



Improving Selection to the Foundation Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this review being carried out when the current system appears to work well and most people get their first choice?

Some concerns were raised about the current system, including:

- Candidates answer white space questions in their own time, which makes it harder to ensure that the work is their own
- Marking the answers to white space questions is labour intensive and costly – with much Consultant time away from service

To address this, the Department of Health commissioned a Project Group to review methods of selection into the Foundation Programme.

What is being proposed?

After considering all the evidence the following recommendations were made:

- To pilot two new selection methods:
 - Educational Performance Measure (EPM) - to evolve from the current quartile rankings
 - Situational Judgement Test (SJT) – to replace the current white space questions
- To continue with the current method of selection unless piloting of the proposed new method demonstrates substantial and convincing evidence for change

What is an Educational Performance Measurement (EPM)?

A common framework based primarily on the results of assessments of applied knowledge and clinical skills. This will be more robust than quartiles with all schools providing scores to a standard specification. This may include separate scores for clinical skills and written knowledge based on performance throughout medical school.

What is a Situational Judgement Test (SJT)?

An invigilated assessment which will assess professional judgement and likely behaviours expected of the Foundation Doctor. All applicants will undergo an assessment comprised of multiple choice questions which may have more than one correct answer and will be based on the complex situations encountered in foundation training.

Are SJTs used in other areas of medical recruitment?

SJTs are currently used in the selection process for GPs, and they are being piloted for selection into other specialty training posts. It is proposed that the SJT will be delivered by medical schools in the UK on a minimum of two dates to allow for electives and unavoidable absence.

How will EPM be scored?

The EPM score will be combined with the SJT scores to give an overall mark which will be used for selection.

How will EPM and SJT be weighted?

The weightings of the EPM and SJT scores have yet to be decided. Independent experts will be commissioned later in the year to offer advice on the best way to do this. More information will be posted on the [ISFP website](#) when this has been confirmed.

How much time will need to be spent revising for the Situational Judgement Test?

There is no need to revise for this test.

How will the new system be fairer?

The SJT test will be taken under invigilated conditions and so it will be entirely the candidate's own work. The assessments used to calculate the EPM score will be based on a common framework which will be used by all UK medical schools. This will ensure each student is assessed in exactly the same way.

When will the pilots be carried out and what - and who will be involved?

SJT pilots will take place over the next 18 months and will look at how effective they are in selecting the best applicants.

A small number of medical schools (2-3 schools) will be involved in a small scale pilot in October 2010. The results from this pilot will be analysed and the outcomes will help inform a larger pilot (8-10 schools) which will run in spring 2011.

Those involved in the pilot will undertake an invigilated test where they will answer approximately 60 SJT questions. It is anticipated this will last for 2 hours.

Which medical schools will be involved in the pilots?

The medical schools that will participate in the pilots have yet to be confirmed. Once this has been agreed, students at each of the medical schools will be informed and information will be posted on the [ISFP website](#). We hope that all final year medical students at those schools involved in the pilots will volunteer to take part.

How do I get involved in the pilots?

Only final year students will be eligible to take part in the pilots. If your medical school agrees to take part in the pilots and you are a final year medical student you will be sent information on when the pilot will take place and what you need to do in order to take part.

Unfortunately, if you are not a final year medical student or your medical school does not volunteer to pilot SJTs you will be unable to take part in any pilots at this stage. However, some sample questions will be available on the ISFP website for those who are unable to take part.

Are the pilots compulsory?

No. If your medical school agrees to pilot SJTs you are under no obligation to take part. But the more students who do take part, the more reliable the findings of the pilots will be.

Are there any benefits in taking part in a pilot?

SJTs are being used more and more for selection into specialty training and it would be beneficial for you to gain early experience of answering these types of questions and to familiarise yourself with the type of assessment you may be required to undertake in a few year's time. You will also have the benefit of knowing that you have helped inform the future selection of doctors.

When will this be implemented?

The proposed new method will be robustly piloted. The new system will only be implemented if the pilots demonstrate substantial evidence that the EPM and SJT are an improvement on the current system and are proven to be a reliable selection method.

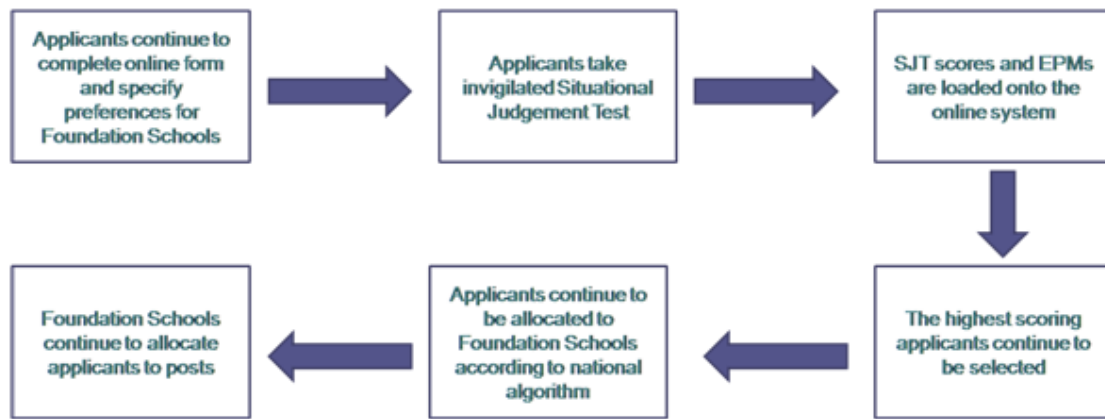
If piloting is successful implementation will be in the 2012/2013 application round. No changes will be made unless there is evidence that this is the best way forward.

How will selection be managed in the meantime?

The 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 recruitment rounds will run as normal using the current system of white space questions and academic quartiles. Pilots will be run over this period at certain medical schools across the UK but will not affect these recruitment rounds in any way.

Will the new selection method affect how I will be allocated to my Foundation School?

Any new system involving EPM and SJT will not affect the way you are currently allocated to your Foundation School. Applicants will continue to complete the online form stating Foundation School preferences. The highest scoring applicants will continue to be allocated to their first choice Foundation School using a matching algorithm and the Foundation Schools will continue to match applicants with vacancies within the school. This is demonstrated in the diagram below:



How can I find out more about the pilots and updates on the project?

We will be sending any relevant information updates to you in a number of different ways:

- Newsletter: This will be sent out quarterly. For information on how to sign up to the newsletter please visit the [ISFP website](#)
- ISFP website: The latest information including updates on the pilot, final reports and how the proposed system will work will be available here. Comments or questions can be posted on the discussion forum and we aim to respond within three working days
- Facebook: Regular updates will be posted on the Improving Selection to the Foundation Programme Facebook group and an email will be sent to members when there is an important announcement
- Email: Emails outlining important information will be sent to you via your medical school secretary or your Head or Dean of the medical school so keep an eye out for these in your inbox
- E-bulletin: Information may be sent via the [UKFPO](#) and BMA Medical Students Committee (BMA MSC) e-bulletins
- Intranet/newsletters: Each medical school will be asked to post information on the project on the intranet and in any newsletters that your medical school produces
- Podcast: A video podcast will be produced which will outline the most important points for you and will be available summer 2010
- Medical School Press: Information updates will be provided to both the Student BMA News and the Student BMJ

What is the website address for the project?

The ISFP website can be accessed at: www.isfp.org.uk. The website contains all information on the project from the final reports of the option appraisal, to information on the pilots and the Project Group. Any information updates will be posted on this website. You can sign up for RSS feeds on any of the pages to ensure you do not miss any updates.

How are the views of medical students being taken into account?

Nick Deakin, Co-Chair of the British Medical Association Medical Students Committee (BMA MSC), is a member of the Project Group representing the medical student body.

The BMA MSC is consulting with its current student members on the system, and with the wider student population.

The UKFPO is also a member of the Project Group and is representing students via the Medical Students Board. Updates on the project are provided at every UKFPO Medical Students Board.

In addition to this, medical students can communicate their views via the [Improving Selection to the Foundation Programme Facebook Group](#) and the [discussion forum](#) on the ISFP website. Any comments posted on either Facebook or the discussion forum will be fed back to the Project Group and will be considered when making any final decisions.

How will this affect international applicants?

EU applicants will be involved in the pilots. Trinity Dublin has agreed to pilot both the SJT and EPM. If the system is adopted international applicants will have to come to the UK to take the SJT. We will also be working with the Academy of Medical Education Europe of the proposed changes in order to help inform schools in Europe to understand these changes.

More information

If you would like project updates as they happen or would like more information on the pilots sign up to our e-bulletin.

You can also join us on [Facebook](#) for regular project updates.