

# Messly's **F3 Workbook**

A step-by-step guide  
to planning your dream F3 Year



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# Welcome to your F3 Workbook

Hi, I'm Amelia. I'm a Clinical Lead at Messly and an F5 Doctor.

If you are a doctor who is thinking of taking time out of training, then I am glad that you have found your way here.

You face a momentous decision; one that could profoundly change your understanding of what being a doctor means, and that decision can be both terrifying and exciting. Being here means that you can approach that decision with the advice, support, and guidance of those who have done this before you.

There are so many reasons why someone might want to step away from training, but your specific motivations will be unique to you. The key to making your time out of training successful is to dig deep, and really understand those motivations in detail so that you can design your F3 in a way that suits you best.

Personally, I am a strong advocate for taking time out of training. Too often I meet doctors who feel very far removed from the well-rounded, multi-faceted humans they were before medical school. Their time and mental energy have been focused on one thing for so long that they have lost touch with the spark that makes them exquisite.

An F3 Year is the first chance that many doctors will have to reacquaint themselves with their past hobbies and incorporate medicine into their other interests.

When I was in training, I found that F3 options were not widely discussed even though they were the most common route for doctors after F2. The impetus was placed on the individual doctor to make the most of their decision to leave training, which made it hard for us to understand the scope of what we could accomplish with our time out.

But the truth is, the possibility of what you can achieve with your F3 is incredibly vast and wonderfully diverse. I hope that by working through this booklet you can feel inspired, empowered, and can achieve the F3 Year of your dreams.

# How to use this Workbook

This workbook has been designed specifically for F2 doctors planning an F3 Year, but can also be useful for more senior doctors contemplating taking time out of training or exploring alternative careers.

## **It can be used to help you:**

- Identify if an F3 Year might be right for you
- Understand what you personally need most from your F3 Year
- Set your boundaries and goals to keep your F3 Year on track
- Identify the types of opportunities that would suit you best
- Start the process of planning and organising yourself

This workbook provides exercises and prompts to help you explore these areas, and provides information, ideas, and additional resources to guide you in the right direction.

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**Exercise 1: Fulfilment Meter** Audit how you currently feel in 8 domains to see which areas would benefit from focus during an F3 Year.

**Part 2: Boundaries & Goals** Discover the importance of setting clear boundaries and goals and how to identify yours.

**Exercises 2 & 3: Boundaries & Goals** Using a list of prompts, take some time to define your personal boundaries and goals for the coming year.

**Part 3: Finding the Right Options for You** A run-through of the most common options for F3s, to start your process of deciding what to do.

**Exercise 4: F3 Options List** Review a list of the most common F3 options

**Exercise 5: This or That** A series of either/or choices to help you identify which F3 options might be the best fit for you based on your preferences.

**Part 4: Getting Organised** Understand the importance and benefits of planning your year in advance and how to customise a timeline to fit your needs.

**Exercise 6: Planning Ahead** Populate a calendar with key dates and activities to make sure you stay ahead of the game.

## PART 1

# To F3, or not to F3?

Whether or not to take an F3 Year is a very personal decision and the reasons for taking one will vary from person to person.

However, the most common reasons for doctors take time out of training are:

### **Broadening your medical experience**

Many doctors use their F3 Year as an opportunity to get some specific experience in a specialty before they commit to further training, particularly if the further experience would strengthen their specialty applications.

### **Recharging your batteries**

Training places heavy demands on your personal and professional life so it is not unusual for doctors to want to take a break before continuing along the training pathway, whether that is a long holiday or simply reducing your hours as a locum.

### **Seeking adventure and excitement**

Exploring medicine in sunnier parts of the world where you can travel while also working is a very desirable choice. Australia and New Zealand are two of the most popular destinations for F3 doctors.

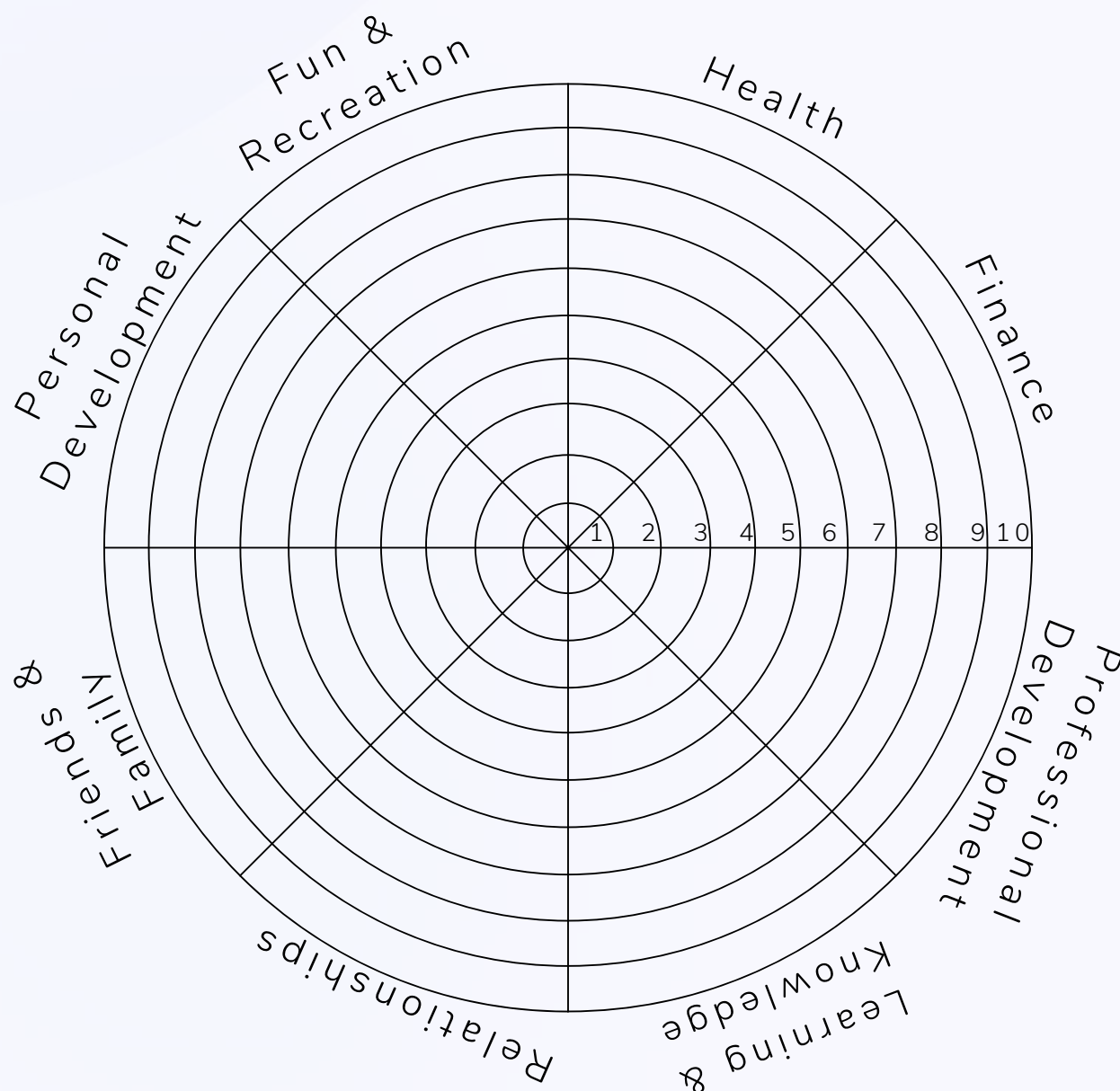
### **Exploring alternative options and careers**

An F3 year might be your first opportunity to try something new since starting medical school. Some doctors test out new careers with the knowledge that they could easily return to medicine in the future should they want to.

[Click here to read a comprehensive article on the Messly blog](#)

# Fulfilment Meter

A fulfillment meter is a useful gauge to see which areas of your life are satisfying you, and which are not. Use this meter by coloring in each segment to the level (1-10) that you feel satisfied in that domain. When you are done, reflect on which areas you feel underserved, and how you might be able to boost your sense of fulfillment in that area during F3.



## PART 2

# Boundaries & Goals

Setting your boundaries and naming your goals early on can help you establish which options for spending your F3 Year are likely to be the best match for you.

### **Step 1: Establish your boundaries**

Boundaries are things that you **MUST** do, or something that you **WILL NOT** do, or **CANNOT** do. You're putting a clear line in the sand up-front.

For example, you may decide that your two-hour drive to and from work has made you feel awful, and therefore you **WILL NOT** take a job that requires you to commute that far.

Or, you may feel that you **MUST** pay off your student loans during your F3 year and so have to prioritise work that can make this happen.

### **Step 2: Identify your goals**

Goals are things that you **WANT** to do or achieve, and doing so would enrichen your life. They can be personal, professional, financial, or geographical.

For example, you may **WANT** to travel to the Arctic, or you may **WANT** more experience in a surgical specialty.

Setting goals help you move in the right direction for your own development, and will help you narrow down your F3 options to find the right experiences for you.

Now, complete exercises 2 and 3 on the following pages. You can use the prompts (they can be found after the exercise pages) if you need to.

# Boundaries

Use this page to explore your boundaries. If you are stuck for questions to ask yourself, look at the list of prompts after the next page.

## PERSONAL

Example: I will not work weekends so that I can spend time with my family.

## PROFESSIONAL

Example: I must get 6 months ITU experience for my ST1 applications.

## GEOGRAPHICAL

Example: I must live in Cornwall to be near the beaches and good surfing.

## FINANCIAL

Example: I must earn at least £2,000/m to afford my mortgage.



# Goals

Use this page to explore your goals. If you are stuck for questions to ask yourself, look at the list of prompts on the following page.

## PERSONAL

Example: I would love to learn how to fly a plane this year.

## PROFESSIONAL

Example: I really want to get some research published.

## GEOGRAPHICAL

Example: I have always wanted to travel to Tahiti.

## FINANCIAL

Example: I would like to be able to afford to buy an electric car.

# Boundaries & Goals

## PROMPTS

Here are some prompts to help you complete exercises 2 and 3.

### Geographical

- I must /want to live (location) .....
- I will not commute more than (distance) .....
- I need to /want to travel to (location) .....
- I must /want to have a holiday for (number of weeks) .....
- .....

### Financial

- I must /want to earn at least (amount).....
- I need to /want to save at least (amount) .....
- I have to /want to be able to afford (item).....
- .....

### Personal

- I have to /want to spend more time (hobby) .....
- I must learn /would feel happy if I learned (skill).....
- I need to /would love to achieve (milestone) .....
- I have to /have always wanted to experience (activity).....
- I need to /hope to feel more (emotion) .....
- .....

### Professional

- I must work in / I would enjoy working in (specialty) .....
- I need to /want to improve my skills in (competency) .....
- I would feel proud of myself if I worked on (task) .....
- It is important to me that I work on (project) .....
- My career would be more fulfilling if I (goal) .....
- .....

## PART 3

# Finding the right options for you

There are so many options for how to spend your time out of training that choosing the right one can be daunting. Don't get trapped in a job that don't meet your needs or goals simply because you haven't given enough thought to what you would truly enjoy and benefit from.

### **Routine or excitement?**

Would you love working on a research project for a year or prefer the fast pace of HEMS or ED?

### **Teaching or frontline?**

Would you find teaching medical students fulfilling or prefer to remain on the frontline providing care?

### **Earn more or have stability?**

Would maximising your earnings by locuming be more enticing than the routine and experience of a steady 9-5 job in a single department?

While there are definitely more common and conventional options for F3 doctors, the truth is that your imagination is the only limit to what you might be able to do. Knowing your options and what you might enjoy can help you to point your compass in the right direction.

# F3 Options

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but here are some of the more common options for F3 doctors. Tick the ideas that instantly jump out at you and capture your attention, and then proceed to exercise 5 to see whether the options you chose might be a good fit for you.

## CONVENTIONAL

☐

Clinical Fellowship

☐

Academic Fellowship

☐

Research Fellowship

☐

Trust Grade Doctor

☐

Locum Doctor

## ADVENTUROUS

☐

Work Abroad

☐

Volunteer at NGO

☐

Expedition Medicine

## MEDICAL-ADJACENT

☐

Medical Writing

☐

Medical Tech

☐

Medicolegal Firm

☐

Pharmaceutical

## NON-MEDICAL

☐

Civil Service

☐

Consulting Firm

## TIME OUT

☐

Travel/Holiday

☐

Further Education

# This or That?

This exercise helps you to explore your priorities for F3. Do you value personal time or career? Money or experience? Do you want work experience or life experience? On each row, circle one option from the two options given, then review your answers on the next few pages.

This?	That?
MORE PATIENT CONTACT	LESS PATIENT CONTACT
FRONTLINE	BEHIND THE SCENES
MORE OF THE SAME	TRY SOMETHING NEW
UK	OVERSEAS
PRACTICAL	ACADEMIC
HOSPITAL BASED	NON-HOSPITAL BASED
MONEY	EXPERIENCE
CAREER	PERSONAL LIFE
FAST PACED	RELAXED
CREATIVE	TECHNICAL
RESEARCH	LEADERSHIP
TEACHING	LEARNING
HOLIDAY	HOUSE
ROUTINE	FLEXIBILITY
MEDICAL	NON-MEDICAL

# This or That?

## RESULTS

Check your answers to the 'This or That' exercise above and match it to the corresponding grouping below to see which F3 options may suit you best.

OVERSEAS  
TRY SOMETHING NEW  
PERSONAL LIFE  
RELAXED  
HOLIDAY

If you chose many of these words, consider working abroad in Australia or New Zealand. Not into hospital medicine? You could try adventure or wilderness medicine, volunteering, or just a good old-fashioned holiday.

RESEARCH  
TRY SOMETHING NEW  
ACADEMIC  
LESS PATIENT CONTACT  
MEDICAL

If you chose many of these words, you may want a slight change, but not a whole new career. Consider roles in medicolegal or medical education. Maybe further education in research is right for you, or even the National Medical Director's Clinical Fellow Scheme.

PRACTICAL  
CREATIVE  
NON-MEDICAL  
NON-HOSPITAL BASED  
SPONTANEITY  
MONEY

If you chose many of these words, you are probably looking for a big change and F3 may be your opportunity to try something totally out of the box. Do you want to be an artist? A comedian? A journalist? A skydiving instructor? Consider spending some time studying and getting experience in your passion. You could always fund it with some locum work on the side.

FRONTLINE  
HOSPITAL BASED  
MORE OF THE SAME  
FLEXIBILITY  
MONEY  
HOUSE

If you chose many of these words, you are probably looking to fill those coffers for a big purchase. Maybe that's for a house, a wedding, or a new addition to the family. Or maybe you want to get rid of that student loan debt once and for all. Whatever the reason, locum work seems right for you and could earn you over £100,000 per year!

# This or That?

## RESULTS

NON-HOSPITAL BASED  
TECHNICAL

TRY SOMETHING NEW  
MONEY

BEHIND THE SCENES

LESS PATIENT CONTACT

If you chose many of these words, it is likely that you are ambitious and prefer to focus on the big picture. Whether that means working in government or management consulting, a med-tech start-up or an NGO, you probably aren't fulfilled by the day-to-day grind of the ward. Consider looking for work with a private company such as a medicolegal firm.

EXPERIENCE  
UK

CAREER

TEACHING

ROUTINE

MORE OF THE SAME

If you chose many of these words, you are most likely looking to develop your skills, knowledge, and career. You may already know that you want to specialize and so a clinical fellowship or research post might be the best choice for you. Focus on collecting those points that will bolster your CV for future specialty applications. That is, of course, if you are sure you want to take an F3 in the first place as you may have everything you already need to go straight into training.

FAST PACED

LEADERSHIP

ACADEMIC

TECHNICAL

TEACHING

SPONTANEITY

EXPERIENCE

If you chose many of these words, you are probably looking to inject a bit of excitement into your working life. You maybe want a bit of everything so consider designing your own working week. Locum work in ED combined with a part-time clinical fellowship in simulation training with a sprinkle of HEMS on the weekend would suit you well (or something along those lines).

[Click here to read a deep dive into the work options for F3 doctors on the Messly blog.](#)

## **PART 4**

# **Getting Organised**

An F3 Year usually means more control over your schedule, career, growth, and personal life.

However, the flip side of that is that you also have to take more responsibility than trainees for:

- seeking out interesting opportunities
- staying on top of key dates and deadlines
- collating resources and information

The doctors that tend to have successful F3 Years are those who have a self-starting mindset, take initiative, and can confidently assert themselves.

The good news is that you've found this resource, so you're already ahead of many doctors who are stuck in the planning phase. Though it may feel like F3 is still miles away, as you will soon see, now is the right time to set your plans in motion.

Complete exercise 6 on the next page to see how you can prepare over the next year.



# Planning Ahead

Populate the calendar below with your key actions dates for the year ahead. You can find useful links on the next page to help locate important dates that you want to remember.

<b>ASAP</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <p>Run through this Workbook. Sign up for Messly's F3 Planning Webinar</p>	<b>OCTOBER</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Research clinical fellowships, apply for overseas posts, consider training applications.</p>	<b>NOVEMBER</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>DECEMBER</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Research the financial side of an F3 year using the <a href="#">Locum Salary Calculator</a> and reading <a href="#">this article</a>.</p>
<b>JANUARY</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>FEBRUARY</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>MARCH</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Read <a href="#">this article</a> to get your CV up to date. Discuss with potential referees.</p>	<b>APRIL</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>If you want to locum, read <a href="#">this article</a> about bank vs agency for F3. Use Messly's <a href="#">locum service</a> to start registering with agencies.</p>
<b>MAY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>For fellowships, start checking out <a href="#">NHS Jobs</a> and contacting departments to enquire about jobs.</p>	<b>JUNE</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Rotas are released 4-6 weeks ahead of time so book locum shifts now to first pick of what's available.</p>	<b>JULY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>If you are leaving a trust, contact your referees again and download your ePortfolio &amp; ARCP.</p>	<b>AUGUST</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Enjoy your new life as an F3!</p>

NOTES:

# Other Resources

**F3 Hub:** A collection of the best of Messly's content, guides and videos for planning your F3 year, see [here](#).

**Messly's F3 Planning Webinar:** See [here](#).

**Exams:** Find dates for exams by clicking [here](#).

**Specialty Applications:** Specialty application dates can be found [here](#).

**Locums:** Get up-to-speed with how locuming works in Messly's [Locum Doctor Hub](#), use the [Locum Academy](#) to ask questions or register to use [Messly's locum finding service](#) (used by 2,000 F3s in 2022 to find locum work).

**Jobs:** Clinical Fellowship and Trust Grade jobs are generally advertised on NHS Jobs, see [here](#). You can also reach out directly to departments too.

**Australia / New Zealand:** Read up on the process and key information in Messly's guide [here](#). You can also see a selection of live jobs selected by Messly [here](#).

