

Please be aware that due to industrial action by BMA staff, some non-urgent services to members may be impacted on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 March 2026. If you need urgent information about casework support on these days please [contact us](#) to submit an enquiry.

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Applying to work as a doctor in the UK

Before applying for a visa

 Location: International  Audience: International doctors

 Updated: Monday 6 June 2022  Topics: International doctors

This page is part of our toolkit for international medical graduates looking to apply for a visa. Use the menu on the left to navigate the steps needed to practise medicine in the UK.

It covers taking the IELTS/OET and PLAB tests.

Quick tips

Are you sure UK healthcare is right for you?

1. Take our online module - [advice for doctors thinking of coming to the UK](#)
2. Assess your chances - do as much research as possible into the current employment situation and realistically assess your chances of securing a job.
3. Do your research on the UK - we think it's a great place to live and work that is full of opportunity and welcoming of people from all backgrounds.
4. Do your research on the UK's national health service and what it's like to be an employee - try our [work and life in the UK pages](#).
5. Think about the costs - they can soon start to build up once you consider test and registration fees and travel - the Savvy IMG have a [guide on how much you can expect to spend](#).
6. Make contact - write to the responsible organisations, ask questions and get everything in writing.

Once you're sure, you can start the steps below.

Step 1 - demonstrate your English

You can take the [IELTS \(international English language test system\)](#) or the [OET \(occupational English test\)](#) to demonstrate you have a good 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.

Step 2 - take the PLAB test



Update - January 2021

The GMC have made changes to the routes that international doctors can use to join the register. Those who have gained their primary medical qualification outside of Europe and who have passed an [acceptable overseas registration exam](#) may no longer be required to take PLAB.

The GMC will email all those waiting to take PLAB 1 and 2, so they can check whether they are eligible for either route.

Take the [PLAB \(professional and linguistic assessments board\) 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.

To take the tests in the UK, you can request [a standard visitor visa](#) - you may be admitted for six months with the possibility of an extension.

About the PLAB test

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.

Get more information on [booking the test](#).

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 two 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 two years after the date it was issued.

Clinical attachments

Some international medical graduates like to get experience in the NHS by doing a clinical attachment. Many do this shortly before taking part two of the PLAB test or just after passing it.

Read our [guidance on clinical attachments](#).

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[Applying for a job and registering with GMC](#)

