

Foundation Applicant's Handbook

8 October 2007



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Introduction

Welcome to the national online application process for the Foundation Programme 2008. This process is used for allocating places to foundation training programmes in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

We would like to thank the F1 doctors who suggested we develop this handbook after they applied last year. We have tried to provide specific guidance on how to tackle the application form, and some indication of what the scoring panels will be looking for. We hope that this handbook, along with all the other information available at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk will address most of your questions.

Overview of the process

3 Sep - 12 Oct 07	Ensure that you are eligible to apply. If you are expecting to graduate from a UK medical school by July 2008, you are eligible. If your medical school is outside the UK, or if you graduated from any medical school before 31 July 2006, you must apply to the Eligibility Office by midday on 12 October 2007. More details on the eligibility process are online at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk .
8 Oct 07	Prepare your answers. From 8 October, the application questions will be available online, along with the Foundation Applicant's Handbook . You may wish to start drafting your answers.
29 Oct 07	Register online at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk. Only eligible candidates will be able to apply. You must register before you can access the online application form.
29 Oct – 9 Nov 07	Complete the online application form between 29 October and 9 November 2007 (at noon, GMT). Late applications will not be accepted.
12 Nov – 13 Dec 07	Applications are scored by your first choice foundation school.
9 Jan 08	You will be notified via email of your application results including overall application score and allocation to a foundation school (if successful).
10 Jan – 11 Feb 08	You must submit your preferences for trust/training programme. Deadlines will vary by foundation school. Check the website of the school you have been allocated to for further information on how they will match you to a specific programme.
21 Jan – 11 Feb 08	Your referees will be asked to submit a structured reference for you as part of the pre-employment checks.

End Feb 08	Your foundation school matches you to a specific programme
Feb/Mar 08	Appeals process opens. More information about the appeals process will be published on the Foundation Programme website prior to February.
Mar/Apr 08	Pre-employment checks begin. Your prospective employer will run criminal records and other checks and may require that you attend an interview or verify answers from your application form before issuing your contract.
Jun/Jul 08	Graduate from medical school and become provisionally registered with the GMC (if applicable). Please note that GMC registration is a separate process from applying for the Foundation Programme. However, you must register before you take up employment.
Jul/Aug 08	A contract of employment is issued to you. Your employer will also confirm your salary details, pay banding, rota and so on.

Preparing for the application

Checking eligibility

All final year medical students from UK medical schools who expect to graduate by 31 July 2008 are eligible to apply for the Foundation Programme. All those from non-UK medical schools, or those who have graduated from a UK medical school more than two years before the Foundation Programme is due to begin (graduated prior to 31 July 2006) must check whether they are eligible by applying to the Eligibility Office by noon on 12 October 2007. Full details of the eligibility process are online at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk.

Viewing the application form

From 8 October 2007, you can view the application questions, and see all the sections which will appear on the form at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk. This will be in the form of a PDF which you can print.

If you are unable to view and/or complete the application form online due to a cognitive or mobility impairment you should contact the Eligibility Office to discuss, in confidence, any necessary special arrangements.

Registering to apply online

1. From 29 October 2007, you can register online at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk
2. Click on "Register and enrol" and follow the instructions to choose a login and password.
3. An authentication code will be emailed to you which you must enter into the system.
4. The system will check the personal identification information you enter against the list of eligible applicants. If everything is in order, your account will be activated.
5. Once your account is activated, you may begin working on your application.

Register online as early as you can after 29 October. Enter your personal data: name, date of birth and email address EXACTLY as you supplied it to the medical school or the Eligibility Office. The data you provided to them is pre-loaded from onto the website in order to ensure

that only eligible applicants can register to apply. If the system can't find your data because you supplied it differently, you face a delay in accessing your application. If there are any problems setting up your account, contact your local deanery, medical school, or the Eligibility Office.

The application form

The application form asks you to confirm your clinical skills and is designed to assess your professional and personal skills. The assessment of your clinical skills is made primarily throughout your time at medical school. By passing your final exams, we expect you to be clinically prepared to proceed with foundation training.

In answering each question, you must demonstrate analysis, reflection and learning, and relevance to foundation training. Your answers to the application questions must demonstrate evidence of the personal skills which are included as part of the person specification for foundation applicants; namely that you put the patient at the centre of care; you are organised and able to prioritise; you can work effectively with others; you have good communication skills; and you are capable of dealing with pressure and/or challenges.

Applications for the Foundation Programme 2008 will be accepted online through www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk between 29 October and 9 November 2007. The deadline for applications to be submitted is 12.00 noon (GMT) on 9 November 2007. Late applications will not be accepted.

Verification of answers

A random sample of up to 10% of applicants will be asked to verify the answers they provided on their application form. The process of verification will be determined by the foundation schools.

DOs and DON'Ts for completing your form

DO	DON'T
<p>Compose your answer offline first and save it. Use your word processing programme's spell check and word counter before copying and pasting your answer into your application form.</p> <p>NOTE: The word counter you use may be different than that used by the application website. You may have to amend slightly if you are close to the word limit.</p>	<p>Don't expect to complete the whole application in one sitting.</p> <p>Book at least three sessions in your diary to work on it. It will undoubtedly take longer than you think.</p>
<p>Make sure you paste your answers into the correct box on the application form.</p> <p>Remember, the panel will only see the answer you have given in that particular box on the form, so if your answer is irrelevant because you pasted it into the wrong box, you will receive no points for that answer.</p>	<p>Don't forget to save each tabbed section as you go along.</p> <p>You will lose your work as you move from one tab to the next unless you save. You will be able to edit/amend saved answers until the point you submit your application.</p>

DO	DON'Ts
<p>Print out a hard copy of your completed application form. You may need it if your foundation school wishes to interview you, or if they need to verify your answers.</p>	<p>Don't be tempted to use someone else's material.</p> <p>The application system uses sophisticated anti-plagiarism software to detect any form of standard answer.</p>
<p>Ask a friend/colleague to proofread your final application.</p>	<p>Don't leave it to the last minute to submit your form.</p>

Sections within the application form

The online application form will be divided into eight sections. Each section is represented online by a separate page. Pages are delineated by "tabs" across the top of the screen.

Below is a description of what each section is about along with guidance on what the scorers are looking for.

You may come back to any section you have previously saved to edit your answers up until the time you submit your application form.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you do not press save on each section, you will lose your answers when you go to the next section.

Personal

The first section relates to your personal details. This is pretty self-explanatory – fill in your name, address, telephone numbers, etc.

This section also asks you to submit details of any disabilities which the employer may need to know about in order to make appropriate arrangements for any pre-employment checks or for your employment.

You must disclose details of any unspent convictions, previous convictions, investigations into your fitness to practise; and you must declare any relationship to a director or employee of your first choice deanery or foundation school.

Members of the scoring panel will not have access to this section of your form. They will not know whose questions they are marking; nor will they be able to view any information you have provided about disabilities or criminal convictions.

Preferences

Before submitting your application, you must rank all of the foundation schools in order of preference. Provisional details of programmes within each foundation school may be available to view on foundation school websites (they may not be available yet for all schools). [Click here](#) for a list of foundation school websites.

In the past, most UK medical school students have applied to a local foundation school. Therefore, below is a table which shows last year's information on the number of foundation school vacancies, and the number of medical school graduates in each local area. Do not automatically assume though that you will get a place in a foundation school with has more vacancies than applicants. Competition will vary, depending on where the other applicants choose to list as their first choice. Be aware too that this information does not necessarily reflect the number of job vacancies and final year medical students for this year.

Comparison of foundation school vacancies and number of local final year medical students for 2007 entry to the Foundation Programme

Foundation School	Vacancies	Local Students
Birmingham	111	567 in W. Mids
Black Country	78	567 in W. Mids
Coventry and Warwick	85	567 in W. Mids
East Anglian	147	137
Hereford and Worcester	66	567 in W. Mids
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland	130	223
Mersey	266	284
North Central Thames	306	381
North East Thames	264	303
North West Thames	306	361
North Western	485	406
North Yorkshire and East Coast	157	292 in Yorkshire
Northern	348	322
Northern Ireland	210	193
Oxford	168	140
Peninsula	148	92
Scotland	803	846
Severn	246	194
Shropshire and Staffordshire	155	567 in W. Mids
South East Thames	381	384
South West Thames	279	265
South Yorkshire	156	259
Trent	270	321
Wales	312	302
Wessex	217	186
West Yorkshire	250	292 In Yorkshire

Please note: Information on vacancies and local final year medical students for 2008 can be found on the application website from 29 October 2007.

This year, there are a few changes which may impact on your decisions. Notably, Cambridge graduation changes from December to June. Therefore, Cambridge will have an additional 130 medical school graduates; but that will be matched by an increase in the number of foundation places available in the East Anglian Foundation School.

Please note that Birmingham North, Birmingham South and Shropshire and Staffordshire Foundation Schools will join together for the purpose of recruitment. Also, please note that

South East and South West Thames Foundation schools have merged to become the South Thames Foundation School.

Qualifications

This page consists of four sections: GMC registration status, details of your main medical degree, post qualification experience and any other educational qualifications.

This part of the form will only be used for employment purposes and will not be scored. If your application is successful, this will be passed to your employer.

GMC registration status

If you have not yet graduated, you will need to select “I do not have GMC registration” from the drop-down menu.

If you already have limited or provisional GMC registration at the time of completing the application form, please enter your GMC registration details.

Main medical degree

You must enter details of your medical degree and university. If you have not yet graduated, enter the anticipated date of graduation.

Post qualification experience

This section is for those applicants who have already completed medical school and may have had some experience working as a doctor prior to applying for the Foundation Programme.

Other educational qualifications

This section is for applicants who have completed additional educational degrees or relevant diplomas only. These may include: BA, BSc, BMedSci, PhD, etc.

Questions

Tips for writing good answers

TIP 1	It is important that your answers illustrate your ability to analyse, reflect and learn and to identify how your experience will be relevant to foundation training. These terms are defined as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis: the ability to draw relevant conclusions from key facts and events• Reflection: a consideration of past experience, and its impact on you• Learning: how your knowledge and experience has changed your approach• Relevance: how you will apply your knowledge to foundation training.
TIP 2	Make sure you read the question carefully - answers need to be relevant, well constructed and appropriate.
TIP 3	Check how many examples are asked for, whether they are academic or non-academic, clinical or non-clinical.
TIP 4	Be clear in your descriptions of your achievements and experiences.
TIP 5	Communication skills and attention to detail are important, so answers must be in full sentences (i.e. no bullet points). Poor spelling and grammar may impair the quality of your answer and will lead to a reduction in your score.

Question 1

Maximum points available: 5 points

Limit: 250 words

List your educational achievements.

Guidance

There are two scoring components for this question:

1. Additional degrees to primary medical qualification reflecting a minimum of an additional year of study (in the case of an intercalated degree). There is a maximum of four points for this component.

Number of points	Achievement
0	No mention of any educational achievements apart from medical degree, or achievement listed is non-educational, incomprehensible answer or blank box
1	BSc or BA, class unspecified or 3 rd class or equivalent; or BMedSci
2	BSc or BA, class 2:2
3	BSc or BA, class 2:1 or Masters degree
4	BSc or BA, class 1 st , PhD or equivalent doctorate

2. Other educational achievements – prizes, honours or other evidence of high educational achievement gained after finishing secondary education (or equivalent). There is a maximum of one point for this component.

Number of points	Other educational achievements
1	There is a maximum of one point for this section and can include any one of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prizes: Academic or educational prize at a national level2. Publications: Publications of peer reviewed academic work to which the applicant is a named contributor. References should be given in Vancouver style format.3. Presentations: Oral poster presentation at national or international level, for which the applicant is the first or second named contributor.

Please note: It is possible that your foundation school will ask you to verify your answers, so make sure you have all your paperwork in order.

Question 2

Maximum points available: 8 points

Limit: 150 words

Guidance

Give one example of a non-academic achievement explaining both its significance to you and the relevance to foundation training

Give an example of an achievement, not just an experience. Ensure that it is clear to the scoring panel how and why this was an achievement. Remember to include its significance to you and its relevance to your future training.

Question 3 Maximum points available: 8 points Limit: 150 words	Guidance
<p>Describe one example (not necessarily clinical) relevant to your medical training where you have felt personally under pressure and/or challenged. What did you do to manage this, and what did you learn from this experience that will be relevant to foundation training?</p>	<p>Be clear and concise in your description of the example, how you handled the pressure or challenge, and the outcome of your actions. Dramatic content is <u>not</u> a key factor. Reflect on what you learned from the experience and how it will be relevant to foundation training.</p> <p>NB: Please do <i>not</i> give an example that includes prioritisation as this is covered by Question 4.</p>

Question 4 Maximum points available: 8 points Limit: 150 words	Guidance
<p>Describe one example from your undergraduate medical training of your ability to prioritise tasks and information from any clinical or educational area. What was the outcome, what have you learned and how will you apply this to foundation training?</p>	<p>Show how you determined what was most important and how you prioritised. Describe the outcome and show whether it was successful or not, and in either case what you learned and how you will apply this to your foundation training.</p>

Question 5 Maximum points available: 8 points Limit: 150 words	Guidance
<p>Describe one example from your own clinical experience that has increased your understanding of the importance of team working. What was your role and contribution to the team? What have you learned and how will you apply this to your foundation training?</p>	<p>Describe your role within the team and how you contributed. It should be clear from your reflection how this experience increased your understanding of team working. Show how it will apply to your future training.</p>

Question 6 Maximum points available: 8 points Limit: 150 words	Guidance
<p>Describe one example of a recent clinical situation where you demonstrated appropriate professional behaviour. What did you do and what have you learned? How you will apply this to foundation training?</p>	<p>Show how you have specifically demonstrated a professional attitude, behaviour or integrity in a particular situation, as well as evidence of learning from the example. Show how you will apply this to your foundation training.</p>

Question 7 Maximum points available: 10 points Limit: 250 words	Guidance
<p>Compare and contrast the care pathways you have observed for two different patients with similar clinical problems. To what extent did each pathway take the individual needs of the patient into account? What have you learned from these patients that will be relevant to your foundation training?</p>	<p>Give an appropriate and specific example with a clear analysis of how the individual needs of the two different patients were met, with clear evidence of what you learned, and how you may apply this to your future training. DO NOT give any information from which the patients concerned may be identified.</p>

Clinical skills

This section lists the clinical and practical skills that the GMC require all doctors to be able to perform by the end of medical school. You are asked to tick a box to indicate if you believe you will have attained each competency by the time you complete your medical school training.

This section is not scored, so be honest in your answers. The panel scoring your answers to the questions above will not have access to what you enter into this section.

This section of the form will be sent to employers for their pre-employment checks. If you say you are able to do something that you cannot, you may not be given the training and support you need to gain the competence once you start your job.

References

You will need to provide names and contact details of two referees. They must both be either practising hospital consultants or practising GPs who are able to give an opinion of your past performance.

Ask your referees if they are happy to write your reference before you complete this section. You'll need to enter their correct email address (the email address they use most often, if they have multiple email addresses). They will have to agree to complete a standard online reference for you between 21 January and 11 February 2008.

References are not used in the scoring process, but are required by your prospective employer prior to issue of a contract. This means that even if your application is successful, you cannot start your job until your references are received.

Keep in mind it is your responsibility to ensure your references are submitted. You will be able to see if your references have been submitted by logging in and checking the website.

If you are currently employed as a doctor, or have been employed as a doctor anytime during the last six months, one of your referees must come from that employer.

Other information

This section includes the equal opportunities monitoring information required by the National Health Service to monitor their recruitment practices. This section asks you to provide your age, gender, ethnic origin, religious beliefs and whether you have a disability.

In order to comply with the obligations placed on them under equalities legislation, employers are obliged by law to collect and analyse this information. The information you provide in this section will be held on a secure database and compiled into a statistical report which will not identify individual applicants. This will be sent to your employing organisation to help them ensure they are adhering to equality and diversity guidelines.

The scoring panels will not have access to this information at any time during the scoring process.

Submit

This section includes not only the “submit” button, but several declarations as well.

You will be asked to tick a box to declare that you have completed the application by yourself, without significant help or input from other sources.

This declaration applies only to formulating your answers, rather than the physical act of inputting them into the computer. (If you are disabled, for example, and someone else inputs the information on your behalf, this does not constitute “significant help or input”.)

Please note: The online system has anti-plagiarism software which can identify applications where some form of standard answer has been used. This is regarded as a serious probity issue and if plagiarism is found, applicants will not get a place in foundation training and may be referred to the GMC. The scanning of applications by anti-plagiarism software is the only “automated” part of the application process.

We advise you to submit your application a few days early to avoid the last minute rush. Like any website that has to deal with a high level of traffic, the application site could slow down when it is very busy, and this may be stressful for you when you are trying to submit your application. Once the application is received you will receive an email confirmation to tell you it has gone through.

IMPORTANT: Once your application has been submitted, it cannot be changed. Make sure you double check everything and ensure it is saved before you submit. We advise you to print out a copy of your completed application form before you submit it.

Contacting you

Remember to check your email regularly throughout the process. We will use your email address to send you updates and personal messages about your application throughout the entire recruitment period.

Scoring

Number of points available

Applications will have a maximum score of 100 points, which will consist of two components:

- 1. Academic Ranking - 45 points (maximum)**

Your academic ranking is calculated by your medical school, who have divided your year group into four quartiles based on academic performance. If you are in the first quartile (the top 25% of your year), you will receive a score of 45; if you are in the second quartile, your score will be 40; the third quartile 35 and the fourth quartile 30.

If you are graduating from a UK medical school, these scores will be automatically supplied by the school to the local postgraduate deanery, which is responsible for entering the data onto the system. Your medical school will inform you of your academic ranking.

If you are graduating from a non-UK medical school, or if you have graduated from a UK medical school before 31 July 2006, you will have already applied through the Eligibility Office and your medical school dean must have sent in a statement of your academic ranking to the Eligibility Office.

2. Application questions - 55 points (maximum)

There are seven questions. Each question has an individual score and a word limit (detailed in the previous section).

How applications will be scored

Answers to the application questions will be scored by panels of two people, at least one of whom is a clinician, using a detailed set of national scorers' guidelines. Prior to scoring, all those involved in the panels must undergo "calibration training". This is to ensure that scorers are marking as consistently as possible.

Your answers will be scored horizontally. This means that each panel will only score one question at a time (i.e. all Question 2s; or all Question 3s) rather than scoring an entire application. The result is that each application is scored by a number of panels, which will ensure consistent and fair scoring for all applicants.

Each member of the panel will score an application question independently, and then the panel must agree a final score together for each answer. If they cannot agree, the answer is passed to another panel to score. A chief assessor will be nominated for each scoring event and will be the final arbiter of scoring in case of dispute.

The scoring panels will only be provided with the answer to the specific question they are marking, and your anonymised applicant number. For example, while marking your answer to question one, they will not see your answers to the remaining six questions, any of your personal details including your name, prizes and so on, nor your preferred ranking of all the foundation schools. All other information is held on a secure database and passed to employers for pre-employment checks once an applicant is matched to a training place.

Allocation to a foundation school

Allocations to a foundation school will be based on your overall application score and order of preferences list. You will be notified of your overall application score in January. (This is the combined score of your academic ranking supplied by your medical school, and the number of points you score on the application).

Allocation to a foundation training programme

The next step is allocation to a specific programme within the foundation school. As this part of the process is managed locally by the foundation school, it is very important to check the website of the foundation school you are matched to in order to check what process is being used by your particular school.

Pre-employment checks and employment contracts

Pre-employment checks include Criminal Records Bureau checks, occupational health checks and may, in some cases, include a structured interview. You must ensure that both of your references are submitted, as your employer cannot offer you an employment contract without them.

It is important to note that the employer (hospital or trust), not the foundation school, is responsible for offering you an employment contract. They are also responsible for all contractual issues – location, pay, banding, etc.

Frequently asked questions

Should I ask an online service to help me with my application?

We know there are websites which offer to write or re-write your answers for you. They may use many of the same phrases, so the plagiarism software we use will pick it up. When we asked medical students to submit applications to them as examples to find out how good they are, the feedback we received from them was "Don't waste your money."

Does the offer of a training programme guarantee me a job?

The Foundation Programme recruitment process will match you to a foundation training programme, but the employing organisation (ie the Trust) makes the formal offer of employment. They will offer you a contract only after they have completed your pre-employment checks.

What happens if I don't want the job?

Successful applicants will be allocated to one foundation school only, then to one programme only. Declining your foundation school or programme allocation will mean that you are withdrawing from the entire recruitment process for this year.