**HEENW School of Emergency Medicine**

**Policy on SPA time and Study Leave**

**June 2018**

**Supporting Professional Activities (SPA) Time for Trainees**

Higher Specialty trainees (ST4-ST6) should have 4 hours of SPA / non-clinical time rostered per week or a day alternate week. ST3 trainees should have 4 hours of SPA time every 2 weeks.

ST3 EM trainees can work up to **42 hours clinically with 2 hours of non-clinical work per week.**

ST4 – ST6+ EM trainees can work up to **40 hours clinically with 4 hours of non-clinical work per week.**

Any additional hours in their contracts will allow for handover at the end of shifts and unanticipated emergencies delaying the end of their shift. This is in line with the position statement on SPA time issued by the Training Standards Committee in RCEM.

The workload in emergency medicine is recognised to be constant, relentless, and high intensity. The annual GMC survey shows that workload in EM scores red across all departments. Unlike other specialties, there is no down time, only direct patient contact or attendance at teaching. This is having a deleterious effect on the workforce producing burnt out, exhausted doctors looking for alternatives to training for a consultant career in EM. More than 25% of our workforce is now LTFT. Despite this trust’s continue to drive their workforce with unsustainable rotas in order to meet the demands of their patients and their organisational KPIs.

Non-clinical time is to enable trainees to work on essential elements of their curriculum, which include a Quality Improvement Project. This will require regular work and meetings to ensure that the iterant process is followed. Trainees are also required to produce a management portfolio during higher training. This requires a minimum of 4 pieces of work on specified management areas, they will need to be produced, reflected on and then a WPBA completed for them. The time should also be used to work on other projects, guideline updates, portfolio maintenance as agreed with their educational supervisor.

ST3 trainees will use their time to take part in audits and QIPs in progress, complete GCP, review guidelines and also to maintain their portfolio.

The calculation for LTFT trainees should be calculated pro rata.

The rationale for introducing SPA time includes:

- recognition of the change to FRCEM exam format and the essential requirements of a QIP and management portfolio in order to complete training

- recognition of the contribution trainees make outside of the clinical setting

- encourage trainee involvement in research, audit and quality improvement  
- allow time for trainees to work on publications and presentations

SPA time should be clearly and specifically allocated within the rota as part of trainees expected hours and not linked to Study Leave.  
The time should be used effectively, and trainees will be expected to provide supporting evidence if requested.

Examples of SPA Activity

Audit & QI Projects

Governance work including complaints, coroners reports, SUIs

Management portfolio cases

Development of Guidelines

Research including online GCP Training  
Publications (with appropriate senior guidance)  
Preparation for regional/national presentations  
Management – e.g. shadowing senior management and attending board meetings

Organising a regional training day  
Organising and running simulation sessions  
Organising and running local teaching for medical students/junior trainees  
Attending to previously missed training opportunities

Working towards leadership and education PGCert modules

**Regional Teaching Days**

Attendance at Regional Teaching Days for ST3 and ST4- ST6 is mandatory. The programme is available on the HEENW website. Trainees should be released from clinical work from the night shift before the teaching day until the early shift the following day. Attendances at the regional teaching day’s uses a proportion of study leave not SPA time. Trainees do not have to apply for study leave in order to attend; the departmental rota master should make adjustments to the rota to allow attendance.

If due to annual leave or other leave the ST4-ST6 trainee cannot attend their own regional training day, they can attend the complementary training day in the other region. This is not available to the ST3 trainees as their training days are pan regional.

On 5th Thursdays for NW, and published dates (on HEENW website) for Mersey, training afternoons are held for HST trainees. Simulation for ST4s and Ultrasound for ST5 & 6. Trainees should be released from clinical work in order to attend.

Occasionally extra training days are run for the trainees benefit, for example the research regional training day. Details of these events will be circulated to the trainees and the TSTLs. Attendance cannot be mandated. All trainees are encouraged to apply for study leave to be released from their rotas in order to attend.

Trainees should use study leave to teach on life support courses, unless otherwise agreed with employing trust.

**Study Leave Allowance**

Trainees are eligible for 30 days of study leave per annum. 15 days are allocated to cover regional teaching days and afternoons. 15 days are available for personally directed study leave. Up to 7 days of this can be used for private study leave as agreed with employing trust.

**Guidance on Study Leave and Zero Days**

The following principles apply:

The BMA state that trainees should have a day returned for study leave on zero days

HEENW and lead employer state that if a trainee is attending mandatory training on a rest day then they would be entitled to time back in lieu, if they are attending a course which is not considered mandatory then lieu time would not be granted.

The School believes that zero days are rest days and working on them even for study leave is exceeding your hours and cannot be mandated and is therefore the choice of the individual trainee.

We have a responsibility as professional doctors, employees and learners to act in a sensible and pragmatic fashion to protect our own health and that of our patients.

**Responsibilities:**

**Trust Specialty Training Leads and Rota Masters**

All study leave should be booked 6 weeks prior to the start of the leave.

If a trainee has booked study leave in advance of the rota being written, and once the rota is released it falls on a zero day, the trainee must be offered a zero day in lieu for that study leave. It should be as soon as possible following the leave, but within 2 weeks of the study leave. All movement of zero days must be by negotiation between the trainee and the department.

If a trainee books study leave that falls on a zero day, after the rota has been written, but 6 weeks in advance of the leave, then a lieu day should be given within 2 weeks of the leave.

Study leave booked with less than 6 weeks may result in a lieu day may not being granted.

If a trainee decides to go on study leave on a zero day, and requests a lieu day in retrospect, that will NOT be granted.

Equally, if the department has changed the rota at short notice, with the agreement of the trainee, and a rest day is disrupted by study leave, that zero day should be paid back as soon as possible.

**Trainees**

You are responsible for ensuring you organise your study leave 6 weeks in advance and negotiate lieu days before the study leave is taken.

Responsibility lies with the trainee to ensure that there is adequate balance between clinical experience and Study Leave.

**Guidance on Study Leave and LTFT Training**

An additional consideration will apply to Less Than Full Time Trainees

1. LTFT trainees have regular working and non-working days, and zero days to balance average working hours
2. Trainees work LTFT for many reasons
3. Allowing reorganisation of non-working days for study leave may enable the LTFT trainee to reorganise regular fixed commitments, avoiding additional costs for study leave (e.g. childcare, counselling, hospital appointments)

**If a LTFT trainee applies for Study Leave on a non-working day, the above guidance will similarly apply. Non-working days for LTFT trainees should be considered in the same way as zero days.**

This policy covers the vast majority of study leave cases. Any instances not covered by this document should be discussed with the trainees’ Training Programme Director.

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