

Applicant Guidance: **Pre-application**

UKPHR Specialist Registration by Portfolio Assessment

April 2025

This document will be updated periodically, so please check the UKPHR website to ensure you are using the current version.

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We strongly recommend that you read each section of this document to help you decide whether the Specialist Registration by Portfolio Assessment route is suitable for you before starting on your pre-application.

About the SRbPA route and pre-applications

1. Specialist registration with UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), General Medical Council (GMC) or General Dental Council (GDC) is an essential requirement for Consultant or Director of Public Health roles.
2. The UKPHR registration process is a **retrospective** route to Specialist Registration that requires an individual to demonstrate that they meet a set of competencies that aligns with the 2022 Public Health Specialty Training Curriculum. The route gives those who did not complete a Public Health Specialty Training Programme to demonstrate that the entirety of their experience and knowledge is equivalent to a newly qualified consultant in Public Health.
3. The SRbPA route has two stages:
 - a. The **pre-application process** assesses whether the applicant is working at the right level (i.e. a new consultant) and will be able to provide evidence across the full range of competencies upon submission of their full portfolio.
 - b. **Full portfolio** submission is only made if a pre-application is approved and UKPHR is satisfied that the applicant is working at the right level.
4. If you are considering applying, you must be confident that you are **'portfolio ready'** i.e., that you can meet all the required competencies, or have very few gaps to fill. If your pre-application is approved, you will have 18 months to collate a full portfolio. We urge any applicants to consider this carefully and ensure if you have gaps, these are completed before you send in your pre-application. So be very sure your portfolio is complete and as comprehensive as possible before you send it in. Do not rush to send it in, as you may waste some of your 18 months of portfolio preparation time.
5. **Before you start your pre-application, it is crucial that you read this document and all three of the following guidance documents** to gain a comprehensive understanding of the scope of this process:
 - UKPHR Show How competencies and guidance
 - UKPHR Know How competencies and guidance
 - UKPHR Portfolio application guidance
6. We also recommend that you listen to the podcasts our Moderators have recorded. These are available on our [website](#) and our YouTube page: <https://tinyurl.com/yxdw6yzd>
7. UKPHR want you to succeed, but this is a long and challenging process for most. This guidance is meant to help you present as coherent a case as possible for your registration. Please note that if you do not follow the advice given in this and other guidance documents, you are unlikely to have a successful application.
8. The purpose of the pre-application process is to ensure that applicants going forward to submit a full portfolio can achieve registration. Your pre-application must demonstrate that you are working at the level of a newly qualified public health consultant in the UK. The pre-application process reflects the learning outcomes of the [Public Health Specialty Training Curriculum \(2022\)](#) and is also considered to be equivalent with the Portfolio Pathway route for public health doctors overseen by the General Medical Council. It is very strongly recommended that you are **PORTFOLIO READY** before sending in your preapplication.

Eligibility

9. The focus of the pre-application is to establish that you are working at the right level to ultimately be admitted to the register as a public health specialist.
10. For a successful pre-application, you **must**:
 - Work in or have worked previously in a senior public health role and will be able to demonstrate practice in accordance with *Good Public Health Practice*.
 - Be able to demonstrate competence in public health practice equivalent to a newly qualified public health professional who has completed the Public Health Specialty Training Programme.
 - Hold a post graduate qualification (in any relevant public health discipline) i.e., Level 7 and above in the Qualifications and Credit Framework¹ or Level 11 and above in Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework².
 - Provide evidence of CPD and be part of a formal CPD programme for at least one year. The CPD programme must include reflection.
 - Consistently demonstrate sound judgment in effectively using a range of advanced public health expertise and skills, mapped to the required competencies
 - Use a range of advanced public health skills in working at senior organisational levels to deliver population health in complex and unpredictable environments
 - Have experience of Strategic Leadership and Collaborative Working for Health
 - Be able to submit evidence of recent and complete appraisal documentation together with PDP and 360 feedback
 - Be on track to submit a completed portfolio within 18 months of pre-application approval.
11. It is important to describe your role in any work cited and to describe work in relation to the breadth of public health know how and show how competencies. This experience can have been built up over time and in different roles in a wide variety of settings including health, local government, academic, voluntary sector, and independent sector.
12. We strongly recommend that you ask someone who has been through a UKPHR portfolio registration process to read your application form, matrix and other supporting documents before submission and ask them for honest feedback on your drafts.
13. A public health doctor who has previously applied to the General Medical Council for a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration/Portfolio Pathway and has been refused may apply to UKPHR under the SRbPA route, after 18 months from the unsuccessful GMC notification.
14. Applicants who have been part of the formal public health training programme but not completed for whatever reason, may apply and use evidence acquired during that training if it demonstrates competency at the appropriate level.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

² <https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>

What is in a pre-application?

15. You will need to submit a range of documents to the UKPHR office, who will undertake basic eligibility checks and ensure a complete application before sending these to assessors. The supporting documents for a pre-application consist of:
- A completed application form and signed declaration.
 - A current job description.
 - A current CV outlining posts held over the past 10 years clearly showing dates of employment and the status of posts and CPD activities.
 - An organisational chart showing how your role fits into the management structure of their employing organisation and who you report to.
 - Copy of your most recent annual appraisal, conducted within one year of the pre-application. This can be either a work-based or professional appraisal.
 - 360-degree feedback report and accompanying reflection, undertaken within three years of the pre-application. This report should be cited in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) / appraisal documents. An appropriate 360 tool must be used (e.g., one of, or similar to, the tools approved by UKPHR for use in connection with revalidation <https://ukphr.org/registration/revalidation/>).
 - Your current Personal Development Plan, completed within one year of the pre-application and evidence of participation in a formal CPD scheme for at least one year prior to pre-application submission.
 - A completed matrix document that maps your evidence to competencies for both Know Hows and Show Hows, including evidence of reflection. The purpose of this document is to help you review your evidence across all the competencies to identify any gaps. The matrix template can be downloaded from our [website](#).
 - A reference from a senior Public Health professional (Director of Public Health or equivalent) completed on the UKPHR reference template. Your referee must be very familiar with your work and able to comment on the support you may require in order to demonstrate that you meet all of the competencies. They should also confirm the information provided in the organisational chart. The template can be downloaded from our [website](#), and you and your referee can listen to the podcast our Moderators have made about this here: <https://youtu.be/7qal3lqGkQE>
 - Certified copies of qualifications, membership of professional bodies, certificate of passing the Faculty of Public Health Diplomate Examination (if you've taken this) and marriage certificate/change of name deed if any documents are in a different name. Copies should be certified by your referee on their reference.
 - Certified (by your referee on their reference) copy of ID. We accept passports and government-issued ID.
16. Pre-applications and supporting documentation must be submitted electronically by email to UKPHR at register@ukphr.org. Please do not embed documents (e.g., emails, Word document, spreadsheets, presentations etc) into other documents, as this has led to problems which has delayed assessments. Please do not PDF documents – such as the matrix, reference and application form.
17. Once received, the UKPHR Office will check for completeness, and then your pre-application will be processed for assessment. An incomplete pre-application that does not meet all the requirements will not be processed.

The pre-application matrix

18. The pre-application matrix maps your evidence against the competencies required for the SRbPA. It helps you reflect upon your evidence and identify any gaps you may have against all know how and show how competencies. It is a good place to start in helping you understand whether you are ready to submit a portfolio if your pre-application is approved.
19. **Read both Know How and Show How competency documents carefully** and review your evidence thoroughly. You are strongly advised to:
- Assess how adequate your evidence is against each element of each competency. You must evidence learning at a Masters' level or equivalent for the Know How competencies. Show How competencies are measured against the expectations of someone who has completed the formal training programme i.e. a newly qualified consultant.
 - Identify gaps, and plan and arrange for any further development you may require to demonstrate the full range of competencies. On your pre-application matrix, please ensure that you clearly list any gaps in Know How and/or Show How competencies that you plan to fill.
 - Ensure any gaps in your preapplication matrix are highlighted in your PDP. This assures the assessors that you are aware of the gaps, and have plans to address them within your PDP, which are achievable within appropriate timescales. If they do not think that timescales are realistic, this could be a reason to refuse your application.
20. The assessors will look at your CPD for evidence of your learning. If you plan to evidence your Know How competencies by passing the Faculty of Public Health Diplomate Examination (DFPH) examination, we strongly advise you to do so prior to submitting your preapplication. Bear in mind that you will have 18 months from preapplication approval to portfolio submission, and passing the exam on the first attempt cannot be assumed.
- **If applicants have passed the Diplomate exam less than 5 years from the date of their portfolio submission**, they are exempt from providing additional evidence for all Know How competencies.
 - **If applicants have passed the Diplomate exam 5 -10 years prior to the date of their portfolio submission**, they are exempt from most Know How competencies except for those containing the word 'current' (KH6.f, KH6.h, KH7.c, KH7.e, KH7.f), where **they must demonstrate up to date knowledge of the current situation**.
- Please ensure to submit your certificate confirming your pass, certified by your referee on your reference form.
21. For the purposes of the pre-application, we advise that you focus your evidence on the most relevant for the competency or part of the competency being claimed. For your **Know How competency matrix**, ensure you have clearly listed the course / modules / learning title that fulfils each part of the competency, including the date the learning was completed. If you have identified gaps in your Know How competencies, please complete the 'planned learning section' of the matrix to include the course / modules / learning title and planned date the learning will be completed.
22. For your **Show How competency matrix**, make sure you've identified which work you will use to satisfy each element of each competency. The title of the work / learning is sufficient for the pre-application. Do not provide a summary of the work but do cite the date for the work. If you have identified gaps in your Show How

competencies, please complete the 'planned work' section of the matrix to include the title of the work you will use to satisfy the competency, including the date you plan to complete the work.

23. If your pre-application is approved then you decide that there are other relevant examples of your learning or work that are more suited to the competency as you are collating your full portfolio, you can use those instead.

Evidence

Postgraduate qualification & CPD

24. The **postgraduate qualification** may be in "any subject relevant to public health" because of the breadth of disciplines that contribute to public health practice. The purpose of this requirement is to establish that knowledge has been acquired at the appropriate level through formal study you have undertaken after a first degree - this may be a Postgraduate Diploma, Master's Degree or PhD. If there are questions as to whether the qualification's title or subject matter is relevant, this will be determined by the assessors. UKPHR cannot comment on the relevancy of a postgraduate qualification prior to the assessment process.
25. All UKPHR registrants are required to engage in CPD in line with the Faculty of Public Health's CPD policy. To demonstrate that you have appropriate **CPD**, you must show that you have been actively participating in formal CPD activities for at least one year prior to submitting your pre-application. This CPD must include an element of reflection. Many applicants will use the Faculty's CPD scheme or one of the others recommended by the Faculty, a list of which can be found here: [Exemption from CPD - Faculty of Public Health \(fph.org.uk\)](https://fph.org.uk/exemption-from-cpd)

Personal development plan, appraisal and 360 feedback

26. You are required to submit a current, signed off PDP, completed within one year of your pre-application, and expected at the required level of practice. PDP content should include elements required for specialist Public Health registration and include plans to show how any identified competency gaps are to be addressed. Management PDPs alone are normally insufficient. The appraisal can be professional or work-based.
27. You are required to submit a recent annual appraisal, conducted within one year of your pre-application and a 360-degree feedback report within the last 3 years, both expected to reflect the required level of practice. It's recommended that the 360 feedback is undertaken as close to the pre-application submission date as possible.
28. Assessors will determine whether the 360-degree feedback tool is appropriate. It must be relevant e.g., one of, or similar to, the tools approved by UKPHR for revalidation. See view the list of approved tools under "important documents": <https://ukphr.org/registration/revalidation/> . UKPHR cannot comment on the relevancy of a 360-feedback tool prior to the assessment process.

The reference

29. A referee is required to provide a summary statement to confirm your professional competence as a public health specialist equivalent to a newly qualified public health consultant.

30. Your reference must be completed by a public health specialist registered with the UKPHR, GDC, GMC, or international equivalent. If possible, this should be your line manager, your most recent appraiser, or someone with whom you have had a reporting relationship. If this is not your line manager, it must be someone with whom you have worked closely for at least a year and who has direct knowledge of your work. If relevant, your referee should also set out the support, if any, you will receive while preparing your portfolio for submission (e.g., study leave, mentoring support).
31. Your referee should not be someone with whom you have a close personal relationship with, such as family and friends.
32. The views of your referee should be based on direct observation of your work for **at least one year within the past three years**. If you are unable to find a referee that can provide a full year reference, an additional reference will be required to make up the shortfall. Please note that all referees will still need to meet the criteria requested by UKPHR.
33. The purpose of the reference is to provide assurance that the applicant:
- Has worked in a senior public health role and is able to demonstrate practice in accordance with *Good Public Health Practice*.
 - Can demonstrate competence in public health practice across the breadth of Public Health competencies equivalent to a newly qualified public health professional who has completed the Public Health Specialty Training Programme.
 - Maintains and enhances professional knowledge and skills through continuing professional development and participates in a relevant formal CPD scheme.
 - Uses a range of advanced public health skills in working at senior organisational levels to deliver population health in complex and unpredictable environments and has experience of strategic leadership and collaborative working for health.
 - Consistently demonstrates sound judgment in effectively using a range of advanced public health expertise and skills across the breadth of the required competencies
 - Has the support of senior colleagues to proceed with compiling a portfolio for assessment within 18 months of receiving approval from UKPHR.
34. **If you are self-employed**, your reference should confirm that you comply with the following requirements:
- a. You have actively taken steps to maintain and enhance skills and knowledge during the preceding 5 years.
 - b. You have taken part in opportunities for CPD.
 - c. You continuously reflect the values outlined in Good Public Health Practice.
35. Referees are expected to have read the competencies, pre-application and portfolio guidance to be fully aware of the assurances they are providing us about you.

Assessment of your pre-application

36. Once UKPHR has received your pre-application it will be checked in the office for completeness. If there are elements missing, it will be returned to you to address any outstanding areas. When we have confirmed that your full pre-application has been received, UKPHR will then look for assessors.

37. Your pre-application will be assessed by two assessors who will each complete their individual assessment and then agree a joint recommendation. Your assessors will aim to return their assessment to UKPHR within 6 weeks and this will then be presented at the next monthly Registration Panel and then ratified by UKPHR's Registration Approvals Committee. When UKPHR receive your completed assessment from your assessors, you will be notified which Registration Panel and which Registration Approval Committee your application will be considered at, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of your application. From the application being sent to your assessors to your receiving your outcome it may take 4-5 months. All timescales are indicative, but we will do our best to keep you updated on the progress of your application.
38. If, during the assessment process, your assessors believe that they may need a small amount of additional information to help make their decision, they may request a 'pause' to the assessment process while will request the additional information from you. This will pause the assessment 'clock', until the additional information is received.
39. If your application is:
- Accepted:** you have **18 months** from the date of your pre-application acceptance letter to submit your portfolio.
 - Not successful:** you will receive a letter detailing the reasons for this decision and you will be offered a feedback meeting via Microsoft Teams with your assessors. When we send your outcome letter, we will ask you to let us know your availability for this meeting, along with your questions for the assessors to answer. Your feedback meeting is usually with both assessors, one acting as lead and the other acting as observer and note taker to help the conversation proceed smoothly. UKPHR will record the feedback meeting (unless you instruct us otherwise) and the assessors will use this recording to write their notes. The feedback meeting must be scheduled within 30 days of the date of your outcome letter. You are advised to ask a colleague to join you, preferably your line manager or mentor at the meeting. **You are strongly advised to take up the offer of the feedback meeting.** After the feedback session, you should carefully review consider any development needs should you wish to continue, preferably with a colleague who is already registered as a public health specialist.
40. If the assessors cannot agree or questions are raised about your pre-application, the Registration Panel may recommend moderation of your pre-application. If this happens, a UKPHR Moderator will undertake an independent assessment of your pre-application. If a Moderation is requested, we will write to you after the Registration Approvals Committee to let you know. The Moderator will aim to complete their assessment in time for the following month's Registration Panel and Registration Approvals Committee but note that Moderation does result in a delay.
41. If your pre-application is unsuccessful, you can re-apply up to three times. If you fail three preapplication attempts, you must wait for a minimum of two years before reapplying. Then after the two years, you can start your four attempts at a pre-application again.
42. You should be aware that material considered in the previous attempts will not be routinely made available to the assessors of the current application. This is to ensure assessment is unbiased. Each application needs to be complete.
43. If you are on [parental leave](#) or have [extenuating circumstances](#) which prevent you from submitting your portfolio within 18 months of the deadline listed on your

preapplication acceptance letter, then you must apply to seek an extension from UKPHR's Registrar.

Pre-application fee

44. Please note that each pre-application incurs an assessment fee. You can find out the pre-application assessment fee on our website here: <https://ukphr.org/fees-and-charges/>. Payment can be made via the following methods:

BACS:	Bank: CAF Bank Account name: Public Health Register Sort code 40-52-40 Account number 00036414
PayPal:	Using the account register@ukphr.org

Hints and tips

45. It is important to understand some of the trends we've identified since the inception of the SRbPA route. Here are some frequent reasons why applications are not successful:
- There are gaps in the applicant's knowledge/experience and assessors are not reassured that the applicant has acknowledged and identified ways of addressing these, particularly within the PDP. This demonstrates a lack of planning or lack of awareness that they have a competency gap. Main gaps to date have been health protection and health intelligence.
 - The applicant is not engaged in an appropriate CPD scheme for a year prior to preapplication, or they have not demonstrated that they are focusing their CPD on the public health competencies relevant for specialist practice.
 - The applicant is an expert in one field of public health, but there is a lack of assurance that they will be able to demonstrate the full breadth of the competencies. For example, experience solely in health protection or public health commissioning.
 - Pre-application is not completed sufficiently and therefore too vague for assessors to reach a judgement
 - There is no evidence of clear public health experience
46. Some applicants have told us that becoming a local assessor for a UKPHR Practitioner Registration scheme has helped them understand how portfolios are approached by assessors.
47. We recommend that you look at UKPHR's FAQs and listen to the Moderator podcasts before submitting your pre-application.

Annex 1

Key Changes made December 2024:

- Expanded reflection section in preapplication matrix to ask applicants to clearly list that they understand any gaps
- Preapplications can be moderated
- Can now pause pre-application assessment for additional info
- No longer need to wait 6 months from unsuccessful outcome to send next pre-application
- Portfolio assessment timescales now 12 weeks
- CPD - need to demonstrate engagement for at least 1 year as part of a formal program
- Keep file and folder names short when electronically sharing documents, and PDF copies of emails
- Expanded guidance for references for self-employed applicants
- Recommendation that 360 report should be undertaken as close to pre-application submission date as possible
- UKPHR require certified (by referee) copies of ID for all pre-applicants
- Overseas applicants are now eligible to apply
- Do not need to wait 6 months between up to 3 preapplications
- For doctors, if unsuccessful with GMC CESR route must wait 18 months before sending a preapplication

Changes made March 2025:

- Amended wording for who can provide a reference
- Clarification has been made for those who have passed the Diplomate exam as to when they will be expected to provide additional evidence for Know Hows with the term 'current' in (this is required if their portfolio is submitted more than 5 years after DFPH exam pass date).