

School of GP Specialty Training

Guidelines for Trainees Taking Time Out of Programme from GP Specialty Training

Introduction

There are circumstances in which trainees may wish to take time out of their GP specialty training programme. Taking time out of programme will only be granted when clear need is demonstrated and under strict criteria. This document describes the policy and procedure for trainees to apply for time out of programme and is fully compliant with the Gold Guide.

The Gold Guide outlines the circumstances under which trainees can apply for time out of programme

1. Approved clinical training (OOPT) – this is to spend time in a post outside HENW that has been prospectively approved by the GMC for GP specialty training. As GP training programmes are fixed 3-year programmes such a request represents a *change of programme* and is dealt with under that policy.
2. Additional clinical or related experience (OOPE) – this is to spend time gaining clinical experience in non approved posts in the UK or overseas. This time is not part of the formal 3-year programme leading to CCT.
3. Research (OOPR) – this is time to undertake research, normally for a higher registerable degree e.g. master's degree. This time is not part of the approved 3-year programme leading to CCT.
4. Career break (OOPC) – this is time out for personal reasons such as health problems, carer responsibilities or to pursue outside interests.

This policy does not include statutory leave such as maternity, paternity, or parental leave, which are dealt with through the Lead Employer.

Important information for trainee on a Visa

Trainees employed with a skilled worker Visa will need to relinquish their visa if they take more than 4 weeks unpaid leave in any calendar year. The lead employer cannot employ a trainee needing a visa who doesn't have one and would therefore terminate the trainee's contract. It is therefore not possible for a trainee with a visa to apply for OOP.

Principles and Criteria for approval for Time Out of Programme (OOP)

Full details of OOP guidance can be found in the relevant sections of the Gold Guide and the GMC website link:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/out-of-programme>

Any approval for time out of programme will depend on 2 factors: -

1. Meeting the criteria set out in this document,
2. The ability of the programme to accommodate the absence and the remaining requirements of a trainee on return.

Applications for OOP will be accepted any time after a specialty training programme has been started, but not normally approved to start until at least one year of the programme has been successfully completed.

OOP cannot be used to defer the start of a programme. Deferrals are only approved for statutory reasons. In such cases, the trainee should defer making an application until ready to begin training.

Trainees will normally only be granted a maximum of one year out of programme, but up to 2 years may be exceptionally approved at the Postgraduate Dean's discretion. Trainees wishing to take OOP for longer than 2 years will normally need to relinquish their NTN and re-apply in open competition for re-entry to the same specialty or to a new specialty.

Those trainees requiring a Health and care Worker Visa or Skilled Worker Visa should contact the Deanery sponsorship team for advice before application.

Trainees must give 6 months' notice of the requested start date of OOP. Applications for OOP **cannot** be approved retrospectively. Under certain exceptional circumstances trainees may be able to apply for urgent time out of programme.

The needs of the service will be considered in planning time out of programme, in particular, the start and finish dates of the OOP period will normally be expected to coincide with post changeover dates within the programme.

To be eligible to apply for OOP, a trainee's most recent Annual Review of Progress (ARCP) must be satisfactory, except for urgent OOP. The application form requires a trainee's Educational Supervisor to sign and confirm satisfactory progress and a copy of the most recent ARCP outcome and Form R must be attached.

Trainees are advised to discuss any proposal for time out of programme with their GP Training Programme Director who will need to sign and confirm OOP can be accommodated within the programme, and in the case of OOPC that the time away cannot be accommodated by LTFT.

Trainees taking time out of programme must give **at least** six months notice of their expected date of return. Although the returning trainee will be accommodated into the next available suitable vacancy in their programme, it may take time for a suitable placement to arise. Trainees must submit an updated application form if requesting to extend the OOP period.

Trainees must ensure that the GP School has an up-to-date contact address and e-mail address throughout the period of OOP. Trainees must remain fully registered with the GMC during the time out of programme, as this is a condition of retaining the NTN.

A period of refreshment and updating of skills may be necessary before the trainee returns formally to the programme. This will be at the discretion of the GP Head of School, following discussion with the GP Training Programme Director. Supported return to training resources and support are available. Link below.

<https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/supported-return-to-training>

ARCP Process and OOP

The annual ARCP process applies to **all** trainees who are OOP and they must submit the required information.

- Completion of Form R, Parts A and B to support revalidation. This should include details of any clinical work undertaken and appropriate appraisal documentation.
- An annual OOP report form (this can take the form of the trainee's original OOP application form if no changes have taken place)
- For OOPE - the normal assessment forms for the specialty, together with a Clinical Supervisor's report
- For OOPR – a report on progress of research towards the stated objectives from the research supervisor
- For OOPC – update from trainee, which may include an Occupational Health report if applicable.

The criteria for each type of application are as follows: -

Applications for Time Out of Programme for Clinical Experience (OOPE) or Research (OOPR)

Any planned clinical experience or research should be of demonstrable benefit to the trainee's programme i.e. development of skills relevant to a career in general practice. The experience should be related to the requirements of the curriculum. Experience or research may be within the UK or overseas.

Applications for experience or to obtain qualifications to become a GPwSI will not normally be approved as the competencies required for a GPwSI fall outside the curriculum. It is recommended that this training should be completed after achieving a CCT.

Applications should normally have the support of the trainee's educational supervisor and Training Programme Director

Applications for OOPE or OOPR must be submitted at least 6 months in advance.

Trainees who apply for OOPE or OOPR should submit a detailed proposal which includes:

- The overall aims of the experience
- Reasons why the experience needs a break in programme and cannot be done after obtaining a CCT.
- Detailed learning aims and objectives related to the GP curriculum.
- How the learning will be recorded (normally this should be in the learning log of the e-portfolio)
- A timetable of work and study.
- What assessments of competence will take place.

Applications for Time Out of Programme for Career Break (OOPC)

Applications for time out of programme for a career break will normally only be granted for one of the following reasons: -

- Those with significant health issues that cannot be accommodated through less than full time training or reasonable adjustments. OOPC is not an alternative to sick leave.
- Those who have caring responsibilities for dealing with serious illness in family members that cannot be accommodated through less than full time training.
- Those who have childcare responsibilities that cannot be accommodated through less than full time training.
- Those with a clearly identified life goal which cannot be deferred until after CCT is achieved.

Trainees will be required to submit evidence in support of their application e.g.

- Those with health issues will need to have an occupational health assessment arranged by the Lead Employer.
- Those with family caring responsibilities will need to submit medical evidence regarding the illness of the family member and the care required and why this cannot be achieved through less than full time training.
- Those with childcare responsibilities will need to submit evidence why this cannot be achieved through less than full time training.

Applications for URGENT Time Out of Programme (Criteria for Urgent OOPC)

Where a trainee needs to apply urgently for OOPC and cannot meet the 6 month deadline, the following criteria must be met:

- 1.** A significant change in circumstances must have occurred since the start of the programme and within 6 months of the application for urgent OOPC.
- 2.** A significant change in circumstances must be one of the following:

Development of a personal health problem that requires time out of programme that cannot be managed through either current statutory leave policies (e.g. sickness, maternity) or Less Than Full Time Training. In such circumstances, the trainee must have an Occupational Health assessment arranged through the Lead Employer which supports the application.

Or

Development of a primary caring responsibility for a close relative who has a disability (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) and requires substantial personal care (more than 1 hour per day) provided by the trainee and this cannot be managed through statutory leave policies.

3. The trainee must have had a discussion with their Educational Supervisor, the TPD and Lead Employer to explore alternative solutions (e.g. statutory leave, Less Than Full Time Training) and have documented the outcome. This must include documentary evidence of the significant change of circumstances outlined above in point 2.

4. In very urgent circumstances, the trainee should discuss their OOPC request with their Educational Supervisor, as a period of urgent annual leave or special leave may be considered by the Host Organisation to meet immediate need. However, the trainee must ensure that the OOP application form is submitted to cover the start of the requested OOPC time to ensure they are not recorded as being on unauthorised leave from the workplace.

Funding and Contractual Issues

Trainees whose OOP applications are successful will be granted unpaid leave for the period of the OOP.

Trainees taking career breaks should get advice from the Lead Employing Organisation on their statutory rights and pension options in relation to career breaks.

Approved OOPE or OOPR is unpaid leave and therefore does not constitute a break in service in respect of:

- Continuous employment
- Incremental progression
- Maternity leave

Trainees undertaking a period of unpaid leave who wish to remain in the NHS Pension Scheme are required to maintain their pension contributions currently as detailed below:

- Months 1-6 - Trainees will be required to pay via standing order/direct debit the amount that would have been deducted in respect of employees' pension had they remained on the payroll. This payment must be made on the 1st of the following month. For the first six months, the employers' contributions will be paid by the respective Trusts.
- Months 7-24 - Trainees wishing to stay in the NHS Pension Scheme are liable for both the employees and employers' contributions and will be required to pay these as detailed above. Trainees employed by another NHS organisation whilst taking time out of programme can continue payments with the receiving organisation.

Trainees on OOP are not eligible to apply for funded study leave from the specialty study leave budget. Any study leave taken during the period of OOP must be funded either by the trainee or the organisation/ authority hosting the research/ clinical experience post.

Trainees on OOP are not eligible to receive expenses from the GP School budget. It is the responsibility of the host organisation/ authority offering the post to meet any expenses associated with it.

Process for application for time out of programme

The trainee should have initial discussion with the Training Programme Director (and Educational Supervisor for OOPE and OOPR applications) regarding the proposals.

The trainee should consult with the Lead Employer to discuss proposals for OOPC including the Lead Employer's occupational health advisor for applications related to health problems.

The trainee must have the active support of the host site (hospital or GP practice) they will be working in at the time of the OOP period and the relevant declarations must be signed.

The GP OOP application form and supporting documentation can be obtained from the Deanery Website at <http://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/general-practice/general-information>

Trainees must complete all sections of the application form and forward it together with the supporting documentation to the Training Programme Director with whom they should have already discussed the proposal. The Training Programme Director will be required to sign section E of the form.

NOTE: Trainees must ensure that they sign section D of the form to confirm their understanding of the NHS Pension Scheme regulations whilst out of programme.

The trainee should complete an OOP application form and send this with any evidence to support the application to england.gptraining.nw@nhs.net

NOTE: Incomplete applications, e.g. those with incomplete documentation or signatures will not be accepted and will be returned to the trainee for completion.

The Head of School will consider OOP requests. Trainees will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application.

Right of appeal

Trainees who wish to appeal the decision of an OOP panel should do so in writing to the Primary Care Dean within 10 days of receiving the panel's decision. The letter of appeal should include all reasons and evidence relating to the appeal.

The Primary Care Dean will convene and chair an appeal panel comprising at least 2 other members who will be a senior Educator from another specialty (Director, Associate Dean or Head of School). The appeal result will be sent to the trainee within 2 weeks of the appeal. The appeal result is binding.