

TAKING TIME OUT AFTER FOUNDATION

Approximately half of Foundation trainees choose to take time out of training after completion of their Foundation programme. There are many reasons that people make this decision – some wish to travel while others are looking for opportunities to enhance their CV, or because they just don't feel certain yet about their preferred specialty for further training. At this stage, you have full registration with the GMC, a broad base of general medical skills and you are at a natural break in your career progression. Here are some tips if you are thinking of taking time out of training and some information on the most common options. It is important to think carefully about your options: there are lots of opportunities available so pick the right one to suit your personality, skill set and aspirations.

The most frequent options are:

WORKING WITHIN THE UK

- **SHORT TERM POSTS**

All Boards and Trusts run Staff banks and there are several commercial locum agencies which you can apply to join. You must ensure that you work within your level of competence.

- **LONGER TERM POSTS (3 + MONTHS)**

LOCUM FOR SERVICE (LAS) POSTS

LAS posts are Locum Appointment for Service posts. These posts are not training posts, you will have clinical supervision to ensure patient safety but without other opportunities associated with training posts. LAS posts are advertised on an open market basis but different Trusts and Health Boards will advertise in different places.

FELLOWSHIPS

A fellowship is essentially a LAS post with a defined developmental aspect. The developmental aspect may be research (often leading to a higher degree: MSc, MD or PhD), teaching (such as a Clinical Teaching Fellowship), Simulation, Quality Improvement or Leadership. These involve a variable amount of clinical (service) work and it is important that you look at the job description, and ideally speak to the contact on the application form, and someone who has previously undertaken the role to find out more. These posts are advertised on the SHOW website in Scotland, and the other usual places and you will need to apply directly for each post.

WORKING OVERSEAS

There are opportunities to work overseas – Australia and New Zealand are popular choices, as is the option to work in the developing world. Some doctors undertake expeditions or other adventurous assignments. If you are thinking of working abroad, start planning early as formalities can take a long time. Also, be aware that the working year doesn't necessarily run August-August in all countries as it does in the UK.

In order to work abroad, you may need to get a Certificate of Good Standing from the GMC. Also check on other statutory requirements that apply in the country in which you intend to work eg certification of BBV status, CXR etc.

If you're planning on working in a developing country or on an expedition or wilderness project, make sure you ask what will be expected of you, and be explicit about your skill level and experience.

TOP TIPS AND FAQ

What about GMC registration if I am out of training?

In general you should aim to maintain your GMC registration. If you're not doing clinical work, there is the option for 'voluntary erasure', but you then have to arrange to re-register on your return to clinical practice. There is also the option to stay on the register but relinquish your licence to practice.

How do I remain "Foundation competent"?

On completing Foundation Training you are awarded a 'FACD 5.2' certificate – this is mandatory for being accepted onto a Core or Specialty training programme and is valid for 3 years only. If you're taking longer than 3 years out, you'll need to provide formal evidence that your foundation competencies are up to date by getting a Consultant who has supervised you for at least 3 months to fill in an 'Alternative Certificate' for you.

How easy is it to return to training after time out?

If you plan to apply for Specialty training after time out, check the Person Specification for the Training Programme you hope to apply for. This lists all the criteria and characteristics the admissions panel are looking for in their prospective trainees. Importantly, make sure you don't end up with too much experience in a particular specialty to be eligible for entry-level training. Some specialties have an upper limit of around 18-24 months experience, any more and you may be forced to apply for jobs higher up the training scale e.g. ST3 and above.

It's a good idea to keep an electronic record of all relevant details so that if you are completing application forms from overseas, you can still accurately note dates of qualifications, courses etc.

If improving your CV is the main aim of your time out, remember that applications start towards the end of the calendar year so anything you want to do to enhance your application will need to be done by the winter of the year before you hope to re-enter training.

Be aware that on your job application you will have to give a full employment history, which involves justifying any gaps in employment. Additional clinical experience will usually be viewed positively and you should be positive about any skills you have acquired or developed in non-clinical environments – eg team working, leadership, quality improvement, simulation, research, teaching.

If you go abroad, plan carefully for your return to the UK. For example, you will need to factor in time-off and money to return to the UK for interviews/assessments.

What about revalidation?

You may have to provide evidence of your competence so retain references and supervisor reports as you go along. In any UK non-training role you must have a yearly appraisal which should be arranged by your employer. In Scotland this takes place on SOAR with a NES trained appraiser.

What are the financial implications of taking time out?

Some options are financially advantageous – others less so. If you are going abroad, think about how you'll pay your credit card/student loan/mortgage. Student loans need to be paid by direct debit while you are away and you are expected to give an assessment of your projected income.

What are the implications for employee rights and pensions?

Taking a break in service may have an impact on statutory rights and pension entitlements, for example, and you should seek advice on this before making your decisions.

USEFUL LINKS

BMA – Working Abroad <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/career/going-abroad>

GMC - guidance on licencing and revalidation <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/managing-your-registration/information-for-doctors-on-the-register>

Scottish Medical recruitment <http://www.scotmt.scot.nhs.uk/recruitment/specialty-recruitment.aspx>