

Portfolio pathway applications – information for responsible officers

What is the Portfolio pathway?

Most doctors are entered onto the GMC's specialist register after completing an approved training programme leading towards a CCT. However, some doctors who haven't completed CCT training feel they have the same knowledge, skills and experience as a doctor who has completed the approved curriculum. This might be via training and qualifications undertaken outside a UK approved programme, as well as experience. These doctors can apply for specialist registration via the Portfolio pathway, leading to the award of a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR). If they are successful, their name is entered onto the specialist register. There is information about the Portfolio application process [here](#).

In order to be successful, a doctor needs to demonstrate they have the knowledge, skills and experience required for practice as an eligible specialist in the UK.

Documentary evidence

Portfolio pathway applications are assessed on the basis of documentary evidence only. This means that we need to see evidence of all of the skills and competencies an applicant has - we aren't able to make any assumptions about their abilities. It's therefore very important that a doctor is able to gather evidence before they submit their application.

Ways you can support a doctor considering applying via the Portfolio pathway

Doctors thinking of applying via the Portfolio pathway should review the current curriculum for their specialty and carefully consider whether they have evidence to show they meet the high level learning outcome in the curriculum. Support, coaching and feedback from senior colleagues can be invaluable in this process. You should think about any areas that you think an applicant might currently not have evidence of skills in, and whether there is any advice or support you could give them to help them prepare for an application. Some particular areas where you might be able to help are:

Access to other areas

Applicants are sometimes unsuccessful because they have focused on a particular area of the CCT specialty they are applying for specialist registration in. The GMC assesses applicants against the high level learning outcomes of the relevant curriculum, and strength in one outcome won't compensate for a deficiency in another.

Some applicants will benefit from opportunities to refresh or develop their skills in a different area from the one they predominantly work in. Of course, this is not always possible due to service demands. But you may wish to consider whether this is an option for a potential Portfolio pathway applicant, or if there are any opportunities for them to use SPA time to gain experience in other areas.

Assessments and appraisals

The GMC makes decisions on Portfolio pathway applications based on the documents an applicant provides. In some cases, we are presented with lots of evidence about the *volume* of work a doctor has done – such as extensive logbooks of procedures completed – but very little evidence about the *quality* of their work.

Applicants are much more likely to be successful if they provide relevant evidence of how well they've performed in meeting the outcomes in the curriculum. You may be able to help to facilitate or arrange this. The types of assessments and evidence an applicant should provide are detailed in our [specialty specific guidance](#).

Leadership opportunities

Portfolio pathway applications specialties ask an applicant to show leadership skills. Some of these can be attained by completing relevant courses, but it can be difficult for applicants to show how they have applied them. You might be able to help suggest some opportunities for a prospective applicant to do this – such as chairing meetings, sitting on appointments panels, leading rota organisation, or mentoring junior colleagues.

Helping to choose referees

Applicants for a Portfolio pathway application are asked to nominate referees who can comment on their knowledge and skills. The GMC will contact these doctors directly, and ask them to complete a structured report. You might wish to talk to a doctor about who they plan to nominate. The most useful references are usually provided by those who work directly with the applicant, and can comment on their current competence from personal experience. It's also important that referees are told they are going to be nominated, as the form can take a while to complete. There's some guidance for referees available [here](#), and guidance on deciding who to nominate [here](#).

Verification of evidence

Documents submitted to the GMC in support of Portfolio pathway applications need to meet specific verification requirements, which often require the applicant's colleagues to review and be able to attest to evidence. Further guidance is available [here](#).

We won't be able to discuss a doctor's individual application with you directly unless they give us authorisation to do so. An applicant can set this up by telephoning us on 0161 923 6602.

Further resources

Curricula

It's important that applicants review the current approved curriculum for their specialty, so they are aware of the requirements they will be required to demonstrate in their application. An up to date list of curricula is available [on our website](#).

Specialty Specific Guidance (SSG)

The GMC has produced guidance on the documents that should be submitted for Portfolio pathways applications in each approved specialty, with the input of the relevant Royal College or Faculty. This specialty specific guidance can be accessed [here](#).

Contact the GMC

The GMC is happy to discuss any queries doctors considering Portfolio pathway have about the process, or their evidence. They can contact us on portfolio@gmc-uk.org, or by calling 0161 923 6602.