



3 January 2022

The Rt. Hon. Mr Sajid Javid M.P,  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care,  
House of Commons,  
London SW1AOAA

By email to: [sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Mr Javid,

**Re: Sudden Cancellation of PLAB examination by GMC**

On behalf of medical associations representing BAME doctors working in the NHS, we would like to draw your urgent attention to the sudden cancellation of the Professional Linguistic and Assessment Board (PLAB) examination by the General Medical Council for January and February 2022. This has come in the background of surging numbers of positive cases with COVID-19. You may be aware that success in PLAB is the main route for entry into NHS training for these doctors, and that this issue had arisen in 2020 following the first lockdown. Many of the doctors during that period remain traumatised from that experience and we are desperately keen to seek your support in order to ensure that history is not repeated.

The current situation has impacted on more than 2500 doctors, a significant number of which have already arrived in the country.

This sudden decision without any prior warning results in candidates losing months of their valuable time, visa cancellations, financial and accommodation difficulties and the NHS in being deprived of hundreds of doctors who would have started working in August 2022. Not to mention the significant mental stress as well as the fact that these doctors are also not able to provide valuable medical services in the countries of their origin.

Unfortunately, new dates for sitting the exam will not be available for another six months at least.

This issue has created a catastrophic dilemma for a significant number of doctors who are stuck in UK and or have finalised their travel plans based on their visa expiry. These doctors are very much needed by the NHS here, given that we are now facing one of the most challenging times in healthcare, made worse by the acute shortages of doctors in this country. To have cancelled the

PLAB at short-notice is extremely unfortunate. However, to then cast them off without proper financial compensation risks significant reputational damage to the GMC internally, and to outside world, to the NHS.

As associations, we are ready to work with the GMC and Home Office to help this cohort but we expect all of them to be properly compensated for the issues related to their visas and all their out of pocket expenses. We would ask that you instruct the GMC to act on this matter with urgency so that these doctors are provided immediate support, and so that the GMC prioritises their PLAB exams at the earliest, and most certainly earlier than the six months that has been planned. We would further ask that you work with the Home Office in order to ensure that their visas are automatically extended for a period that is appropriate in these circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

1. Mr Shabi Ahmad (General Secretary APPNE)
2. Dr J. S. Bamrah (Chairman BAPIO)
3. Dr Jenny Vaughan (The Doctors Association – DAUK)
4. Mr. Ghulam Abbas (President APPSUK)
5. Mr Ibrahim Bolaji (Medical Association of Nigerians Across Great Britain, MANSAG)
6. Dr Ezzeldin Rahman (Sudanese Doctors Union UK )
7. Mr Amit Sinha (General Secretary, BIDA)

CC:

1. Mr Charlie Massey, CEO GMC
2. Rt Hon Ms. Priti Patel, Secretary of State for Home Affairs
3. The National Press