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Applications For Foundation Programmes

Introduction

When you apply to the foundation programme there are various factors that you should consider. Here we give you a guide to what you should be thinking about whilst making your application.

The UK Foundation Programme Office has published the timetable and documentation for the next recruitment round.

The dates are as follows:

16 Jul - 17 Aug 2012	Eligibility checking
Late Aug 2012	Academic programmes available to view
1 - 7 Oct 2012	Register and enrol on FPAS. All programmes available to view
8 - 19 Oct 2012	Application period for both FP and Academic FP applications
Late Oct 2012 - mid Jan 2013	Local short-listing and interviews for AFP applicants
7 Dec 2012	1st SJT date
7 Jan 2013	2nd SJT date
Late Jan 2013	AFP national offers
Early Feb 2013	AFP cascade of offers
25 Feb 2013	Primary list applicants informed of allocation to unit of application for FP. Reserve list applicants contacted regarding the process for batch allocations
Mar - Apr 2013	On-line references collected
Early Apr 2013	Primary list applicants informed of local match to foundation programme results

Which Foundation School?

Application to foundation is made online through the UKFPO website (the only exception is with the academic foundation programme, see section below for details).

In your application you will be asked to rank all foundation schools. Your application will be scored and you will be allocated to one foundation school only. Your allocation to a foundation school will depend on your scoring as well as your preference. The scoring will be based on an academic score provided by your medical school (this accounts for a maximum of 40 points) and a score you will be given which relates to your completed application form (this accounts for a maximum of 60 points).

For more information you should download the application handbook provided on the UKFPO website. An updated handbook will become available in the autumn at the same time as the online registration system is opened.

Location

When making your application, one question you will have to consider is location. You should therefore consider:

- whether you have family commitments or dependants
- whether you feel like moving somewhere new or want to stay somewhere with which you are familiar
- the type of hospital or trust you would like to work in, whether it is based in an inner-city area or in a rural location
- the competition. Certain areas of the country are more competitive than others as

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they are located in popular areas, and you might also want to consider the number of posts available.

Specialty interests

You do not choose these at the application stage. Once you have gone through the application process and you have been given a score you will be allocated to a foundation school and they will ask you to rank the programmes in which you are interested. The chance of getting the programme that you have ranked will depend on your overall score (this is based on an academic score provided by your medical school, the Educational Performance measure, and a score you will be given which relates to the Situational Judgement test). If you have a low overall score you are advised to rank a number of programmes.

Your foundation programme will usually consist of three four monthly rotations (e.g. Geriatric Medicine/General Surgery/Respiratory medicine) for your first foundation year. Some programmes will consist of two six monthly rotations. The information about the programmes is often provisional and may be subject to change, as precise details of rotations are subject to the service delivery requirements of the NHS and subsequent confirmation by employing Trusts. For some foundation schools you will know the content of both F1 and F2 years at the outset. Other foundation schools are organised differently and you will find out about what your F2 rotations are during the second or third rotation of your F1 year. Foundation schools will have some information about the region they cover available on their [websites](#).

It is the foundation schools' job to make sure that the rotations throughout the foundation programme are well-balanced, so that you get a chance to work in a reasonable range of specialties. In choosing your programme, you can use the [interests tool](#) on this website to help you.

When ranking programmes you are advised to carry out some career exploration. See our pages on [career exploration](#). We also have information on over sixty specialties, so visit our [specialty pages](#).

If you are finding it hard to decide which programme to rank, then you can read our pages on [decision-making](#) and you can use some of our [decision-making tools](#), such as the [pros and cons exercise](#).

If you want to get some experience in an uncommon specialty that is not normally offered in the foundation years, you may be able to do an audit or taster in that area.

Deadlines and methods for allocation to programme vary by foundation school, so you should check your allocated foundation school website for further details on how you are matched to a programme. A list of foundation school websites can be found on the [UKFPO website](#).

Being flexible

It is important to remember that you may have to be prepared to be flexible during your foundation training. In some programmes you will be placed in one hospital during your F1 year and in a different hospital during your F2 year. Therefore you may need to be prepared to move house as you transfer from one location to another. You should be able to tell whether this is most likely to be the case from the foundation school website.

Academic Foundation Programme

There are two types of foundation programmes, one is referred to simply as the 'foundation programme' and the other is called the 'academic foundation programme'. Entry to these programmes is very competitive and there are much fewer academic foundation programmes per foundation school compared to the foundation programme. For 2013 entry the Academic Foundation Programmes deadline will be the same as for the other Foundation Programmes. (see time-line at the top of the page).

These programmes are designed for those

- that attain a very high academic achievement in their medical degree (first-class degree, prizes etc).
- would like to pursue a career as an academic at university.

The UKFPO states that only 5% of foundation applicants apply to the academic foundation programme.

Most but not all foundation schools hold academic foundation programmes.

The UKFPO website has details on [academic programmes](#). The UKFPO also has a very useful [Rough Guide to the Academic Foundation Programme](#).

N.B. There are also a few Academic roles in F2 that you can apply for during your F1 years (you would have to check on foundation school websites/NHS Jobs/BMJ careers for details of these).

Case-study -Academic foundation

This case-study was submitted to us by Dr Kyle Stewart, an Academic F2 trainee in gastroenterology, who works for the South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust:

When I was in 4th year of medical school at Birmingham I was fortunate enough to be able to do my elective in Dubai. While I was there I did a study on the occupational injuries within the hospital workforce which was subsequently accepted to a conference in Cape Town as a poster presentation. This made me realise how much I enjoyed presenting and getting my name out there, which lead me to take an active role in the rest of medical school and my F1 year with teaching and trying for publications. In that time I managed an audit which was accepted to 2 national conferences and an article in the British Journal of Cardiology entitled "Discharge Medication For the Secondary Prevention of Myocardial Infarction".

I decided to apply for the role of academic F2 for a number of reasons. By the end of F1 I felt comfortable with ward work and felt ready for a new challenge. I also felt that I was not able to dedicate a lot of time to teaching and publications as I was purely ward based. The academic F2 role at Torbay gave me the opportunity to spend 4 months of my time (spread across the year) to dedicate to my own projects, teaching programmes, papers, posters and anything I wanted to set my mind to. For me, this was a lease of freedom which I could not have found in another job. The academic programme is a fantastic way to boost your CV as the application process is very competitive and at the end you will have completed a PGCE (teaching qualification course funded for you). It is more than likely you will have a number of publications in various formats to your name which your peers will not be able to match.

Be aware however that all academic programmes are different, some are research oriented and others are teaching oriented with a set background specialty that you will not have the option to change. Make sure when you apply that you know what the focus of the academic programme is and you are happy being in one specialty for a year (gastroenterology in my case)

For me, the application process involved completing a form with standard questions ie. Qualifications, why do you want to do the academic programme etc.

From this I was invited to interview in front of a mixed panel of clinicians and administration staff. I prepared a portfolio with evidence of previous teaching sessions I had done along with my medical degree certificates and anything else I could find which might impress. The main focus of the interview was:

- 1. Why did I want to do the academic role?*
- 2. How have I previously been involved in teaching and academia?*
- 3. How will I use the PGCE in the future?*

I was also given a clinical scenario to discuss. These vary, in my instance it was "A 60-year old Jehova's witness on warfarin for AF is admitted with massive haematemesis." Questions involved patient management ie. The issue of blood transfusion, crystalloid v colloid resuscitation, definitive management, rapid reversal of warfarin. I found out shortly after that I was successful with my application.

At present, I am involved in several research projects that hope to achieve international recognition, ongoing audits and teaching programmes for nurses, medical students, colleagues and other members of the multi-disciplinary team. The academic programme also gives me my own time to explore possible careers options, discover other medical interests and revise for exams. I can be flexible with my time and work around other commitments I have.

I would recommend the academic programme to hard-working individuals who have an interest in teaching or academia, are motivated enough to work in a self-directed fashion and have the maturity to work in an independent fashion.

Please note the content and opinions expressed in all case studies are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of NHS medical careers.

Resources

- [The UK Foundation Programme Office website.](#)
- A very useful [Guide to the Foundation Programme](#) can be downloaded from the UKFPO website and the website has more details about the application forms and they usually differ slightly from year to year.
- Deciding which foundation school and/or programme to apply to can be difficult. For some help and ideas on how to make that decision, see our guide to [decision-making tools](#).
- The UKFPO has launched the [FP Curriculum 2012 Resource](#) which aims to assist foundation doctors in improving their knowledge and understanding of the topics set out in the FP Curriculum 2012.
- [BMJ Careers](#) has written an article with information on the changes to recruitment which took place in 2012.

Improving Selection to Foundation

The Improving Selection Foundation Programme (ISFP) project is looking to create a

better method for selecting medical students into the Foundation Programme. This involves amending the current process whereby students answer white space questions (free text questions relating to the F1 job specification) and are awarded a score by their medical school, known as quartiles, based on how they perform at medical school. Below we briefly explain how the new system came about and we also provide links to the [ISFP website](#) for further information where appropriate.

History

The Medical Schools Council was commissioned by the Department of Health in January 2009 to lead a Project Group to look at new selection methods.

New system

There are two new selection processes:

Educational Performance Measure (EPM): this takes into account each student's performance during the course of their medical school career. Each medical school uses a standard Framework to determine each student's score. This replaces quartiles.

Situational Judgement Test (SJT): this is a computer marked, multiple choice test taken under invigilated conditions. There are approximately 70 questions and it last approximately two hours twenty minutes. Questions are designed to assess the professional judgements and behaviours that foundation doctors are expected to possess. This replaces white space questions.

Pilots

Between October 2010 and April 2011, pilots took place at seventeen UK and two non-UK medical schools involving over 1,000 students. Final year medical students were asked to take a two hour invigilated Situational Judgement Test (SJT), answering 60 questions. Feedback on five of the items was provided following the SJT.

The pilot data has been analysed and the results show that the Situational Judgement Test is a reliable, valid and appropriate method for selection in this context. These findings support the considerable published research on SJTs.

A full scale pilot – or [Parallel Recruitment Exercise \(PRE\)](#) – took place during the 2011/2012 academic year for those students applying for the Foundation Programme 2012.

All final year medical students sat a one hour Situational Judgement Test (SJT) consisting of 30 questions in addition to completing their online application form for Foundation Programme (FP) 2012.

Students took the SJT at their medical school on either 28 November, 9 December 2011, or 9 January 2012.

The Situational Judgement Test took place in invigilated conditions. Students were given their SJT score in April 2012 and the results were used to help validate the SJT items and evaluate the effectiveness of the questions.

More information

For more information on the project visit the [ISFP website](#) where you will find all the background information to the project and some example Situational Judgement Test questions and FAQs.

A video podcast which provides all background information to the project can be accessed via [YouTube](#)

The Medical Schools Council have also produced a [presentation on the changes to selection](#).

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