



## Information on applying for a medical consultant level post

This information is for doctors who have recently obtained CCT/FRCPath or have an equivalent qualification. It outlines the process of applying for a consultant-level post in the NHS. It includes information on approval of job descriptions and job plans as well as guidance on completing the application form, the interview process and also consultant appraisal, CPD and revalidation.

Slightly different systems exist across the four home nations and any variations will be explained.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the RCPPath offers a job description review service and provides input into selection and interview through a College representative appointed to the interview. This service is available to all employers.

Before advertising a medical post, the job description, job plan and person specification must be submitted for review to the RCPPath. A post cannot be advertised until the job description has been reviewed and endorsed by the RCPPath. The job description, job plan and person specification are reviewed against the relevant model job description by experienced College staff and medical specialty reviewers. The RCPPath will provide a representative from the same speciality as the post to be involved in the Trusts' selection and interview process.

Foundation Trusts (FT's) are not obliged to involve the College in reviewing the job description prior to advertisement although many still do. The FT can also choose whether they invite a College representative to be involved in the selection and interview process.

It is recommended that you closely scrutinise the job plan and job description prior to interview. Any concerns should be raised with the Trust; if there are further concerns regarding the terms and conditions of service these should be discussed with the BMA.

In Scotland this process is managed by the Scottish Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. The specialty specific national advisors comment on the proposed job description directly with the employer (usually one of the 14 Scottish Health Boards) prior to interview but smaller issues are usually raised when the interview panel meets. There is no formal approval mechanism for the job description.

### 1. Advertisement

Posts are usually advertised in the British Medical Journal or online BMJ Careers <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/hospital-medical-healthcare-doctors-jobs.html> as well as on NHS jobs <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>

The details provided in the advertisement may provide either a full description or may give a brief outline of the post.

In Scotland, jobs are usually advertised on the NHS Scotland website <https://jobs.scot.nhs.uk/>



## 2. The Job Description (JD)

The Job Description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position.

The Person Specification details all the relevant, essential and desirable qualifications, skills and knowledge required for the position.

On receiving these documents, attention should be paid to the full range of clinical commitments, including any on-call rota.

The Trust management structure should be clearly identified along with the lines of clinical and managerial accountability.

For more information please refer to Page 4 of the document - BMA CCSC – Applying for a consultant post <http://bma.org.uk/-/media/Files/PDFs/Practical%20advice%20at%20work/Contracts/consapplyingforpost.pdf>

## 3. Making an application by application form

It is important that you complete the application form correctly and demonstrate that you meet the requirements of the person specification of the post.

More advice on completing application forms is available [http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/help/appformHelp\\_2.html](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/help/appformHelp_2.html)

A step-by-step guide in filling in a NHS application form is available [http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/help/appform\\_flowchart.html](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/help/appform_flowchart.html)

It is crucial to include content on your form that is relevant to the post with plenty of appropriate examples. Ensure your content is presented clearly and effectively.

Here are a few writing guidelines to bear in mind:

- use clear, plain English - avoid using jargon or overly academic language, and do not complete the form in capitals or 'text speak'
- keep your sentences short - two shorter sentences are generally clearer than one very long one
- read it back to yourself - does what you have written make sense? Are your points clear and easy to understand?
- check, check and check again - if you can, give your form the 'overnight test' and go back to it again the next day, so you can read it with fresh eyes. It can also be useful to get someone else to read it for you. Remember to do a spell check. No matter how good your application form is, spelling mistakes will let it down, so make sure everything is spelt correctly, before submitting.

The supporting or additional information section is your opportunity to sell yourself - so use it to your advantage. You can include any information here that is not covered elsewhere on the form to support how and why you would be suitable for the post. This is about convincing the employer you have the required skills, knowledge and experience - and that they really should be inviting you for interview. You can include, among other things, more details about:

- your duties and responsibilities
- your skills, knowledge or experience relevant to the post
- apparent gaps in your career profile
- any voluntary work you have carried out
- your research experience

- publications or presentations
- clinical care or clinical audit.

After the closing date a short-listing process will be followed. This process will assess all applicants against the person specification. Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview.

#### **4. Writing a CV/ Résumé**

Your CV/résumé is a career road map so you should ensure that you are consistent in your layout format and that you list everything in chronological order. It helps to structure your CV/résumé under headings such as:

- personal details
- career statement
- education and qualifications
- career history
- clinical skills and experience
- management and leadership experience
- development courses and conferences attended
- research experience
- clinical audit
- presentations and publications
- teaching experience
- information technology skills
- personal interests.

#### **Further reading**

Matt Green, Director of Professional Development & Medical Publishing at BPP University College, School of Health, has written an article for BMJ Careers on preparing the perfect medical CV <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20004424>

#### **5. Formal visit after shortlisting**

Once shortlisted you are encouraged to visit the site/s where you have applied for a post to meet prospective colleagues. Details of how to arrange a visit are usually given in the job description.

#### **6. The consultant interview**

The structure of the interview varies but usually comprises an oral presentation and may include a focused assessment.

The core membership of the Advisory Appointment Committee (the interview panel) is as follows:

- a lay member (often the Chair of the employing body or another non-executive director)
- an external professional specialty assessor, appointed after consultation with the relevant Royal Medical College
- the Chief Executive of the employing body (or a Board-level Executive or Associate Director)
- the Medical Director of the employing body (or person who acts in a similar capacity at that hospital), or the Director of Public Health for public health appointments
- a consultant from the employing body

- in the case of appointments to posts that have teaching or research commitments or both, the Committee must also include a professional member nominated after consultation with the relevant university.

At the end of the interview you may ask the panel any questions regarding any aspect of the post.

The interview panel for jobs in NHS Scotland is similar to the above and will include the Scottish Academy appointed National Advisor. It should be noted that the job of the panel members is to make a recommendation for appointment to the panel chair, who is usually the Chief Executive or their representative. The panel chair does not however need to follow the recommendation of the panel members.

### **Further reading**

Advice for job seekers - <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>

Managing the interview - [http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/advice/interview\\_manage.html](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/advice/interview_manage.html)

Robert Ghosh, consultant physician at the Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, together with Matt Green, from BPP University College's School of Health, explore the factors that you need to consider when preparing for and undergoing a consultant interview  
<http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20006642>

## **7. Professional Registration**

Medical Consultants posts within the NHS can only be carried out by people with a UK Professional registration, with the General Medical Council (GMC).

Jobs that require the post holder to have a professional registration (with a licence to practise) will state this within the advert and/or within the person specification. Any offer of employment will be subject to confirmation of professional registration where applicable.

## **8. Criminal Background**

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 helps rehabilitated ex-offenders back into work by allowing them not to declare criminal convictions to employers after the rehabilitation period set by the Court has elapsed and the convictions become 'spent' (old). During the rehabilitation period, convictions are referred to as 'unspent' (current) convictions and must be declared to employers within the application form. However, in order to protect the vulnerable, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order 1975 exempts some professions within the health and care sectors from this approach.

Where posts have been identified as exempt, employers are entitled to know about all previous convictions regardless as to whether they are considered 'spent' (old) or 'unspent' (current), including reprimands, final warnings or cautions, and to take this into account when assessing an individual's suitability for a post.

If you are applying for a post which involves having access to patients in receipt of health services, your offer of employment will be subject to a satisfactory disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Failure to reveal information relating to any convictions could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment. Where the position falls under regulated activity and meets the criteria for an enhanced criminal record check, the disclosure will include information held against the barred lists for working with children and/or working with adults and any restrictions to that barring.

## **9. The consultant contract**

The consultant contract is divided into Programmed Activities (PAs) which are of four hours duration. The number of Programmed Activities should be stated in the job plan.

PAs are then divided into Direct Clinical Care (DCC), Supporting Professional Activities (SPA), additional NHS responsibilities and external duties.

Direct Clinical Care are the duties that are directly related to providing clinical care and include out-patients, ward work, clinics, laboratory duties, histology reporting, infection control etc.

Supporting Professional Activities are those which underpin direct clinical care and include teaching/training, medical education, continuing professional development (CPD), audit, appraisal, revalidation and research.

The recommendation from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges is that 1.5 SPAs are required for revalidation (including CPD & appraisal). Any activities over and above those required for revalidation should attract an appropriate SPA. SPA time should be included in the normal working hours.

In Scotland, the number of allocated SPAs may not be stated explicitly in the job description however they should be negotiated with the successful candidate afterwards and then subsequently as part of the annual job plan review process.

## **10. The consultant job plan**

The job plan should state the full PA allocation and any fixed DCC time such as ward rounds and out-patient clinics.

For histopathologists a rigid time table is unworkable because of the flexibility required to ensure an even work flow; in these circumstances an annualised or generic job plan is appropriate.

## **11. Appraisal**

All consultants should have an annual appraisal, which will include future targets, evidence of reaching or contributing to Trust aims and should include an assessment of the job plan.

Any concerns regarding the job plan should be discussed with the appraiser who will usually be a consultant colleague trained in this process. The job description will clarify the arrangements for mediation should a dispute arise.

## **12. Private Practice**

Activities that attract a payment cannot usually be performed within normal working hours but are allowed via 'time-shifting' whereby the time taken up by fee paying activities is made up by the same amount of time for direct clinical care.

## **13. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

This is the process by which clinical and professional standards (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour) are maintained throughout the lifetime of the consultant appointment.

The requirements for participation in the scheme include a target of 250 credits calculated on a 5-year rolling cycle. Doctors must achieve this through a range of academic, professional and clinical activities and record these activities on the online portfolio. The CPD year runs from 1 April until 31 March of the following year. Doctors must make their annual return between 1 April and 30 June.

To join the RCPATH CPD scheme you must complete the online registration form.

Please refer to the Guide to the CPD scheme for further information.

<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/professional-standards/cpd/online-portfolio.html>

The GMC have published further guidance on GMC requirements for Continuing Professional Development [www.gmc-uk.org/education/continuing\\_professional\\_development/cpd\\_guidance.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/continuing_professional_development/cpd_guidance.asp)

## **14. Revalidation**

Medical Revalidation is the process for all licensed doctors in the UK to demonstrate to the General Medical Council (GMC) that they are up to date and fit-to-practise.

Revalidation is a continuous 5-year process whereby a doctor's practice is reviewed through appraisal. A doctor needs to revalidate once per every five-year cycle.

The minimum requirements for revalidation are outlined at:  
<http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/revalidation/9611.asp>

## **15. Workforce details online**

The key to much of our advocacy work and to making the case about the pathology workforce of the future is having robust evidence about the shape of the profession now. How effective we can be lies, in part, with our Fellows.

When you take up your consultant post in the UK, please take five minutes to complete and provide your professional details at <https://www.rcpath.org/myrcpath/workforce-data.html>

If you have any questions about this information please contact the Assistant Registrar or Workforce Department for advice at [workforce@rcpath.org](mailto:workforce@rcpath.org)