

Pre-ARM briefing – Medical degree apprenticeships

This briefing:

- outlines proposals for medical degree apprenticeships in England
- identifies some of the key issues members may want to consider in developing and submitting motions on medical degree apprenticeships
- signposts to further useful information.

You may also wish to read our pre-ARM briefing on widening participation.

Background

HEE states on its website that ‘apprenticeships are a key way for people to learn on the job... allowing learners to gain the opportunity to gain a qualification and apply their learning while continuing to earn a salary’. From 2020 onwards, HEE has been developing an MDA (medical degree apprenticeship) with the twin aims of widening participation and addressing the shortage of doctors in underserved areas.

Degree apprenticeships were established in 2015 as a combination of academic and on the job learning. The number of degree apprenticeships have grown rapidly in recent years from 756 in 2015/16 to 13,587 in 2018/19. Existing degree apprenticeships in healthcare include: nurse, sonographer, paramedic, occupational therapist, physician associate, physiotherapist, and diagnostic radiographer. Proposals for a pharmacist degree apprenticeship are also being developed.

Non-healthcare degree apprenticeships include, among others, civil engineering, architecture, and law. The solicitor apprenticeship is a six-year programme aimed at post A-level students, paralegals and chartered legal executives which covers all the content in a law degree and Legal Practice Course.

Apprenticeship schemes attract Government funding (via the Apprenticeship Levy) up to a maximum of £27,000 per apprenticeship.

MDA proposal

The proposed MDAs will involve combining working with studying to attain a UK undergraduate or post-graduate medical degree approved by the GMC. The degree element will:

- follow the same curriculum as traditional students at that medical school
- meet the GMC’s ‘Outcomes for Graduates’ standards
- be recognised internationally in the same way as current UK primary medical qualifications, and
- incorporate the GMC’s new UK medical licensing assessment.

It will be for employers and medical schools to determine entry requirements (both academic, behaviours and attitudes etc) which is likely to include a contextual admissions policy.¹ On completion, the medical degree apprentices will be entitled to provisional GMC registration, granting them access to the UK Foundation Programme Year 1.

¹ [Contextual admissions](#) processes take social and educational contexts of applicants (such as their neighbourhood, school and parents’ education level) into account during admissions processes.

MDA students will not pay student tuition fees and will have a fixed income through their employment in the NHS.

There will be no 'national model' for an MDA – different approaches may be taken forward, but all subject to the meeting the same apprenticeship standard and assessment described above. They may also differ in length though it's likely they will be between 5 and 7 years duration.

BMA membership

The current BMA Articles of Association define a 'medical student member' as

'Medical students who are enrolled for a course of study in the United Kingdom for or leading to a primary medical qualification'.

From the information we currently have, students enrolled on a medical degree apprenticeship programme will be entitled to: BMA membership; representation by the BMA's medical students committee; become a member of that committee; and be elected onto other BMA committees and BMA UK Council.

Key issues to consider

We do not have current ARM policy on this issue.

In submitting motions to the ARM, members may wish to make proposals or set out views on the following:

- any refinements that could be made to the MDA as it is developed that would ensure it meets its stated aims of widening participation and increasing the number of doctors in underserved areas
- the level of resourcing required within academia and the NHA to support MDAs
- the potential role of the BMA in supporting medical degree apprentices, including lobbying in relation to terms and conditions.

Further information

BMA (April 2021) [statement on medical apprenticeships](#)

HEE information on [apprenticeships](#)