

An Anaesthetist's road to UK

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Working as an Anaesthetist & Intensivist in the UK is considered as a valuable experience by most anaesthetists from around the world, who are either currently working in the NHS or have left the UK to work in their own country.

There are many reasons why jobs in the NHS are most sought after. To name a few are:

1. Flattened hierarchy
2. Good work-life balance
3. Great opportunities for career progression

I started working in the UK as a Trust grade fellow in Anaesthetics & Intensive Care, in December 2018, & since then, I've had numerous enquiries about how to work in the UK. This article aims at addressing many of these questions. There are various routes to enter the UK healthcare system. To practice in the UK, GMC registration is essential.

There are 3 ways of getting one.

1. PLAB – This exam is usually taken by most doctors who have just qualified from medical school, but can be taken by specialists as well.

Issues:

- a. A basic exam licensing and qualifying exam which enables you get a GMC registration. It consists of part 1 -MCQs and part 2- OSCE
- b. Preparing for a basic exam when you've already been specialised, may not be as easy as it sounds. One needs to be coached and extensive practice is needed to crack this one.
- c. Getting exam dates has been an issue during & after the COVID pandemic.

2. MRCP or EDIAC or Primary FRCA – If you pass MRCP, or EDIAC, you can apply for a GMC registration number directly. This opens door to almost every job in the country for you. If you've passed EDIAC and are in the UK, you can directly take the final FRCA or FICM exam & go down the CESR route to become a consultant in UK.

Issues:

- a. Getting exam dates
 - b. Exams are not the easiest, especially when preparing from South Asian Countries where your working schedule is busy. Hence, passing exams can take longer than expected.
3. Sponsorship route i.e. MTI on Tier 5 visa via RCOA, or Direct Tier 2 (now Skilled worker - Health & Care Visa) sponsored by Trusts who can sponsor GMC registration.

This pathway has been elaborated further down in this article.

Advantage – It gives you time to adjust to the NHS system & methods, & also gives you time to take whichever exams you want to.

Issues – Limited jobs which get taken up very quickly, so one has to be at the right time & at the right place and above all be persistent.

Even though it is a bit easier to get a job once you have GMC registration, it takes almost similar amount of time, paperwork, & patience for all of these routes, as preparing for and passing any exam takes time.

So, honestly, it's a matter of choice.

I started working on the MTI pathway 4 years ago, in January 2018, when I was working as a junior anaesthetist in a corporate(private) tertiary care teaching hospital in Mumbai, India.

This pathway can be approached by following these steps.

1. Pass IELTS/OET with a required score for UK.
2. Get in touch with a UK Hospital trust's MTI lead Consultant

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Apply for jobs online – www.nhsjobs.com, www.trac.jobs

There are 2 job opening windows for all jobs in NHS.

October-November-December for jobs starting in February next year, & March-April-May for jobs starting in August.

It is advisable to apply for multiple posts, to get at least few interview calls.

3. Attend the job interview (remote via MS Teams or Zoom)

4. If you get a job offer, sign the job offer letter after checking that you're happy with everything written in the letter.

5. Apply to Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCOA) for MTI sponsorship.

You will need 2 referees from the places you have worked in (preferably 1 from the hospital department where you have worked during your anaesthetic training and another from current hospital department) to fill in a reference form given by RCOA & should be emailed independently to RCOA by the referees.

6. Once you get the MTI sponsorship letter, apply to General Medical Council for registration (GMC registration). You will need to get your MBBS (primary medical qualification) degree verified by ECFMG (EPIC verification), a Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) and also a Good Standing Certificate (GSC) from your state/ country's medical council. It is ideal to get the EPIC verification done as soon as, or even before you sign the offer letter, if your decision to move to UK is firm as it can be a lengthy procedure.

Validity for GSC & PCC is limited hence time your application appropriately.

Also, it is important to be continuously employed for the last 12 months & preferably the last 5 years, before applying for GMC registration. Any employment break of >28 days in the last 5 years will have to be explained to the GMC. They are very considerate and mostly accept those breaks if the reasons are genuine.

7. After verifying all documents, GMC will send you an email inviting you for an Identity Check. You must attend this ID check within 90 days from receiving this email.

8. Inform your UK trust MTI lead & HR that you have received the ID check invite from GMC.

They will now apply to Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) for a Certificate of Sponsorship (COS) for your Tier 5 UK Visa (you will have to sign that application)

AoMRC will check the paperwork & issue a COS

9. You can then apply for a Tier 5 UK Visa in your country and enter the UK.

It is a tardy and lengthy process; hence you will need to be patient & determined enough to wait for things to fall in place.

Some aspects may have changed, especially after COVID pandemic, but most steps will remain, more or less, the same.

I hope this article proves to be helpful to the many anaesthetists & intensivists aspiring to come to the UK.

GOOD LUCK!!!

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