual route into postgraduate training for IMGs is via the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) examination, for which a prerequisite is a pass in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), within an overall score of 7.5 and minimum score of at least 7.0 in each category of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Details are on the GMC website.

3. Contact the relevant College or Specialty Association (e.g. Royal College of Surgeons, Royal College of Physicians etc) whose addresses and websites will be available via your local British Embassy or Consulate, or British Council office; or through any major search engine. (Please note that those who have completed a one year internship in their home country are not eligible to join the Foundation Programme.)

Much useful information is available from the International Department of the British Medical Association and the majority of medical posts and training programmes are advertised in the Careers section of the British Medical Journal. See www.careers.bmj.com

Recruitment and selection

At the time of writing, the main recruitment and selection rounds take place between December and March for posts which start at the beginning of August at run through and core level. For ST3 and above recruitment will run in the second round from February onwards. A few posts may be advertised at other times. Small changes in the exact recruitment timetable take place from year to year.

Available training posts and programmes, and also non-training posts, are advertised on NHS Jobs at www.jobs.nhs.uk and on the Deanery website. Jobs may be advertised in the Careers section of the British Medical Journal at www.careers.bmj.com Individual Deanery websites provide further information. Contact details for all Deaneries at www.copmed.org.uk

Clinical attachments

Clinical attachments (observerships) are useful prior to working in the UK for the first time. These can only be arranged by direct contact with a Consultant or General Practitioner (GP). We advise contacting the Director of Medical Education/Clinical Tutor in the Postgraduate Centre of a hospital within your chosen geographical area. The Clinical Tutor should be able to advise which Consultants may be able to help.

The Deanery is not able to arrange clinical attachments for you. Some hospitals may charge for clinical attachments and generally you will be required to pay for your accommodation.
Medical Training Initiative

The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is an immigration category under tier 5 within the Training and Work Experience Scheme (TWES), administered by Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (aomrc.org.uk). The MTI allows overseas postgraduate doctors (International Training Fellows) to come 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 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. Further details are available from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges website on http://www.aomrc.org.uk/mti/medical-training-initiative.html

Induction courses

Wessex Deanery provides regular International Doctor Induction Courses, aimed at doctors who are about to start or have started their first job in the UK. While attendance at these courses is not compulsory, it is strongly advised that most doctors who are new to the NHS find the content extremely helpful as an introduction to working as a doctor in the UK. A three day course is held at St Mary’s Hospital on the Isle of Wight. It is held once a year, usually during the month of July. There is no charge for attendance and travelling expenses are reimbursed. All bookings must be made via email to Ms Joanne Helliwell at joanne.helliwell@iw.nhs.uk.

Each hospital trust runs its own Induction Programme, normally on the first one or two days of the start of the new appointments in the first week of August. Attendance at this is compulsory as it provides all the vital local information about working in that particular trust.

Support from the Deanery

The Associate Dean with special responsibility for overseas medical graduates will offer career advice, counselling and support. He can be contacted on Tanzeem.Raza@wessexdeanery.nhs.uk