FAQs regarding international medical graduates and COVID-19 (updated 29 April 2020)

My Tier 5 visa will be expiring soon and I can’t leave due to borders being closed, what should I do?

The Home Office has announced a relaxation of immigration restrictions for NHS frontline workers and their families. This includes:

- an automatic and free 1-year extension for all those whose visas are due to expire before 1 October 2020 (this will be exempt from the immigration health surcharge).
- a removal of the cap on additional hours students can work, or doctors and nurses undertaking second jobs (bank etc).

Please visit the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) website for more information.

We have been informed that the UKVI will be writing to all institutions that employ NHS workers from overseas and ask them to provide the details of those whose leave will expire prior to October of this year which will act as a proxy for a CoS. At present you do not need to contact the Home Office.

I would like to extend my Tier 5 visa, can I do this?

Please see the guidance above and visit the UKVI website for more information.

I need to make an application to switch between different types of visa, but cannot return to my home country to make the application, what should I do?

Please visit the GOV.UK website for the latest information.

At the time of writing (31 March 2020) the UKVI has confirmed:

- During these unique circumstances individuals will be able to apply from the UK to switch to a long-term UK visa until 31 May. This includes applications where they would usually need to apply for a visa from their home country.
- They will need to meet the requirements of the route they are switching into and pay the UK application fee.
- Those whose leave expires between 24 January and 31 May 2020, including those whose leave has already been automatically extended to 31 March 2020, are eligible to apply.
If I am currently working from home as a result of the pandemic do I need to notify the UKVI?

The UKVI has provided the following guidance to Tier 2 and 5 sponsors regarding homeworking:

*We are aware that many workers sponsored under the Tiers 2 and 5 immigration routes are now working from home rather than their normal workplace due to the coronavirus pandemic. Tiers 2 and 5 sponsors are normally required to notify us of such changes of circumstances. However, due to the current exceptional situation, we will not require sponsors to do so if working from home is directly related to the pandemic. Other changes must still be reported as usual.*

I feel I am not getting the training I require, what should I do?

You are participating in the Medical Training Initiative (MTI) scheme at a time of unprecedented challenge. We understand that this may mean that you are not receiving the clinical training that you had anticipated upon application to the scheme. All doctors in the UK at the current time are being asked to work in new and sometimes unexpected ways. You should still expect to receive adequate supervision in your post and please let us know if this is not the case. We are not at this time able to guarantee that you will be able to complete the training you expected to receive in the UK, but please be assured that we will do our utmost to support you receiving the training you were/are expecting and we are investigating possible options to address this situation with other royal colleges, the General Medical Council (GMC) and UKVI.

I have returned to my home country for the time being but intend on returning to the UK at a later date once the situation allows to resume my MTI post for the remainder of my current Tier 5 visa, what should I do?

We are aware that some MTIs may have decided to return to their home countries for present, either for personal reasons or at the request of their home government. There is no rule against this though you will need to contact the MTI team (mti@rcplondon.ac.uk) to advise us that you have done so.

I have applied for and started the MTI process but would like to defer my training, is this possible?

Please speak to the UK hospital you had been offered a post at in the first instance and then contact the MTI team (mti@rcplondon.ac.uk) to seek advice on how to proceed.

I have completed my GMC registration and been invited to an ID check but would like to defer, will I have to restart the GMC process?

The GMC has extended deadlines for ID checks from 3 to 6 months, so as long as your new start date falls within the 6 month period you will be able to defer. If you intend to defer for more
than 6 months then you might need to restart the GMC process later on. Contact information for the GMC can be found on their website.

I have applied for and received my Tier 5 visa, but I am unable to travel to the UK before my 30-day vignette visa expires, what should I do?

UKVI has announced that if an individual’s 30-day visa to travel to the UK for work, study or to join family has expired, or is about to expire, individuals can request a replacement visa with revised validity dates free of charge until the end of this year.

To make a request, UKVI has advised that individuals should contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team (CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk) and include their name, nationality, date of birth and their GWF reference number with ‘REPLACEMENT 30 DAY VISA’ in the subject line. If they have already contacted the team about this, please let the team know in the email.

Such individuals will be contacted when Visa Application Centres (VACs) re-open to arrange for a replacement visa in their passport. Individuals will not be penalised for being unable collect their BRP while coronavirus measures are in place and this process will remain in place until the end of 2020. UKVI has advised that in these circumstances, individuals will still receive a BRP card with revised dates to cover the full visa duration originally requested.

I have applied for and received my Tier 5 visa but I would like to defer my training, is this possible? Will I need a new certificate of sponsorship?

Yes it is possible to defer your training. You will not require a new certificate of sponsorship. The UKVI will consider it to be valid beyond the expiration date in these circumstances and will handle each case individually with those affected. Please contact the NHS team inbox (UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk) with details of your situation, role and employer and you will be advised on the best course of action depending on your particular circumstances.

I am cutting short my training in the UK to return home. Will I be able to return at a later date to complete my training?

At present once a doctor has been issued a Tier 5 visa, they won’t be able to get another one for 5 years. However, we are speaking with the government about this and will provide updates on the RCP website if this changes.

I would like to continue my application and take up my post in the UK.

The RCP MTI scheme will continue to run but please note that there will be some delays in the process due to hospitals being very busy so it might take longer than you would like for us to obtain the paperwork needed from them.

It is important to note that some visa application centres are closed, and this may impact your ability to come to the UK. Please check the VFS Global website to be sure that you can complete your application.
My MTI application is almost complete, and I intend on arriving in the UK soon, will I be required to self-isolate for 14 upon arrival?

No, we have received confirmed that the recently introduced self-isolation rules for new arrivals in the UK does not apply to MTI doctors, the exemption list includes ‘a registered health or care professional travelling to the UK to provide essential healthcare, including where this is not related to coronavirus’.

In order to qualify as exempt;

- those entering the UK will need to be able to provide evidence that they are due to start work within 14 days and be able to demonstrate their professional registration.
- Regulated staff who leave the UK for a holiday or to visit family and return will also be exempt however will need to prove they are resuming employment within 14 days.

For further information please consult the following links:
https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/2020/05/government-announces-details-on-quarantine-arrangements