

# SAS Development Programme: Supporting the Development of a Diverse SAS workforce

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## Aim

The SAS Development Programme was established in 2012 with Scottish Government funding to develop SAS doctors and dentists working in NHS Scotland. It is essential that there is equal opportunity for all doctors and dentists to reach their full potential irrespective of their background. The NES SAS Development Programme wished to ensure that it is supporting the needs of the diverse SAS workforce in Scotland with its [SAS Development Fund](#).

## Background

There are approximately 1,300 Specialty, Associate Specialist and Specialist (SAS grade) doctors and dentists working in NHS Scotland. SAS careers can offer an alternative, positive career pathway for doctors and dentists; the new SAS contract has created the potential for progression to Specialist, with some SAS doctors aiming to achieve Specialist Registration by pursuing the Portfolio Pathway.

The GMC State of Medical Education and practice in the UK Workforce report 2024<sup>1</sup> indicates that of the 23,772 registered doctors in Scotland, 19.9% have a Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ) from outwith the UK. In 2023, 68% of joiners to the UK medical register have non-UK PMQs, with a high proportion entering SAS or locally employed (LE) posts.

**The SAS Development Fund** aims to support all SAS doctors and dentists to develop their skills and knowledge to develop, deliver new or improved clinical services, or to enhance their role within their clinical team. Funding can support applications to upskill, including costs for training courses, relevant post-graduate qualifications or specific secondments, including progression towards the Portfolio Pathway.

## Methods

We analysed the anonymised data from April 2022-March 2025 on the 106 sequential applications to the SAS Development Fund, providing sufficient numbers/data to ensure individual anonymity; gathered in respect of gender, age, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, caregiving responsibility, and remoteness/rurality. Given the recognised diversity within the SAS workforce, we compared the data of all applicants against those whose funding was approved to determine if this reflected the profile of applicants in all categories.

## Results

For all charts: Not approved Approved



## Results

Of the 106 applications, 103 were approved. All groups of SAS applied to the SAS Development Fund. We compared the profiles of all applicants against those whose funding was approved and found that the profile of those whose applications were successful reflected the profile of applicants in all categories.

## Conclusion

The SAS Development Fund supports the opportunity for development for the diverse group represented by the Scottish SAS workforce. We will continue to highlight this fund to all groups via our SAS Education Adviser network and ensure ongoing equal opportunity in accessing SAS funding.