

Working Overseas: Revalidation and Performers List Guidance

Introduction

This paper serves to explain how revalidation and other regulatory processes affect GPs working overseas. It also provides guidance for those GPs returning to NHS clinical practice after a period overseas or otherwise away from UK practice.

Requirements to practise in the NHS and revalidate

In order to practise in the NHS you need to:

- a) Have a UK licence to practise
- b) Be registered on a performers list¹, which creates a prescribed connection to a NHS UK designated body (e.g. NHS England or a NHS Board)

Revalidation does not require that a specific amount of clinical practice be undertaken during the revalidation cycle. Instead you are required to demonstrate that you are up-to-date and fit to practise across the full scope of your work and demonstrate this at annual appraisal.

Your NHS designated body, however, may require a minimum clinical commitment in order to maintain your position on a performers list. For GPs practising in England, the Responsible Officer can now determine this clinical commitment; however it is not yet clear whether the same approach is taken in the devolved nations. By remaining on a performers list you maintain a prescribed connection to an NHS designated body. That organisation will have a responsible officer who will make a recommendation on your fitness to practise to the GMC for revalidation.

Although unrelated to your position on a performers list, the GMC provides other means of maintaining your UK licence to practise if working outside of UK general practice. Details can be accessed on the GMC pages below:

[Suitable persons – information for doctors](#)
[Information for doctors who cannot identify a suitable person](#)

I am planning on working outside the UK. What are my options?

If you are planning to work outside the UK for a substantial amount of time, the GMC provides the option of temporarily relinquishing your UK licence to practise. This will mean that you will pay a reduced fee, and your position on the GP register will indicate that you are in good standing with the GMC. You will not be required to revalidate for a UK licence to practise whilst working outside the UK. You can re-apply for your licence online (three months before returning is recommended) detailing the work you have been undertaking whilst abroad and a certificate of good standing from the relevant regulatory authority for the country where you have been

¹ There is currently a national performers list for England and individual performers lists in the devolved nations.

practising. The GMC may require that you revalidate within a specific period – two years, for example.

But what about my position on the performers list?

This will depend on the amount of time that you are not practising within your designated body (as a result of practising outside the UK). It is important that you discuss your plans with your designated body before you leave. You should establish whether the organisation requires a minimum clinical commitment to maintain your position on the performers list. You should also find out whether there are any measures which would prevent automatic erasure from the list, such as applying for appraisal exemption, and what steps you need to take to satisfy your organisation that you meet those requirements.

What should I do whilst practising outside the UK?

You will need to meet the requirements of the regulatory authority of the country where you are practising. However, you should maintain your CPD as prescribed in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) and try as much as possible to keep up-to-date with UK practice, using resources such as the RCGP [Essential Knowledge Updates and Challenges](#), which are free to RCGP members. You should ensure that keeping up-to-date with UK practice is included as a PDP objective for the period while you are outside the UK.

If I maintain a connection to a UK designated body, will supporting information collected outside the UK count for UK revalidation?

In most cases, supporting information for revalidation will need to be collected within the context of the NHS or a UK Designated Body, such as the Defence Medical Services. However, ultimately the responsible officer will make a decision as to whether supporting information collected outside a UK setting can be relied upon for the purposes of revalidation.

If I maintain a connection to a UK designated body, can I be appraised whilst outside the UK?

To count for revalidation, your appraisal must be delivered through your UK designated body. There have been various discussions about appraisals delivered through Skype etc, but a designated body is unlikely to provide appraisal for a doctor if they are not undertaking clinical sessions within that organisation.

What should I do when I wish to return?

If you need to reactivate your GMC licence, you should apply to do so three months before returning to the UK. Similarly, if you need to re-apply for your position on a performers list, you should do so as soon as possible before returning to the UK. You should inform your designated body as soon as you plan to return to practise in the UK and inform them of your work intentions when arriving back in the UK. Your designated body will be receptive to early applications because it can take up to three months for the organisation to carry out the appropriate checks. You can apply to enter a performers list prior to your return, but you will need to present yourself and papers in person by appointment.

Will I need to 're-train' to get back onto a performers list when I return to the UK?

This depends on the length of time you are out of UK practice. Gaps of one year to eighteen months are commonplace, particularly because of maternity leave. In such circumstances GPs will either have been allowed to remain on a performers list or will be allowed straight back onto it without the need for re-entry assessment. However, a responsible officer is likely to apply discretion the closer the gap gets to two years and will consider a number of factors such as the GP's level of experience, their intended working environment and the relevance of the work they have undertaken abroad to UK general practice. A period of induction, support or supervision may be required.

The Committee of General Practice Education Directors (COGPED) and NHS England recommend a re-entry assessment and a period of induction and adaptation after a GP has had an absence from UK general practice for a period of two years or more. Whilst this is the current position, the RCGP is keen to arrive at a more proportionate arrangement for GPs returning to UK practice, whilst ensuring the highest standards of patient care. The College will work on this issue with key stakeholder organisations in the coming months.

Where can I access further information about the current GP Induction and Refresher (I & R) Scheme?

Details about this programme are available on the GP National Recruitment Office website². Doctors in this group should approach their Deanery or Local Education and Training Board for further advice. Costs of the assessments within the programme - a written Multiple Choice Exam and Simulated Surgery Exam - are borne by the applicants. This programme is available in Scotland, Wales and England but is not currently available in Northern Ireland.

Where can I find further information and resources?

[RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners](#) (taking a break from UK practice section)

[RCGP Essential Knowledge Updates and Challenges](#)

Dr Madeleine Attridge articles in [RCGP Revalidate](#)

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² See www.gprecruitment.org.uk/refresher.html