

North West of England School of Foundation Training

Frequently Asked Questions:

Specialised Foundation Programme Recruitment

(v1.0)

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North West of England Foundation School

Frequently Asked Questions – Specialised Foundation Programme Recruitment

This document highlights a range of key SFP recruitment questions that we often get asked here at the North West of England Foundation School. We advise applicants to read this document thoroughly, as well as reviewing the list of SFP related FAQ's published on the [UK Foundation Programme Office website](#) **before** contacting the foundation school.

Section 1:

Considering SFP Research specialties not offered directly

- i) **I'm interested in a speciality that is not offered directly at my preferred SFP trust. Is there any flexibility to allow the possibility of undertaking a research project in this specialty during my four-month academic placement if I can find a willing academic supervisor?**

Our academic employing trusts will try their best to accommodate personal requests that address peoples research interests. There tends to be some flexibility on the research topic pursued, as long as there is a suitable academic supervisor to support this. Most research placements tend to be focused towards the clinical element within the specific training programme (track) in the first instance, so topic projects will usually be tilted towards these in some way.

For example, a doctor assigned to an Infectious Diseases or Paediatrics related placement declaring an additional interest in neurology, within an Infectious Diseases context this could link to a project on encephalitis research in adults or if it's an academic paediatrics placement, epilepsy in children.

However, we do recommend you speak to each SFP trust you are interested in on an independent basis as there may be some variation with this rule. Some sites may offer differing levels of flexibility to others.

New SFP doctors will have time in their FY1 year to plan their projects with their academic supervisor to ensure they are up and running in time for their FY2 placement.

If applicants require further information, please first off read the supporting documents for each academic training programme uploaded to the foundation school webpage under the [Where to find additional information on our SFP trusts/programmes](#) section.

ii) **Is there any flexibility or degree of choice with my allocation of academic / clinical supervisor?**

Allocation of supervisors is co-ordinated by the employer and not the foundation school. The academic supervisor that SFP doctors are given will likely have consultancy background in the specific linked research speciality present on their allocated academic training programme.

For trusts that do not have a pre-specified specialty shown in the research block and supervisor already linked to it (for example Manchester University - Wythenshawe and Salford Royal which offers all three academic pathways - Research, Leadership or Education) once doctors have chosen their discipline, they are then linked by the employer to the appropriate network and an appropriate supervisor within it.

Supervisor details and contact information can be found in the supporting documents linked within the [Where to find additional information on our SFP trusts/programmes](#) section.

Section 2:

SFP Oriel Application Specific FAQ's

i) **Can I alter my SFP preferences on Oriel after the 4th October 2023 application deadline?**

Yes. At the time of writing, the deadline is 13th October 2023, 12:00 noon. Please make any alterations well in advance of this date and check the UKFPO website for confirmation of any amendments to the deadline.

ii) **How do I amend my referee details on Oriel?**

Referee details can be amended prior to the closing date or until the reference has been returned. To amend referee details, applicants must access this information through the FP vacancy. Applicants are not required to provide referee information in the SFP application.

iii) **Do you accept pre-prepared CV's and portfolio's as part of my application?**

No, all elements of your application need to be typed into the structured online form within Oriel.

Section 3:

SFP Longlisting, Shortlisting and Scoring Related FAQ's

i) **Is my EPM decile score used to identify those who will be invited to interview?**

No. For 2024 recruitment the decile has been removed for longlisting, shortlisting and interviews.

ii) **What score is generally required to obtain an interview as I am worried about the emphasis on additional Educational Achievements and how competitive this may be?**

As seen in previous recruitment processes in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 (for example) a total application score of approximately 45% was required to secure an invite to interview. The total application score is a combination of the scores from white space questions and the additional Educational Achievements.

This approximate threshold is always subject to change each year and may not bear any reflection on the upcoming recruitment process.

An invite to interview is not a guarantee that you will receive an SFP offer after the interview. The North West of England Foundation School will not acknowledge applicant requests for live scoring estimations during the SFP 2024 recruitment process.

iii) **What are the competition ratios prior to and following the interview?**

The application processes for over the past several years has seen an approximate ratio of 2.5:1 of applicants being shortlisted for interview, followed by a further 2.5:1 of interviewees being offered one of our 63 SFP posts.

These ratios are subject to change each year and we will not be in the position to divulge the number of applicants for the SFP 2024 process.

iv) **Can you tell me the exact allocation of points within the marking structure at shortlisting stage i.e. what each level of presentation, publication scores etc?**

Aside from the shortlisting criteria published on our website, we are not able to divulge any further detail as this information is only shared with those involved with facilitating the local shortlisting process.

However, generally with any assessment process, the more relevant, significant and stronger the item, the higher the score will be.

v) **What method do you use to short list?**

The North West of England Foundation School runs a volunteer led shortlisting event in the October / November of each recruiting period.

vi) **Do you use horizontal or vertical shortlisting?**

For our local processes in the North West we use vertical shortlisting.

vii) **I have not received an Invite to Interview. What happens next?**

If you do not receive an interview invite, your application status on Oriel will change to one of the following:

'Shortlist Reserve' meaning that you have been placed on a reserve list for invite to interview.

'Shortlist Unsuccessful' meaning that you have scored below the threshold to be placed on the shortlist reserve.

A 'Shortlist Reserve' Oriel status does not guarantee that you will receive an invite to interview. This is dependent on other applicants invited to interview withdrawing from the recruitment process and where you are ranked within the shortlist reserve list.

The foundation school will not be able to divulge where applicants have individually ranked until the 12th January 2024, when applicant rankings will be released on Oriel.

viii) **I was not invited to interview, therefore can I please request my application score and feedback early?**

No. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of applications we are not able to give individualised feedback on shortlisting scores.

Section 4:

SFP Interview and Scoring Related FAQ's

- i) **I see that you are offering virtual interviews. Therefore, can any exceptions be made as I will not be able to attend on the interview date?**

No. Unfortunately if you are unable to attend the online interview in person, there will be no alternative dates on offer and your SFP application will not be progressed any further in the recruitment process. All panel members have been trained and briefed and it will not be possible to reconvene the panel to carry out individual interviews.

- ii) **I have found out that I need to be elsewhere on the morning/afternoon of the interview date. How do I arrange my interview time so I can still attend?**

All interview booking is handled using an online self-service booking system on Oriel. You will be able to book specific time slots (tbc) at 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 14:00, 15:00 and 16:00 GMT. Places are limited and capped at each time slot and are filled on a first-come first-served basis, so we recommend that if the interview time is an issue, that this booking is made as soon as possible.

- iii) **I do not have an internet connection – can I join the interview by telephone?**

All interviews will be completed by video conferencing – we do not allow any candidates to join via the telephone so please ensure that you can access the online video conference platform before the day of the interview and that you have a good connection. If your connection is so poor the panel cannot hear your answers your interview will be terminated. In exceptional circumstances the panel may offer you another interview slot, but this cannot be guaranteed so it is vital you ensure your internet connection is sufficient.

- iv) **How long are the intended interview slots?**

At the interviews there are two interview stations, each allocated 15 minutes each. *Please note the formatting of these slots is subject to change as we are still developing the format for 2024 recruitment.*

(30 minutes total interview time from start to finish, including rotation periods).

- v) **What interview questions and/or stations do you use?**

Face to face interview stations. Questions focus on clinical scenarios, interpretation of information and career aspirations.

- vi) **Do you use presentations or other methods?**

No presentations will be required at the interviews.

vii) **How many interviewers are there typically, per panel?**

Two per interview station panel (minimum).

viii) **Do I need to bring a portfolio with me to the interview?**

You do not need to bring a portfolio with you to the interview. Any achievements will be captured within the SFP application at shortlisting stage.

ix) **What is the interview scoring criteria? What is your tie breaker system?**

Criteria supports answers made with depth, awareness and relevance to the questions being asked. Tie breaking system (if required) is manually implemented when scoring collated.

x) **Are the white space questions and additional EA scores from SFP Shortlisting no longer considered after the SFP Interviews?**

Yes, this is correct. The scores obtained at interview are added together to create an SUoA score. The SFP match ranking score is the score used by Oriel to identify final SFP offers.

Section 5:

SFP Offer Related FAQ's

- i) **Is the rota contained within my SFP offer on Oriel the exact order that I will be working it?**

Not necessarily. The HR / postgraduate education team at the employing hospital trust will arrange the order of the rotation for each doctor, once the SFP application process has been completed. Doctors on the same track cannot do all their academic placements at the same time. The foundation school is not involved with this part of the process and any queries related to rotation orders should be directed to the employer Postgraduate Administrator / Foundation Administrator using the contact information [here](#).

- ii) **How does the matching process work for SFP offers?**

The matching process is completed using an online algorithm within Oriel. SFP applicants to the North West of England Foundation School will be ranked in SFP match ranking score order (highest to lowest) and matched in score order to their highest SFP preference that is still available.

A unique ranking on Oriel will be generated in order for applicants to be matched successfully to SFP programmes. This is to prevent the system from randomly allocating if the shortlist management scores become tied. Tie breaks are pre-set within Oriel to ensure each applicant is given a unique position.

If an applicant does not rank all of the programme preferences available to them and none of their stated preferences are available when it is their turn to be matched, they will not receive an offer. The Oriel algorithm will then add the next highest scoring applicant to the list of applicants to receive initial SFP offers.

SFP Offers will be made online via Oriel and allocations will be made using the Oriel algorithm and not manually actioned by the foundation school.

- iii) **I have received an SFP offer on Oriel. Do I have to accept it?**

Applicants must accept the SFP offer that is given to them or decline the offer. Applicants declining an offer will not be reconsidered during the cascade (reserve) allocation process and their SFP application will be automatically withdrawn on Oriel. The applicant will then be included in the Foundation Programme (FP) allocation process.

If an applicant accepts the SFP offer, but then decides to withdraw from the accepted offer at a later stage, they will also be withdrawn from the national allocation process to FP. This will mean the applicant will be unable to re-apply until the next national recruitment process the following year.

- iv) **I have just received my SFP offer but I have been speaking to my friend who has also been allocated to the same trust and we have decided that we'd like to swap our offers. Is this possible?**

Swaps are not permitted under any circumstances by the foundation school, employer or UKFPO. If you do not wish to accept your offer you will need to decline it.

- v) **Do I have to complete my four-month academic placement between the dates specified to me by the employer?**

Yes. There is no flexibility to undertake your SFP placement at any other time outside the dates / rotation you have been allocated. Doctors allocated to a track cannot all undertake their SFP placement at the same time.

Can we help you with anything else?

Further SFP related FAQ's are available on the [UK Foundation Programme Office website](#).

For any other queries relating to the national or local SFP process that are not covered on this document or the UKFPO page, please send an email to foundation.nw@hee.nhs.uk

The North West of England Foundation School wants to ensure that applicants have access to the most up to date and accurate information. As the recruitment period is a very busy time here at the school, any queries that are directed to us for which the answer can be found here, in the FP/SFP Applicants Handbook or the UKFPO website may not be prioritised.

We wish everyone the very best of luck with their SFP applications.

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Document Control	
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