

UK Foundation Programme

Guidance for medical schools on the process for applying for pre-allocation to Foundation School on the grounds of Special Circumstances



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Please note: -

All non-UK medical school students/graduates, and UK medical school graduates that have a date of qualification prior to 7th August 2017 will make their application via the UKFPO. For these applicants, all references to “panels” should be read as “the UKFPO panel”.



General Principles

- 1.1 Applicants who need to remain in a geographical area for specific caring or health reasons to undertake their foundation programme training can apply to their medical school to be considered for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances. It is important that discussion takes place with the potential applicants so that they have a realistic expectation (see Appendix B helping potential applicants to be realistic).
- 1.2 Applicants can only apply for special circumstances at the foundation school they have ranked first in their application form. Special circumstances applications listing a different foundation school will not be considered by the local panel.
- 1.3 Applicants can only apply for special circumstances based on their current situation.
- 1.4 Applicants who believe that they meet one or more of the criteria are strongly advised to discuss their circumstances with their medical school before completing the national special circumstances form. The purpose of this discussion would be to help potential applicants be realistic and clarify for them exactly what evidence is required to allow an informed decision to be made.
- 1.5 Approved special circumstances will result in applicants being pre-allocated to a specific foundation school for their foundation programme training, provided that their score is sufficient to meet the national allocation criteria.
- 1.6 Approval of a special circumstances application does not guarantee a specific programme within the pre-allocated foundation school.
- 1.7 All applicants must adhere to the rules of the national application process. This means that all applicants applying or approved for pre-allocation on the grounds of their special circumstances must still complete and submit an application form. Applicants must also sit the Situational Judgement Test and must achieve an application score that is high enough to meet the national allocation criteria. This score may also be used for matching applicants to specific programmes.
- 1.8 If the Foundation Programme is oversubscribed, then pre-allocation to a specific foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances is only guaranteed for those who score highly enough to make the primary list. Reserve list applicants with special circumstances whose applications for pre-allocation have been approved can only be allocated to their first-choice foundation school if that school has vacancies available on the date that batch of vacancies is allocated.
- 1.9 An applicant pre-allocated to a foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances will not be permitted to link their application to another individual in the process.
- 1.10 An applicant who is seeking approval for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances for a specific school can only apply for an academic foundation programme in an Academic Unit of Application which covers that specific foundation school but will not be pre-allocated.
- 1.11 Medical schools will only consider applications from students who have not graduated prior to 7th August 2017. Any applicant who graduated before this time must submit their Special Circumstances form through the UKFPO.

*For information around managing the expectations of potential applicants, please refer to Appendix B.

The Criteria

To be considered for pre-allocation to a foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances, applicants must meet one of the following criteria.

2.1 Criterion 1: The applicant is a parent or legal guardian of a child or children under the age of 18 who reside primarily with them and for whom they have significant caring responsibilities.

- 2.1.1 An applicant whose sole criterion is that she (or their partner) is currently pregnant will not be regarded as eligible for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances. Please refer applicants to the Inter-Foundation School Transfer policy for further guidance. The policy can be found via the UKFPO website www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk
- 2.1.2 It is expected that the applicant and their child(ren) in this category will remain in their current address and application for pre-allocation will be to the foundation school local to that address.
- 2.1.3 If the applicant and the child(ren) do not normally reside together, this should be referred to on the application form, and information must be supplied as to why the caring responsibilities remain equally significant.
- 2.1.4 Applicants will be required to supply the following supporting evidence:
- copy of birth certificate(s) of child(ren).
 - for legal guardians a copy of the legal document that confirms their status for the child named in the birth certificate.
 - statement confirming that they have significant caring responsibilities for the child(ren) from an appropriate professional who they would normally have known for at least six months.
 - proof of current address, e.g. driving licence, utility bill dated within the last three months or council tax bill dated within the last twelve months.

2.2 Criterion 2: The applicant is the primary carer for someone who is disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010).

Definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment, that the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. For the purposes of the Act: -

- substantial means more than minor or trivial.
- long-term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.
- normal day-to-day activities include things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

Some conditions, such as addictions to non-prescribed substances, are specifically excluded.

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also covered by the scope of the Act.

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions. People with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with visual impairments are automatically deemed to be disabled.

- 2.2.1 For an applicant to meet this criterion, the applicant must be the primary carer for this person, who would normally be the applicant's partner, parent or sibling.
- 2.2.2 If the person they are caring for is not their partner, sibling or parent, the applicant will be expected to explain clearly and present a strong case as to why and how they have the role of primary carer for this person.
- 2.2.3 Applicants who provide care for a person as part of a group of carers, e.g. a family, are not eligible to apply under this criterion
- 2.2.4 It is expected that the applicant and the person who they care for in this category will remain in their current address(es) and application for pre-allocation will be to the foundation school local to that address. If this is not the case, relevant evidence must be supplied as to why follow up arrangements could not continue as present.
- 2.2.5 Applicants will be required to complete a care plan to demonstrate how they will combine the responsibilities of foundation doctor and primary carer and that local support resources have been fully considered.
- 2.2.6 Applicants will be required to supply the following supporting evidence:
- statement from GP/Social Services professional that they have known the applicant for normally at least six months confirming the applicant's role as primary carer for this person.
 - care plan.
 - proof of current address, e.g. driving licence, utility bill dated within the last three months or council tax bill dated within the last twelve months.

2.3 Criterion 3: The applicant has a medical condition or disability for which on-going follow up for the condition in the specified location is an absolute requirement.

- 2.3.1 As this medical condition already exists for the individual as a medical student, it is expected that the applicant will remain in their current address and application for pre-allocation will be to the foundation school local to that address. If this is not the case, clear arguments need to be made as to why follow up arrangements could not continue as present.
- 2.3.2 If the request for pre-allocation is not for the local foundation school relevant evidence must be supplied as to why follow up arrangements could not continue as present.
- 2.3.3 Applicants will be required to supply the following supporting evidence: -
- A report by the current medical specialist treating the condition or Occupational health physician in which they will be required to: -
- describe the current medical condition or disability
 - describe the nature of the on-going treatment and frequency
 - state why the follow up must be delivered in a specific location, rather than by other treatment centres in the UK.

2.4 Criterion 4: Unique circumstances

- 2.4.1 If applicants consider that there are particular unique circumstances that requires them to be in a particular environment whilst they undertake the Foundation Programme, applicants can apply for Special Circumstances under this criterion.
- 2.4.2 Applicants must provide evidence with regard to these circumstances including the reasons for placement in a particular location from a professional individual who has recognised standing to support the application.
- 2.4.3 Applicants must be reminded that they will still be required to complete the Situational Judgement Test, the score from which may be used as part of the process of matching to programmes. Applicants must achieve an application score high enough to meet the national allocation criteria.
- 2.4.4 Applicants will be required to supply the following supporting evidence: -

Statement by a professional that:

- describes the current unique situation
- explains why the follow up must be delivered in a specific location rather than another location in the UK
- proof of current address, e.g. driving licence, utility bill dated within the last three months or council tax bill dated within the last twelve months.

Panels

- 3.1 Applications must be considered by a panel, rather than by an individual. Medical schools (UKFPO in the case of eligibility office applicants) will be responsible for convening a panel, in accordance with the national process and timeline, to consider the applications.

Each medical school will be required to convene a local panel to consider applications from its current undergraduate students. UKFPO will convene a panel to consider applications from all non-UK medical school students/graduates, and UK medical school graduates that have a date of qualification prior to 7th August 2017 (See Appendix 1).

- 3.2 The panel must consist of a minimum of three people. At least one member must be an academic clinician, and one a representative of the local foundation school, normally the Foundation School Director or Foundation School Manager.
- 3.3 Each panel must have a member who will act as administrator/recorder. This person will not take part in the decision making, but will be responsible for the pre-panel administration and completion and submission of all the documentation including: -
- Checking the applicant's Special Circumstances application is for the Foundation School the applicant has ranked first in their application preferences. If this is not the case, the application should not be considered.
 - Checking the address of the school in relation to the applicant's address and the responsibilities outlined in the application.

- Informing the applicant of the outcome of the submission. In addition, they must complete all relevant audit documentation and return it to the UKFPO.
- 3.4 Each panel member must have undertaken equality and diversity training within the last three years.
- 3.5 Panels must ensure that all information in each application form is treated as private and confidential, and only available to those directly involved in the approval process.

Process for Submission and Consideration of Applications

- 4.1 Details of the process, the criteria, and the relevant forms will be published on the UKFPO website www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk
- 4.2 Medical students who believe that they meet one or more of the criteria are strongly advised to discuss their circumstances with their medical school before completing the national special circumstances form. The purpose of this discussion would be to help potential applicants be realistic and clarify for them exactly what the panel would expect to see in order to be able to make an informed decision.
- 4.3 Applicants must submit their application form with the required supporting documentation and in accordance with the national timeline.
- 4.4 Applicants must send their applications by post, rather than email, because of the requirement for the signed supporting documentation. Each medical school must advise its local students of the address details for applications and the latest time for receipt of applications on the closing date.
- 4.5 Medical students who are on elective at the time when applications are to be submitted may make arrangements with their medical school to send their application form by email and their supporting documents separately.
- 4.6 Those who qualified before 7th August 2017 and those who are not graduates from UK medical schools will be able to access similar support and information from the national website and the UKFPO staff.
- 4.7 Applications must be complete and include all the required supporting documentation. Applicants cannot submit further documentation at a later date unless they have previously made a special arrangement with their medical school to do so. Panels are asked to be sympathetic about this with students who are on elective at the time of the application. It will be the decision of the panel whether late documentation is accepted.
- 4.8 The panel must decide if applicants adequately demonstrate that they meet one of the criteria and have provided the necessary supporting evidence. Some applications may meet more than one of the criteria. The panel may wish to contact the relevant signatories for further information.
- 4.9 The panel is also required to approve decisions by the medical school regarding educational special circumstances (as outlined in Section 3).

- 4.10 If the panel, whilst assessing an application, disagree with the opinion of the medical professional in the supporting documentation, it is the responsibility of the panel to discuss and clarify the reasons with that professional and record the reasons for their decision. This information should be shared with the applicant. This will also be required to be recorded on the appeal documentation if there is to be an appeal.
- 4.11 Applicants are advised that the panel may choose to contact them or the professional(s) supporting their application for further clarity.
- 4.12 Applicants will be provided with a checklist to assist in the completion of the application form. Applicants are advised to check their applications thoroughly before sending them in for submission and consideration by the panel. All the information provided on the application form must be correct with all the relevant boxes ticked. Incomplete applications should be rejected from the process.

The Panel's Decision

- 5.1 After considering the application, the panel will reach one of the following decisions: -
1. The application is approved for pre-allocation to the specified foundation school
 2. The application is not approved
- 5.2 The administrator of the panel will notify applicants of the outcome, in line with the national timeline.
- 5.3 If the panel approves the application, a copy of the application form and supporting documentation must be forwarded to the receiving foundation school where the applicant will be provisionally pre-allocated.
- 5.4 The administrator of the panel must inform the relevant organisation, usually the deanery/foundation school linked to the home medical school, responsible for inputting the student data on the national application system, so that the applicant can be provisionally pre-allocated on the online system.
- 5.5 If the panel does not approve an application, the applicant will be notified of the reason(s) why the application was not approved. The panel will advise the applicant of the appeals process and the date by which an appeal must be submitted.
- 5.6 Approval of an application for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances constitutes pre-allocation to a foundation school and does not guarantee a *specific* programme or location in a foundation school.

The remainder of this document is for
OFFICE USE ONLY

To be completed by the local panel administrator			
Please list the members of the panel who considered this application. Indicate members who are clinicians by an asterisk.	Medical School Representative:		
	Foundation School Representative:		
	Additional Members:		
	Administrator:		
What date did the panel convene?			
What was the decision of the panel?	<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED		
If APPROVED , please include in this section any suggestions from the local panel to the receiving foundation school. These are only suggestions; allocation will be determined by the receiving foundation school.			
If NOT APPROVED , please give reasons: -			
(Empty space for reasons)			
Chairperson Signature		Date	
Name			
Position			
Email			
Tel.			
Administrator of local panel to complete the audit trail			

AUDIT TRAIL

Applicant advised of panel decision

APPROVED

Copy of application & supporting documents sent to receiving foundation school

NOT APPROVED

Application & supporting documents filed locally

AFTER APPEAL

Copy of upheld/approved appeal application & supporting documents sent to receiving foundation school

Copy of not upheld appeal filed locally

Appeals

- 6.1 Appeals will be considered by the national appeals panel, run by the UKFPO, on the grounds that the process was not applied with appropriate diligence or due care, or that the decision was made in a prejudicial way.
- 6.2 Appeal forms must be lodged by applicants directly with the UKFPO by the date indicated in the national timeline, in order for all their documentation to be considered by the national appeals panel.
- 6.3 The national appeal panel will consider the appeal and inform both the applicant and the original panel of its decision.
- 6.4 If the appeal is successful the UKFPO will pre-allocate the applicant on Oriel, notify the receiving foundation school and request that the nominating medical school send the special circumstances application form to the receiving foundation school.
- 6.5 The decision of the national appeals panel is final, and no further correspondence will be entered into.

General Information

- 7.1 The above process is for the consideration of existing special circumstances, many of which may have been managed by the applicants throughout their time at medical school. Applicants whose circumstances change after the closing date for submission of applications for consideration must contact the director of the foundation school where they have been allocated, as soon as possible.
- 7.2 If an applicant's circumstances change after the closing date for submission of applications for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances they cannot apply for special circumstances at this stage. Applicants are advised to contact the foundation school director when they have been allocated. An application to change allocated foundation school will now be treated as an inter-foundation school transfer (IFST), for which there is a separate process. Details are available on the UKFPO website www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk
- 7.3 It must be stressed that this is *not* a process for late special circumstances applications. The applicant will be required to clearly demonstrate how the circumstances have arisen or changed significantly since the closing date for applications for pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances.

APPENDIX A

National Timeline: Special Circumstances – August 2019 Entry

12 th October 2018 (12:00 BST)	Deadline for submission of special circumstances applications to the home medical school or Eligibility Office for those who qualified prior to 7 th August 2017 or those who qualify outside the UK.
15 th October – 9 th November 2018	Panels meet to consider applications.
By 12 th November 2018	Panels notify applicants and the receiving foundation school of panel decision and forward relevant documents.
13 th – 22 nd November 2018	National appeal submission period open.
22 nd November 2018 (12:00 BST)	Deadline for appeals submission.
29 th November 2018	National appeals panel meets to consider appeals.
3 rd December 2018	National appeals panel notifies applicants of its decisions on appeals.
7 th March 2019	All applicants on the primary list will be notified of their allocation.

APPENDIX B

Managing the expectations of potential applicants

The underlining principle of pre-allocating applicants to particular foundation schools is on the understanding that their special circumstances will prevent them from working in any other geographical location. Therefore, applicants must rank that foundation school as their first preference on their Oriel application form. Failure to do so will prevent their special circumstances application form being considered.

Criterion 1

1. Applicants with children will be familiar with combining the demands of parenthood with studying for an undergraduate degree. However, there are significant differences between being a student and a foundation doctor. This may include irregular and antisocial working hours as well as shift patterns and working at night. This should include a discussion about the possibility of flexible working hours.
2. Medical schools should discuss with applicants the longer-term implications of their care commitments. It needs to be pointed out that pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances does not exist for specialty training, and that applicants should be giving some thought to how they will manage in the longer term. There are many sources of advice as to how the majority of doctor's balance family and work responsibilities.
3. Medical schools must explain that this criterion is related to childcare and that pregnancy will not be considered under this criterion.
4. Medical schools must explain that this criterion is based on an applicant's current circumstances and current address.

Criterion 2

1. Applicants must be counselled to indicate clearly how they are the **primary** carer of the person being cared for, and that all appropriate local resources are being considered and utilised. It should be highlighted that just being a family member does not meet the requirements of being a carer under this criterion.
2. All applicants must indicate the extent/level/type, as well as the frequency, of the caring role they provide. They are required to include a structured care plan to indicate how they intend to balance the requirements of their care commitment with the demands of a busy job, with varying shift patterns.
3. Applicants must demonstrate that they utilise and do not duplicate alternative care services which are available, either hospital based, or community based. For example, many people would wish to accompany a sick relative to an important medical appointment and would expect to take annual leave to do so. Interpreting or translating for a relative is not a reason for special circumstances. Translators or interpreters can routinely be available for GP and hospital appointments.
4. It is expected that the applicant and the person who they care for will remain in their present residence and application for pre-allocation will be to the foundation school local to that address. If this is not the case, evidence will be required as to why follow up arrangements could not continue as present.
5. Medical schools should discuss with applicants the longer-term implications of their care commitments. It needs to be pointed out that pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances does not exist for specialty training, and that applicants should be considering whether their level of care commitment is realistic in the longer term.

Criterion 3

1. Applicants with a medical condition or disability will be familiar with combining the requirements of their condition with studying for an undergraduate degree. However, there are significant

differences between being a student and a foundation doctor. This may include irregular and antisocial working hours, shift patterns and working at nights. This should include a discussion about the possibility of flexible working hours.

2. Medical schools will no doubt have already discussed with applicants the longer-term implications of their condition in terms of their career. It needs to be pointed out that pre-allocation on the grounds of special circumstances does not exist in the same way for specialty training, and that applicants should be aware of the mechanisms deaneries have for managing doctors with medical conditions and disabilities.
3. As part of demonstrating that they have a medical condition or disability requiring local follow up, applicants will have to submit a signed form from their Occupational Health physician or appropriate medical specialist to support their application: -
 - a. It is important that the applicant is aware that evidence will be required as to why the relevant medical support would not be available in the foundation school they have been allocated.
 - b. Applicants must be advised that they should declare their medical condition on their TOI form.

Criterion 4: Unique circumstances

1. Applicants must be clear as to why they consider the circumstances are unique and why this will impact on their future working as a Foundation Doctor.
2. It is difficult to be prescriptive as to what constitutes unique circumstances. However, it is expected that it will be an exceptional situation and not the norm.
3. The applicant must provide robust and demonstrable evidence to support their application.
4. Medical schools should counsel students as the reasonable of the request and whether their requirements could be met via other processes.

APPENDIX C

Exemplar Letters: Guidelines for local panels

The following exemplar letters are offered to panels as templates. The content and wording can be adjusted as deemed appropriate, but panels should ensure that the necessary information which needs to be covered in each letter is still included.

EXEMPLAR LETTER 1: Panel approves application

Dear,

Foundation Programme 2018

Request for pre-allocation to a foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances

I am pleased to inform you that your request for pre-allocation to the North Country Foundation School has been approved on the grounds that you meet Criterion 1 - *a parent or legal guardian of a child or children under the age of 18 who reside primarily with them and for whom they have significant caring responsibilities.*

It is likely that the Foundation Programme will be oversubscribed this year, which means there will be more applicants than places available. If this happens, pre-allocation to a specific foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances is only guaranteed for those who have a high enough application score to make the primary list. This is the list of applicants who will be allocated to foundation schools on Thursday 7th March 2019.

Applicants on the reserve list will be allocated to foundation schools in batches, on pre-set dates. Reserve list applicants with special circumstances will only be allocated to their first-choice foundation school if that school has vacancies available on the date they are allocated. If there are no places available at the applicant's first choice foundation school then they will be allocated elsewhere according to the places available, their score and their stated preferences.

Please contact your medical school, local deanery, or local foundation school for more information about your pre-allocation based on special circumstances.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this further, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

LETTER 2: Local panel does NOT approve application

Dear,

Foundation Programme 2018

Request for pre-allocation to a foundation school on the grounds of special circumstances

I regret to inform you that the special circumstances panel has not approved your request for pre-allocation to the North Country Foundation School.

The panel concluded that based on the evidence provided your application did not meet Criterion 2 - *be the primary carer for someone who is disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (expected to be a partner, sibling or parent)*, for the following reasons:

- A grandparent is not a partner, sibling or parent, and there was insufficient explanation of why you are responsible for the caring role instead of your parents.
- Your care plan indicates that there is not a need for regular care, but that you are an extra pair of hands when your grandparent is particularly demanding or has a hospital appointment.
- There was no indication in your care plan that you had explored the possibility of some support from community resources, particularly for hospital visits.

Please note that this does not in any way prejudice your national application through the national online application system.

If you wish to appeal against this decision, this will need to be done through the UKFPO. Full details of the special circumstances appeals process, including a form, can be downloaded from the UKFPO website: www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk. Your completed appeals form should be returned directly to the UKFPO on the address provided on the appeal form by 22nd November 2018 (12 noon BST).

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this further, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX D

Appeals Process

Applicants whose applications for pre-allocation to a foundation school on the grounds of their special circumstances are not approved by the original panel have the right of appeal.

The following will be recognised by the national appeals panel as grounds for appeal: -

- a) that the process was not applied with appropriate diligence or due care
- b) that the decision was made in a prejudicial way.

If an applicant wishes to appeal against the decision by the original panel not to approve his/her application, the appeal must be made on the accompanying national special circumstances appeal form, explaining succinctly the grounds for the appeal.

The national appeals panel will send the applicant an email within five working days to acknowledge that they have received the appeal. Late appeals cannot be considered.

The national appeals panel will consider the appeal and make its decision on the basis of any investigations it considers reasonable, having regard to the statement within the appeal and any supporting evidence provided by the applicant.

The privacy and confidentiality of the appellant will be respected, subject to the need for an open and fair investigation and for the outcome of the investigation to be reported appropriately. The intention is both to protect the appellant's privacy and to protect those involved with the appeal.

The applicant and original panel will be informed of the outcome of the appeal in line with the national timeline.

The decision of the national appeals panel is final and further correspondence will not be entered into.