Home Office

Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test

This guidance is based in the Immigration Rules.

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Immigration Rules part 3, paragraphs 75A to 75F

This guidance tells you about the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test for overseas-qualified doctors who want to practice medicine in the UK.

Doctors who wish to practice medicine in the UK must register with the General Medical Council (GMC). If they qualify overseas and wish to register they must pass the PLAB test to demonstrate their knowledge of English and their medical expertise.

Doctors sitting the PLAB test are included in the definition of business visitors, but they must meet the requirements of paragraphs 75A to 75F, they also have the appeal rights associated with these rules. For more information, see related link: Business visitors.

Doctors applying to take any other test or examination, such as those needed to enter one of the Royal Colleges, are treated as general visitors and must demonstrate they meet all the requirements of this route.

This means they must not be granted more than six months leave as a general visitor and they are subject to the normal restrictions on general visitors switching into other categories of leave. For more information, see related link: General visitors.

Dentists do not need to pass the PLAB test.

Doctors with leave to take the PLAB test cannot switch into skilled employment under the points-based system.

Doctors who come to the UK to take the PLAB test can do periods of clinical attachments during their leave. They do not need to apply separately to do a clinical attachment, unless the period of the attachment goes on beyond the end of their leave to take the PLAB test.

Changes to this guidance – This page tells you what has changed since the previous

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	version of this guidance. Contacts – This page tells you who to contact for help if your senior caseworker or line manager can't answer your question. Information owner – This page tells you about this version of the guidance and who owns it.	

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Key facts

This page shows you the key facts for the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test.

Category: Doctors taking the PLAB test	
Eligibility criteria	An applicant must: • be a graduate from a medical school and intend to take the PLAB test • provide documentary evidence of a confirmed test date or of their eligibility to take the PLAB test by way of a letter or email from the General Medical Council or a test admission card • not intend to take employment in the UK • not intend to produce goods or provide services within the UK, including the selling of goods or services direct to members of the public • not intend to do a course of study • maintain and accommodate themselves and any dependants adequately without using public funds • be able to meet the cost of their onward journey • intend to leave the UK when their leave in this category expires unless they pass the PLAB test and are granted leave to do a clinical attachment • not spend more than 18 months in the UK in this category • already have leave in this category, if they are applying for an extension of stay in this category.
Application forms	Application made outside UK – VAF2 Extension (within UK) – FLR(O) Indefinite leave to remain – N/A
Cost of application:	Fees for Home Office services (Links to staff intranet removed)
Entry clearance mandatory?	No
Is biometric information required for applications made in the UK?	Yes
Code of leave to remain granted	Code 3 conditions.
Entry clearance endorsements	C: PLAB test. LTE 6 months. Code 3.
Conditions of leave to remain	No work or study allowed. No recourse to public funds.
How long is leave to remain normally granted for?	Six months. Applications can be made to extend by six months at a time to a maximum of 18 months.

Are dependants allowed?	Only if they qualify as a general visitor in their own right.
Work and study allowed?	No. Only observation as part of the clinical attachment as part of the test process is permitted. Clinical attachments do not count as employment for this purpose.
Switching into this category allowed?	No. Applicant must already have leave in this category in order to be granted an extension.
Does this category lead to settlement (indefinite leave to remain)?	No
Is knowledge of language and life required?	No
CID case type	CID case type (Business) - LTR
Immigration Rules paragraphs	75A to 75F

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This page lists the changes to the 'Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test' guidance, with the most recent at the top.

Date of the change	Details of the change
24 January 2014	Six month review by the modernised guidance team: • Minor housekeeping changes.
11 July 2013	Six month review by the modernised guidance team: • Minor housekeeping changes.
	For previous changes you will need to access the archived guidance. See related link: PLAB test – archive.

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This section tells you how to check if a person applying for leave to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test meets the requirements for that category.

When considering an application you must check:

- the application is valid
- the applicant's passport or travel documents are genuine
- the applicant meets the substantive requirements for the category
- there are no general grounds for refusal.

For more information, see related links:

- Specified application forms and procedures
- General grounds for refusal.

People taking the PLAB test are included in the definition of a 'business visitor' in paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules. An applicant must meet the requirements of paragraph 75A to 75F of the Immigration Rules. They must:

- be a graduate from a medical school and intend to take the PLAB test
- provide documentary evidence of a confirmed test date or of their eligibility to take the PLAB test by way of a letter or email from the General Medical Council or a test admission card
- not intend to take employment in the UK
- not intend to produce goods or provide services within the UK, including the selling of goods or services direct to members of the public
- not intend to do a course of study
- maintain and accommodate themselves and any dependants adequately:
  - out of resources available to them without recourse to public funds or taking employment, or

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	○ be maintained and/or accommodated by relatives or friends who can prove they are able and intend to do so, and are legally present in the UK, or will be at the time of their visit • be able to meet the cost of their onward journey • intend to leave the UK when their leave in this category expires unless they pass the PLAB test and are granted leave to do a clinical attachment • not spend more than 18 months in the UK in this category • already have leave in this category, if they are applying for an extension of stay in this category. **Extensions only** The applicant must not be in breach of immigration laws, except for any period of overstaying: • for 28 days or less which will be disregarded, or • where the application was submitted before 9 July 2012. For more information, see related link: Applications from overstayers (non family routes). **More information** For more information on these requirements and when doctors are eligible to take the PLAB test, see related links: • PLAB testing process • Documents the applicant must provide.	

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This page tells you how the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) testing process works.

Doctors who qualify overseas, and hold a qualification not recognised in the UK, must pass the PLAB test in order to register with the General Medical Council (GMC).

Before coming to the UK, they must pass a pre-assessment International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. This is designed to find out if the doctor has a reasonable command of the English language before they can sit the PLAB test. IELTS tests can be taken in various countries, including the UK.

If the doctor passes the different stages of the test, they can sit the PLAB test in the UK.

Doctors must take the PLAB test to demonstrate their knowledge of medical English and their medical skills and knowledge.

The PLAB test consists of two separate assessments, part 1 and part 2. The GMC requires doctors to pass part 1 before they can take part 2 of the test. If a candidate fails part 1 by a wide margin, the GMC does not allow them to re-sit part 1 for a period of at least four months from the date of the failed test.

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About this guidance Key facts Entry or extension requirements Granting or refusing Dependants	This page tells you the documents a person applying for leave to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test must provide from the General Medical Council (GMC) to show they are eligible to take the test. A candidate who applies for leave to sit the PLAB test must produce evidence from the GMC that they have a test date or are eligible to take the test. This can be a: • GMC letter or email • test admission card.	**In this section** PLAB testing process Links to staff intranet removed

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Granting or refusing

About this guidance Key facts Entry or extension requirements Granting or refusing Dependants	This section tells you how to grant or refuse applications for leave to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test in the UK. For more information, see related links: • Grant or refuse entry clearance • Grant or refuse entry at UK port • Grant or refuse extension of stay.	**In this section** Grant or refuse entry clearance Grant or refuse entry at UK port Grant or refuse extension of stay Links to staff intranet removed

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Grant or refuse entry clearance

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This page tells you how to grant or refuse applications made overseas for leave to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test.

For guidance on the requirements, see the link on the left: Entry or extension requirements.

Entry clearance is not mandatory, except for people whose nationality requires them to have a UK visa. For more information on which nationalities require a visa, see related link: Appendix 1 of the Immigration Rules.

Grant entry clearance
If a person meets all the requirements of paragraph 75A of the Immigration Rules, and paragraph 320 of the general grounds for refusal does not apply, you must grant entry.

You must grant entry clearance for six months. You must endorse their entry clearance: ‘C: PLAB test. LTE 6 months. Code 3’.

Refuse entry clearance
If the applicant does not provide the evidence that is required to show that they meet the requirements of paragraph 75A or if paragraph 320 of the general grounds for refusal does apply, you must refuse the application.

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This page tells you how to grant or refuse entry at a UK port to a person seeking entry to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test.

For guidance on the requirements, see the link on the left: Entry or extension requirements.

Entry clearance is not mandatory, except for people whose nationality requires them to have a UK visa. For more information on which nationalities require a visa, see related link: Appendix 1 of the Immigration Rules.

Granting entry
If a person meets all the requirements of paragraph 75A of the Immigration Rules and none of the general grounds for refusal in paragraphs 320 or 321 apply, you must grant entry.

You must grant leave on code 3 conditions, for a maximum of six months.

Refusing entry
You must refuse leave to enter if the passenger does not meet all of the requirements of paragraph 75A of the Immigration Rules or if any of the general grounds for refusal in paragraphs 320 to 322 of the Immigration Rules applies.

For more information on refusing entry, see related link: Refusal of leave to enter.

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This page tells you how to grant or refuse applications for leave to remain to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test.

For guidance on the requirements, see the link on the left: Entry or extension requirements.

Grant an extension
If the person meets all the requirements of paragraph 75D of the Immigration Rules, and none of the general grounds for refusal in paragraph 322 apply, you must grant leave to remain.

If the applicant meets the requirements on each occasion, you must grant up to six months leave to remain at a time on code 3 conditions.

The maximum amount of time a person can spend in the UK in this category is 18 months. You must not grant a person leave that would mean they would spend more than 18 months in total in the UK in this category.

Refuse an extension
If an applicant does not meet all the requirements in paragraph 75D of the Immigration Rules or if any of the general grounds for refusal in paragraph 322 apply, you must refuse an extension of leave.

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About this guidance Key facts Entry or extension requirements Granting or refusing Dependants	This page tells you which dependants can be granted leave to join a person with leave to take the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test. Family members of people with leave to take the PLAB test who wish to join them in the UK must meet the requirements of the general visitors or child visitors rules. If their application is successful, they will be granted leave that expires on the same day as the person taking the PLAB test, up to a maximum of six months. For more information, see related links: • General visitors • Child visitors.	Links to staff intranet removed

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This page explains who to contact for more help with a specific case in the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test category.

If you have read the relevant Immigration Rules and this guidance and still need more help with this category, you must first ask your senior caseworker or line manager.

If the question cannot be answered at that level, you may email the study and visit operational policy team for further guidance on the policy.

Changes to this guidance can only be made by the modernised guidance team (MGT). If you think the policy content needs amending you must contact the study and visit operational policy team, who will ask the MGT to update the guidance, if appropriate.

The MGT will accept direct feedback on broken links, missing information or the format, style and navigability of this guidance. You can send these using the link: Email: Modernised guidance team.

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This page tells you about this version of the 'Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) test' guidance and who owns it.

Version	11.0
Valid from date	24 January 2014
Policy owner	Study and visit operational policy team
Cleared by director	Sonia Dower
Director's role	Director, operational policy and rules
Clearance date	28 May 2013
This version approved for publication by	Richard Short
Approver's role	Grade 7, modernised guidance team
Approval date	20 January 2014

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