International medical graduate coming to work in the UK

BMA
This resource focuses on the journey of an International medical graduate who wishes to work in the UK.

It will provide you with a high level overview of the sequence of key steps you will need to take to work as a doctor in the UK. Such as getting GMC registration and a visa.

The content of this resource will break these down into several key steps. We have also developed the journeys of:

– International medical students who wish to study at a UK Medical School and

– EEA doctors coming to work in the UK

We strongly recommend you familiarise yourself with guidance issued by the Home Office.
The process of securing a job in the UK, which includes getting a visa and becoming registered with the GMC, can take longer than you might expect. Timescales will depend on your level of English and how much time you take to prepare.

Tier 2 is the main immigration route for doctors working in the UK and is for skilled workers with a job offer.
The UK Immigration system is based on a points-based system. Before applying for your visa, you must have an offer of a skilled job in the UK and enough money to support yourself. Your employer must be a licensed sponsor and satisfy the Resident Labour Market Test (also known as the RLMT).

This means they are required to advertise certain jobs initially for a set time to see if the job can be filled by a UK or EEA national, before the job can be offered to someone from outside the EEA, in order to comply with their sponsorship licence rules.

You can read the Home Office guide for the full list of documents and how much money you’ll need.
To practise medicine in the UK you must be registered with a licence to practise. To apply for registration you must (amongst other things):

- Hold an acceptable **overseas qualification**
- Demonstrate your knowledge and skills (usually by passing the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board test)
- Provide evidence that you have completed clinical experience
- Provide evidence that you are in good standing with your regulator and
- Be able to demonstrate that you have the necessary knowledge of English to practise safely in the UK

Step 1 and 2, later in the resource, will provide further information on the PLAB and English language tests.
If you want to practice as a General Practitioner (GP) you will need to:

– Join the GMC GP register. You can find more information here.

– Apply to join the National Performers List which is a list of approved GPs, who satisfy a range of criteria necessary for working in the NHS.

– Register on the NHS GP Induction and Refresher scheme which offers dedicated practical support and a range of assessments including placements and simulated surgeries.

NHS England also provides financial support for those wishing to work in general practice in England. You can also apply for the International GP recruitment programme.
Demonstrate your English language proficiency

You can take the International English Language Test System (IELTS) or the Occupational English Test (OET) to demonstrate you have the appropriate level of English.

To pass these tests you will need a good standard of English and must prepare well in advance.

The tests are available in a number of different countries. You may choose to take the test before you arrive in the UK.
Take the **Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board test**, also known as the PLAB test.

This helps the GMC to make sure that you have the right knowledge and skills to practise medicine in the UK.

You do not need to take the PLAB test if you are applying directly for GP or specialist registration through the **GMC equivalence routes**.

The exam is run four times a year in the UK and in a number of overseas locations. You can choose to take the test before you even arrive in the UK.
The PLAB test is in two parts:

– Part 1 which is a written multiple choice exam, with 180 single best answer questions.

– Part 2 which is a practical objective structured clinical exam, known as an OSCE.

You can get information on booking the test and the cost on the [GMC website](https://www.gmc-uk.org/)

Once you’ve passed both parts, you can apply for registration with a licence to practise. Your application must be approved within two years of passing part 2 of the test. Once the GMC approve your application and you gain registration you can work as a doctor in the UK.

When you take the PLAB test, your IELTS or OET certificate must be no older than 2 years after the date it was issued.
You are now at the stage where you can apply for jobs

You can search for jobs that match your skills, and apply for NHS jobs online by registering at NHS jobs
Apply for GMC registration with a licence to practise

– If you have met the requirements set down by the GMC, you will be granted registration. You must have your registration in place before you start your job.

– You can find more information on the registration fee on the GMC website. The process usually takes between one and three months and you should allow yourself plenty of time to complete it.

– You can find out more information on the GMC website.
Your employer, a licensed sponsor has satisfied the Resident Labour Market Test and offers you a job.

Your employer then becomes your sponsor, but only when they have checked that you are appropriately qualified, experienced and have a good level of English and you can do the job they’re hiring you for. They will then assign you a certificate of sponsorship to prove this.

You must receive this within six months of the job being advertised.
A certificate of sponsorship is an electronic record and holds your personal details and information about the job you’ve been offered. Your sponsor will give you a certificate of sponsorship reference number to add to your Visa application.
Submit your visa application and pay the health surcharge

– A Tier 2 visa costs £610. The health surcharge costs £400 a year and you will need to pay this upfront for the duration of your visa.

– You can bring family members with you to the UK on this visa. They must have a visa if they are from outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland and they too will have to pay the health surcharge upfront.

– The earliest you can apply for your visa is up to 3 months before the day you are due to start work in the UK.

– The date is included in your certificate of sponsorship and you will usually get a decision on your visa within 3 weeks.
The Home Office approves your Tier 2 visa application. You can now start your post.

– You can start your stay up to 14 days before the start date of your certificate of sponsorship.

– The maximum length of stay for this type of visa is 5 years and 14 days or the time given on your certificate of sponsorship plus one month.

– Remember, before you start your course, you must have your biometric residence permit. You will get one automatically when your visa is approved. You can then use this to confirm your identity, right to study or work in the UK and right to any public services or benefits you’re entitled to. Further information, including where you can apply for your BRP can be found on the [Home Office website](https://www.homeoffice.gov.uk).
Key resources

BMA immigration page

BMA overseas resource

GMC registration page

NHS England support for international doctors completing GP training

NHS Employers: Working and Training in the National Health Service – A guide for international medical and dental graduates thinking about working or training in the UK (May 2015)
The British Medical Association (BMA) is the trade union and professional association for doctors in the UK. It also offers specialist support for doctors new to the UK.

By becoming a member of the BMA you’ll be joining thousands of other doctors who also qualified overseas. You’ll also benefit from an initial 50% discount on membership fees.

To find out more about how membership can benefit you as an overseas qualified doctor [click here](#)