



Guidance for Applicants to Thoracic Surgery ST4 Clinical Training programmes in 2026

Introduction

NHS England – Wessex Recruitment Team (formally Wessex Deanery) is coordinating National Recruitment to Thoracic Surgery ST4 for commencement in August 2026. National Recruitment will cover all Thoracic Surgery ST4 posts in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Please read this guide alongside the '**Applicant guidance**' which is available on the Specialty Training website: <https://medical.hee.nhs.uk/medical-training-recruitment>

We like to inform applicants that 2026 recruitment (for posts starting in August 2026) will be the last year of recruitment to ST4 Thoracic Surgery posts.
After the 2026 recruitment cycle entry into this specialty will be at ST1 level only.

Key Dates

Date	Event	Notes
Wednesday 22 October 2025	Advertisements Published	<i>Adverts will be placed on the NHSE Wessex website</i>
Thursday 23 October 2025 (10:00)	Applications Open	<i>Applications will only be accepted via the Oriel online application portal</i>
Thursday 20 November 2025 (16:00)	Applications Close	<i>Applications will close promptly at 16:00. Late applications will not be considered.</i>
By Friday 5 December 2025	Self-assessment cut-off / longlisting	<i>The self-assessment cut off score will be determined and applicants will receive notification of the outcome of the scoring process. The evidence verification will include top ranking applicants as well as applicants who score within a certain cut-off margin, defined, and set by MDRS.</i> <i>Please note that eligibility will be checked at a later stage so being put through to the next stage of the process (self-assessment verification) does not necessarily mean you are eligible to apply.</i>
Monday 8 December – Friday 19 December 2025	Evidence upload - applicants	<i>Top ranking applicants, as well as applicants who score within a certain cut-off margin, defined, and set by MDRS, will be asked to upload evidence to an online verification portal. This facility will close at 10:00am on Friday 19 December 2025.</i>



Monday 5 January 2026	Evidence Verification Day	Assessors will scrutinise the evidence uploaded (each portfolio will be reviewed by a panel of 3 Assessors). Once the verification process has been completed the scores will then be checked to create the final shortlist.
Tuesday 6 January 2026	Final shortlist / outcome of evidence verification	Final self-assessment scores following evidence verification will be released to applicants.
Tuesday 6 – Friday 9 January 2026	Self-assessment appeal window	Following the release of the final self-assessment scores applicants will have 72 hours in which to submit an appeal. Please refer to the Appeals section for further information.
w/c 19 January 2026	Appeals reviewed and invitation to interview	Appeals will be reviewed and responded to by the Clinical Recruitment Leads. Invites to interview will be released no later than Monday 26 January 2026.
Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 February 2026	Interviews	Interviews will be held virtually via Qpercom Recruit.
No later than Thursday 5 March 2026	Initial offers made	Offers will be made through the Oriel application portal.
13:00 Thursday 2 April 2026	Holding deadline	Applicants must have accepted or declined any “held” post by this deadline. Any post not accepted will be recycled and offered to other eligible applicants.

Contacting the Recruitment Team

It is kindly requested that applicants do not contact Consultants or Training Centres involved in National Recruitment.

Please refer to online documentation for information about the posts.

Any queries should be directed to the Recruitment Team via email:

england.CTSurgeryRecruitment.wx@nhs.net

- The Team will endeavour to respond to your queries within 48 hours
- The office opening hours are **09:00 – 17:00, Monday - Friday**

Raising concerns about the recruitment process that fall outside of the national complaints policy



Should you wish to raise any concerns about the recruitment process that falls outside of the national complaints policy (e.g. fraudulent submissions by other applicants) please contact england.mdrs.confidential@nhs.net where you can raise such concerns.

This email address should not be used to raise a complaint which bypasses the process detailed in the national complaints policy.

Applying for a Vacancy

Applications for all posts in Cardiothoracic Surgery will be completed via the Oriel recruitment portal only. The portal can be accessed via the internet: <https://new.oriel.nhs.uk/Web>

The system requires pre-registration which can be completed immediately.

Longlisting / Shortlisting

We will be processing applications by self-assessment score initially for 2026. Eligibility will then be checked at a later stage. Please note that being put through to the next stage of the process does not necessarily mean you are eligible to apply.

Any applicants who get through the initial stage who are then found out to not satisfy the essential criteria for the posts being advertised will be removed at this point. This process will be completed centrally by the NHS England – Wessex Recruitment Team.

Queries at the longlisting stage will be limited to clarification of information that you have supplied on your application form.

Any applicant who is unsuccessful at the shortlisting / longlisting stage will be informed of this.

The person specification to assess eligibility can be viewed on the NHSE Specialty Training website: <https://medical.hee.nhs.uk/medical-training-recruitment/medical-specialty-training/person-specifications>

Fitness to Practise

Any applicants who answer yes to **any** of the fitness to practise declarations on their application form must complete an additional form (which can be downloaded from the resource bank on the specialty training website) and submit it to: england.CTSurgeryRecruitment.wx@nhs.net marked “**Fitness to Practise – Confidential**”

Disability Confident Scheme (DCS)

Eligible applicants applying under the Disability Confident Scheme will need to score at least 50% of the total self-assessment score to be invited to interview.



Achievement of Core Competences

Typically, you will have achieved the competences or equivalent from the first two years of specialty training (ST/CT1 and 2). For further information, see the specialty training curriculum available from the relevant Royal College websites.

If you have completed Core Surgical Training you will need to upload your CT2 ARCP outcome form. If you have not completed a Core Surgical Training programme you will need to submit an Alternative Certificate of Eligibility to Enter Higher Surgical Training, which can be downloaded from our website.

Alongside evidence of Core Competences you will also need to document in your employment history that you have completed at least:

- a. 12 months training in general thoracic surgery of which a minimum of 6 months must have been spent at ST3 level
- b. 12 months training in cardiac surgery of which a minimum of 6 months must have been spent at ST3 level

Immigration

With effect from 6 October 2019, all medical practitioners are on the Shortage Occupation List. This means that with the exception of applications to Public Health, all specialty recruitment applicants will be exempt from the RLMT; there will be no restriction on their appointment.

Evidence upload verification portal

Once the self-assessment scores have been reviewed to determine the cut off and those applications have been longlisted the following groups of applicants will then be invited to upload evidence for verification:

- Those who score above a specified self-assessment cut-off score.
- Any applicant who scores within 6 points below the specified cut-off score. For example, if the cut-off score is 30, all applicants scoring above 24 will be invited to upload their evidence for review.

Applicants will be able to upload evidence as detailed in their application form between **10:00am on Monday 8 December 2025 and 10:00am on Friday 19 December 2025.**

Full details of how to upload evidence will be provided by Friday 5 December 2025 so that you can start collecting and preparing your evidence but general guidance is below. It is imperative that you provide evidence for everything that you have cited on your application form as this evidence will be used to confirm the self-assessment score. Any discrepancies or missing evidence may result in your self-assessment score being downgraded.

The portfolio of evidence should be organised as follows:



- The content of the evidence portfolio must be in the same order as the domains in the application form.
- Evidence within each domain should be in chronological order.
- The evidence must be in English. Non-English documents must be accompanied by a certified English translation.
- **For each domain the entire evidence for that domain must be uploaded as a single PDF. Applications with multiple PDFs uploaded for each domain will not be scored and excluded from the application process.**

An evidence verification day will take place on Monday 5 January 2026 whereby the evidence of each applicant will be scrutinised by a panel of three Assessors (Cardiothoracic Training Programme Directors, SAC members and Consultants with Training pedigrees). and the self-assessment score either confirmed or amended based on the evidence provided.

Once the evidence verification process has taken place and the final self-assessment list has been confirmed, the outcome will be released to applicants.

Appeals process

Following the release of the verified self-assessment scores applicants will have 72 hours in which to appeal. Applicants making an appeal will not be able to submit additional evidence. The Clinical Recruitment Leads will review appeals based on the evidence previously submitted. It is possible that a verified self-assessment score could be adjusted down as well as up following the submission of an appeal. Following the appeal process the adjusted self-assessment score will be final. Rules regarding divergence criteria for appeals are available on request.

Preferences

Applicants who are invited to attend the online interview process will be asked to rank their preferences of the available training programmes through the Oriel Recruitment portal. These preferences will be used in conjunction with the rankings after the interview to inform the offer made to the successful applicants. The number of posts available in each training programme will be published alongside the preference list.

Preferencing will be made available after interviews have taken place, until **12:00 noon Monday 23 February 2026.**

Interview

All interviews will be conducted online via Qpercom Recruit.

The interviews will take place on Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 February 2026. Applicants invited to attend an interview will be able to book an available slot, but we ask that applicants make themselves available for both days in case of any technical issues.



The ST4 online interview will consist of 2 separate assessment stations:

1. 5 Structured Questions lasting approximately 25 minutes.
2. 3 communications skills questions last approximately 25 minutes

Please note the specific areas mentioned above may change between applications opening and the actual interview. However, full details will be given to applicants who are invited to attend an interview.

Important – applicants who are invited to attend an interview must not share the interview questions and answers outside of the interview with anyone including fellow applicants, mentors or supervisors. If this is found to occur and traced to an applicant, it may result in their application and/or offer being withdrawn from the recruitment process.

Your self-assessment score will be carried over to make up part of the total final score after the interview.

Lay Representatives

There will be Lay Representatives who will be observing interviews to ensure fair process is being followed. They will be asked to have their camera turned off and microphone muted for the duration of the interview. The administrator will let you know during the document checking process if a Lay Representative will be present for your interview.

Outcome of Assessment Centre – Offer of a Training Post

Offers will be made to successful applicants by NHS England – Wessex for all posts nationwide. Your ranking from self-assessment and interview will be used in conjunction with the preferences that you made through the Oriel recruitment portal.

Further Information

For any further information or queries about the specifics of the process after reading this document please refer to the Cardiothoracic Surgery Recruitment website or contact the Recruitment Team details at england.CTSurgeryRecruitment.wx@nhs.net