



10/07/2026

Dear Chair of Council, Chair of the RB,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the outcome of the debate at ARM 2026 relating to eligibility criteria for specialty training, and particularly the adoption of a policy advocating a minimum of five years' NHS experience for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) before they can apply for specialty training.

This development has caused significant concern among many IMG doctors and organisations that represent them. IMGs constitute a substantial and essential part of the NHS workforce and have consistently contributed to patient care, service delivery, and, more recently, the collective efforts of the medical profession during periods of industrial action.

We are particularly concerned about the process through which Motion 59 was debated. The motion, which sought to improve fairness and access to specialty training for IMGs, was amended shortly before debate through the addition of a rider proposing a five-year NHS experience requirement. Furthermore, the rescheduling of the debate raised questions among many delegates regarding whether adequate opportunity was provided for full consideration of the motion and its amendments. As you are aware, the IMGs were extremely distressed by the behaviour of some of the members of the RB, as the motion was clearly going to impact on them and their families very significantly. In our view, the top table should have given a good account of this, as well as remind RB of the contributions of IMGs not just to the NHS but also to the BMA.

The resulting policy risks creating a substantial barrier to career progression for many highly qualified doctors. A significant proportion of IMGs arrive in the UK with extensive postgraduate experience, specialist qualifications, and years of clinical practice. Requiring an additional five years of NHS service before specialty training will unnecessarily delay professional development and limit opportunities for talented doctors who have already demonstrated their competence and commitment.

We are also concerned that this policy appears inconsistent with previous BMA positions. ARM 2023 called for greater training opportunities for all doctors and supported enabling IMGs to achieve specialist registration and Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) where they wished to do so. The new policy risks moving away from that principle of equitable access to training and career progression.

We fully recognise the concerns of foundation doctors and UK graduates regarding the increasing competition for training posts. However, the long-term solution lies in addressing the shortage of training opportunities, expanding workforce planning, and increasing the number of training places. Restricting access for one group of doctors does not address the underlying structural issues affecting the training system.

At a time when the NHS continues to face workforce challenges and remains dependent upon international recruitment, policies that are perceived as exclusionary risk undermining morale, retention, and the UK's attractiveness as a destination for highly skilled medical professionals.

We note that several leading medical organisations have supported substantially shorter experience requirements, generally ranging between two and three years, while the GMC has consistently advocated against exclusionary barriers affecting IMGs.

Beyond its practical implications, this policy has significantly damaged confidence among many IMG members in the BMA's ability to represent the interests of all doctors fairly and equitably. We are aware that some members are actively considering withdrawing their membership as a result of these developments. Such a loss of trust would be regrettable for both the IMG community and the Association.

We therefore respectfully request that:

1. The BMA shelve any lobbying or implementation efforts relating to this policy.
2. The Council undertakes a formal review of the evidence underpinning the five-year requirement.
3. Meaningful engagement takes place with IMG stakeholders, representative organisations, and affected members before further policy decisions are made.
4. Any future policy in this area is based on principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, workforce sustainability, and evidence-based workforce planning.
5. The BMA focuses on lobbying the government on expanding training numbers and bringing the medical workforce in line with other EU countries as recommended by a recent [APPG](https://globalhealth.inparliament.uk/files/globalhealth/2026-03/APPG%20Inquiry%20Report_Updated.pdf) report https://globalhealth.inparliament.uk/files/globalhealth/2026-03/APPG%20Inquiry%20Report_Updated.pdf.

The BMA has long championed equality, inclusion, and fairness within the medical profession. We believe these principles are best upheld by ensuring that all doctors, regardless of where they obtained their primary medical qualification, have fair and proportionate access to training and career progression opportunities.

We hope the Council will reconsider this policy and engage constructively with the IMG community to develop a more balanced and inclusive approach.

Professor JS Bamrah

On behalf of the undersigned supporters.

Signed by

1-APNA Asian Professional National Alliance

Chairman Dr Tanvir Alam

2-APPNE **Association** of Pakistani Physician of Northern Europe

President Dr Nadeem Raja

3-APPS Association of Pakistani physician and surgeons

President Professor Aamer Sarfaraz

4-BAPIO British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin

President Dr Joydeep Grover

5-BIPEPA British Irish Pakistani Emergency Physicians Association

President Prof Ayaz Abbasi

6-BEMA British Egyptian Medical association

President Dr Atef El-kholy

7-BIDA British International Doctors Association

President Professor Amit Sinha

8- BPOS British Pakistani orthopaedic society

President Tahir Khan

9-CAMDOCUK Cameroon doctors u k

Chairperson Dr Linda Bello

10-MANSAG Medical Association of Nigerians Across Great Britain

President Dr Jide Menakaya

11-MDA Muslim Doctors Association

President Dr Hina Shahid

12-NNCAUK Nigerian Nurses Charitable Association UK

General secretary Obi Amadi

13-SUDAN DOCTORS UNION UK

President Dr Nabeel Arman

•