

HOW TO BECOME A BREAST SURGEON

There are 4 main routes into Breast Surgery in the UK:

1.. CCT in General Surgery	2. CCT in Plastic surgery and Oncoplastic Fellowship	3.The CESR application route	4.Working as an SAS doctor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of breast surgeons practice as a Consultant Breast Surgeon after obtaining a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) in General Surgery. • This is often combined with an accredited oncoplastic fellowship to gain some plastic surgery experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing your CCT in Plastic Surgery along with an accredited oncoplastic fellowship which is carried out in the final years of training, or even post CCT, giving you appropriate skills to manage the full range of benign and malignant breast conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have not followed the traditional UK pathway for surgical training or have been trained abroad, you can still enter training at various points if you are able to provide evidence of equivalent clinical and professional competencies. You can apply for consultancy recognition through the CESR application. There is also a Breast Surgery Specific CESR route. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, doctors and surgeons not wishing to follow the standard training pathway may wish to work in as an SAS (Staff, Associate Specialists and Specialty doctors) role. SAS posts also include clinical assistants, hospital practitioners and other non-standard, non-training trust grades.

Breast Surgery is a fantastic, challenging and rewarding career.

Breast surgeons come from two main surgical specialties: General Surgery or Plastic Surgery. General Surgery is a large specialty, (approximately 2000 consultants or 1 in 4 of all surgeons in the UK) dealing with emergency admissions and performing a very wide range of elective operations on the breast, endocrine glands and in the abdomen.

Plastic surgery is a smaller specialty with approximately 500 specialists in the UK. It has two main components: reconstructive plastic surgery, which is all about restoring appearance and function to the human body after illness or accidents, and aesthetic (often called “cosmetic”) plastic surgery which is done to change the appearance from choice. Much of the work done by plastic surgeons in the NHS is reconstructive surgery.

Many consultant posts now allow individuals to practice solely as a breast surgeon, but other posts continue to allow surgeons to work in more than one special interest area and to continue providing emergency cover.

THE “TYPICAL” GENERAL SURGERY PATHWAY

1. The Foundation Years: FY1/2

After medical school, all doctors need to spend 2 years working as a paid foundation trainee, rotating around different medical and surgical specialties. Trainees wishing to become breast surgeons should try and get some experience of surgery, ideally breast surgery, in their foundation years.

2. Early Surgical Training: CT1/2/ Phase 1

After the foundation years, doctors can enter breast surgery via the core surgical training programme (CT) – spending 2 years in a paid hospital training job with rotations covering a range of surgical specialties. These can often be themed towards one specialty (general or plastic surgery).

Trainees wishing to continue their surgical training beyond this point must complete their membership of the Royal College of Surgeons exam (MRCS) by the end of their CT2 year. This exam is a prerequisite for entry into the next part of specialty training. Entry into higher surgical training (HST) is again via national selection.

3. Higher surgical Training (Phase 2 & 3)

- In Phase 2 (typically 4 years – although this is competence based) – a trainee will experience at least 3 years of elective general surgery and the first 6 to 12 months of basic breast surgery alongside the General Surgery on call rota.
- In Phase 3 (typically the last 2 years of training) – breast trainees may be able to stop doing emergency general surgery & specialize in breast & oncoplastic surgery modules as long as they have required emergency competencies for CCT – “being able to MANAGE” the on call emergency take”.
- Trainees are encouraged to declare an interest in breast surgery early on so that the most appropriate training posts can be allocated.
- It is recommended that in Phase 3 breast trainees request a 12 month placement in a level 3 oncoplastic centre, which is routinely doing over 100 major oncoplastic procedures per year including pedicle flaps, free flaps, revisional procedures, chest wall reconstruction for locally advanced disease and a full range of cosmetic breast surgery.

4. Post CCT Training

Increasingly it is possible for trainees to obtain experience of oncoplastic surgical techniques during their breast surgery training. However, it is often desirable for trainees to undertake a post CCT fellowship. There are currently 14 National Oncoplastic Breast fellowship posts across England, which are managed by a Training Interface Group (TIG) between General Surgery and Plastic Surgery. There are also other locally organised fellowships and RCS accredited breast fellowships available to trainees across the UK. These allow trainees to develop more advanced skills in oncoplastic breast reconstruction techniques before entering independent practice.

Further information

If you are interested in finding out more about breast surgery, you may be interested in the following websites:

Association of Breast Surgery

www.associationofbreastsurgery.org.uk

The website includes information about training and webcasts of presentations from past ABS Conferences.

The Mammary Fold

www.themammaryfold.com

The Mammary Fold is the national association run by trainees for trainees in breast and oncoplastic breast surgery in the UK.

JCST

www.jchst.org.uk

The Joint Committee on Surgical Training (JCST) is an advisory body to the four surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and Ireland for all matters related to surgical training and works closely with the Surgical Specialty Associations in Great Britain and Ireland.

BAPRAS

www.BAPRAS.org.uk

The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS) is the voice of plastic surgery in the UK, advancing education in all aspects of the specialty and promoting understanding of contemporary practice.

GMC

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/>

Covers information around CESR applications in General Surgery and Breast Surgery