



DOccMed Toolkit

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SOM welcomes all health professionals interested in occupational health as a member.

Benefits include:

- Monthly e-bulletins, free webinars, mentoring (at <https://ohcareers.info/>), a free legal helpline, peer support & access to regional group meetings
- The *Occupational Medicine* journal 9x a year - an international peer-reviewed publication, which provides up to date research and information.
- Access to medical appraisals & indemnity insurance for occupational medicine doctors
- Free appraisal toolkit & access to professional indemnity insurance for occupational health nurses
- Career support, with regular job adverts, an annual careers fair and CPD opportunities
- Campaigning and advocacy for occupational health & medicine
- Money-saving discounts

Conferences are useful for **staying up to date** with new research and industry trends. They are advertised on the SOM website under events. SOM can also provide guidance on finding **work experience** and **shadowing** and do take a look at <https://www.som.org.uk/careers> for information about careers events, courses and training.

1 Introduction to the SOM Toolkit for Diploma Doctors

by Dr Lanre Ogunyemi, SOM President

Working in occupational medicine offers a unique and rewarding opportunity to bridge the gap between healthcare and the workplace. It is a specialty unlike any other, focusing on an advisory role that supports individuals, organisations, and workforces in managing work-related and general health issues. This work not only benefits employees but also contributes to the success and sustainability of businesses and communities.

The Diploma in Occupational Medicine (DOccMed) is a vital stepping stone for medical practitioners who are either exploring occupational medicine or enhancing their practice by incorporating it. It is particularly popular among general practitioners (GPs) who wish to expand their portfolio by offering occupational health services to local companies. These practitioners play a pivotal role as the first point of contact for employees experiencing illness or suspected work-related conditions, supporting them to stay in work or return to work as part of a broader societal benefit.

The Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) and the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) are committed to supporting professionals pursuing occupational medicine qualifications, guidance, and education. To achieve the DOccMed certification, candidates must complete an approved training course and successfully pass both the MCQ and oral portfolio assessments within five years. Thousands of GPs across the UK have taken this step, equipping themselves with the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality occupational health care.

As the professional organisation representing occupational health practitioners, SOM welcomes all health professionals interested in this vital field. Membership provides access to numerous benefits, including:

- Professional development resources like free webinars, mentoring, and peer support.
- Tools such as the free appraisal toolkit and access to indemnity insurance.
- Networking and career support, including job adverts, careers fairs, and CPD opportunities.
- Advocacy for occupational health and medicine through campaigns and policy work.
- Updates on cutting-edge research through the *Occupational Medicine* journal and SOM events.

This toolkit has been specifically designed to guide and assist diploma doctors, offering practical advice, resources, and insight into key aspects of occupational medicine. Whether you are new to the field or looking to deepen your expertise, this toolkit will serve as a valuable companion on your professional journey.

SOM remains dedicated to supporting its members in making a meaningful impact on workplace health and well-being. Together, we can promote a healthier, more productive workforce and champion the essential role of occupational health in society.

Join at:



www.som.org.uk

or email at



membership@som.org.uk

2 Getting Started in Occupational Health:

Build your professional relationships e.g.

- Link or working with an **occupational health company** as an independent contractor working for the company or join as an employee. Look on the find an Occupational health provider for companies.
- Use **SOM regional and special interest groups** to network with closely related colleagues.



Roles in occupational health post-diploma include:

- **Occupational Medicine doctor**
- **Occupational health nurse** - focuses on health promotion and employee wellbeing, including ensuring healthy working practices and providing basic healthcare screening.
- **Occupational health advisor** - this role requires a postgraduate qualification in occupational health, such as a degree or diploma, and other skills including presentation, teaching, and training.
- **Occupational hygiene** - Also known as industrial hygiene, this involves helping employers understand how health hazards affect workers and advising on how to protect them.
- **Toxicologist** - studies the adverse effects of chemicals, substances, radiation, and materials on the human body, animals, and the environment

What are recruiters looking for?

A **CV** that highlights your **education, career history**, and any **Occupational Health experience**, such as shadowing. Have you tailored your CV to emphasise relevant OH skills and experiences? Is your CV concise and easy to read?

Be prompt and responsive in communications, such as emails, especially when arranging interviews. Have you confirmed the interview details and any necessary documents? Are you prepared to follow up if needed?

At the interview:

Be Prepped - Research the company thoroughly and show interest in joining the organisation. What do you know about their values or services? How does their approach align with your professional goals?

Demonstrate your CPD - Show your commitment to Occupational Health (OH). Have you been reading articles from the SOM? How would you answer the question, "What's currently topical in Occupational Health?"

Highlight your OH Experience. Have you done any shadowing or spoken with other OH doctors? Have you joined groups with others interested in OH? What did you learn from your diploma case study? What aspects of OH interest you, and what are your long-term goals?

Explain your current role - Consider what tasks in your current role relate to OH. For instance, do you... Write reports? Work to deadlines. Have a solid understanding of how the Equality Act applies to OH? Think about how you would structure an **OH report**. When would you seek input from others? How would you manage a complex case?

Team Player How do you support your colleagues? Do you proactively share knowledge or offer assistance when needed? How would you collaborate with multidisciplinary teams, such as HR or physiotherapists, to ensure a comprehensive approach to cases.

3 Supervision and Clinical Governance:

Clinical governance covers activities that help to maintain and improve the quality of patient care. It includes quality assurance, quality improvement, and risk and incident management.

Clinical supervision is a formal process that provides professional support and learning for practitioners. It is a non-judgemental way for practitioners to develop their skills and keep up with the latest developments in care.

Clinical governance frameworks include:

- A focus on quality.
- Implementation of evidence-based practice.
- Input to the research-and-development agenda.
- Taking the lead in monitoring and delivery of the quality of care.

Clinical supervision can be conducted in group, one-to-one, or peer supervision. These meetings vary, but can look like:

- An individual presenting a predetermined topic.
- An individual presenting a personal development topic.
- The group discussing issues raised from an audit of practice.
- The group discussing a clinical case and how care can be improved.

Linking the clinical governance and the clinical supervision:

To engage in clinical supervision, as part of the clinical governance framework organisations will need to:

- Encourage a culture of openness and honesty.
- Encourage multidisciplinary working.
- Ensure that staffing levels create an opportunity to manage change effectively.
- Provide support mechanisms that are useful and used by staff.
- Encourage staff involvement in decision-making.
- Provide staff appraisal systems that work.
- Develop open lines of communication and access to information.

If you are joining an OH company this will be provided

Setting up on your own may require SEQOHS accreditation and you will need to team up with someone else who can help you.

4 Case Study

Case study – Dr Iain Kennedy GP (add photo?)

“I believe having the DOccMed has made me a better GP. And being a GP (of the self-employed, independent contractor variety - with employees) has given me experience of the commoner clinical and employment scenarios I am presented with in occupational medicine. Our attached medical students from Aberdeen University also get a taster of what it is like to have a portfolio career.

The DOccMed has opened a number of avenues beyond routine NHS work, which makes my professional life as a doctor varied and more interesting. I have been an Approved Doctor with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for 19 years, doing health surveillance medicals for merchant seafarers. I also provide independent medical assessments for the motor car repairs industry, and Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

assessments - for workers in the electric power sector, and for whisky distillery workers. I work one half day in occupational medicine per week, and another GP in my practice works two half days. The fees companies typically pay are reasonable, and enough to keep other GPs in the partnership sweet.

This year (2024) I am undertaking online training via the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh followed by a course in Plymouth next year to become an 'Approved Medical Adviser of Divers' (AMED). Early in 2025 I am embarking upon training at King's College London on the Basic Course in Aviation Medicine (BCAM) as I begin the process to become an 'Aeromedical Adviser' (AME)."¹

5 Setting Up Your Practice:

Step 1. Do you want to work on your own either as a limited company or as a self-employed (sole trader) or if you want to build a larger practice? If the latter is the case, you may want to consider a business partner – someone who understands how to write a business plan and how to write a tender and also consider working closely with another occupational physician perhaps as a partner (so that you can have holidays without letting your clients down!).

Step 2. Consider how you will gain some clients – self-advertise or focus on building strong reputations within the sector. You can consider networking via the SOM and FOM as an effective way of developing your profile and gaining clients. You can also advertise by posting regularly on LinkedIn about the topics which most interest you to raise your profile.

Step 3. Give your business a name, develop a website, get a business bank account and a reputable accountant – preferably one who understands your business or one in a large practice with partners with a broad understanding of tax issues as specifically pertaining to occupational medicine. This can include IR35, which you should understand if you are working as a subcontractor, or VAT which may apply to some but not necessarily to all areas of your work.

Step 4. Be aware of pitfalls such as client expectations which do not match your own. Many clients do not have a clear understanding of the role of occupational health and having a clear written contract will be helpful in making clear what you are and what you are not able to offer. Have specific KPIs (key performance indicators) which cover time from referral to appointment, time from appointment to receipt of management report, feedback on health surveillance. You may wish to include an ethics clause or at least to discuss the ethical issues around occupational medicine with your client before you start to work for them.

Step 5. Have a diverse portfolio. The value of not having all your eggs in one basket cannot be over-estimated. Even if you specialise in one area, try as much as possible to diversify so that if there are difficulties in one area (such as banking or aviation) your business will survive. Having some public clients such as local NHS hospitals or local government will be helpful.

Step 6. Consider finding a mentor – this could be your appraiser or another senior person in the business who can guide you. SOM hosts a mentoring site at <https://ohcareers.info/>

Step 7. Consider issues such as GDPR – should you be registered with the information commissioner's office? Should you be using your own secure online OH system?

¹ <https://www.som.org.uk/dr-iain-kennedy-gp>

Step 8. SEQOHS/industry kite marks such as ISO. Tend to be expensive but many large tenders will stipulate that these are required. If you have a business manager this may be a major part of their work.

Step 9. Are you going to have premises or will you engage a virtual office to field calls?

Step 10. Finally, as we are all gradually getting older consider your pension – if you have a limited company and earn over the threshold you, everyone you employ will need a company pension.

6 Professional Development and Training

Specialty training in Occupational Medicine

Specialty training in occupational medicine starts at ST3 level and takes **four years full-time**. Applicants should have **MBBS** (or equivalent), and they should have undertaken some training in specialties such as surgery, psychiatry, IMT medicine, general practice, public health, anaesthetics/ ACCS, radiology or paediatrics. Applicants that have not undergone two years of UK core/ specialty training must submit a Certificate of Completion of Common Professional Capabilities at time of application and have at least 24 months experience (not including foundation level experience) in the same speciality area, by the advertised start date.

The **person specification** and **entry criteria** for Occupational Medicine ST3 2024 recruitment can be found at [Occupational Medicine ST3 2024 | Medical Hub \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/occupational-medicine-st3-2024). Prospective applicants can apply on the ORIEL portal [Oriel - Home](#)

The **Faculty of Occupational Medicine** (FOM) has a detailed guide for prospective trainees, including how to become a consultant in Occupational Medicine [Prospective trainees \(fom.ac.uk\)](https://www.fom.ac.uk/prospective-trainees).

Training posts can take place within the **NHS**, in **industry** and in the **armed forces**.

➤ **Training in the NHS**

- The National School of Occupational Health manages the National Recruitment for occupational medicine for NHS ST3 vacancies; the process runs twice a year.
- The National Occupational Medicine ST3 listing is published via [NHS Jobs](#) and [Oriel](#).

➤ **Training in industry**

- industry employers can advertise their training vacancies and most use [BMJ Careers](#).
- Any industry candidate will be required to attend a **National Recruitment interview** to ensure they are “appointable;” this is called benchmarking, to ensure consistent standards.

➤ **Training with the Armed Forces**

- the Armed Forces have their own recruitment process. Their candidates are also required to attend a National Recruitment interview for benchmarking.

Specialty training in occupational medicine requires trainees, in approved training posts, to pass **two examinations** (part 1 MFOM and part 2 MFOM), a **research project** (e.g. dissertation, substantial audit) and **workplace-based assessments**.

Part 1 MFOM, is taken in ST3 year. Candidates who already passed the DOccMed MCQ exam, are exempt from the Part 1 MFOM.

Further information can be found...

- FOM website [Faculty of Occupational Medicine \(fom.ac.uk\)](http://fom.ac.uk)
- and on the National School of Occupational Health website [National School of Occupational Health | Health Education England East Midlands \(eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk\)](http://eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk)

Additional qualifications

After obtaining the **Diploma in Occupational Medicine** (DOccMed), you can train to become.

an **appointed doctor** for ionising radiation or work in compressed air, for example. Information on how to become an appointed doctor can be found on the HSE website. [Appointed doctors – Appointment and Renewal Process - HSE](#)

The Diploma in Aviation Medicine (DAvMed) is designed for doctors who wish to practise aviation medicine. Please see [DAvMed \(fom.ac.uk\)](http://fom.ac.uk) for more information.

The SOM advertises **HAVS courses**. The @Work Partnership has a Certificate in Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) course.

Portfolio Pathway (CESR) entry to the Specialist Register:

Following a DOcc Med, the '**CESR Pathway**' now known as the '**Portfolio Pathway**' is an option - more information regarding the Portfolio Pathway can be found on the Faculty of Occupational Medicine website [Portfolio Pathway \(CESR\) entry to the Specialist Register \(fom.ac.uk\)](http://fom.ac.uk)

The application process requires **considerable time commitment**. The submitted documentation needs to provide evidence of achievement of capabilities as described in the **GMC-approved Occupational Medicine Curriculum**. It is expected to relate mostly to the last **six years** of professional experience.

What qualifying criteria will I need to meet before entering this pathway?

You will need to have completed, as a minimum, *both* Foundation Years *and* at least two years Post Foundation clinical experience.

While it is not essential to have obtained any postgraduate diplomas before entering this pathway, you will need to provide evidence that capabilities of core training in any recognised specialty or general practice in an equivalent way.

You can submit your evidence to FOM for consideration before preparing to gather evidence for a Portfolio Pathway/CESR application later.

Job options

There are various options available for those wanting to pursue a career in OH after gaining the diploma qualification.

Some of the options are listed below:

- **NHS work:** You can try contacting local OH departments to see if there is any availability to take on part time work.
- **Corporate providers:**

- Some OH providers will offer supervision schemes for those who have no prior OH experience e.g. Health Partners, Optima and Medigold have previously advertised these posts.
- <https://www.som.org.uk/find-oh-provider-company> has a comprehensive list of OH providers.
- Independent work
- Freelance/adhoc: this can be slightly harder to come by but sometimes contacting various OH recruiters may enable you to be informed if work becomes available (some recruiters mentioned below)
 - [Occupational Health Staffing](#)
 - [Occupational Health Jobs UK](#)
 - [Gel resourcing](#)



Occupational Medicine specialty training pathways flowchart

Ref <https://www.fom.ac.uk/education/specialty-training/current-trainees/training-handbook-2022-curriculum>

7 Quality Assurance and Accreditation

The following standards and minimum requirements are designed to be applied within a **UK accreditation scheme**. They articulate the expectations of a **safe, effective, quality** occupational health service, therefore services not participating in accreditation may also find them useful. These are **professional standards** for occupational health services.

A **standard** is something considered by an authority or by consensus as a basis of comparison in measuring or judging adequacy or quality. These standards have been developed by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine with other occupational medical and nursing professional bodies, commercial occupational health providers, employer and worker representative bodies and government agencies.

Minimum requirements are intended to be well-defined and easy to understand. They must be met to satisfy the standards. Many of the minimum requirements relate to statutory or professional responsibilities.

Examples of **suitable evidence** are the records that applicants can use to demonstrate that they meet the standards and the minimum requirements. The examples are indicative and only illustrate the kind of information that can be used.

Accreditation will be a voluntary and cyclical process. Accreditation provides independent validation that an occupational health service has demonstrated competence measured against the standards and is fit for purpose. Accreditation is not an end point. It drives continuous improvement, allowing occupational health services to self-assess their services and performance against standards, identify improvement areas and take remedial actions.

More information can be found here - <https://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/standardsjan2010.pdf>

Here are some tips for maintaining **high standards of practice** and **continuous improvement**.

- **Conduct risk assessments** - Regularly assess work processes, equipment, and the working environment to identify and mitigate potential hazards.
- **Communication** - Encourage open communication to foster a culture of employee well-being.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – regularly monitor and evaluate health and safety practices to identify areas for improvement.
- **Streamline auditing and inspections** – audits and inspections are a staple part of the continuous improvement process. It is essential to receive the information included in reports as quickly as possible so that you can respond to potential hazards and vulnerabilities before it is too late.

8 Resources and Tools:

For more information, visit

<https://www.fom.ac.uk/education/examinations/diplomas/doccmec>.

This page includes:



[Portfolio template](#)



[Reading lists](#)



[Example exam papers](#)



[Additional contact information](#)



[Information on working part time](#)

General advice:

- There are lots of books available, but make sure they are in date as laws and regulations change. The recommended [reading list on FOM](#) is a good starting point.
- Some books (e.g. Oxford Handbook, 3rd edition 2002) can be accessed for free online via Open Athens or your NHS institution/library.

Free online/ PDF guidance

- Good Occupational Medicine Practice (FOM, 2017) – good overview and concepts, especially for exams
https://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/GOMP_2017_Web.pdf
- Equality Act 2010: guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>
- HSE A-Z topics page – useful topics and downloadable PDFs include:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/doctors/guidance.htm>
 - Approved Codes of Practice
 - Appointed Doctor Guidance (ionising radiation, asbestos, lead, COSHH, Compressed Air)
 - Back pain and manual handling (managing upper limb disorders at work, DSE, and ART, RAPP, and MAC tools)
 - Drugs and alcohol misuse at work
 - Pregnancy
 - Noise
 - RIDDOR
 - Sickness absence
- Assessing fitness to drive – a guide for medical professionals (DVLA, 2024)
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c8b0d0e39a8536eac052f4/assessing-fitness-to-drive-august-2024.pdf>
- ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) – advice on employment law, dispute resolution

Interactive tools and checklists to aid practitioners in their daily practice.

- HSE website for MSK assessments/tools – ART, RAPP MAC.
- HSE ready reckoner and calculator for vibration and noise.

Important Dates

2025 Dates for the Diploma in Occupational Medicine are:

- Monday 12th May 2025 (MCQ) – Online exam
- Tuesday 13th May 2025 (Oral/Viva) – Online exam
- Wednesday 14th May 2025 (Oral/Viva) – Online exam

Registration for the **May 2025** exams will open at **9.00am on Monday 20th January 2025** and close at **5.00pm on Monday 17th March 2025**.

- Monday 10th November 2025 (MCQ) – Online exam
- Tuesday 11th November 2025 (Oral/Viva) – Online exam
- Wednesday 12th November 2025 (Oral/Viva) – Online exam

Registration for the **November 2025** exams will open at **9.00am on Monday 21st July 2025** and close at **5.00pm on Monday 15th September 2025**.

Examination Fees

For more information on **examination fees** <https://www.fom.ac.uk/membership/subscriptions>

9 Peer Support and Networking:

Peer support and networking within the **workplace** and within the **wider field** is important for those working in Occupational Healthcare. It can benefit not only your everyday experience of work but can open career opportunities as well.

Within the workplace, peer support and healthy working relationships have been shown to be positively correlated with job performance, job satisfaction, and role clarity². Peer support was viewed as being a valuable resource to deal with the stressful demands of home and work life.

Within the wider field, **peer support and networking** provide many benefits. These include:

- Sharing knowledge of the sector.
- Learning about specific tools of resources.
- Bringing new experiences and interests to your peer group.
- Meeting new people within your peer support.
- Finding out about conferences, training, or events.
- Strengthening support and encouragement for those working in the sector.

Peer support and Networking opportunities:

- Join professional associations such as SOM.
- Attend conferences.
- Participate in online forums.
- Establish mentorship relationships and peer support groups.
- Reach out to those working in Occupational Health on forums such as LinkedIn.

Meet people working in Occupational Health in your area!

SOM offers regional groups to their members, providing local relevant **educational events** to develop member's knowledge.

There are also excellent **networking opportunities** through social events and workplace visits. This contributes to your CPD requirements.

For **more information** about SOM regional groups...



<https://www.som.org.uk/regional-groups>

or email at



ann.caluori@som.org.uk

² Agarwal, Brooks and Greenberg, 2020.

[https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2165079919873934#:~:text=Evidence%20further%20suggestions%20that%20peer,positive%20coping%20strategies%20\(e.g.%2C%20exercise](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2165079919873934#:~:text=Evidence%20further%20suggestions%20that%20peer,positive%20coping%20strategies%20(e.g.%2C%20exercise)

10 Other FAQs

What if I am an overseas candidate/international member of SOM?

Being an international member means you have the requisite skills and experience but have been practicing in a different environment, under different laws governing the practice of Occupational Health. As an overseas candidate, you probably will not have a work permit required to practice in the UK, which is quite different from having a licence to practice. This presents a challenge when adapting to the UK, which may require a short period of adjustment. This could be through; resources to help, shadowing other doctors, or employment in moderate or large organisations where support from other colleagues is available.

To aid international members, we encourage providers to acquire a sponsor licence through which a certificate of sponsorship would be issued to support the work visa application process for international talent. This can be acquired through the [UK government website](#).

Indemnity

It is important to get suitable **indemnity cover**, and this will depend on the scope of practice. You may have to enquire at various indemnity providers to see what the individual specific requirements are.

DOccMed is considered an **entry level diploma** into the speciality and as such indemnity providers will usually require the clinician to have **adequate supervision** before offering indemnity. Alternatively, they offer indemnity if the individual has had enough prior experience in the OH field e.g. MDDUS will offer indemnity if the physician has had minimum of 2 years OH experience before setting up independent practice.

If working for the **NHS/corporate companies'** supervision should not usually be a problem, however it is necessary to be mindful if setting up independent practice. If a SOM member, you can get a **MDDUS discount**.