



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PROGRESSIVE INTERGRATED PLAN FOR PLACEMENT AND
APPOINTMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO GRADUATED FROM
SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING INTO
ACCREDITED MEDICAL INTERNSHIP POSTS IN PROVINCIAL
HOSPITALS FOR ANNUAL 2020 CYCLE**

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Table of contents:

1. Background	3 - 5
2. Scope	5 - 5
3. Legal and Policy Framework	5 - 6
4. Plan	6 - 9

PROGRESSIVE INTERGRATED PLAN FOR PLACEMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO GRADUATED FROM SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING INTO ACCREDITED MEDICAL INTERNSHIP POSTS IN PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS FOR ANNUAL 2020 CYCLE

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Medical Students who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning are required to perform a statutory medical internship for a period of two-years in an accredited medical internship posts in a pre-determined health facility by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) after completing an MBChB Qualification.
- 1.2 South Africa's GDP Growth forecast for 2019 has been revised to 1.5 percent, from an estimated 1.7 percent at the time of the 2018 MTBPS. The weaker outlook projects a slow improvement in production and employment following poor investment growth in 2018, and a moderation in global trade and investment. The medium-term outlook is subdued, with GDP growth projected to reach 2.1 percent in 2021, supported by a gradual improvement in confidence, more effective public infrastructure spending, and a better commodity price outlook than previously assumed.
- 1.3 In the 2019 Budget Speech, Government announced the following for the Health Sector: Health, we need simple, effective interventions. We need more doctors and nurses. R2.8 billion has been re-prioritised to a new Human Resources grant and R1 billion for medical interns. R1 billion has been added to raise the wages of Community Health Care workers to R3 500.00 per month. Finally, about R319 million is allocated to eliminate Malaria in South Africa.
- 1.4 The National Department of Health (NDOH) and its Provinces operate in a very narrow fiscal space. Treasury guidelines suggest that National and Provincial Departments have to shed 5%, 6% and 7% over the next three financial years i.e. the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, respectively. The real impact of effected cuts will be clear in 2020. The indicative allocation for the

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2020/21 MTEF for NDOH alone shows a reduction of R3,9 billion over the MTEF. The reduction in budget allocation for the coming financial year (2020/21) is R1,2 billion. This cut on the back of current budget shortfalls will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible for the sector to accept further demands on its overburdened financial resources for the foreseeable future.

- 1.5 Further to the above-mentioned developments, the NDOH developed a medical internship and community service placement guidelines in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The guidelines seek to prioritise the placement of medical internship and community service within the limited available resources prioritising South African Citizens over non-South African Citizens. The placement prioritisation was further strengthened as follows: 1. South African Citizens; 2. Permanent Residents; 3. Foreign Nationals: 3.1 Refugees; 3.2 Work Permit Holders; 3.2.1 Spousal/Relative Visas; and 3.2.2 Study Permits.
- 1.6 For placement of 2018 (applied during 2017), there were only 1426 available posts against 1588 applicants (i.e. South Africans 1499; Foreign Nationals 89). The allocation was as follows within the limited resources: Total allocation 1426 (i.e. SA=1405 Foreign Nationals =21). The remaining unallocated 68 foreign nationals had to apply in the following Cycle for 2019 because there were simply not enough posts.
- 1.7 For placement of 2019 (applied during 2018), there were 1578 posts available posts against 1846 applicants (South Africans 1633, Permanent Residents 42, Refugees 49, other Foreign Nationals 122). The allocation was as follows within the limited resources (South Africans =1554; Permanent Residents =21 and Foreign Nationals =3). A total of the 171 foreign nationals were not allocated (i.e. Refugees = 49 plus 122 Foreign Nationals) as there were not enough posts. Due to non-allocation status for Foreign Nationals, 49 Refugees took the NDOH to court in 2018 demanding to be allocated medical internship posts.

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- 1.8 In order to address these many challenges, the matter was referred back to the National Health Council (NHC) on 5 December 2019 to approve a proposed Progressive Integrated Plan to place non-South Africans Citizens who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning and are wishing to undertake medical internship in South Africa.
- 1.9 During the National Health Council deliberations it was noted that the responsibility to accredit medical internship posts falls within the prerogative of HPCSA and not within the jurisdiction of the NDOH. Whilst there are currently 170 medical internship posts accredited, it remains the responsibility of the NDOH to source funding for medical internship posts. However, the abovementioned fiscal predicament has made this unattainable.
- 1.10 Whilst current unfunded posts (170) have been made available for the 2020 year in order to absorb non-South African Citizen applicants, it is emphasised that this number will not in the future be guaranteed as it will be dependent on future availability of posts and financial resources.
- 1.11 Accordingly, the National Health Council (NHC) has resolved as follows:

2. SCOPE

This Progressive Integrated Plan is applicable to non-South African citizens (i.e. Asylum Seekers, Refugees other categories of non- South African citizens) who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning wishing to complete medical internship in South Africa at accredited HPCSA posts that allow them to register as medical doctors with HPCSA.

3. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This Progressive Integrated Plan, is based on the following legal and policy framework:

- 3.1 The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951);

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- 3.2 The UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967);
- 3.3 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969);
- 3.4 The Universal Declaration of the Human Rights as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 15 December 1948;
- 3.5 Basic Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 6 September 1993;
- 3.7 Refugee Appeal Board Rules 2003 (as amended in 2011);
- 3.8 The Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974);
- 3.9 The National Health Act. 2003 (61 of 2003);
- 3.10 The South African Citizen Act, 1995 (Act 88 of 1995);
- 3.11 The Immigration Act, 2002 (Act 13 of 2002);
- 3.12 Refugees Act, 1988 (Act 130 of 1988); and
- 3.13 Refugee Regulations (2000).

4. PLAN

Internship

- 4.1 Medical Internship is required for medical students upon successful completion of a medical degree (MBChB) in a South African Institution of Higher Learning and

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meeting the requirements as prescribed by Section 24 of the Health Professions Act. Applicants must undertake an internship programme as provided for in Section 61 of the Act and associated regulations relating to the registration and training of interns in medicine. The internship programme must be fulfilled for the prescribed minimum period at a health facility accredited by the HPCSA.

- 4.2 The terms of the training programme and the duration are determined by the HPCSA that regulates the profession.

Internship post

- 4.3 Due to limited resources there will be two types of medical internship posts. Both the posts will be accredited by HPCSA:

4.4.1 South African Government Funded Medical Internship Post: These posts will only be reserved for South African Citizens and Permanent Residents. The Government of South Africa will be responsible for funding of these posts and such funding will be approved prior to the placement of an incumbent into the post. Proof of such funding must be recorded on the file.

4.4.2 Self-funded Medical Internship Post: These posts will only be reserved for non-South African Citizens who are Asylum Seekers (who can prove that Department of Home Affairs has guaranteed their stay in South Africa for more than two years before commencing with Internship); Refugees who hold work and study permits and who can provide proof that they are allowed to be in South Africa for at least a period of two-years prior to their commencement of medical internship. Individual applicants as mentioned above must first secure funding for an accredited medical internship post by a sponsor, which may include their Country of Origin. Funding or sponsorship must be secured and approved prior to placement of applicants. Such funding for a respective post and proof thereof must be recorded on the file.

PROGRESSIVE INTERGRATED PLAN FOR PLACEMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO GRADUATED FROM SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING INTO ACCREDITED MEDICAL INTERNSHIP POSTS IN PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS FOR ANNUAL 2020 CYCLE

- 4.5 It is emphasised that due to limited resources, internship posts cannot be guaranteed, and are offered to all applicants in accordance with the approved internship and community service policy guideline that provides prioritisation of medical intern posts to South African Citizens in line with the Immigration Act of 2002. This means that non-South African Citizens will be placed subject to available resources once all South African Citizens and Permanent Residents who studied at South African Universities have been placed.
- 4.6 To facilitate that non-South African Citizens who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning can complete their medical studies and make them eligible to register as medical doctors, the self-funding model described in paragraph 4.4.2 above will be implemented with effect from 1 January 2020:
- 4.6.1 Asylum Seekers:- Asylum seekers have not yet been granted permission to stay longer than a period of six months in South Africa. It is therefore imperative for an Asylum Seekers to first provide proof that they have been granted permission to be in South Africa for a period of at least two-years prior to being placed in a medical intern post. The NDOH will be able to process their applications as medical interns and place them in HPCSA accredited posts in health facilities only as self-funded medical interns for the two-year internship programme, subject to availability of posts. This self-funding method is not limited to self-funding and includes sponsorships.
- 4.6.2 Due to limited resources, the Refugees who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning who wish to complete their medical internship in South Africa will have their applications processed as medical interns and be placed in HPCSA accredited posts in health facilities only as self-funded medical interns for the two-year internship programme. This self-funding method is not limited to self-funding and includes sponsorships.

PROGRESSIVE INTERGRATED PLAN FOR PLACEMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WHO GRADUATED FROM SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING INTO ACCREDITED MEDICAL INTERNSHIP POSTS IN PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS FOR ANNUAL 2020 CYCLE

- 4.6.3 Non-South African Citizens who are funded by their own Government (i.e. Country of Origin) who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning who wish to complete their medical internship in South Africa and supported by their Government: The NDOH will be able to process these applicants for medical internship and place them in HPCSA accredited posts in health facilities provided that their Government has agreed to continue funding them to complete their internship in South African health facilities.
- 4.6.4 Non-South African Citizens with study and work visas permits in South Africa who studied in South African Institutions of Higher Learning and wish to complete their medical internship in South Africa: The NDOH will be able to process these applicants for medical interns and place them in self-funded HPCSA accredited posts in health facilities provided that they secure funding from other sources including from their own Government (Country of Origin) for the duration of the medical internship.