

Recent changes to postgraduate medical education and training in the UK

The Modernising **Medical Careers** (MMC) programme came into effect from August 2005. The basic rule is that two year Foundation Programmes commencing in August 2006 are available to those doctors who are required by the GMC to undertake a year of provisional training. The national application process for the two-year Foundation Programme starting in August 2006 opened 6 October, 2005. Application process closes between 28th October 2005 and 8th December 2005 depending on individual programmes. The majority of PLAB2 holders have already undertaken a PRHO/intern equivalent year in their own country and would not be eligible for Foundation Year 1 or 2 year Foundation Programmes. A small proportion of PLAB2 doctors will have been informed by the GMC that, when registered, they will have to work under limited registration in PRHO or Foundation Year 1 posts. These are the only holders of PLAB2 who would be eligible to apply under this scheme. Confirmation of The GMC guidance can be obtained by emailing the GMC at the following e-mail address: restrictedlr@gmc.org. Further information relating to eligibility and advice to candidates is posted on the MMC website (www.mmc.nhs.uk)

F2 Posts

Doctors moving up through their Foundation Programme from the F1 posts currently occupied will take up majority of UK F2 posts in August 2006.

Specialist training programme

Entry to speciality training programme will require successful completion of F2 year. It is not yet clear if there be any mechanism for the overseas-trained doctors who have not done a F2 year in the UK to demonstrate such competence and compete for the specialist training posts. The scope for International Medical Graduates for entry into training programme after PLAB under these arrangements is extremely doubtful. Overseas-trained doctors face immense difficulties in obtaining paid employment in the UK. Competition for jobs is intense. Recent Pre-Registration House Officer (PRHO) posts are attracting over 1000 applications for each post. Recent changes to the postgraduate medical education and training has led to even locally trained graduates finding it extremely difficult to secure training posts. It is very likely that the first post in the UK will be an unpaid (honorary), temporary (locum), or a non-training (trust grade) post. Securing the first post – training or non-training – is no guarantee of continued employment subsequently.

Other employment

- Home Office regulations do not allow doctors to obtain alternative employment.
- So far as temporary (locum) vacancies are concerned, these are few, unpredictable, and required at short notice. Overseas doctors find it difficult to obtain locum posts as registration is only granted after a post has been obtained and the papers take too long to process. Most hospitals are unwilling to employ doctors without work experience in UK.

Clinical attachments

These unpaid and purely observer posts are also hard to find. Very few hospitals and Consultants accept doctors for such attachments, and increasingly, many are levying charges for granting such attachments. Moreover, most hospitals do not provide accommodation for doctors on attachments, and arranging private accommodation is both difficult and expensive. With the advent of the Foundation Programme the prospects of such Clinical Attachments look very gloomy.

Difficulties with VISA

Each visa application costs £500 for an extension and it is common experience that many have got visa extensions only for a month or even less depending on the duration of the attachment.

Cost Implications

Cost of living without an income in the UK is high and should be borne in mind as part of the overall planning. The areas that cost money are accommodation, subsistence and visa charges, applying for jobs, travel within United Kingdom for interviews and attachments, not forgetting the cost of attachments charged by the hospitals. The overall cost of waiting for the first job could be in the region of up to £10000 for a year. This information is provided to inform the decision about coming to the UK for postgraduate training, and to bring to the notice of the prospective applicant the current very high level of competition for junior posts, the long periods of time that they may spend unemployed, and the impact of recent changes to the postgraduate medical training. Passing PLAB is not a guarantee of a training placement, and there is currently an overwhelming surplus of doctors for the junior training posts. This information is accurate as of October 2005. Further up-to-date details on unemployment and competition for junior doctor posts are available on <http://www.bmjcareers.com/juniorcomp> and <http://www.gmc-uk.org/register/default.htm>.