

# Getting into Palliative Medicine

*A guide from the Association for Palliative  
Medicine*

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**THE ASSOCIATION FOR PALLIATIVE MEDICINE**  
*Of Great Britain and Ireland*

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*2019 version*

## ***How do I apply?***

Applications for Round One recruitment usually take place in early February. It is worth looking at the timeline, eligibility criteria, person specification and application scoring information well ahead of time as there are lots of opportunities to improve your application in the months leading up to the deadline. The application form takes a long time to complete so avoid leaving it until the last minute. Provisional post numbers for each deanery are advertised online but can often change. You will be given a pre-interview score to determine whether an interview is offered. Your pre-interview score will be combined with your interview score (although the points will then score differently) and you will be ranked against all other candidates. Deanery preferences are generally asked for around the time of the interview.

The main website to look at is:

<https://www.st3recruitment.org.uk/specialties/palliative-medicine>

## ***What was the interview like?***

The interviews take place over a couple of days, often in late March. If you are invited to interview, you will be able to select a preference for date and time. At present, the interviews are run by and take place in West Midlands Deanery. You will be asked to prepare an eligibility folder and an evidence folder. These take some time to put together so start on them as soon as you begin your application.

Although any interview is nerve-wracking, everyone there will be supportive and want you to do as well as you can. The interviewers are looking for people who will be good future colleagues in Palliative Medicine.

There are three 10 minute interviews with 3-5 minute transfers between each station.

**Station 1:** This is the station where the main areas being assessed will be your **suitability for and commitment** to training in the specialty, and your achievements and engagement with training and learning to date. This is your opportunity to talk about your passion for Palliative Medicine and sell yourself as a future trainee. This is a particularly busy station for with lots of ground to cover. Make sure you've prepared for some commonly asked questions.

**Station 2:** At this station you will be asked to think about a **clinical scenario** which will be related to Palliative Medicine (but won't require significant Palliative Medicine knowledge). After discussing the clinical scenario, you will be asked some questions about professionalism and clinical governance.

**Station 3:** This station will present you with an **ethical scenario** and is also designed to assess your communication skills. Again, this is likely to have a Palliative Medicine theme but won't demand specific knowledge.

## Top tips for success from current SpRs Hannah Rose, Isobel Jackson & Vanessa Jackson

- **Prepare early** - Spend time considering how you can maximise your pre-interview score - small additional things can make a big difference. **Check the ST3 Person-Specification information** available through the RCP application website: [www.st3recruitment.org.uk/specialties/palliative-medicine.html](http://www.st3recruitment.org.uk/specialties/palliative-medicine.html). Measure yourself and your CV against the 'Essential' and 'Desirable' criteria and try to fill any gaps that you can. Pay particular attention to areas that score highly e.g. passing MRCP PACES exams. Scores are re-calculated post-interview (eg, although passing PACES will give you lots of points for your pre-interview score, it has less weight after the interview).
- **Gain experience** – The interview provides an opportunity to demonstrate your experience in Palliative Medicine. It is beneficial (although not essential) to get experience working as part of a Specialist Palliative Care Team. Not only will this demonstrate commitment to the specialty and better prepare you for the clinical and ethical scenarios, it will also give you the chance to see if a career in Palliative Medicine is right for you. There are often non-training jobs in Palliative Medicine as well as opportunities for taster weeks.
- **Look out for courses and conferences in Palliative Medicine** - the APM website often advertises these. These provide opportunities to stay in touch with topical issues as well as potential careers advice. Talk to your local Palliative Care team – they are likely to be able to provide advice about the interview and may have projects that you can get involved with.
- **Practice makes perfect!** Find a friend or a colleague and get them to ask you questions. A Specialty Interview Book is a good investment and provides sample questions. There is very little time at each station so having a structure in your head beforehand will help you to give effective and confident answers.
- **Spend time preparing your evidence folder.** It is crucial that this documents all of your achievements declared on your application form (and any that you achieve between submitting your application and the interview). The easier it is for the interviewers to navigate the better. Make sure that you carefully follow the guidelines for the layout.
- **Remember - no one expects you to be a Palliative Medicine doctor already!** They just want to see that you're passionate about working in this area in the future and that you have spent time thinking about why it is what you want to do.
- **Look out for other ways to demonstrate your interest:** audits, essay prizes or The Association of Palliative Medicine Juniors Committee (see <https://apmonline.org/committee-pages/juniors-committee/>). This is always a good place to find out about current opportunities. Why not consider applying for a post on the committee or attending the annual conference?

## Do I have the right experience?

- Most applicants are physicians with at least 24 months' clinical experience.
- Many have done Core Medicine, General Practice or ACCS training.
- Applicants without MRCP (UK) need:
  - At least 12 months' post-foundation experience in a range of acute hospital medical specialties, giving at least 4 months' experience managing patients on unselected medical take with ongoing patient management.
  - A further 12 months' experience post foundation stage is also required in any of the physician specialties, or in general practice, anaesthetics, surgery, clinical oncology, psychiatry or paediatrics (a maximum of 6 months per specialty).
  - There may be further examination requirements if you have not completed MRCP (see the ST3 recruitment website for details).

**Note the application deadlines and do not give up! There is a second round of recruitment later in the year so look out for timelines for this too.**

If you are unsuccessful after both rounds of recruitment, seek advice from your deanery's Training Programme Director for Palliative Medicine, the details for which should be available on your deanery website. If your heart is set on the specialty, consider a non-training grade hospice post, which gives you valuable clinical experience in the specialty as well as demonstrating your commitment.