



## **Medical Training Pathways - UK and Hong Kong**

There is often a lack of clarity amongst parents and students with regards to the medical training pathways in the UK and Hong Kong, and concerns regarding the transferability of qualifying with Medicine (MBBS) in the UK and then working as a doctor in Hong Kong. Students often overlook or even avoid applying to the UK to study medicine and transferring back to HK due to not being fully informed about their options or for fear of not being able to return to practice medicine in Hong Kong (and becoming trapped in the UK system).

At Aspire, we believe it is very unfortunate that many students and parents are not aware of the legitimate pathways for transferring from UK to HK and we also believe that the apprehension to apply for the UK MBBS degree is an unnecessary concern, as this often results in perfectly suitable candidates giving up their aspirations of becoming a doctor due to the sheer competitiveness for places to study medicine at HK institutions.

With regards to the HK Medical Licensing Exam (HKMLE) for entry to the HK medical system as an international doctor, the common myth that it is an 'impossible task' to pass this exam is frankly not true. The exam is certainly challenging, and the overall pass rate reflects this, but one must bear in mind that the highest proportion of candidates who pass this exam are UK graduates, and comparatively the highest number of applicants for the exam are from other countries (Mainland China). Traditionally, the medical curriculum of HK medical schools are widely adopted from the UK system, and certainly the many postgraduate specialty membership exams are directly adapted from the UK standards.

### **Training in the UK**

As a medical student in the UK, you will study for 5-6 years, depending on whether you take 1 year out to obtain an intercalated science degree (BSc) alongside your MBBS, which is becoming a popular trend. After graduating, you will embark on two years of foundation (FY) training, rotating around different specialties as a foundation doctor in FY1 and FY2 posts. Almost all international students will secure a place in foundation training, and will obtain their full GMC (General Medical Council) registration on completion of FY1. After completing both years of FY training, you will need to decide on what specialty you would like to apply for. As an international student, the one disadvantage is that you must at this point secure a training post, as any gaps in your training may void your Working Visa. But conversely speaking, there is often little need for alarm as most international students would secure a training post if all the necessary boxes are ticked, for example, having a well-prepared CV and sufficient training in interview technique for specialty interviews. You may apply to more than one specialty as well. Specialty training duration





depends on the selected specialty: general practice (GP) requires 3 years, whereas medical or surgical specialties may take up to 6-7 years. The end goal is to obtain Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) [pathway A].

### **HKMLE & transfer to HK to practice**

There are various stages during the doctor's training pathway in which you can complete the 3-part HKMLE exam. All UK medical graduates would have completed a minimum of 5 years of medical school training, which fulfils the eligibility criteria to take the HKMLE. UK graduates can apply to the 3-part HKMLE at any point after graduation with MBBS, and on passing the final part of the exam, candidates can commence the Pre-Registration House Officer (PRHO) post in Hong Kong for 12 months [pathway B]. This will then be followed by their selected specialty training in Hong Kong e.g. family medicine, cardiology or general surgery, until Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). For UK graduates that have already completed their specialty training (CCT) in the UK, passing the HKMLE would at present also require completion of the PRHO post, reduced to 6 months duration before they can work as a specialist in HK [pathway C1]. Alternatively, after HKMLE completion they may opt to work under limited registration (3 years duration) in their specialty [pathway C2].

### **Exemptions from HKMLE & limited registration**

At present and in the foreseeable near future, the shortage of doctors in HK has led the Hospital Authority (HA) board to offer Internationally qualified specialists (CCT) the right and opportunity of commencing work without HKMLE under a limited registration for a

period of 3 years, with the possibility of further extension. This effectively grants doctors with a 3-year timeframe to prepare for and pass the HKMLE in-situ whilst familiarising themselves with the HK system. On completion of this exam, all candidates will then complete the outstanding length of their contract and then obtain the full HK practicing licence [pathway D].

### Summary

Overall, the pathways for doctors to transfer from the UK to HK medical system may seem complicated, but with some careful consideration in understanding the such pathways (summarised by the flow chart provided below), it is relatively self-explanatory and we trust it would provide you with extra options in order for you to achieve your ambitions to become a fully qualified doctor in the HK system.





### Key phases

1 - **S** : School

2 - **MS** : Medical school (5-6 years)

3 - Foundation training :

a. **UKF** - UK Foundation training (2 years)

b. **HKF** - HK Pre-registration house officer (1 year)

4 - Speciality training :

a. **UKS** - UK Specialty training (5-6 years)

b. **HKS** - HK Speciality training (5-6 years)

5 - **CCT** : Certificate of Completion of training (e.g. consultant radiologist, surgeon, or GP)

### Key pathways

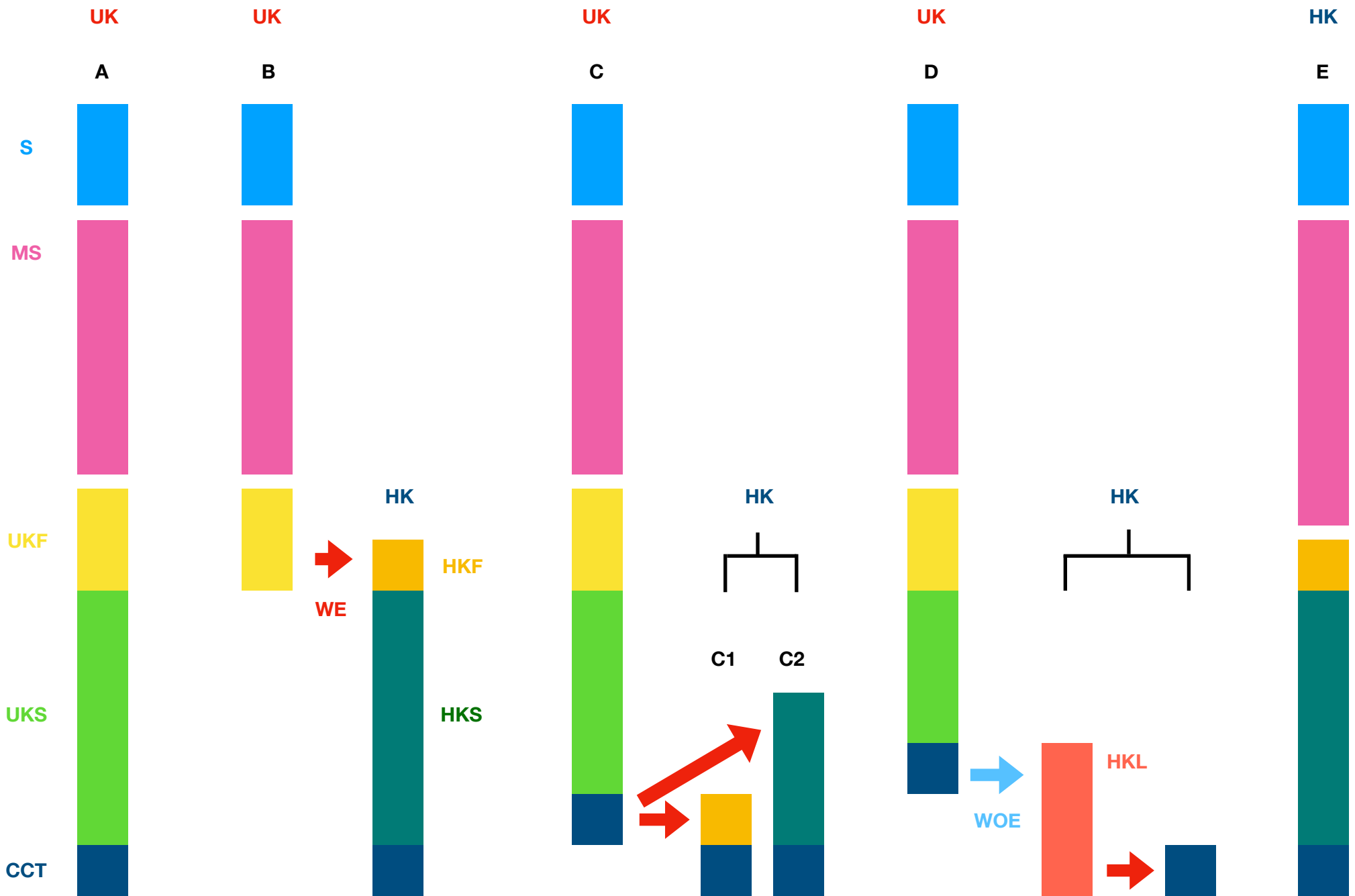
**A** - Full UK training up to CCT and remain in the UK

**B** - UK medical school and foundation training, followed by completion HKMLE then HK training to CCT

**C** - UK training until CCT followed by completion of HKMLE then HK practice

**D** - Transfer from UK practice to HK practice with limited registration without HKMLE; pending success in exam, transfer to HK practice

**E** - Full HK training up to CCT and remain in HK



Training Pathways Flowchart



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## KEY

**S** - School (DSE, AL, IB etc.)

**MS** - Medical school : 5-6 years

**UKF** - Foundation Training Year (UK) : 2 years

**HKF** - PRHO Pre-registration House Officer (HK) : 6-12 months

**UKS** - Core & Specialty Training (UK) : 5-6 years

**HKS** - Basic & Specialty Training (HK) : 5-6 years

**HKL** - HK limited registration : 3 years & renewable

**CCT** - Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT)

**WE** - Transfer to HK medical system with completion of HKMLE (licensing exam)

**WOE** - Transfer to HK limited registration without completion of HKMLE