
GMC position statement on oral and maxillofacial surgery – December 2011

Purpose

1. The purpose of this statement is to clarify the position with regard to trainee progression into the specialty of oral and maxillofacial surgery (OMFS).
2. Specifically, the statement:
 - a. Sets out the requirements for entry to OMFS specialty training.
 - b. Clarifies that previous arrangements for fast tracking F1 doctors into core training are now discontinued.
 - c. Confirms the flexibilities which exist to allow those who have completed foundation training, undergraduate dental training and have kept their foundation skills and knowledge up-to-date, to have this effectively counted as a Foundation Year 2 refresher year.
 - d. Clarifies the circumstances in which those wishing to enter OMFS specialty training can reduce the time they spend in core surgical training.
 - e. Confirms the position in respect of doctors who have previously by-passed Foundation Year 2 en route to OMFS specialty training.

Background

3. Correspondence we received earlier this year highlighted anomalous arrangements that purport to enable some doctors to progress directly from Foundation Year 1 (F1) to core surgical training - by-passing Foundation Year 2 (F2) – in circumstances where their qualifications and experience have been assessed as equivalent to F2 competences.
4. The specialty of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS) was cited as an example of where doctors, with relevant medical and dental qualifications equivalent to F2, can enter the discipline in quicker time as a result of by-passing F2.

5. Whilst very limited and specific flexibilities exist as part of the Department of Health (England)'s Medical Education and Training Programme recruitment arrangements to allow doctors who can demonstrate F2 equivalence to by-pass UK foundation training – for example, if they can demonstrate equivalence by virtue of their overseas experience or if they are UK applicants who graduated before the introduction of the Foundation Programme - the GMC has not sanctioned any other exceptions.

6. In order to become an OMFS surgeon, and because of the complexity of the specialty which requires an individual to have both medical and dental qualifications, those awarded a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) will have spent up to 19 years in education and training. Against this background, there has been debate about, and initiatives by postgraduate deans, aimed at shortening training.

Requirements for entry to OMFS specialty training

7. The specialty curriculum for OMFS, approved by the GMC and which leads to the award of a CCT, stipulates that it is a mandatory requirement to complete F1 and F2 before entering core surgical training and then OMFS specialty training. It does not provide any flexibility for trainees enrolled in CCT training. However, the standards in *The Trainee Doctor* state that:

Candidates will be eligible for consideration for entry into specialty training if they...are able to demonstrate the competences required to complete foundation training...and those who have not undertaken foundation training but can demonstrate the competences in another way.

8. In practice, the provisions in *The Trainee Doctor* would relate to those who, as described earlier, can demonstrate equivalence to foundation competences by virtue of their overseas experience or if they are UK applicants who graduated before the introduction of the Foundation Programme.

Previous arrangements for fast-tracking F1 doctors into core training

9. We understand that the National Recruitment (England and Wales) process for core surgical training had made provision for dually qualified doctors in F1 to by-pass F2 and enter core surgical training en route to OMFS specialty training. They produced and placed on the core surgery recruitment website a form entitled *Form F Instructions for applicants with dual dental and medical qualifications applying to CT from foundation Year 1*. This was effectively the mechanism to fast-track doctors from F1 to core surgical training. Although a small specialty, several doctors have progressed using this flexibility over the last few years.

GMC position

10. In order to agree a way forward, we had discussions with key interests including the Department of Health (England), Postgraduate Deans, the Royal College of Surgeons and the United Kingdom Foundation Programme Office. The GMC's Postgraduate Board noted the outcomes of the discussions.

11. It is clear that the current flexibilities described above are not compatible with the OMFS curriculum approved by the GMC.

12. As F2 is effectively a progression from F1, we believe it would not be possible for a doctor who had undertaken two years of F1 (dental then medical) to have sufficiently covered the required competences in F2.

13. Form F has now been removed from the National Recruitment website and the route to fast-track F1 doctors into core training is no longer available.

Other flexibilities

14. However, we believe there is scope for some flexibility which would allow doctors, subject to relevant qualifications and satisfactory assessments, to progress in a different way.

Evidence of keeping foundation skills up-to-date

15. Related to those pursuing the OMFS route specifically, there will be some doctors who have completed foundation training before entering dental training. This means that it may be five years before they enter specialty training in OMFS. They would therefore fall outside the three year period that foundation competences are normally recognised for. For trainee doctors falling into this category, if they can show evidence of keeping their foundation skills, knowledge and competences up-to-date during and after their dental degree, we propose that these elements may be counted as a foundation refresher year. These arrangements should be agreed between the trainee and their Postgraduate Dean.

Shortening the overall length of training for doctors wishing to gain a CCT in OMFS

16. There is no minimum time limit in the OMFS person specification for completing core surgical training. Therefore, if a trainee achieves the core surgical competences, the specialty specific competences and the MRCS examination in one year rather than two – which would be the norm - there is nothing to prevent a trainee from applying for entry to higher OMFS training in the first year of core training (the ST3 year). They could do this if they achieved the competences and the assessments necessary in that year. However if they wanted to go into another surgical specialty they would need to do two years core training to meet the relevant person specification.

Doctors who have previously by-passed Foundation Year 2 en route to OMFS specialty training.

17. We are aware that some doctors have progressed into core surgical, then OMFS training, through the fast track, 'Form F' arrangements described earlier. Clearly many will have moved up through their training. We will not be imposing requirements retrospectively. Therefore, doctors who have progressed in this way will, exceptionally, be given dispensation.

Dissemination

18. This document has been published on our website and circulated to key interest groups including the Departments of Health, the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the United Kingdom Foundation Programme Office, the Junior Doctors Committee of the British Medical Association and NHS Employers.

19. Trainees who have questions about their individual circumstances should contact their postgraduate dean in the first instance.