

CCT, CESR and the Combined Programme

A guide to the routes of entry to the GMC's specialist register for doctors starting specialty training across HEE North West.

Registration Pathway

There are two pathways to registration on the GMC's specialist register for doctors on a GMC approved specialty training programme in the UK:

- CCT (Certificate of completion of training) – For doctors who started an approved specialist training programme at ST1 and will gain all their competencies in GMC approved training posts.
- CP (Combined programme) - For doctors who joined an approved specialist training programme at a later starting point having already obtained some of the CCT curriculum competencies from previous non-approved training posts.

Types of Registration

For doctors appointed to GMC recognised training programmes in the UK, there are two possible types of specialist registration on the GMC's Specialist Register once they have completed a specialty training programme:

- **CCT (Certificate of completion of training)** - Doctors with a CCT have completed an approved training programme in the UK and are eligible for entry onto the Specialist Register.¹
- **CESR (Certificate of eligibility for specialist registration)** - The process by which doctors who have not trained in an approved programme can demonstrate their knowledge, skills and experience are equivalent to that of the relevant CCT curriculum to join the Specialist Register.¹

There are other types of entry on the GMC's specialist register, but these do not apply to doctors on GMC recognised training programmes. Further details of these can be found on the [GMC website](#).

Due to changes in legislation following the UK's exit from the EU, as of the 1 January 2021 any doctor on a combined programme pathway whose application for entry on the specialist register is approved by the GMC, will be granted a CCT.

¹ GMC Website – Specialist Registration: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/the-medical-register/a-guide-to-the-medical-register/specialist-and-gp-application-types>

Defining a training programme

When deciding on the training route of a doctor, the whole of a doctor's training programme must be considered. The GMC considers the whole period of training from CT1/ST1 to certification as the training programme. This means that core training is considered a part of the training programme of a particular specialty, even if doctors are regularly appointed at ST3/ST4. Joining a training programme at ST3/ST4 is therefore considered by the GMC as joining a training programme part way through.

For example, in Plastic Surgery, the training programme is eight years in length, consisting of two years of core training and 6 years of specialist training. Even though CT1 and CT2 were completed as part of a Core Surgical Training, these core years are considered to be part of the Plastic Surgery Training Programme when deciding on the registration pathway to entry on the GMC's specialist register.

Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) Pathway

The CCT pathway identifies a doctor who is expected to gain a CCT registration upon completion of a specialty training programme having gained all curriculum competencies in GMC recognised posts within a UK training programme.

Please note that if you completed an "Alternative Certificate of Core Competence" during recruitment, this does not automatically mean you are eligible to be on the CCT pathway. The "Alternative Certificate of Core Competence" only confirms that you have the competencies expected of someone who had completed a core training programme. To be recognised as being on a CCT pathway, a doctor must have completed the core training competencies whilst in a GMC recognised core training programme(s).

You are on the CCT pathway if:

- You are a UK trainee who achieved the required competences considered towards your appointment to an NTN programme in GMC approved training posts.

Approved posts are ones which have been prospectively approved for training by the GMC. Training undertaken in the EEA/Switzerland can be approved if you provide evidence that the posts were approved by the statutory authority in the country in which you undertook your training.

Combined Programme (CP) pathway

The CP pathway can lead to registration on the GMC's specialist register either by CCT or CESR.

The CP pathway identifies a doctor appointed to a UK training programme **above ST1**, but have not gained their core competencies in GMC approved training posts (or posts undertaken in the EEA/Switzerland and approved by the statutory authority in that country)

This may also include those doctors who have not acquired the pre-requisite entry qualifications asked for in the curriculum, but who can offer an alternative qualification that has been judged to be an acceptable equivalent by the appointing HEE local office.

You are on the CP pathway if:

- You are a UK trainee who achieved some or all of the required competences considered towards your appointment to an NTN programme in non-approved posts.

This only applies to doctors who enter a training programme above ST1.

Therefore, you will be placed on to a CP route to specialty registration if you gained your core competencies:

- outside of the UK,
- in the UK but not as part of a GMC approved training programme, or
- in the EEA/Switzerland but in posts that were not approved by the statutory authority in that country.

Previously, doctors on the combined programme pathway would have only been eligible for entry on the GMC's specialist register as a CESR. Retrospective applications will also be accepted by the GMC to issue a CCT to doctors who were previously granted a CESR through the combined programme who meet these requirements.²

From 18 May 2020, doctors on a Combined Programme who completed the minimum amount of time training in the UK or are training in specialties for which there is no minimum training time, will qualify for a CCT. Combined programme doctors who did not meet the minimum UK training time will be awarded a CESR.

Details of the minimum UK training time for each specialty can be found on the [GMC website](#).

From 1 January 2021, all doctors on the Combined Programme will be awarded a CCT. From this date there is no minimum training time.

National Training Numbers (NTNs)

A doctor may be issued with an NTN ending with the letter "C" (denoting being on the CCT pathway) before it is established that they are on the CP pathway. Once it has been confirmed that a doctor is not on the CCT pathway, the doctor will be issued with a new NTN ending with an "CP" (denoting being on the CP pathway).

Passing Royal College Membership exams outside of training

If all core competencies are achieved within a GMC approved training programme, with the exception of passing the Royal College Membership exam for that specialty, doctors are eligible to be placed on the CCT pathway providing they enter or re-enter training within seven years of the examination pass.

² GMC website - Retrospective granting of CCT to doctors granted a CESR through the combined programme: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/join-the-register/registration-applications/specialist-application-guides/retrospective-cct-for-doctors-with-cesr-combined-programme>

“An examination pass obtained after completing a core training programme, but before completing the candidate's higher training programme, will be considered current for award of a certificate of completion of training.”

GMC Website: Expectations about the currency of examinations: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/national-professional-examinations/the-expectations>

“Any valid passes in national professional examinations can be counted towards a CCT – even if obtained outside approved training - provided that the candidate enters, or where appropriate, re-enters, approved training within seven years of the examination pass.”

Appendix of Regulations for the Intercollegiate Membership Examination of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and in Ireland:
<https://www.intercollegiatemrcsexams.org.uk/mrcs/mrcs-regulations-and-formal-documents/>

Non-UK exams

Doctors must have passed the UK exam to be awarded a CCT. A European exam considered equivalent/similar to the UK exam by the college does not mean you are eligible to be awarded a CCT.

“Doctors entering UK training at ST3 (or above) from approved European training with a European exam considered equivalent/similar to the UK exam. Eligible for a CESR(CP)

Doctors entering UK training at ST3 (or above) from approved European training with the UK exam (or who gain the UK exam at a later point but prior to end of training). Eligible for a CCT

Doctors entering UK training at ST3 (or above) from training outside the UK with an outside UK exam considered equivalent/similar to the UK exam. Eligible for a CESR(CP)”

GMC position statement: The role of UK and overseas exams in approved curricula:
<https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/position-statements/the-role-of-uk-and-overseas-exams-in-approved-curricula>

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Amendment to V3.1 to confirm that as of 1 January 2021, all trainees on the Combined Programme will be awarded CCT.