The Foundation Programme GUIDEBOOK
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The information contained in this guide is intended for those who are starting the Foundation Programme in Malta. The information herein is correct at the time of printing, and may be subject to change. This is not intended as legal guidance, but instead it is intended as a training aid.

For an electronic copy of this book, go to www.fpdoctors.info
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The Malta Foundation Programme (FP) is now in its fifth year. The programme has continued to develop and improve over these years. The affiliation to the United Kingdom Foundation Programme (UKFP) granted in 2009, has been renewed and will be reviewed in 2016. This has been achieved after the Malta FP underwent two rigorous Quality Assurance processes by the Medical Council Malta (MCM) successfully.

During these years, the number of trainees on the Programme increased progressively. New Educational Supervisors and Foundation Training Programme Directors (FTPD) have been recruited in order to maintain the quality of training. The number of clinical training placements has doubled since the start of the programme. This has ensured that the quality of both training and service delivery is maintained.

The Curriculum and Reference Guide have been reviewed, and the Clinical skills and Simulation and Careers sections have been expanded accordingly. For Doctors needing additional help, the Trainee Support Team has received the direct support of two FTPDs. New work streams have been introduced, one of which included the setting up of an Audit and Quality Improvement Committee (AQIC). This has already given excellent results in the First AQI Conference held on 22nd June 2013 and which will now be an annual event. Other work streams involved the setting up of trainee led initiatives in patient safety and infection control. We hope to continue to work on other initiatives.

This Guidebook has been developed mainly by foundation trainees. It
is another tool to help trainees understand their training needs and obligations in the best possible way. Who better to advise on how to face this challenge than those who have been through the programme themselves.

Finally, these achievements would not be possible without the support of the Clinical Supervisors and other medical and allied health-care professionals who have contributed significantly to the programme over these years and to whom we are grateful. We also thank the Foundation School administrative staff and our Faculty. It is our pleasure to see our trainees progress through the programme and beyond and we are very proud of their achievements. We are indebted to the MCM as well as the UKFP Office for their support, and for making the continuing affiliation of the Malta Foundation School possible.

About this guidebook

This guidebook explains how the Foundation Programme works, and will help you get the most out of your first two years of clinical practice. It covers a range of topics including: applying to the Foundation Programme, how to progress through F1 and F2, advice on completing your assessments and guidance on the next stage of your career after foundation training. It also covers career advice and what to do if things are not going well in your placement.

The handbook has been written for both final year medical students and foundation doctors. It isn’t exhaustive, but provides a good starting point to find out more about how your first two years of training will work. If you want to share your experiences and/or give us advice about how to make it better, please contact us via e-mail or through the Malta Foundation Programme Office. We would also be grateful if you would like to contribute your experiences to future editions of this handbook. Our contact details can be found on our website at: www.fpdoctors.info.
An INTRODUCTION to the Foundation Programme

What is the Foundation Programme?

Your F1 post in the Foundation Programme will be the first medical job you have after you graduate. All medical graduates must undertake a two-year period of training as a house officer within the Foundation Programme in order to be able to work as a doctor in this country and elsewhere.

These two years form the bridge between medical school and specialty training. Your placements provide a safe environment to put in practice what you have learned at medical school, while giving you the additional skills, knowledge and experience needed to begin specialty or GP training.
How does Foundation training work?

As you would expect, the Foundation Programme is designed so you can gain basic competence in core clinical skills as well as other professional skills like communication, teamwork and the use of evidence and data. You will be expected to demonstrate increasingly sophisticated skills in these areas throughout the Foundation Programme, well beyond what you learned in medical school. Your first foundation placement will usually commence in early July after you have completed your final examinations and received your results. You will rotate to your next placement after three months. You will cover mostly general disciplines in the first year, with more focus on specialties in the second year. Each Foundation doctor must spend at least two rotations each in medical and surgical subspecialties, and at least one compulsory rotation in A&E.

Throughout the whole programme, and as you progress through specialty/GP training and beyond, you will continue to gain new competences, which you should add to your portfolio. Your portfolio shows evidence of the competences you have achieved in different areas and it will accompany you for the duration of your career.
How will my achievements be logged?

Over the two years, you will build up a portfolio of assessments and achievements as you acquire more experience and new competences. Part of this will involve asking colleagues to assess your clinical and professional skills in a range of settings while you work.

At the end of each year, you must demonstrate that you have met the standards of competence set out in the Foundation Programme Curriculum. There are a range of assessment tools you can use to prove your competence and they are detailed later in this guide. Once you have successfully completed your first foundation year (F1), you will be eligible to proceed to your second year of training (F2).

Who will organise my Foundation training programme?

All of your postgraduate training is organised by the Malta Foundation Programme Office.
What else can I expect?

You will be responsible for your own learning, making sure your assessments are completed, attending the structured learning sessions, organising any “tasters” (usually a week spent in a specialty you would not otherwise experience as a foundation doctor) and keeping your portfolio up to date. Learning on the job is a key feature of the Foundation Programme, and you have lots of ground to cover in these first two years. Besides formal teaching sessions, you should consider every activity an opportunity to learn something new. Clerking patients, presenting on ward rounds and attending outpatients all add to your collection of knowledge. Always be on the lookout to add to your portfolio of competences and develop new clinical skills. For some competences, you may learn as much from nurses and non-clinical members of your healthcare team as from the senior doctors. Each day will bring many opportunities to learn. Grasp every opportunity you are given.

You will have a named senior doctor as your educational supervisor. His/her job is to help you through your training programme and support your overall learning curve. The same senior doctor will be your educational supervisor throughout the year. You will have a different educational supervisor in your second year. You will always be supported to ensure that you have good clinical supervision and a structured educational experience.
A whole variety of key people and organisations are referred to throughout the Foundation Programme Guidebook. The entire programme is centred around the foundation doctor, who is supported through clinical and educational supervisors. They, in turn, are supported by the Foundation Training Programme Directors (FTPDs). Below is an explanation of what they all do.

**Your Clinical supervisor**

Your clinical supervisor is the professional responsible for teaching and supervising you. This will be the consultant with whom you are assigned during that particular placement. Your clinical supervisor is responsible for supervising your day to day clinical and professional practice, supporting your supervised learning events (SLEs) and assessments, ensuring that you have the appropriate range and mix of clinical exposures, and arranging a work programme to enable you to attend fixed educational sessions.

**Your Educational supervisor**

Your educational supervisor is the doctor responsible for making sure you receive appropriate training and experience. He/she will also decide whether individual placements have been completed. The educational supervisor must be involved in teaching and training, and should help your professional and personal development. Your educational supervisor is responsible for undertaking regular formative appraisal, providing support so you can develop your learning portfolio, ensuring you understand and engage in assessment, and ensuring appropriate training opportunities are available for you to learn and gain competences.

You will have a named educational supervisor for the first year and a different educational supervisor for your second year. You will be told the name and contact details of your educational supervisor at the start of your 1st and 2nd years. Your clinical supervisor and educational supervisor could be the same person, or two separate people.
Your Foundation Trainee Programme Director (FTPD)
Your FTPD is the director who will review your portfolio throughout the year to ensure that your training is on track. Each FTPD is assigned a number of trainees and will issue regular reports to each trainee which will highlight areas of progress and suggest any improvements. Your FTPD is also available for any advice should you need it.

The Foundation Programme Manager
The Foundation Programme Manager is Caroline Galea. She is responsible for the administration of the programme and is the person to contact if you have any administrative issues, such as problems with your e-portfolio password, problems with receiving communications from the Foundation Programme Office and any other issues that may arise. Caroline and her staff will be more than happy to help you or direct you to where help can be provided.

How to make the most of your Clinical and Educational Supervisor meetings
Educational/clinical supervisors meetings are held at the beginning of each quarter so as to set a target of what should be achieved and then again towards the end of each rotation so as to evaluate the progression. Apart from these meetings one will have a “beginning of year meeting” and “an end of year review” with the educational supervisor so as to have the official sign off.

After the initial ice-breaking it will become easier to make the best of these meetings. Personally I found that having a basic idea of what I wanted to achieve at each placement made meetings quite straightforward.

One must keep in mind that their target is to help us foundation doctors improve our potential to become excellent doctors. Hence, it is crucial to contact them if difficulties arise – irrespective of whether a meeting is due or not. Meetings may be organised on an “as required” basis!

Doriella Galea, FY1
You will need to complete the appropriate application form to join the Foundation Programme. We will contact you with the details of how and when to apply. Although placements will vary, you will have exposure to the clinical and educational environments necessary for you to get all the competences required for you to complete foundation training.

One of the main aims of foundation training is to give you the opportunity to experience a wide range of specialties and clinical settings to help inform your future career choice and provide you with a broad range of skills. Successful applicants are appointed to a two-year programme. Once you have confirmed acceptance of your programme, the Department of Health will proceed with preemployment checks. Once they are satisfied, they will offer you a contract of employment.

You will be notified of the locations and specialty placements for the entire first year at the outset. The placements for your second year will be determined at a later stage. Your personal choice and ranking may influence which placements you will be assigned, but this will depend on availability of placements.

A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE APPLICATION TIMELINE
Before you start your first placement, you will be expected to undertake an induction and shadowing period, which will be invaluable in teaching you the ropes before you can work with your firm. During induction, the Foundation Programme aims to deliver practical information about life on the wards, including training in hospital software and basic practical skills, further explanation of the Foundation Programme’s training systems such as ePortfolio, and sessions on safe prescribing. Immediate Life Support courses will also be organised for new FY1s.

However, the most essential part of your induction week is the time that you will spend shadowing your assigned firm. We recommend you contact your Clinical Supervisor early on in order to make the most of your time on the wards and learn by taking a hands-on approach.

A peek into Induction Week

Congratulations! You’re at the hospital and it’s different now. You’re brand new FY1s.

I remember sitting in the auditorium, being welcomed into the new structure with people wishing us well. I felt different - I used to sit in that seat as a medical student. You’ll sit and listen to a lot of new things - which could seem overwhelming. All the papers you need to get sorted, the stuff you need to sign, understanding the work jargon: “sick leave, vacation leave, over-time, duty roster, benefits, CME…”

There were talks about e-portfolio. I must admit, I did drift away at times. There was a lot of information delivered during induction - don’t worry, you will get the hang of e-portfolio along the way. Many other talks will follow - the talk about the many forms by the pharmacist was very helpful. There will be many papers in that file you’ll be carrying around for ward rounds-including pharmacy forms!

Make the most out of your shadowing hours on the wards- this will help you to get started with your firm. It is the time to practise venflons, bloods, iSoft, telephone numbers, dealing with the pages and of course… the patients - this will make the start much smoother.

Good luck - your colleagues will be willing to help you out!

Anne Fenech, FY1
During the placements in your F1 year, you will put the knowledge, skills and attitudes you learned as a student into practice as a doctor. Your placements will also equip you with new knowledge and skills whilst supporting your professional development.

Your F1 placements will ensure that you will be able to acquire the required competences. In addition to medicine and surgery, your post may include any of the recognised specialties such as:

- Cardiology
- Cardiothoracic Surgery
- Dermatology
- ENT
- Geriatrics and Rehabilitation
- Haematology
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopaedics
- Psychiatry
- Urology

You will be asked to give your preferences for particular posts before you start the Foundation Programme, but these will need to be varied to ensure that you acquire the necessary experience. Your preferences will be taken into account when the assignment of posts is made. Hence it will not be possible, for example, to select four surgically related sub-specialties as this is unlikely to provide you with the breadth of experience required for you to obtain the required competences.

For you to be able to proceed to the second year of foundation training, you will need to demonstrate that you have achieved the required level of competence at the end of your F1 year. You will be able to demonstrate your competences through satisfactory completion of your assessments. If you are unable to demonstrate this, you may be required to repeat the F1 year. This is unlikely to happen if you have worked throughout the year and completed your assessments as advised.
Looking back at FY1

When I asked my colleagues for single words they would use to describe the past year, the most popular replies included satisfaction, pay, workload, burnout, stress, reward, frustration, learning. The fact is that if every word was a single piece of a puzzle the final picture would represent the FY1 experience, with all its ups and downs and pros and cons. It’s up to every individual to make the best out of every day that passes, learning from mistakes and motivating themselves from positive experiences.

The world of pages, dealing with colleagues, ward rounds, patients, on calls, eportfolio - it all seemed so much to handle at first. The first few months of work may seem daunting, but looking back at the past year, we learned fast and going to work quickly became part of our daily routine. Never hesitate to call for help or seek seniors for advice. Everybody knows how his first day felt. A good FY1 doctor is one who takes initiative, learns to prioritise and makes the best out of day to day experiences to learn more.

To put it straight for those of you who just ended medical school, your lifestyle will improve - social life, financial status, the fact that you can finally call yourself a graduate doctor rather than a burned out student. In the beginning I recall getting that awkward guilty feeling when doing anything else but sitting at my desk studying, the same feeling I used to get when I was a student. However the fact that you can start enjoying your free time will quickly sink in.

Obviously making the most of FY1 entails some willpower and initiative - sacrificing some of your free time to involve yourself in audits, conferences and other activities will pay off. The trick is to strike a balance and to strive to enjoy learning and gaining experience, while making up for the long days and nights we’ve spent indoors studying for our finals.

John Bonello, outgoing FY1
The Foundation Programme is designed to give you the opportunity to access a wide range of specialty placements. Placements will be combined carefully to provide you with the ability to gain the required F2 competences. Placements in F2 usually consist of four 3-month placements in a variety of specialties, which are chosen at the end of F1. You will also have the opportunity to complete the requisite 6 months each in Medicine and Surgery (and approved specialties), should these not have been completed in F1. During your second year, you will spend at least one rotation working at the A&E department, further developing your skills as a clinician. Depending on your selected programme of rotations, you will also have the opportunity to spend a rotation in Family Medicine out-of-hospital.

F2 is when you will start to gear up for your specialty training applications. You may avail yourself of a taster week in various specialties in order to develop your CV, and continue to expand your ePortfolio. At the end of the year, when your portfolio is complete and you have achieved all the required skills and competences, you will be able to sign off from the Foundation Programme and collect your Foundation Achievement of Competency Document (FACD), confirming your success.

Your second Foundation year is a time when you will find yourself maturing as a doctor – enjoy the experience and make the most of it!

**Taster weeks**

A taster week is an opportunity to spend a week within a placement you have not experienced or worked in. There are a wide variety of placements to choose from, ranging from specialties that are available routinely as placements such as Haematology and General Practice, to specialties FP doctors do not typically work in such as Anaesthesia, Public Health, Pathology, and Medical Imaging. Any option can be discussed with the Foundation School. Foundation Doctors are entitled to 5 days of study leave for this experience and can have one taster week per year. In order to organise your week, contact the Foundation School with the chosen specialty and time period.

The majority of FP doctors are satisfied with the taster weeks they participate in. In order to make the most of it, plan your taster week in advance so as to choose the best time to do it. Read up beforehand, exploring every aspect of the specialty and taking every opportunity offered. That way, your taster week can help you broaden your horizons and choose your future career.

Anthea Brincat, FY2
Looking back at FY2

When you think about it, being an FY2 is not terribly different from being an FY1. You get the same kind of calls and have the same responsibilities. The big difference is that you’re more experienced. While it may sound trivial, this really makes life easier. It frees up more time for you to focus on clinical life rather than on basic procedural skills. I found this to be crucial. While in FY1 I devoted myself to learning the ropes, I used my FY2 to plan ahead.

It starts with picking rotations. Think about what you want to do with the rest of your life. It may sound daunting but if you’ve no clue (which is the norm, rest assured) take the opportunity to try things you might be interested in. Even if it turns out that you really hate a particular rotation, don’t worry. You now know that that particular speciality is not for you. A small note on A&E (which everyone has to go through) – make the most of it. There are few specialities which give you the clinical acumen and experience that A&E gives you.

When preparing for BST interviews use your time wisely. Don’t go wild and attend every conference/course available and sit for tonnes of post-grad exams. It’s time-consuming, stressful and terribly expensive and will only result in burn-out. Also, these will only get you a limited amount of points in an interview. Instead, be selective. It’s good to show interest but remember you have a life outside medicine too so don’t get caught up in the harsh competition and lose any semblance of a personal life you may have acquired during FY1 just to stay home and study.

One final piece of advice: enjoy it. FY2 can be a very fun year if you make the most of it!

Christine Cannataci, outgoing FY2
The Foundation Programme is a training programme set in a teaching hospital environment. While you will find yourself learning plenty on the job, the Malta Foundation Programme aims to deliver quality training to the UK Foundation Programme standards. Teaching is delivered in both formal and informal setups throughout your two years. You will receive continuous feedback from both your peers and your seniors and will build a multidimensional picture of your professional development on your online e-Portfolio.

During the Foundation Programme, you will need to perform a number of **Supervised Learning Events**, in the form of Case-based Discussions (CbD), Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercises (mini-CEX), and Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS), and the Developing the Clinical Teacher tool. These are short opportunities to get feedback on your progress and require minimal preparation. Twice each year, Foundation doctors obtain Multi-Source Feedback from medical and paramedic staff in their current placement, which is an excellent way to obtain comments about professional behaviour.

The Foundation Programme will also set aside time for your **formal**
teaching, with weekly lectures and practical training sessions.

The e-Portfolio is an invaluable tool in your development, enabling you to record all your progress in an easily accessible manner. With your e-Portfolio you can look back on your progress and plan your next career move. It also has the advantage of being an accredited logbook of your achievements, which you can present during later job applications.

At the centre of all these resources is you. It is up to you to make the most of all the opportunities the Programme delivers and make it a rewarding self-directed learning experience.
In order to maintain consistency in your clinical and professional development, the Malta Foundation Programme is based on a detailed Curriculum identical to the UK Foundation Programme. Having a Curriculum ensures standardised training and sets outcomes that trainees should aim to achieve. The two key concepts of the Foundation Programme Curriculum are patient safety and personal development, both of which are essential to producing well-rounded doctors.

Every step in your training will be covered by the Curriculum, and by the end of your two years you will be expected to have shown competence in every aspect of it in order to obtain your Foundation Achievement of Competence Document (FACD). This is done by linking all your achievements to individual subheadings on the curriculum via the e-Portfolio. The Curriculum can be used to reflect on your achievements so far and plan future aspects of your development.

**Formal teaching**

The Foundation Programme will ensure that you have access to a formal taught programme of education which addresses the professional elements of the Curriculum.

You will have one hour per week of protected, bleep-free time set aside for a timetabled learning programme. There will also be additional periods of training which will be included during your two year, some of which may need to be covered by study leave.
The learning path

The Foundation Programme Curriculum is continuously being reviewed and updated, and the one currently in use was developed in 2012. The current Curriculum encompasses all aspects of your development in detail and is split up into twelve core competencies, each of which has its own subheadings:

1. Professionalism
2. Relationship and communication with patients
3. Safety and clinical governance
4. Ethical and legal issues
5. Teaching and training
6. Maintaining good medical practice
7. Good clinical care
8. Recognition and management of the acutely ill patient
9. Resuscitation and end of life care
10. Patients with long-term conditions
11. Investigations
12. Procedures

Further information about the Foundation Programme Curriculum can be obtained from your e-Portfolio.
Your e-Portfolio contains everything you need to manage your placements and monitor your progress on the Foundation Programme. Your e-Portfolio will quickly become an invaluable tool in recording your achievements and is key to completing the Foundation Programme. The e-Portfolio used by the Malta Foundation Programme is the same as that used by nearly all UK Foundation schools, thereby ensuring equivalence between the two programmes.

It is essential to get familiar with your e-Portfolio and to learn how to use it to its full potential. A full explanation of the features of the site is beyond the scope of this booklet, but you will receive ample training during your Induction week. The site contains full information about the FP curriculum, the Foundation Programme declarations and agreements, all the assessment forms you will need, and additional slots to record your achievement and plan your career. Moreover, each meeting you have with your Educational and Clinical supervisors

To access your e-Portfolio:

http://www.nhseportfolios.org
should be logged on your e-Portfolio.

Your e-Portfolio will be reviewed periodically by your assigned FTPD to ensure you are on track, and you will receive a report on your progress. At the end of your two years, you will print out your e-Portfolio and submit it to the FP office before you receive your FACD.

The e-Portfolio is also a useful asset during your ST applications, and you may be asked to present a copy during your specialty interviews.

The Foundation Learning Portfolio is just the start, but it is a powerful tool if you make the most of it. In an increasingly competitive environment, a solid e-Portfolio will go a long way to ensure your success.

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**Core procedures**

In Foundation Year 1, you are expected to show proficiency in a number of core procedures which are fundamental in your day-to-day practice. This is done by asking a colleague to observe you and fill out the relevant core procedure form on your e-Portfolio. Filling out all your core procedure forms is mandatory in your first year, but optional in your second.

The list of core procedures is as follows:

- Venepuncture
- Venous cannulation
- Preparation and administration of IV medications
- Arterial puncture
- Peripheral blood cultures
- Intravenous infusion including prescription of fluids
- Intravenous infusion of blood and blood products
- Injection of local anaesthetic to skin
- Intramuscular injection
- Subcutaneous injection
- Perform and interpret ECG
- Perform and interpret peak flow
- Urethral catheterisation (male and female)
- Airway care including simple adjuncts
Your two years as a Foundation trainee will be full of opportunities to obtain feedback about your work as a junior doctor. This feedback is based on a series of Supervised Learning Events, which aim to provide the trainee with one-to-one educational opportunities. These consist of case-based discussions (CBD), mini-clinical evaluation exercises (mini-CEX), direct observation of procedural skills (DOPS) and developing the clinical teacher. We advise you to make the most of these opportunities to reinforce good practice and obtain sound advice for future improvement.

Case-Based Discussion (CBD)

This is a structured discussion of cases you have been involved in. It allows you to review your decision-making and clinical reasoning in a safe, non-judgmental environment with a senior clinician. Your CBD can be about any case you were involved in and it is up to you to decide which aspect of care to discuss. You will need to complete 6 CBDs in each year of your Foundation Training.
Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX)

During a mini-CEX, a senior will observe you assess a patient and give you feedback about various aspects of your interaction with the patient including history taking, examination technique, communication, clinical judgement and professionalism. A mini-CEX can be done in a variety of ways and settings, be it in the outpatients department, during a ward round, or in A&E. This SLE will help you identify gaps in your practice as well as your strengths as a clinician, and is a way of helping you develop not only your medical knowledge but the quality of patient rapport you establish as a developing trainee. During each year, you will need to fill out at least 6 mini-CEXs.

Direct Observation of Procedural Skills

Your Foundation years are an excellent time to pick up practical skills that will be useful in your later career. Although all Foundation doctors are expected to master a set of Core Procedures, you have a choice in what procedures you pick out for a DOPS, such as pleural tapping, skin suturing, lumbar puncture, or cardioversion. Doing a DOPS is interesting and generally enjoyable, and is a good way for you to confirm proficiency in a minor procedure and obtain feedback about the interaction with the patient. Three DOPS SLEs per year are needed as a minimum requirement to progress.

Developing the Clinical Teacher

The Foundation Programme aims to produce not only safe clinicians, but also capable trainers within a teaching hospital setting. Although you will find yourself teaching constantly on the job, having a senior observe you during a tutorial or lecture is an excellent opportunity for feedback. You will need to do one Developing the Clinical Teacher per year.
Multi-Source Feedback (MSF) provides an opportunity for a number of your colleagues to comment on your abilities and offer feedback. An MSF is an excellent tool to assess professionalism and the quality of patient and staff rapport, things which are sometimes overlooked when assessing clinical skills. You will need to complete an MSF assessment at least twice a year in order to progress.

The tool that is used for multi-source feedback is the Team Assessment of Behaviour (TAB), easily accessible on the ePortfolio. A minimum of ten responses are required so that an MSF is valid, so you will need to send out a request to about fifteen members of staff. It is therefore important to plan in advance. You may send requests to anyone, including your seniors, nurses, and members of the paramedic staff, and it is compulsory to request a TAB from your Clinical supervisor. The information that is filled out on TAB forms is completely anonymous and you will only be able to see the results once your Educational Supervisor releases these to you.

A good MSF result is a great confidence booster, and highlights the importance (and responsibility) of keeping up good practice every day.
Within the Foundation Learning Portfolio is a section for your very own personal development plan. This will help you think about what educational experiences you’d like to have in the coming months. Putting this together need not be a daunting task if you follow a few simple guidelines.

**Keep your PDP SMART:**

- **Specific** - Objectives should specify what you want to achieve.
- **Measurable** - You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not.
- **Achievable** - Are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?
- **Realistic** - Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?
- **Time-Bound** - When do you want to achieve the set objectives?

The structure and content of PDPs will vary depending on your learning needs. The Curriculum will guide you as to the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to complete the Foundation Programme. However, you should not be constrained by the Curriculum as the benefit of a PDP is that it allows you to develop in areas that are outside of set boundaries. Your PDP is not just about foundation competences, but how you develop as a doctor.

Your PDP should include a personal account of the experiences you have had and your reflections on them. It doesn’t all need to be shared with your supervisor. Your supervisor will only have access to those areas which you decide to share with him/her. The reflective practice form in your portfolio will help you focus on how experiences or events affect you, the patient and the healthcare team. Reflective practice also encourages you to think about how things might be done differently.

Your educational supervisor will be happy to help you in the construction of this element of the portfolio but it is essentially your
An important aspect of your personal and professional development is your involvement in clinical audit. You will be expected to have participated in at least one audit during the Foundation Programme in a healthcare setting that is becoming increasingly evidence-based, it is imperative to know what goes into the organisation of a study. Moreover, clinical audit is one of the pillars of clinical governance, and involving yourself in change will develop your skills as a clinical leader.

Foundation Programme Audit and Quality Improvement Committee

This committee has been set up this year (2013), and is composed of Dr. Mariella Borg Buontempo, two FY1 trainees, two FY2 trainees and myself.

There are various reasons why we thought of setting up this group. We would like to give Foundation doctors an equal opportunity to be involved in an audit and/or quality improvement project. We would also advise trainees who are experiencing difficulties with their projects. We wanted to make sure that any project is not done by 2 or more different individuals at the same time unknowingly. This has led us to develop a database of such projects. Before embarking on these projects, doctors need to give us a brief outline. The results of such an audit should not end up being shared with a few people and then stored away somewhere. We believe that such projects should act as catalysts in promoting change and thus improve the service delivery within our organisation.

This committee also gives the FP trainees an opportunity in being involved in a management group. This year we have also organised a 1-day conference where FP trainees will be presenting their projects through oral and poster presentations. It will become an annual event in our calendar.

Dr. Pierre Ellul
Lead for the Audit and Quality Improvement Committee
The Foundation Programme offers practical training sessions for trainees to learn procedural techniques in a safe, standardised manner. This ensures confidence and competence in the core procedures each trainee is expected to master during the programme. Training is currently given in procedures such as venepuncture, peripheral venous cannula insertion, arterial blood gas sampling, blood culture, and nasogastric tube insertion.

A clinical skills lab is also available, fully equipped with a SimMan advanced patient simulator. Training sessions are offered at both F1 and F2 levels. This gives an invaluable opportunity for all the trainees to manage acutely ill patients, as well as stress the importance of communication skills and team work in pre-set scenarios. Each session is led by members of the Simulation team, who have undergone training in the UK. These training sessions are mandatory for all trainees but have proven to be a very enjoyable and stimulating learning experience.
By the end of your two years, you will have acquired a basic set of skills which you can apply to any specialty you choose in the future. These are the minimum requirements for satisfactory completion of the Foundation Programme:

1. **Provisional Registration with the Malta Medical Council**

2. **Completion of 12 months F2 training** (taking account of allowable absence).

3. **A satisfactory End of Placement final review** form for each placement on e-portfolio.

4. A satisfactorily mapped **Curriculum** on the e-portfolio. Trainees should be able to demonstrate how they satisfied each item of the Curriculum with relevant activities during foundation training such as SLEs, Assessments, Lectures attended, Conferences, Courses, and E-learning modules. (A useful tool to help in mapping the Curriculum may be found on the FP Malta website [www.fpdoctors.info](http://www.fpdoctors.info)).

5. Evidence that the foundation doctor can carry out all of the **core procedures** listed in the ePortfolio. Trainees should keep a logbook of Core procedural skills to demonstrate competence in performing these procedures. This logbook can be kept on the e-portfolio.

6. Satisfactory completion of the required number of **supervised learning events**, as set by the Malta Foundation School. The Malta Foundation School requires that Foundation doctors complete a minimum of: 6 Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX), 6 Case-Based Discussion (CbD), 3 Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS), 1 Developing the clinical teacher assessment and 2 Multi-Source Feedback (MSF) (and an additional MSF if concerns are identified) each year.

7. An acceptable **attendance record** at foundation teaching sessions. Trainees should attend a minimum of 70% of the weekly
teaching sessions. An acceptable attendance record at the training
days or training sessions organised
by the Foundation School is also
required.
8. A valid Advanced Life
Support certificate or
documented equivalent
9. Achievement of Certificate in
Infection Prevention issued by
the Infection Control Unit of Mater
Dei Hospital.
10. Attendance at Clinical
Simulation training.
11. Evidence of involvement in
audit. The Foundation Programme
Curriculum requires that F2
doctors have been actively involved
in undertaking a clinical audit, and
recognise how it relates to the
improvement of clinical standards
and addresses the clinical
governance agenda.
12. Signed probity and health
declarations on e-portfolio.

Study leave - and you!
Foundation trainees are eligible for
Study leave for the formal
Educational Programme which is
part of Foundation training.
F1 trainees are excused for F1
training purposes for the
following:
1. 6 days to cover a taster week
2. 1 day to cover ILS training
3. 1 day to cover Windmills
course.
F2 trainees are entitled to Study
leave for the following:
1. 6 days to cover a taster week
2. 1 day for ALS training
3. 1 day for A&E training
4. 1 day for Family Medicine
training.
Furthermore, F2 trainees are
entitled to Study leave to cover
for specialty exams and
conferences.
All Study leave needs to be
approved by your Clinical
Supervisor and the Chairperson of
the department you are working
in, so plan in advance!
Over the past few years, the Foundation Programme has been making use of online e-Learning modules in order to deliver useful academic concepts to trainees. These modules support and enhance the learning of Foundation doctors by addressing specific areas of the curriculum.

At the beginning of your Foundation years, you will receive a link to your e-Learning site and further information regarding login. E-learning is not compulsory but is strongly encouraged as an accompaniment to your lectures. Modules are concise and trainees are awarded an e-Certificate at the end of each set of interactive lectures, which can be uploaded to your e-Portfolio and even presented as a certificate of competence at your ST interviews.
At the end of your foundation training, you will compete for entry into specialist training for hospital-based specialties, public health, or general practice. Recruitment and selection into specialty training will commence about half-way through the second year of foundation training and you need to take your decisions about which career path to follow before applying. Advice and support in planning your career is available throughout foundation training. This advice will seek to align your aptitudes and aspirations with employment opportunities and future workforce requirements of the health service.

**Specialty/GP training**

New specialty training programmes are being developed in Malta. Training co-ordinators in the different specialties have been appointed and training programmes have been set up. These programmes have their own competence-based curricula covering all aspects of specialty training from the completion of foundation training through to acquisition of a
Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). The aim will be to provide organised, structured programmes with clear curricula, assessment and appraisal, which integrates the former SHO and Registrar training into a seamless “run-through” training programme. You shouldn’t wait until the last minute to think about your career. Start your research now and discuss your options with your clinical supervisors and the relevant training coordinators.

Planning your career

One of the aims of the Foundation Programme is to give you the opportunity to explore different career options. In addition to rotating through a range of specialties and healthcare settings, you will have access to information and advice about current and future career opportunities.

Choosing which career path to follow needs a great deal of thought. Personal choice needs to be aligned with aptitude, strengths and interests as well as a realistic consideration of the extent of competition for vacancies on training programmes. Think about your own strengths, interests and aptitudes. Getting good career advice is not just about being spoon-fed information, it’s about taking a critical and constructive look at yourself.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Even if your supervisors are unable to answer all of your questions, they will be able to help you reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as you seek to determine which career options best match your emerging skills, aptitudes and attitudes.
As part of the career support the Malta Foundation School offers a one-day generic career planning workshop - Windmills. This workshop is a UK licensed workshop. We have now been organising these workshops on a yearly basis since 2009. The Windmills workshop is a generic career management programme which has been adapted specifically for junior doctors. It combines interactive activities which encourage participants to consider their skills, what they want from their work and lives, their motivation level as well as practical tips for CVs, applications and interviews. It encourages participants to consider their skills and what they want from their work and lives. 'Windmills' helps people to take a fresh, positive and proactive look at their lives: ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills they need to realise their potential.

Career planning may come easy for some, however many find it hard to take career decisions. Windmills is a one day seminar for foundation doctors where you are given the opportunity to take a constructive look at career planning and decision making.

Regardless of whether your career path is clear, the Windmills seminar is an amazing experience for foundation doctors which will help you break down your goals and make them achievable.

Kyra Camilleri, FY2

I suggest that all Foundation doctors should attend this seminar early on during foundation training. Windmills helped me identify aspects of career planning that I was neglecting and set short- and long-term career-oriented goals. I also found the tips on interview skills very useful. In particular, common questions asked during medical interviews were outlined and answering techniques were illustrated. The course co-ordinators gave their personal insight about their experience in speciality training and provided excellent suggestions on CV writing.

James Vassallo, FY2
10 tips to get through your ST interviews

Work Hard. Work Smart. The FP curriculum is an accurate gauge of what interviewers look for in a prospective speciality trainee. Clinical knowledge isn’t everything. Audits, research projects, publications, teaching experience etc... score big points at interviews.

Start Early. Audits, exams, presentations and publications require months to years to complete.

Finish What you Started... And Get Published! Better have one audit with a completed audit cycle (including a re-audit to close the audit loop) than have three “half-baked” projects. Seek opportunities to publish your work or, at least, present it at conferences or educational meetings.

Keep your ePortfolio Organised and Up-to-Date... And LOG EVERYTHING!

Even if you’re uncertain about your speciality... Just go for it! Deciding early helps keep your proactive approach to developing skills and experience focused on your intended career path. There is a tremendous amount of overlap in interview selection criteria. An audit or publication scores points even if it is in a different specialty.

Prove your Interest in your chosen speciality. Working in your favourite speciality as a foundation trainee is, at times, a luxury. Make use of your taster weeks; go to relevant conferences/seminars/courses; sit for membership exams if the college allows it.

Get References! This is the part where the “working hard” should pay off. Make sure you approach your referees in good time!

Your ‘CV’. The amount of effort dedicated to working on your CV does make a difference. Don’t leave it to the last minute. If you followed the above advice diligently, having good CV fodder is a non-issue.

Good Marketing! How to develop good CV writing and interview skills in order to sell yourself is beyond the scope of this article. There are many books/resources available – I suggest you use them. Remember: A good product needs a great sales pitch to succeed.

Keep Things in Perspective. Don’t focus too much on your professional success at the expense of the other important things in life.

Marquita Camilleri, Haematology BST
Sometimes, despite our best efforts, things will go wrong. For one reason or another, whether because of illness, family pressures, financial stress, or lack of aptitude for medicine as a career, a small number of trainees will fail to progress in the expected way. The structure of the Foundation Programme is designed to ensure that any potential problems are identified, and strategies are employed to resolve them as soon as possible. The most important thing is recognising when problems are developing and seeking help. It is also important that you liaise with your supervisors in a timely manner so that surprises are not stored up until it’s too late to do anything about them. Don’t worry. You will be supported.

**Educational Support**

There is a range of sources of educational support available to trainees who are facing difficulties. You should see your educational supervisor or FTPD about any concerns, and he or she will be able to guide you through the problem or refer you to an appropriate person to speak to.

People learn at different rates, and there is nothing wrong with asking for extra help if something is proving difficult. Alternatively, your assessments may reveal areas in which you need support. In this case, your educational supervisor will draw your attention to the need for extra educational support, perhaps in the form of intensified exposure to any specific topic, or supervision which will be arranged by your FTPD.

If you fail in the first year, you need to repeat your F1 year and will not be able to progress to F2. You will be given remedial support for up to one additional year. If, at the end of this time, you still do not meet the required standards, you would be expected to stop practising medicine. In the second year, if a remedial training placement becomes necessary, it will be arranged for a fixed period. If you still cannot demonstrate the required level of competence by the end of the second year, you will not receive a Foundation Achievement of Competency Document (FACD), which means that you will not be able to practise as a doctor.
Psychological Support

Medicine is an inherently stressful profession. The first year or two of practice are known to be tough for all but the most resilient of trainees. It is common, from time to time, to experience feelings of inadequacy or anxiety, and to wonder whether going into medicine was a mistake. Most doctors cope with the stresses of the job by talking over their experiences and feelings with friends, family or peers at work. Your educational supervisor will also be able to offer support, either directly or by suggesting a colleague to talk to. For professional, ethical and personal matters, support is available.

Health Support

It is one of your duties as a doctor to take care of your own health but it is all too easy to become physically run down. It is hard to find time to access and eat a balanced diet, and shift work leads to upset diurnal rhythms and sleep deprivation. Pre-existing conditions may also become aggravated by this lifestyle. Working through illness, self-prescription and the use of alcohol or other substances to relieve stress are risky for you and your patients. Trust us: don’t do it; instead, approach a trusted colleague or the people within the Foundation programme who can genuinely help you.

The Trainee Support Team

The Malta Foundation Programme also offers help through a Trainee Support Team (TST). This team is there to help trainees who need additional help to that which has been already provided by the Educational Supervisor or other colleagues. Trainees may refer themselves directly or be referred by their Educational Supervisor or FTPD. The TST is also activated when trainees exhibit behavioural or clinical competence issues which might impair their progression through the Foundation Programme. The TST provides the trainee with the necessary remedial milieu in order to maximise their chances of progression and success in the Foundation Programme.
Visit our website at www.fpdtpdoctors.info

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