



The Royal College of **Pathologists**
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Sponsorship Scheme

Booklet of Information

International Department
<https://www.rcpath.org/international/international-medical-science-graduates.html>

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Part 1: GMC Registration and Pathology Training in the UK

1. Introduction

The Royal College of Pathologists has always had a policy of assisting International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who wish to obtain some training experience in the UK. The aim of the sponsorship scheme is to offer assistance to those wishing to pursue a career in pathology.

In order to practise in pathology in the UK, all IMGs who are doctors must be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and where they have no right to work in the UK, hold an appropriate [work permit or visa](#).

This guidance explains the process by which GMC registration may be obtained by doctors who are IMGs. For the purpose of this document, 'IMG' refers to doctors from outside of the European Economic Area and from henceforth will be referred to as 'doctors.'

Sponsorship is intended to apply to three distinct groups of doctors:

1. Doctors wishing to apply for entry to recognised specialty training in the UK, leading to an entry on the Specialist Register or doctors wishing to apply for non-substantive posts in the UK (such as Locum Appointment – Service or Staff Grade).
2. Doctors who wish to train in the UK for a limited period outside of a recognised specialty training programme and who are able to fund the training (normally through government grant or stipend).
3. Doctors who have made an application to the GMC for a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) and who have been recommended to undertake a further period of training. (Doctors in this category should look at the specific information in section 6c.).

Before making any firm commitment or plans to come to the UK, all doctors should carefully consider the advice on employment prospects on the [GMC website](#).

Equality and Diversity Statement

The Royal College of Pathologists is committed to the principle of diversity and equality in employment, membership, academic activities, examinations and training. As part of this commitment, we are concerned to inspire and support all those who work with us directly and indirectly.

Integral to our approach is the emphasis we place on our belief that everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest manner. Our approach is comprehensive and reflects all areas of diversity, recognising the value of each individual. We aim to ensure that no one is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. Our intention is to reflect not only the letter but also the spirit of equality legislation.

The International Department collects information about the gender and ethnicity of trainees as part of their sponsorship application. This information is recorded by the College and statistics are published in the College's Annual Report.

Further information about the monitoring activities of the College trainees, candidates, Members and Fellows are available in the College's [Equality and Diversity policy](#).

2. Registration with the General Medical Council (GMC)

This guidance supersedes all previous College documents providing advice and guidance for doctors wanting to work in the UK.

The GMC's role is to protect patients. One of its responsibilities is to register all doctors practising medicine in the UK for one of the following three types of registration.

- Provisional registration: This type of registration allows newly qualified doctors to undertake the general clinical training under supervision which is needed to move to full registration. A doctor with provisional registration is entitled to work only in posts in hospitals or institutions that are approved for the purpose of Foundation Year 1 (FY1).
- Full registration: Doctors need full registration for medical practice in the NHS or private practice. Normally, doctors practising under full registration are restricted for one year to an approved practice setting (see below).
- Specialist registration: In order to take up a consultant post (other than a locum consultant appointment) in the NHS, a doctor must be included in the Specialist Register. Doctors seeking specialist registration should contact the College or the GMC directly for guidance.

The [GMC's website](#) provides information on the various forms of registration and it is recommended that doctors familiarise themselves with the GMC website as soon as possible.

The initial aim of doctors coming to the UK to train is to obtain full registration. There are several routes to full registration, details of which can be found on the GMC's [registration flowchart](#).

3. Pathology Specialty Training in the United Kingdom

a. The Royal College of Pathologists

The International Department is responsible for overseeing training in the following seven pathology specialties.

Information about specialty training can be found on the [College website](#). Specialty specific links are also on the website:

- [Chemical Pathology](#)
- [Histopathology](#)
- [Diagnostic Neuropathology](#)
- [Forensic Histopathology](#)
- [Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology](#)
- [Medical Microbiology](#)
- [Medical Virology](#)

b. Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists Examination (FRCPath)

The FRCPath examination is taken in two parts. Details are available on the exams section of the [College website](#). The FRCPath Part 1 examination may be taken in certain overseas centres. Information about this and the location of the centres can be found in College's examination regulations and guidelines, also available on the College website.

All doctors should note that there is no requirement for doctors to be in possession of FRCPath Part 1 for entry to specialty training in the UK. The FRCPath Part 1 is a requirement for completion of Stage B of the pathology curricula for doctors in an approved UK specialty training programme.

Entry to an approved training programme is at specialty training year 1 (ST1) in the following specialties:

- Chemical Pathology
- Histopathology
- Medical Microbiology
- Medical Virology

Entry to an approved training programme is at specialty training year 3 (ST3) after the successful completion of at least Stages A and B of the histopathology in the following specialties:

- Diagnostic Neuropathology
- Forensic Histopathology
- Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology

For the specialties:

- Haematology
- Immunology
- Chemical pathology (metabolic medicine)
- Joint training in medical microbiology or virology and infectious diseases.

Entry to training is at ST3 following satisfactory completion of core medical training. For information on core medical training (CMT), doctors should contact the [JRCPTB](#).

c. The Royal College of Physicians (RCP)

Doctors should note that the Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board (JRCPTB), under the auspices of The Royal College of Physicians is responsible for overseeing training in the following specialties:

- [Haematology](#)
- [Immunology](#)

Doctors should contact the JRCPTB for training queries related to [Haematology](#) and [Immunology](#), and the [RCP](#) for information about sponsorship for these specialties.

The Royal College of Pathologists is able to sponsor funded (e.g. by Government grant or stipend) doctors wishing to undertake a limited period of training in haematology or immunology. Doctors seeking appointment to a specialty training programme in haematology or immunology must contact The Royal College of Physicians regarding sponsorship.

4. Routes to full GMC registration

a. The PLAB test

Most doctors currently demonstrate their capability for practice and obtain registration by passing the [PLAB test](#).

The PLAB test is a broad-based examination designed to ensure that doctors 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. The test is in two parts: a written paper consisting of extended matching questions (EMQs) and single best answer (SBA) questions; and an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). It is subject to regular independent review to ensure it is fit for purpose. The College regards PLAB as the standard and preferred route by which doctors should obtain registration, particularly those doctors wishing to enter an approved specialty training programme.

b. Sponsorship

Sponsored doctors are normally doctors who are already some way advanced in their chosen specialty and who wish to pursue further specialty training in the UK. The main sponsors of doctors are the UK medical Royal Colleges and Faculties, together with a small number of postgraduate institutions in the UK. Sponsors recommend to the GMC that each doctor they sponsor possesses the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for practice as a fully registered medical practitioner in the UK.

All sponsoring organisations including the Royal College of Pathologists operate their sponsorship schemes in line with an agreed template that is approved by the GMC. There is no scope to make individual exceptions from the template agreed with the GMC.

c. Evidence of the award of an acceptable postgraduate medical qualification

Possession of an acceptable postgraduate medical qualification (PGQ) is a further mechanism for doctors to demonstrate their capability for practice. An acceptable PGQ will be one which furnishes a sufficient guarantee of the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for employment as a fully registered doctor in an approved practice setting (see below).

The College has confirmed to the GMC that membership of the College by examination is an acceptable postgraduate qualification for registration purposes. Further information and details are available on the [GMC website](#).

5. Approved Practice Settings

All doctors undertaking their first period of GMC registration will be required to work initially in practice settings until your first revalidation, which have been approved by the GMC as acceptable for a practitioner who is newly fully registered. These are known as 'approved practice settings' (APS). It is necessary to work in an APS for an initial period of 12 months unless the GMC directs otherwise, regardless of what route to full registration is taken.

The purpose of APS is to provide public protection as it 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.

The GMC provides a list of Approved Practice Settings which is available on their [website](#). In order to lift the requirement to work within an APS, the GMC will require confirmation that doctors have satisfactorily completed 12 month's practice in such a setting. Further information is available from the [GMC](#).

Part 2: Sponsorship (with exemption from PLAB)

6. Sponsorship (with exemption from PLAB)

Doctors may obtain College sponsorship with exemption from PLAB in order to obtain registration. Doctors making an application for sponsorship following the outcome of a CESR application to GMC should read sections 6a and 6c. All other doctors should read section 6a and 6b.

6a. Criteria for sponsorship

The College will consider offering sponsorship for exemption from PLAB to doctors who fulfil the following criteria.

Standard requirements applicable to all doctors seeking registration by sponsorship

- i. The doctor must have a primary medical qualification [accepted by the GMC](#). If the name on the certificate is different to the name by which the doctor is commonly known, evidence (for example, a copy of a marriage certificate) should be provided showing why the names are different.
- ii. The doctor must have passed the academic International English Language Testing System ([IELTS](#)) with a score of at least 7.0 in all four areas (listening, reading, writing and speaking modules) and an overall score of at least 7.5. The certificate is valid for no more than two years, and must be in date at the point of registration with the GMC.

Alternatively, doctors may approach the GMC directly and provide them with alternative evidence of their competence in [English language communication](#). Please note that the GMC can only assess evidence submitted by doctors once they have submitted an application for registration and they no longer issue doctors with letters about the acceptability of their English language evidence.

- iii. The doctor must have been engaged in medical practice for **three out of the last five years including the most recent twelve months**. Two years must be in pathology, and one of these two years in the pathology specialty in which the doctor wishes to work in the UK. There are two exceptions to this.
 - Where a doctor has undertaken a PhD in the UK in a pathology specialty for which they require sponsorship, the clinical content of the PhD could replace the requirements for one year of training in the chosen pathology specialty.
 - Where training in a pathology specialty in which a doctor wishes to train in the UK is not available in the doctor's country of origin, doctors should have three years of postgraduate training including two years of general pathology. Before sponsorship can be agreed, verification of this will be sought from the competent authority for postgraduate medical training where the doctor has trained.

The 12 month rule starts at the point the application for registration is made. You must not come out of practice before this point. It is important to note that clinical attachments and observerships are not counted as medical practice and should not 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.

The College, following consideration of an application, may approve sponsorship when training in a pathology specialty falls slightly short of the required period. However, this will only be in very exceptional circumstances. Where this is the case, training or research in an area of medicine related to the pathology specialty of the applicant may be considered. In such circumstances, the College will seek the support of the Head of Department where the applicant is seeking a post. Normally, the Head of Department will be a Member or Fellow of the College and on the GMC's Specialist Register.

- iv. The doctor must have at least two satisfactory references which will be requested by the College. On receipt of an application, the College will request two references which must be satisfactory in order for the process to continue. References will be sample-checked for authenticity. A copy of the applicant's CV will be sent to referees. The GMC expect any doctor-sponsored doctors to be able to practise at the level of an StR1 (entry level trainee). The College regards that all sponsored doctors must show that they have achieved competencies equivalent to those necessary to have satisfactorily completed Foundation Year 2. The competencies in full are in the [Foundation Programme curriculum](#). It is against these competencies that clinical skills, knowledge and experience will be judged in deciding whether or not to offer sponsorship. Referees will be asked to comment on whether the applicant has met the Foundation Year 2 competencies.

Doctors should also note that as a quality control measure one reference out of every five will be sample-checked with the referee for authenticity.

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.

The seven principles are:

- Good clinical care
- Maintaining good medical practice
- Teaching and training, appraising and assessing
- Relationships with patients
- Working with colleagues
- Probity
- Health

Further information on *Good Medical Practice* can be found on the [GMC website](#).

6b. Pathology-specific requirement for sponsorship by the College for GMC registration for all doctors EXCEPT those seeking sponsorship following a CESR application

- iv. The doctor must show evidence of being, or having recently been, in a postgraduate training programme. In order to be eligible for sponsorship, doctors must be in or have been in a **training** post within three years of their application for sponsorship. **For doctors not in any post, or in a clinical attachment in the UK, evidence must be provided of having been in a training post within three years prior to the date of application for sponsorship.** For doctors applying from a research post, it is expected that the doctor's most recent training took place directly before or within three years of commencing the research. Evidence of training can be provided in the references gathered within the application process or be in the form of a specific letter from a current or most recent educational supervisor.

Doctors are strongly advised to take careful note of section 9 of this guidance regarding evidence of fitness to practise and identity checks, necessary before the GMC will grant registration.

6c. Applications for sponsorship to take a post to allow for completion of recommendations made by GMC for the purposes of an application for a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR).

This section applies **only** to doctors who have made an application to GMC for direct entry to the Specialist Register under CESR route and who have been recommended to undertake a

further period of training. It does not apply to doctors who are recommended for entry to the Specialist Register.

Applicants who have applied for a CESR will have undergone a robust assessment process as a part of their application to GMC and will have provided substantial evidence about their practice.

Where applicants are found not to be eligible for a CESR, they are provided with a schedule of 'top-up' training and (if necessary) assessment, completion of which is intended to support a further CESR application.

The College and the GMC recognise that such doctors may wish to pursue such further training in the UK and may need GMC registration in order to do so. **It should be noted that holding a further training recommendation from the GMC does not provide any exemption from the work permit requirements and doctors must ensure that, prior to seeking training in the UK, they have the right to work in the UK.**

In order to be sponsored for a post further to a CESR recommendation, a number of strict criteria must be met.

First, the standard GMC requirements must be met. These apply to any doctor seeking registration for the first time by any sponsorship route and are listed at Section 6A i–iv on pages 7-8 (*Standard GMC requirements applicable to all doctors seeking registration by sponsorship. These apply to all doctors seeking sponsorship*).

The College has set out further criteria for CESR doctors prior to sponsorship being offered. The intention of offering sponsorship to CESR doctors is to give doctors an opportunity to obtain a post in which they can undergo the top-up training recommended by GMC.

- i. The doctor must have received a decision from GMC about their CESR application. They will have been unsuccessful and will have been recommended a period of top-up training which may include assessment. A copy of this must be submitted with the application for sponsorship.
- ii. The doctor must present a full top-up training plan (including proposals for assessment where necessary) for endorsement by the College. All doctors who fail to meet the requirements for the award of a CESR are recommended to submit a top-up training plan to the College before they commence training. Submission of such a plan is mandatory for CESR doctors seeking sponsorship. The plan must demonstrate commitment to completing the requirements of the GMC decision. The post must be in an APS as set out in section 5 of this guidance.
- iii. The doctor must have a nominated educational supervisor who writes in support of the doctor's top-up training plan and sponsorship application. It would be expected that the supervisor would be an NHS consultant, normally on the GMC Specialist Register and would normally be a Member or Fellow of the College.

References

The GMC has strongly recommended that references be sought to support a sponsorship application. If the references provided to GMC for the CESR application are more than a year old at the point of sponsorship, the College will seek fresh references. A total of two references less than one year old will be required before the College recommends sponsorship.

A separate application form, available from the International Education Officer at the College, should be completed. Doctors seeking sponsorship subsequent to a CESR recommendation should **only** use the specific CESR sponsorship form.

Doctors are strongly advised to take careful note of section 9 of this guidance regarding evidence of fitness to practise and identity checks, necessary before the GMC will grant registration.

7. Application Process for Sponsorship (with exemption from PLAB)

There are three stages of the application process.

Stage 1 – Initial stage

If a doctor believes s/he fulfils the criteria for sponsorship, an [application form](#) must be completed and sent to the International Education Officer, along with the following documentation:

- A **copy** of the primary medical qualification certificate. Original certificates should not be sent until requested. An attested copy of any subsequent postgraduate awards (or part awards) should also be provided.
- A copy of an Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) certificate with the required scores or alternatively, a statement from the GMC attesting to competence in English language communication.
- An up-to-date CV using the [College template](#) or, in the case of CESR doctors only, [a CESR CV template](#)
- Ethnic monitoring [form](#). This is optional.
- Evidence of government funding (if applicable).
- Evidence of CESR outcome (if applicable).

On receipt of an application and the above documents, the College will contact the doctor to acknowledge receipt of the application form and inform them of their eligibility to proceed with the application process for sponsorship.

Applications will not be taken further until two satisfactory references have been received. Doctors are strongly advised to ensure that they give full and up-to-date contact details at which referees can be contacted (experience has shown that email contact tends to be faster). In the case of doctors in training, one referee must be the applicant's most recent educational supervisor or equivalent.

Ineligible doctors

If a doctor is not eligible to proceed with the application process for sponsorship, a letter outlining the reasons why will be provided by the College. However they may still apply for registration through PLAB. **Please note that the GMC considers that doctors who have failed either part of the PLAB test or who have previously been turned down for sponsorship by another sponsoring body are generally not suitable candidates for sponsorship, though they have discretion to consider applications individually.** The College will consider very closely applications from doctors who have previously failed PLAB or who have been turned down for sponsorship by another sponsoring body.

Eligible doctors

If a doctor is eligible for sponsorship by the International Department (who will normally seek the advice of the relevant College Specialty Training Committee [CSTC]), a letter indicating this (a 'sponsorship pending' letter) will be sent to the doctor and this can then be used to support an application for entry to training or for a particular post.

The 'sponsorship pending' letter is essential. **The College will not recommend sponsorship to the GMC without a doctor having the offer of a post (in the case of non-substantive posts, this post must be endorsed for sponsorship purposes by the College).**

It is possible, however that the doctor will not be shortlisted without evidence of GMC registration. The statement will break this *impasse* by providing assurance that the doctor's

credentials will enable them to be offered sponsorship and granted registration on successfully obtaining a post.

Doctors with government funding and who are taking an honorary post arranged for them should make clear at the relevant section of the application form that they have such funding (and send evidence of this) and state whether they have a post arranged. If a post is arranged, the job description should be provided.

Under the sponsorship scheme operated by The Royal College of Pathologists, doctors are not recommended for GMC registration without first being appointed to a suitable post. No exceptions will be made individually.

Stage 2 – Once a post is offered

Eligible doctors wishing to apply for a non-substantive post should send a full job description to the College at the earliest opportunity. Sponsorship for the purposes of non-substantive appointments is contingent on endorsement of the post for sponsorship purposes. This endorsement is not guaranteed and in order to prevent doctors being appointed to a post that is then subsequently not endorsed, the College should be contacted at the first opportunity. The offer of a post is not a guarantee that the post will be endorsed. This process will include checking that the post is in an APS.

CESR doctors **only** will need to present a full training plan setting out how they will meet the requirements set out in their CESR application evaluation.

Stage 3 – GMC registration

Doctors who have been offered a suitable post must apply for GMC registration by completing the online registration application process through the [GMC website](#).

The College will complete the necessary paperwork and send this to the GMC independently. Doctors must **not** start their post until the GMC have formally confirmed the grant of registration.

The attention of all doctors is also drawn to the work permit requirements in Section 11.

8. Posts Accepted for Sponsorship

The Royal College of Pathologists is able to offer sponsorship for full registration in an APS with exemption from PLAB for doctors in the following specialties:

- Chemical Pathology
- Histopathology (and associated subspecialties)
- Diagnostic Neuropathology
- Forensic Histopathology
- Medical Microbiology
- Medical Virology
- Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology

The Royal College of Pathologists is able to sponsor doctors into haematology or immunology posts where they have their own funding. Apart from funded doctors, sponsorship enquiries for training in immunology or haematology should be directed to the [Royal College of Physicians](#).

Please note that all posts, whatever the designation, must be in an [APS](#). This requirement is mandatory and not optional.

Doctors are sponsored for the following without the need for specific endorsement of the job description from the College:

- **Specialty training programmes**

These are GMC-approved training programmes leading to an entry on the Specialist Register on completion. Entry to an approved training programme is at specialty training year 1 (ST1) in the following specialties:

- Chemical Pathology
- Histopathology
- Medical Microbiology
- Medical Virology

Entry to an approved training programme is at specialty training year 3 (ST3) in the following specialties:

- Diagnostic Neuropathology
- Forensic Histopathology
- Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology

- **Fixed-term specialty training appointments (FTSTA) posts**

An FTSTA is a one year post normally at the level of ST1. These are StR posts that do not lead to entry to the Specialist Register via the CCT without subsequent entry to a specialty training programme.

- **Locum appointment – training (LAT) posts**

Where the LAT is for a period in excess of three months confirmation of appointment from the Deanery will be sought. LAT posts may be considered towards a CCT; however this would only be after appointment to a specialty training programme and with appropriate approval from all concerned. Sponsorship may be extended to the listed below on a **discretionary** basis. In order for the College to endorse a particular post for sponsorship, the College must be satisfied that the post has value for the doctors.

- **Honorary supernumerary posts**

Doctors undertaking an honorary supernumerary post will not, under any circumstances, have this time approved towards the award of the CCT should they subsequently obtain a place on a specialty training programme.

- **Locum appointment – training (LAT) posts and Locum appointment – service (LAS) posts**

An offer of a locum post described as 'locum appointment – training' (LAT) for a period of less than three months, or 'locum appointment – service' (LAS) may be endorsed by the College for sponsorship purposes. The job description for the locum post should make clear that the post will involve similar duties and patterns of work to those undertaken by trainees in the department. Endorsement of locum posts for sponsorship is solely at the discretion of the Training Department (who will normally seek the view of the relevant CSTC Chair and **no assumption should be made that such a post will be endorsed**. Under no circumstances will a LAS post be approved towards the award of the CCT should a doctor subsequently obtain entry to a specialty training programme although it may be submitted as part of a CESR application. LAT posts may be approved towards a CCT; however this would only be after appointment to a specialty training programme and with appropriate approval from all concerned.

- **Staff grade and associate specialist posts**

The College will offer sponsorship into posts designated Associate Specialist or Staff Grade on a discretionary basis.

Under no circumstances will posts designated 'locum consultant' be endorsed for sponsorship purposes.

The College expects a doctor to apply for ‘sponsorship pending’ status before applying for one of the above posts in the UK. If sponsorship is not agreed by the College prior to the doctor obtaining a post, it cannot be guaranteed that sponsorship will be offered by the College. If sponsorship is agreed at this late stage, the full application process must be undertaken, which could seriously delay the process of applying for and obtaining registration from the GMC and the doctor taking up post.

Similarly, prior to applying for a non-substantive post, doctors should send the job description for the post to the College for endorsement before making a formal application for the post. There are no guarantees that a post will be endorsed for sponsorship purposes.

Sponsorship for restricted exemption from PLAB is **not** a right – it is offered only to eligible doctors at the discretion of the College. Furthermore, the GMC then has to agree with the College’s recommendation.

Doctors should note that an offer of ‘sponsorship pending’ status will be valid for 24 months. Any extension will be solely at the discretion of the College. However the College makes a strong presumption that after 24 months, doctors should seek career advice and advice about alternative routes to registration (such as PLAB). Doctors should not assume that College discretion will be exercised after the 24-month period.

9. Pre-registration Identity Check and providing evidence of Fitness to Practise

All doctors applying for GMC registration are subject to an identity check by the GMC.

- Doctors must go to the GMC offices to undertake an identity check.
- They must take their original passport with them (copies will not be accepted).
- Details from the doctor’s passport will be taken and retained.
- A digital photograph of the doctor will be taken for GMC records. The photograph will be made available to employers so that they can be assured of a doctor’s identity when they start work, as well as being able to confirm that the doctor has the required registration.

Doctors must attend the GMC for an identity check as a part of the registration process. Doctors must be aware that their registration will not be granted until the GMC has completed the pre-registration identity check. The GMC will invite applicants for registration to attend an ID check as a part of the registration process.

Further information about the pre-registration identity check is available on the [GMC website](#).

Applicants for registration must also satisfy the GMC that at the point of registration, their fitness is not impaired. Applicants must provide:

- a character declaration which the doctor must make themselves
- Certificates of Good Standing issued by the medical regulatory authority in any countries or states where they have worked or held registration in the five years before they applied for registration with the GMC.

In the case of refugees who may be unable to provide this information, the GMC asks to see a structured character reference from another doctor registered with the GMC.

Doctors are strongly advised to take careful note of the requirements for evidence of good standing at the point of GMC registration and also the [separate guidance](#). As Good Standing Certificates have a time limit, these should not be supplied with the initial sponsorship application, but will be necessary prior to an application for registration to the GMC. Doctors should take into account the need to obtain a Good Standing Certificate when considering what date they intend to start their post.

10. Quality Control of the Sponsorship Scheme

The sponsorship scheme is intended to ensure that doctors receive relevant training that allows for the development of their career, the scheme operates to an agreement with the GMC and the sponsorship process will be documented and audited, with the aim providing assurance that the sponsorship arrangements will operate in the way agreed with the GMC.

Structured questionnaires

In order to monitor the satisfaction of sponsored doctors, they will be sent a structured questionnaire. This will ask them to address whether they feel that the training that they receive is adequate and reflects their job description. In cases where issues of concern are reported that have not previously been drawn to the attention of the College, which have not previously been drawn to the attention of the College, the College will contact the relevant supervisor to raise any issues.

Where it is brought to the attention of the College that difficulties are being experienced either with or by a sponsored doctor, the College will in the first instance explore the difficulties with either the sponsored doctor and/or supervisor, subject to circumstances.

Doctors who have been issued with a sponsorship pending letter but who have not found a post will also be sent a structured questionnaire. This will allow the College to monitor the progress made by doctors to whom an offer of sponsorship pending status has been made.

Monitoring the quality of posts for which doctors are sponsored

As part of the quality control of the scheme, the College will only offer 'sponsorship pending' letters to applicants who meet the sponsorship criteria. Formal sponsorship for GMC registration is only offered when doctors provide evidence of appointment to a suitable post. To ensure the quality of the post that doctors are taking, no certificate of sponsorship will be issued until the College is satisfied with the content of the post. Endorsement of posts for sponsorship will therefore normally be a requirement.

In the case of specialty training (ST) posts, Locum Appointment – Training (LAT) (for periods of three months or more) and fixed-term specialty training appointments (FTSTA), such endorsement will be automatic as all such posts are quality assured by the GMC. The GMC procedures are in place to manage situations where such training falls short of necessary standards.

In the case of other posts, the College will determine on an individual basis whether the post is one that can be endorsed. The main criteria in making such a judgement will be whether there is training sufficient to make the post of value to the doctor.

In the case of doctors applying for sponsorship following a CESR application, sponsorship will not be offered without the submission of a GMC schedule of recommendations for further training and the endorsement by the College of a comprehensive training plan, signed by an appropriate educational supervisor. This plan must show evidence of providing opportunity for the doctor to satisfy the training recommendations made by PMETB.

Part 3: Information about Attachments and Work Permits

11. Observer Posts and Clinical Attachments

Ideally, all doctors would benefit from holding an observer post or a clinical attachment prior to applying for posts. Unfortunately, most pathology departments work under such pressure that they are often unable to take an individual for attachments. The onus is on the doctor to persuade a pathology department to take on an observer, but experience has shown that attachments are difficult to obtain. **The College cannot arrange observer posts or clinical attachments for doctors.**

A clinical attachment or observer post does not permit the trainee to do anything other than observe, for example, post mortems or surgical cut-up sections, or share a view of a pathology section under a dual-headed microscope. However such posts do give individuals an introduction to the NHS, laboratory working, understanding staff relationships, etc. GMC registration is **not** required for observer posts or clinical attachments.

Doctors should note that in order to take a clinical attachment, they will need to hold an appropriate visa and that clinical attachment visas are strictly time limited.

12. Work Permits

Before March 2006, IMGs did not require a work permit. Since then, the abolition of the 'permit-free training' category has had consequences for **all** doctors who do not have a right to work in the UK. It is important that doctors fully understand the implications of the work permit provision.

The College cannot arrange work permits for doctors and the College is not able to offer comprehensive advice about work permits. If there are any doubts about a doctor's status in regard to work permits, contact the [Home Office](#) for clarification on +44 (0)20 7842 0800.

All doctors, however, need to be aware that the abolition of permit-free training will have the effect of significantly restricting opportunities.

Immigration Health Surcharge

The UK government introduced an immigration health surcharge on 6 April 2015. The health surcharge will be paid by non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who apply to come to the UK to work, study or join family for a period of more than 6 months. Further information can be found on the [Home Office website](#).

Government-funded doctors

The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is designed to enable a small number of International Medical and Dental Graduates to enter the UK to experience training and development in the NHS for up to two years before returning to their home country.

An MTI (medical training initiatives) visa allows doctors to take a specific post normally, one that is 'brokered' on an honorary basis. Generally speaking, doctors coming to the UK with their own funding are the target for the MTI visa. In order to apply, the hospital or Trust employing the doctor must be able to show that the post is authentic, does not disadvantage UK doctors and is paid at least the UK minimum wage. This last point is essential.

MTI visas are limited for a maximum of 2 years. Doctors will not be allowed to work in the UK for more than 2 years and must leave the UK on expiry of the visa.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (the Academy) acts as the UK Visa Sponsor to enable participants to apply for a Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange Scheme visa with the UK Borders Agency – this is an integral part of the MTI scheme.

It is not possible to switch automatically from an MTI visa to a standard work permit. This means that doctors in a post on MTI cannot obtain a work permit for another post should they obtain one (including substantive training posts) without first leaving the UK for a period equal to the length of time that they were in the UK with an MTI visa.

Before making any application for an MTI visa, doctors should read and consider the relevant [guidance](#).

Because of the 'no switching' rule, the MTI visa is not suitable for most doctors intending to stay and train in the UK towards a CCT.

GMC registration and work permits are two totally separate issues. Holding a work permit is no guarantee that GMC registration will be granted and vice versa.