

## The Sponsorship of International Medical Graduates for Registration

### *Introduction*

1. The purpose of this document is to help organisations and individuals to describe their arrangements for sponsoring international medical graduates (IMGs) for full registration.
2. Please read the guidance notes carefully then complete the template to describe your organisation's arrangements for sponsoring overseas trainees.
3. If you've any queries about the template please contact us on 0161 923 6602. You can also email enquiries to us at: [sponsorship@gmc-uk.org](mailto:sponsorship@gmc-uk.org)

### *Submitting an application to become a sponsor*

4. The completed template should be returned to the following address:

General Medical Council  
Registration Support Team (International)  
3 Hardman Street  
Manchester  
M3 3AW

5. You must return the form with any documents that you refer to in your proposed assessment detailed in the template, typically this includes the following but this is not an exhaustive list:
  - a. Application form
  - b. Reference forms
  - c. Interview questions
  - d. Your organisation's equality impact assessment scheme
6. If you want to submit the form electronically, you can by pressing the 'Submit form' button. If you have an email client such as Microsoft Outlook installed, the form will send automatically. If not, you will be given the option to save the form and send via webmail. **Please make sure to email all supporting documentation to [sponsorship@gmc-uk.org](mailto:sponsorship@gmc-uk.org) if you submit the form electronically.**

## Guidance Notes for Sponsors

### *What's the purpose of sponsorship?*

7. Section 21B of the Medical Act 1983 (as amended) sets out the framework for granting registration to IMGs. Among other things, IMGs must satisfy the GMC that they possess the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practise as a fully registered medical practitioner in the UK.
8. Applicants for full registration may satisfy the Registrar that they've the necessary knowledge, skills and experience in one of the following four ways:
  - a. Passing the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test (69% of IMG doctors enter the register via this route)
  - b. Sponsorship by an approved sponsor (10 % of IMG doctors enter the register via this route)
  - c. Award of approved postgraduate qualifications (PGQ) (20% of IMG doctors enter the register via this route)
  - d. Eligibility for entry onto the GP or Specialist Register. (1% of IMG doctors enter the register via this route<sup>1</sup>)
9. The PLAB test is a broad based examination designed to ensure that IMGs are competent to practise in the UK at the level of a UK Graduate who has completed the requirements for full registration in any of the main branches of medicine and surgery.
10. Sponsored doctors will be those who are already some way advanced in their chosen specialty and who wish to pursue further specialist training in the UK and for whom taking the PLAB test may not be appropriate.
11. Before granting registration to a sponsored doctor, the GMC must be satisfied that the doctor has been selected under quality assured arrangements which have been designed to safeguard the interests and safety of patients. These arrangements must be objective, robust and evidence based.
12. The GMC has a process for approving the schemes offered to assess doctors' knowledge, skills and experience which is detailed below. As well as ensuring the quality of the assessment before giving its approval, the GMC expects to be able to audit the schemes regularly to ensure that quality is maintained. You will be asked to submit evidence that you have completed all of the activities that are documented in your scheme prior to issuing a certificate of sponsorship. **Please be aware that failure to respond to requests for information or adhere to deadlines may lead us to remove you from our list of approved sponsors.**

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<sup>1</sup> Approximate figures from 2011

## *Who are the sponsors?*

13. Sponsors are organisations or individuals in the UK who have put in place suitable mechanisms, which the GMC has approved, for the selection of IMGs. The main sponsors of IMGs are the UK medical Royal Colleges and Faculties. A small number of postgraduate institutions in the UK are approved as sponsors. University heads of department may also sponsor doctors engaged primarily in research or studies for higher degrees where registration is required to allow the doctor to carry out clinical duties.

## *GMC approval of sponsorship schemes*

14. If you wish to sponsor IMGs for registration we'll need to be satisfied that you've undertaken a rigorous assessment of each doctor's current capability for practice in the UK. You'll be asked to complete a sponsorship scheme proposal (SSP) describing your arrangements for selecting doctors for sponsorship in the UK. To be approved as a sponsor you'll need to satisfy the criteria set out in the SSP. When you've completed it, please email it to us for approval. We'll ask you to return the original copy, signed, if and when your scheme is approved.

15. If your sponsorship scheme is approved, any doctor sponsored under those arrangements will be regarded as having satisfied the legal requirement for knowledge, skills and experience. Doctors who have failed (and not subsequently passed) either part 1 or part 2 of the PLAB test or who have previously been turned down for sponsorship by an approved sponsor are not generally considered as suitable candidates for sponsorship. However, if the sponsor feels that an individual has demonstrated the knowledge, skills and experience required to practise under full registration, despite failing part of the PLAB test or not satisfying another sponsorship scheme, the Registrar may still consider the application. In such a circumstance we would strongly recommend the sponsor contact us before agreeing to sponsor a doctor.

## *What we require from sponsors*

16. You should have a mechanism for selecting trainees that will enable you to assess their current suitability for medical practice in the UK. The mechanism should provide you with an objective means of determining whether candidates have the knowledge, skills and experience needed to practise safely under full registration.

17. It's our statutory duty to assess a doctor's capability for practice at the point of registration, and the evidence that the doctor supplies indicating their capability to practise must therefore be sufficiently up to date. As a minimum, a doctor applying for registration with an offer of sponsorship must have been engaged in medical practice for three out of the last five years including the most recent 12 months. The 12 month rule starts at the point the application for registration is made - please make sure that they don't come out of practice before this point. It's important to note that clinical attachments and observerships are not counted as medical practice and shouldn't be taken as such. Volunteer work may be acceptable provided that it can be supported by documented evidence. We allow a maximum gap of five weeks in a 12 month period for annual leave.

18. We wouldn't consider a doctor who does not meet these minimum criteria as being able to supply sufficiently up to date evidence of their medical practice to support their application.

19. In addition, we need to be satisfied that candidates meet the standards which are required of all doctors registered with the GMC. These are the standards set out in *Good Medical Practice* which can be found on our website at [http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good\\_medical\\_practice/index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice/index.asp). You must therefore have a means of assessing whether prospective sponsored doctors are committed to the principles contained in Good Medical Practice. The principles are set out in four domains:

1. Knowledge, skills and performance
2. Safety and quality
3. Communication, partnership and teamwork
4. Maintaining trust

20. Sponsored doctors will already have relevant specialist experience before coming to the UK and we expect them to be capable of working at least at the level of a UK graduate with a minimum of three years post-qualification experience when they first obtain registration. We recognise, however, that in some cases (perhaps because of a lack of technical facilities available to the doctor overseas) a short period of acclimatisation will be necessary for a doctor to become familiar with UK practice which is why all doctors who are registered for the first time are required to work in approved practice setting until their first revalidation. The primary consideration when assessing a candidate's suitability for sponsorship must always be patient safety.

21. It may be beneficial for applicants to go through a full induction programme prior to commencing the one month clinical attachment suggested in criterion two of the template to ensure they understand how they are expected to work within the UK and the NHS. From experiences shared with us by existing sponsors, it may also be beneficial for you to have a mechanism in place for removing an applicant from the application process if their performance was deemed insufficient during the initial or any subsequent trial period and whether you'd consider an appeal from them in this instance.

22. In approving sponsorship schemes the GMC doesn't dictate the terms and conditions for the administration of those schemes. It's for the sponsors themselves to decide if they wish, for example, to set a limit on the number of applicants or charge an administration fee.

23. Please note that we reserve the right to suspend or withdraw the scheme at any time. Sponsors should ensure that they adhere to the scheme criteria at all times.

### *Equality and Diversity*

24. The GMC is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality, and to ensuring that our processes are fair, objective, transparent and free from unlawful discrimination. The GMC Equality Scheme and Equality and Diversity Strategy 2010-2013 are available on our website at [www.gmc-uk.org/about/equality\\_scheme/index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/equality_scheme/index.asp).

25. In addition to completing the sponsorship scheme template below we'll also require you to send us an equality and diversity report to demonstrate how you consider equality and diversity in your own procedures and policies – in particular how you will consider equality and diversity in how your sponsorship scheme is implemented. This could include an equality impact assessment (EIA) or analysis of your sponsorship scheme.

26. This report will be considered by the Assistant Director of Registration alongside your template as supplementary information in support of the arrangements your organisation has in place to select IMGs for sponsorship.

### *Approved practice settings*

27. Please note that any doctor whom you sponsor is required to work in an approved practice setting until their first revalidation; this is an environment which has systems for the effective management of doctors including systems for identifying and acting upon concerns about doctors' fitness to practise, systems to support the provision of relevant training or continuing professional development, and systems for providing regulatory assurance. Further information, including an up to date list of approved practice settings, is available on our website at the following address:

[http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/before\\_you\\_apply/approved\\_practice\\_settings.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/before_you_apply/approved_practice_settings.asp)

### *A single standard for all doctors*

28. All registered doctors must comply with the standards of competence, care and conduct described in *Good Medical Practice*. These are the standards which patients have a right to expect of their doctors, and it is against these standards that doctors will be judged. They apply equally to all UK, EEA and IMG doctors practising in the UK.

29. Those involved in sponsorship (e.g. sponsors, postgraduate deans and supervising consultants) should be familiar with the principles of *Good Medical Practice* and have regard to them in the way they select doctors.

30. All doctors applying for registration under sponsorship will also need to meet the other criteria for full registration. They will need to supply evidence of an acceptable primary medical qualification and of their knowledge of English and show that their fitness to practise is not impaired. Factsheets on all of these requirements can be found on our website at [www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/index.asp)

### *Performance issues and revalidation*

31. Full registration is registration which in theory allows a doctor to work unsupervised. If the doctor pays their annual retention fee, maintains an effective registered address and remains fit to practise their registration continues. Revalidation requires doctors to show that they remain up to date and are fit to practise. All licensed doctors, regardless of where and how they work need to revalidate on a regular basis if they wish to keep their licence to practise. This will normally be every five years, although depending on the circumstances this may be different. There are a number of systems in place, however, such as local appraisal arrangements, to identify doctors who are under performing. In addition, those doctors whose fitness to practise is in doubt and who present a danger to patient safety are dealt with through the GMC's fitness to practise procedures. For more information about our fitness to practise procedures please refer to the relevant pages on our website at [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org). If you have concerns about a practitioner please contact us by telephone on 0161 923 6602 or email us at [practise@gmc-uk.org](mailto:practise@gmc-uk.org)

## *Sponsorship certificates*

32. Your assessment of a doctor's suitability for sponsorship should only be relevant to a **current** application for registration. Sponsorship certificates are only valid for three months from the date of issue. We don't accept certificates that are over three months old.

## Sponsorship scheme proposal

Organisation/individual name	
Sponsorship scheme (Please state the name of the sponsorship scheme offered by your organisation)	

### A - Details of the scheme

1. Please outline the purpose of your scheme	
2. Please give the reason(s) why your candidate(s) are required to hold registration in the UK.	
3. Please outline the reason(s) why your candidate cannot apply for registration under a different route e.g. by taking the PLAB test (Please note paragraph 15 of the guidance)	
4. Please give the contact details of the individuals who will administer the scheme	
<b>Primary contact</b>	
Name	
Address	
Email address	
Work telephone number and extension	
Mobile telephone number	
<b>Secondary contact</b>	
Name	
Address	

Email address	
Work telephone number and extension	
Mobile telephone number	

## B - Evidence of clinical knowledge & skills

*Candidates will need to demonstrate they've the clinical knowledge to allow them to practise safely in an approved practice setting under full registration. They'll be expected to be capable of working at least at the level of a ST 1 when they first obtain registration. The evidence requested must be up to date as outlined in paragraph 12 of our guidance notes listed above.*

**Please provide details of how your assessment will include all of the elements as shown below. If it doesn't, or you have alternative criteria, please provide details.**

### 1. Evidence of progress towards, or success in obtaining, relevant postgraduate qualifications (PGQ).

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

Name of required PGQ		
We will accept evidence of progress towards it		<input type="checkbox"/>
Training/examination leading to the PGQ has been completed and the candidate has the PGQ certificate		<input type="checkbox"/>
The PGQ includes a clinical assessment		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other		

### 2. Where a candidate has failed part of an examination leading to the award of a qualification, further evidence to ensure the standard has subsequently been achieved. Tick all boxes that apply

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

We would not sponsor a candidate that has failed a PGQ examination		<input type="checkbox"/>
We would sponsor a candidate that had failed a PGQ examination but subsequently passed it		<input type="checkbox"/>
We would sponsor a candidate that had failed a PGQ examination if they submitted the following evidence:		



**3. A structured interview by the UK sponsor or individuals and lay persons who are of acceptable standing to the sponsor.** (Please refer to paragraph 5 of the guidance)

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

The interview(s) will take place face to face

☐

The interview(s) will take place using video conference/Skype

☐

If you ticked video conference/Skype, note the measure(s) you will take to check the identity of the candidate:

Who will conduct the interview(s)?  
(Please name roles, not individual's names)

Other

**4. Evidence of previous relevant research or publications.**

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

We will obtain evidence that the candidate has completed clinical research

☐

Research is desirable but not mandatory

☐

We require evidence that the candidate has published clinical material

☐

Publications are desirable but not mandatory

☐

Other

## C - Evidence of clinical experience

*Candidates will need to demonstrate they've completed at least three years of full-time equivalent postgraduate training, including one year's internship (which can be multi-specialty or based solely in one specialty) and at least one year in the specialty in which the doctor intends to work. The evidence requested must be up to date as outlined in paragraph 12 of our guidance notes listed above.*

**Please provide details of how your assessment will include all of the elements as shown below. If it does not, or you have alternative criteria, please provide details.**

### 1. The use of clear criteria for the evaluation of the applicant's curriculum vitae (CV).

(Please refer to paragraphs 5 & 10 of the guidance)

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

Research is desirable but not mandatory

☐

We require evidence that the candidate has published clinical material

☐

Publications are desirable but not mandatory

☐

Candidates will have completed one year's internship (which can be multi-specialty) or based solely in one specialty

☐

**And**

Minimum number of years' experience candidate will have in specialty:

Name of specialty

**And**

Candidate has been engaged in medical practice for three out of the last five years including all of the 12 most recent months at the point the application is made (please note paragraphs 17 & 18 of the guidance)

☐

### 2. Structured references from referees who have directly supervised the applicant which cover all clinical experience to substantiate the quantity and quality of the training.

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

Structured references will be obtained from the candidate's current employer

☐

Structured references will be obtained from the candidate's previous employer

☐

Minimum number of references that will be obtained:

Minimum months/years of the candidate's experience the references will cover:

<b>Structured references will include questions that cover the following skills and behaviours:</b>	
Clinical knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinical skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinical experience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication skills (see section 4 below for more detail)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	
<b>3. Verifying references</b> <b>Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.</b> References will be verified to authenticate as follows:	
By contacting the referee(s) By email/letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
References must be received from an official work address not a webmail address such as Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	
<b>4. Requesting copies of logbooks</b> <b>Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.</b>	
Copies of logbooks must be provided (if they exist in the candidate's home country)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of logbooks are desirable but not essential	<input type="checkbox"/>

## D - Evidence of communication skills and professional attitudes and behaviours

*Candidates will need to demonstrate they possess the communication and interpersonal skills necessary to provide a good standard of care for their patients and work effectively with colleagues as part of a team.*

*All candidates must have achieved the GMC's current minimum scores in the academic version of the IELTS test.*

**Please provide details of how your assessment will include all of the elements as shown below. If it does not, or you have alternative criteria, please provide details.**

### **1. Use of structured references which address the issue of communication, interpersonal and team working skills.**

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

The structured reference referred to in section 3 will capture information about the candidate's communications skills including professional attitudes, behaviours, interpersonal skills and working with others

☐

Other

### **2. Use of a structured interview by the UK sponsor or individuals who are of acceptable standing to the sponsor to assess the professional attitudes and behaviours of an applicant.**

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

The structured interview referred to in section 2 will capture information about the candidate's communications skills including professional attitudes, behaviours, interpersonal skills and working with others

☐

Other

## E - Quality control

*We need to be satisfied that, once we've approved a sponsor's arrangements for determining doctors' suitability for registration, those arrangements continue to operate in the way we've agreed with the sponsor. You'll therefore find it helpful to have a means of ensuring that your procedures are being properly applied.*

*In addition to your audit arrangements, you are required to participate in an annual GMC audit. Please refer to paragraph 11 of the guidance notes for more information.*

**Please provide details of how your assessment will include all of the elements as shown below. If it doesn't, or you've alternative criteria, please provide details.**

### 1. Review of selection/ training procedures applied in individual cases where difficulties have arisen.

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

Remedial training will be given to the individual in the form of:

The individual will be taken off the scheme

☐

The individual's overseas employer will be informed

☐

In serious cases the GMC will be informed

☐

Other

### 2. Assess the performance of the sponsorship scheme.

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

If the sponsorship scheme exists to facilitate an exchange programme ensure the overseas institution is informed of the outcome of the sponsored training

☐

Other

### 3. Participation in the GMC's annual audit scheme and requests for information

(Please refer to paragraph 12 of the guidance)

**Please complete all boxes and tick all statements that apply.**

The GMC will be informed immediately if the sponsorship scheme's primary or secondary contacts change or if any of their contact details change

☐

Completed GMC audit forms and any requested documentation will be returned within deadlines given

☐

GMC requests for information and/or updates to the sponsorship scheme schedule will be responded to within deadlines given

☐

## F - Declaration

Full name			
Position			
Telephone number			
This should be an official work telephone number, <b>not</b> a personal home telephone number.			
Email			
This should be an official work email address <b>not</b> a webmail address such as Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail.			
I confirm that			
will operate the sponsorship scheme in compliance with the arrangements outlined in this proposal and will comply with the GMC's audit requirements.			
Signature			
Date	DD	MM	YYYY
Full address	Official stamp		
			