Revalidation - guidance for doctors working overseas

Education & Professional Development team
This guidance is for doctors working overseas or thinking of working overseas, and who may be concerned about revalidation.

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Introducing FAQs for paediatricians working overseas

A summary of the most relevant FAQs from the GMC, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and RCPCH for those doctors who are working wholly or partially overseas either permanently or temporarily.
If you need more information, please contact either the revalidation team at RCPCH (revalidation@rcpch.ac.uk) with their query or the GMC revalidation team (revalidation@gmc-uk.org).

### Work entirely outside UK

**I work wholly outside the UK. How will I revalidate? (GMC)**

If you continue to hold your licence to practise while practising abroad, you will need to revalidate. This means you will need to connect to a UK organisation that will support you with your appraisal and revalidation. Only UK organisations can be designated bodies, because the legal rules that determine this only cover the UK.

(RCPCH note: Alternatively, you can link to a Suitable Person to provide your revalidation recommendation or follow the GMC direct route to revalidation. In both latter cases you would need to access annual appraisal independently).

However, you may not need a licence to practise if you practice entirely outside of the UK. You may decide it is better to give it up. You can still maintain your registration without a licence, and this will indicate you are in good standing with the GMC. You can apply to have your licence restored if you need it at some point in the future. More information about giving up and restoring your licence is available via the GMC.

### Registered with GMC with license to practice, and practice entirely outside UK

**I am registered with the GMC and have a license to practise, but I practise entirely abroad. How will I revalidate? (AoMRC FAQ)**

If you choose to continue to hold your licence while practising abroad, you will have to revalidate in the same way as doctors practising in the UK, and link to a UK designated body. If your employer or contractor is based within the UK it may be that they will be able to provide you with a link to a Responsible Officer, and you should discuss your revalidation with them at the earliest opportunity.

If you have not already done so, you should confirm your current circumstances with the GMC through your GMC online account so that the GMC can provide you with appropriate advice. However, doctors who are based exclusively overseas do not need a license to practise in the UK. The licence to practise gives doctors legal rights and privileges in the UK that do not apply in any overseas country.

Doctors who are based overseas must abide by whatever regulatory requirements exist in the country in which they practise. You can relinquish your licence to practise whilst working abroad and reinstate it on return to the UK. Once your licence is restored, you would need to link to a designated body, participate in annual appraisal in the UK and provide supporting information in line with guidance.

Any relevant information gathered while working abroad, as well as evidence of ongoing
CPD, should be brought to your first appraisal on return to the UK.

**Relinquishing and restoring a licence** are both applications that a doctor must make to the GMC.

See also the [GMC's information for overseas regulators](https://www.gmc-uk.org/gmc-overseas-regulators) which explains the difference between registration and holding a licence to practise to overseas regulators.

### Work outside UK, GMC registration without a license to practice/no GMC registration

I have been working abroad for several years and only hold GMC registration without a licence to practise/have relinquished my GMC registration and licence to practise. What should I do in preparation for my return to work as a doctor in the UK? (RCPCH)

To work in the National Health Service in the UK you must hold a licence to practise. To arrange this, see the [GMC register application guidance which includes what your overseas employer/regulator needs to provide for you](https://www.gmc-uk.org/). Seeking medical employment in the Health Service can be done via, for example, the [NHS jobs website](https://www.nhsrcjobs.nhs.uk/), the [BMJ jobs website](https://www.bmjjobs.com/) or by contacting your local Trust’s HR department.

If you have been away from the UK for some time, you should ensure you have a [supported return to work](https://www.gmc-uk.org). As part of this, you should familiarise yourself with your Trust’s appraisal policy and ensure you have an appraiser assigned and that you have told the GMC who your employer is via your [GMC online account](https://www.gmc-uk.org/) as your employer will most likely be your designated body and will make revalidation recommendations, via the Responsible Officer (RO) there, to the GMC for you.

General guidance on revalidation processes linked to appraisal, including gathering of supporting information, which you must engage with as soon as you have your licence to practise, are available on the [GMC revalidation website](https://www.gmc-uk.org/). Appraisal processes vary throughout the UK. For more information see our main revalidation in the related content section.

### Work for short periods outside UK

I work for short [1] periods of time outside of the UK doing voluntary work but continue to work in the UK the majority of the time. How will this affect my ability to revalidate? (Academy FAQ)
It should be possible for you to collect the supporting information, participate in appraisals and also to link to a Responsible Officer (RO) through your practice in the UK. You should discuss management of your appraisal and supporting information (including additional supporting information to demonstrate your practice abroad) whilst in the UK with your RO and appraiser.

**Plan to work for a short period outside UK**

If I take a short [1] career break (for example, working abroad), how will this affect my ability to revalidate? (Academy FAQ)

Your ability to revalidate should not be affected if you take a short career break within a five year revalidation cycle. You will be expected to revalidate at the usual point in your five year cycle on the basis of the supporting information you have collected and appraisals that you have attended within this time period.

If you have been unable to collect sufficient supporting information for your appraisal, your Responsible Officer (RO) may recommend a deferral of your revalidation to the GMC, in order to allow you to collect additional information. It is expected that doctors will want to take career breaks within their revalidation cycle, and there is flexibility in the process to manage this. If you do plan a break you should manage your appraisals around that break as far as possible

RCPCH note: it is advisable if you are planning on being overseas for at least 12 months that you arrange to have your appraisal for the year abroad while overseas or as soon as you return to avoid any lengthy gap since your last appraisal. Appraisals should be conducted in line with GMC expectations.

RCPCH note: If you are planning to resign from your current post before going overseas you should ensure that you have made appropriate arrangements for annual appraisal whilst overseas, to ensure you can demonstrate you are continuing to engage with the revalidation process. This may mean linking with an independent provider of appraisals before travelling or maintaining contacts with your previous employer for the purpose of appraisal whilst overseas.

A ‘return to work’ appraisal may also be required by your employer. Some of the supporting information is required over the five year cycle, not annually, so again this may be able to be managed around the career break. You should speak to your appraiser and RO to develop an agreed approach. It is advisable to try to keep your CPD in your clinical areas up to date even if you are not actively practising.

**Hold a GMC licence but do not do clinical practice**

I hold a licence but I don’t do any clinical practice. How will I revalidate? (GMC FAQ)

If you want to continue to hold a licence to practise, then you will need to revalidate like every other doctor who is licensed. However, you may not need a licence to practise if you don’t carry out any clinical practice. If this is the case, you have the option of giving up your licence but maintaining your registration with the GMC. This will show you remain in good
standing with the GMC.

You can apply to have your licence restored if you need it at some point in the future because your circumstances change. Read the GMC information about giving up and restoring your licence.

Please remember, though, that by giving up your licence you will not be able to exercise any of the privileges associated with it. These include writing prescriptions, and signing death or cremation certificates.

**How to confirm prescribed connection to a designated body and Responsible Officer**

How do I confirm my prescribed connection to a designated body and Responsible Officer? (Academy FAQ)

According to The Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010, designated bodies are:

- Organisations that provide healthcare
- Organisations that set standards and policy for the delivery of healthcare
- Some specialist organisations that employ or contract with doctors.

The majority of designated bodies have a Responsible Officer (RO) in place. Each doctor can only have one prescribed connection to a designated body and RO. In the majority of circumstances, the prescribed connection is where you do most of your clinical work. If you are employed by an NHS organisation but work for another organisation for contracted sessions (for example, hospice, independent hospital), your prescribed link will be to the NHS organisation and their RO, regardless of how much of your time is spent outside of the NHS.

To identify your designated body and RO and notify the GMC, you need to set up a GMC online account. The GMC website has a full list of designated bodies or you can also find your designated body by using the GMC’s online designated body tool.

If under the revalidation section of your GMC online account there are no details already in the system for your designated body you need to follow the instructions to confirm it. Once you have confirmed you designated body, your RO should help you to identify a suitable appraiser. If you do not have a connection to any organisation classed as a designated body you should make the GMC aware of your circumstances using your GMC online account.

If you cannot find a Responsible Officer, it may be possible to identify a Suitable Person. If you cannot identify a Suitable Person, you will need to follow the GMC’s direct route to revalidation which will include an annual return and a once in 5 year assessment.

NB In both the Suitable Person and direct route cases you would still need to access annual appraisal independently. The RCPCH cannot provide doctors with Responsible Officer or Suitable Person services as it is not a designated body and does not have a Suitable Person.
How to get an appraisal

How do I get an appraisal? (Academy FAQ)

Once you have confirmed your prescribed connection with a designated body, your Responsible Officer (RO) will advise you on your appraisals. To ensure that you have an appraisal of the required standard for revalidation, your RO will make sure that you are allocated an appraiser who has been through the necessary training.

It is recommended that you have two different appraisers during your five-year cycle. You should speak to your RO if you wish to keep an existing appraiser. The GMC provides further information on the [RO Protocol](#) If your designated body does not offer appraisal, or you do not have a designated body, there are external organisations that offer appraisal services. The [Independent Doctors Federation](#) has appointed an RO and provides appraisal services for members of their organisation without a prescribed connection to an NHS RO. The [Wessex Appraisal Service](#) provides appraisals for doctors without a connection. The RCPCH cannot provide doctors with appraisers or appraisal services.

Forms for appraisal

What forms do I have to fill in for appraisal? (Academy FAQ)

This will vary depending where you work. In the first instance, you should speak to your appraiser or Responsible Officer (RO) about your organisation’s forms or procedures for recording your supporting information and/or the appraisal discussion. Some trusts have purchased electronic integrated appraisal and revalidation systems which include appraisal forms. Your RO will confirm what is expected of you. RCPCH note: If you do not have a connection to a designated body or Suitable Person, you should use the forms advised by your appraiser or access the ones below of most relevance to your situation.

Doctors in England can refer to the [Medical Appraisal Guide (MAG) model appraisal form](#)

Doctors in Scotland use the SOAR system for appraisal: [SOAR for secondary care doctors](#)

Doctors in Wales use the MARS system for appraisal: [MARS for Hospital Doctors](#)

For doctors working in Northern Ireland the guidance is currently being decided.

**Hold a licence to practice, but do not engage in appraisal and revalidation**

What will happen if I do not engage in appraisal and revalidation and hold a licence to practice? (Academy FAQ)
Revalidation is based on processes that most doctors are already familiar with. By not providing the required supporting information or failing to participate in an annual appraisal process, you may not be recommended for revalidation and your licence to practice may be at risk.

If your Responsible Officer (RO) makes a statement to the GMC that you have failed to engage in the process you may be referred to a GMC fitness to practise panel to consider whether your licence to practise should be revoked. If you do not have a Responsible Officer and fail to engage in the process, the GMC will themselves consider whether your licence to practise should be revoked. Further information on revalidation is available from:

- [GMC revalidation site](#)
- [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges revalidation section](#)
- [RCPCH revalidation section](#)

[1] Short has not been defined. However a length of time away from the UK that does not impact negatively on your ability to have your annual appraisal may be considered sufficiently short, for example, less than 12 months (RCPCH note)

**Need other guidance?**

For trainees wanting to go overseas

For overseas regulators (from GMC) to help support doctors working overseas whose employers expect them to hold a UK license

For all doctors - full information about revalidation

**RCPCH members and fellows undertaking RCPCH roles - appraisal and revalidation support**

The RCPCH cannot provide appraisals, act as a designated body, or provide a Suitable Person for members. However, there are other organisations that individuals can approach to access these services.

Members and fellows without a designated body may do one of the following:

- Retain links with a current or previous employer and access appraisal and revalidation services via that employer. (Some Trusts offer this service to former employees for a fee, usually retaining them on an honorary or zero hours contract.)
- Apply for membership of, for example, the Independent Doctors Federation, which may accept members or fellows as members due to their international role. The IDF is a designated body and offers appraisal, revalidation and Responsible Officer services.
- Apply for membership of an appropriate Faculty, for example, Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM), which is a designated body and offers appraisal, revalidation and Responsible Officer services.
- Access appraisal services from the [Wessex Appraisal Service](#)

We can provide assistance with costs of revalidation for senior members and senior fellows who continue to undertake RCPCH examiner roles or specific RCPCH overseas roles and
continue to require a license to practice but are otherwise fully retired. Contact the revalidation team for further information and eligibility criteria.

External links
Revalidation Frequently Asked Questions for overseas regulators and overseas or…