



FAQs regarding international medical graduates and COVID-19 (updated 4 May 2021)

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

If your visa expires before 30 June 2021 and you do not wish to extend it for an additional year but are worried that you may not be able to leave the UK before it expires due to travel restrictions or border closures, you may wish to apply for exceptional assurance. For further information on applying for exceptional assurance and the evidence that you will need to provide please read the following guidance from UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI); <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>

The pandemic has impacted my training in the UK and due to this I would like to extend my visa, can I do so?

Yes, most MTI doctors currently in the UK are eligible for either one of two COVID-related visa extensions currently on offer.

1. Visa extensions for health workers during coronavirus (COVID-19): MTI doctors are eligible for this one-year extension regardless of their visa category if their current visa expires between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2021. If you wish to apply for this extension your employer will need to advise UKVI of this, you will then need to apply via UKVI for the extension as normal (please note if you are on a tier 5 CoS you do not need a new certificate of sponsorship). **Please note that this visa extension is free.** For more information on how to apply for this extension please refer to the following page from UKVI; <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-health-worker-visa-extension>
2. Visa extensions for MTI tier 5 visa holders: MTI doctors are eligible for this one-year extension if they are on an MTI-sponsored tier 5 visa which expires before 29 March 2022. If you wish to apply for this extension you will need to email us to initiate the process and provide us with the following information:
 - a. Current visa start and end date
 - b. Passport number
 - c. Current UK address
 - d. Scanned copy of current Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) card

Doctors interested in applying for this extension will also need to provide written agreement from their current UK hospital. Once we have provided this information to



the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC), we will advise you on the next steps to apply. **Please note that this visa extension is not free.** For more information on this extension please email the MTI team (mti@rcp.ac.uk).

Both above extensions also apply to any dependant visas tied to the main visa holder's visa.

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 MTI doctors may have decided to return to their home countries for the present, either for personal reasons or at the request of their home government. You will need to contact the MTI team (mti@rcp.ac.uk) to advise us that you have done so.

If you intend on returning at a future point in time to resume your MTI post and your hospital is happy for you to do so, you will likely need to apply for a new Tier 5 visa and pay the associated fees to UKVI as an extended leave of absence will have resulted in the termination of your old visa. If you are considering doing so please keep in contact with us and update us on your circumstances.

What is the current situation regarding the immigration health surcharge (IHS) that the government has agreed to abolish for NHS workers?

Given the IT changes required, it has not been possible for the Home Office to make MTI doctors with Tier 5 visas exempt from the IHS at the point of application, however they will continue to pursue this. In the meantime, MTI doctors will need to seek reimbursement from the Department of Health and Social Care. The reimbursement will be paid in arrears of six-month increments. For information on how to apply for the HIS refund please visit the following link; <https://www.gov.uk/apply-immigration-health-surcharge-refund>

If you wish to apply for this refund but cannot do so online because you do not have a national insurance number, please email us directly and we will assist you with this (mti@rcp.ac.uk).

If MTI doctors extend a further year, would they remain as MTI doctors or move on to be hospital grade doctors after the initial two years has been completed?

The extensions will be on identical leave conditions as the leave about to expire for each worker. If an applicant wishes to change route or job role a new application would be required.

Is there any obligation on a hospital to extend the contract for MTI doctors who receive the automatic 12-month visa extension?

No, the extension only applies to those individuals who the hospitals wish to continue sponsoring. If the training is complete, The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) can stop sponsoring them and the leave will be curtailed. During this process, however, the doctor is free to seek alternative employment and then apply for new leave.



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](https://www.gov.uk) for the latest information.

At the time of writing UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has confirmed:

- *If you decide to stay in the UK, you should apply for the necessary leave to remain in the UK. You'll also be able to submit an application form from within the UK where you would usually need to apply for a visa from your home country.*
- *You'll need to meet the requirements of the route you're applying for and pay the UK application fee. This includes those whose leave expires before 31 August 2020.*
- *The terms of your leave will remain the same until your application is decided. If you are switching into [work](#) or [study](#) routes you may be able to commence work or study whilst your application is under consideration.*

If I am currently working from home as a result of the pandemic do I need to notify UK Visas and Immigration?

UK Visas and Immigration (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.

Do we need to notify UK Visas and Immigration of doctors who have returned home temporarily or those unable to return following a period of annual leave prior to the pandemic?

There are no additional reporting duties required as a result of CoVID-19.



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@rcp.ac.uk) to seek advice on how to proceed.

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

Following the latest advice from the UK government, the GMC has suspended identity checks at their offices and are granting registration without an identity check having to be completed first. Applicant's GMC registration status on the register will mention this.

If you had an identity check booked, this will have now been cancelled. When the UK government advice changes to allow in-person identity checks to resume, the GMC will contact those doctors whose registration was granted without an identity check to organise for them to do so at one of their offices. For up-to-date COVID-related guidance from the GMC, please visit their website; <https://www.gmc-uk.org/news/coronavirus>

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.

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 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 upon arrival?

Previously, MTI doctors were included in the quarantine exemptions list which overrode any other requirements, but this has now changed. Healthcare workers are now no longer included in this list of exemptions <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>

From 15 February 2021 anyone allowed to enter England from outside the Common Travel Area (Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man) must quarantine for 10 days.

Before you arrive in the UK you are required to;

- complete a passenger locator form
- provide proof of a negative coronavirus test

You will also need to take 2 further coronavirus tests once in the UK self-isolating which you must book before you travel. Please ensure that you remain up-to-date on the latest guidance from UKVI about international travel to the UK and self-isolation requirements; <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

The guidance on the link above mainly relates to England though links can be found to specific guidance for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Island. Please ensure you check these requirements regularly.

In addition to this, please ensure that you remain up-to-date on the red list travel ban countries as more countries may be added in future. If you have been in one of the countries on this list in the previous 10 days, you will be denied entry to the UK; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-measures-to-protect-the-uk-from-variant-strains-of-covid-19>

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the RCP expect that employing UK hospitals cover the costs associated with self-isolating if the MTI doctor is not able to financially cover the cost themselves. This includes MTI doctors on honorary contracts.