

# Portfolio pathway – policy on structured references

## Summary of policy

1. Doctors making an application for specialist or GP registration using the Portfolio pathway will be required to provide a minimum of three structured references as part of their portfolio of evidence. The references can be from a variety of colleagues as well as medical directors or senior clinicians. However, the author of the reference should have worked directly with the applicant and be able to comment on their practice contributing to providing assurance around the doctor's knowledge, skills and experience in the specialty.

## Background

2. Requirements for entry onto the Specialist and General Practice registers are set out in the Eligibility and Registration of General Practitioners and Specialist Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Order 2022 and General Medical Council (Applications for General Practice and Specialist Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. Both the Order and Regulations sit beneath the Medical Act 1983.
3. The legislation sets out that the doctor must demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and experience required for practising as an eligible specialist or general practitioner in the UK.
4. Doctors who have completed training outside of an approved training programme in the UK can apply for specialist or GP registration via the Portfolio pathway by providing evidence about their previous knowledge, skills and experience.
5. One of the evidence types included in the doctor's portfolio which enables a doctor to demonstrate knowledge, skills and experience is structured references which are triangulated with other evidence to enable a holistic view of a doctor's practice.
6. The totality of the doctor's portfolio of evidence is evaluated and assessed to determine if they have the knowledge, skills and experience required in that specialty. If that assessment is successful and we will grant specialist or GP registration.
7. This policy will enable doctors with a variety of training and experience backgrounds to obtain the structured references to submit in support of their application.

---

## What is the policy?

8. Doctors making an application for specialist or GP registration using the Portfolio pathway should provide a minimum of three structured references which attest to the doctor's performance in their role.
9. The following factors should be taken into account in determining the level of assurance provided by the reference.
  - The references should contribute to providing assurance that the applicant has the knowledge, skills and experience to practise as an eligible specialist or GP in the UK.
  - The references should be from colleagues who have worked closely or directly with the applicant who are able to comment on the applicant's full scope of practice
  - References can be from colleagues such as a medical or clinical director, where the referee is able to comment directly on the doctor's work.
  - References can be from another member of the multi-disciplinary team. Greater weight should be attached to references from colleagues who work directly or closely with the applicant and can attest to the applicant's knowledge, skills and experience.
  - The reference should be completed recently and relate to recent experience of the applicant's work – it should align with our [currency of evidence policy](#) (which provides flexibility where applicants are unable to provide a reference related to recent work).
10. Clinical evaluators and decision makers will make a judgement about evidence which has been provided and consider what level of assurance it provides of the doctor's knowledge, skills and experience. If they are not satisfied that it provides sufficient assurance, they will have the discretion to request clarification or further evidence.

**Policy draft and date: V 0.1 15/09/23**