

**Health Education England –
working across the North West**

Training Programme Management

**Policy and Process for Out of Programme Applications
(Hospital Specialty Trainees)**

Document Title	Policy and Process for Out of Programme Applications
Purpose	To provide guidance to hospital specialty trainees, Clinical/Educational Supervisors, Training Programme Directors/Heads of School, HEE operational staff, Host Organisations and Lead Employers on the policy and process to be followed for Out of Programme applications from hospital specialty trainees.
Author	Bev Miller Project Manager Deanery Integration Bev.miller@nw.hee.nhs.uk
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TAKING TIME OUT OF PROGRAMME (OOP)

1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of Out of Programme (OOP) is to allow a trainee to gain additional clinical experience, clinical training or to undertake a period of research outside the training programme to which they were appointed. Trainees may also request to take a career break or a pause in training.
- 1.2 OOP options exist to support the trainee in achieving their individual educational/personal needs, subject to the approval of HEE - working across the North West. As per the Gold Guide (8th edition) 3.149 time OOP can only be taken with the agreement of the Postgraduate Dean, who will consult as necessary with those managing the specific training programme. There are some limiting factors including:
- The ability of the programme to fill resulting gaps in the interests of patient care and others on the training programme
 - The capacity of the programme to accommodate the trainee's return at the end of the planned break
 - Evidence of the trainee's on-going commitment to and suitability for training in the specialty.

Therefore, trainees must not assume that their request will be approved.

- 1.3 Further detail about OOP can be found in the Gold Guide 3.149 – 3.182 and on the GMC website [GMC/Out of programme \(OOP\)](#). Each Royal College also has specific requirements relating to OOP and trainees are advised to contact their College for further details.

2. Categories of OOP

- 2.1 OOP for Clinical Training (OOPT) - allows the trainee to spend time in clinical training that has been prospectively approved by the GMC, and which is not part of the trainee's specialty training programme. This includes time 'acting-up' as a consultant. The duration of OOPT will normally be for a period of up to 12 months ('acting up' is limited to 3 months, pro rata for LTFT trainees, and can only take place in the final year of the programme).
- 2.2 OOP for Clinical Research (OOPR) - allows the trainee to undertake research, normally for a higher registerable degree, e.g. PhD. Time spent out of programme for research purposes can be recognised towards the award of CCT when the relevant curriculum includes such research as an optional element. The duration of OOPR is normally up to a maximum of 3 years, with a 4-year maximum in exceptional circumstances which requires the prospective approval of the Postgraduate Dean.

- 2.3 OOP for Clinical Experience (OOPE) - allows the trainee to gain clinical experience, which is not a requirement of the specialty training programme curriculum. This does not require prospective GMC approval and does not count towards CCT. This includes working overseas in developing countries. The duration of OOPE will normally be for a period of up to 12 months.
- 2.4 OOP for Career Break (OOPC) - allows the trainee to take a planned career break to pursue other interests (e.g. domestic responsibilities, work in industry, developing talents in other areas and entrepreneurship). Periods of ill health should in the first instance be managed under the guidance of the Lead Employer occupational health services as for other staff. OOPC is an inappropriate way of managing health issues (Gold Guide 3.140). Further guidance on training and health is outlined in the Gold Guide 3.143 – 3.145. If trainees are considering applying for OOPC for health reasons or domestic circumstances, they must explore other options first such as Less Than Full Time Training or statutory leave such as sick leave. The duration of OOPC is normally for a period of up to 12 months, with a second year at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean.
- 2.5 OOP Pause (OOPP) - allows trainees in specialty training to step off the training ladder and **undertake work in the NHS or a similar patient-facing role in the UK**. Experience and competencies gained outside of training may then be considered on the trainee's return to their training programme. The duration of OOPP will normally be for a period up to 12 months.

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 Full details of out of programme guidance can be found in sections 3.149 – 3.182 of the Gold Guide (8th edition) and on the GMC website:

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

Trainees are advised to familiarise themselves with this guidance, and with the OOP guidance from the relevant Royal College, before proceeding with their application to HEE - working across the North West.

- 3.2 OOP will not normally be granted, unless a trainee has been in post for one year. Core trainees (with the exception of Academic Clinical Fellows) are therefore eligible for OOP options after satisfactorily completing their first year of training, as are trainees in ST3 posts in uncoupled specialties. However, occasions where OOP is granted for core trainees are likely to be exceptional (usually for OOPC), given the short period and the nature of their training. The time spent OOP when in core training does not count towards CCT. Academic Clinical Fellows would only be allowed to undertake OOP on completion of their post. Trainees undertaking LAT posts cannot request time out of their post.
- 3.3 OOPT (except Acting Up Consultant (AUC)), OOPE or OOPR are not usually allowed in the final year as trainees must be assessed in an NHS placement in the UK 6 months prior to their CCT date. Trainees will be expected to return to clinical training for their final year within HEE North West.

- 3.4 To be eligible to apply for OOP, a trainee's most recent Annual Review of Progress (ARCP) must be satisfactory. The application form requires a trainee's Educational Supervisor to confirm satisfactory progress and a copy of the most recent ARCP outcome and Form R must be attached. The only exception to the requirement of satisfactory progress is when OOPP is requested (outcome 1, 2, 10.1 or 10.2 is acceptable) or where circumstances have arisen which would allow the trainee to access OOPC.
- 3.5 It is possible that some of the time spent OOPT or OOPR may be counted towards CCT. This must be prospectively approved by the GMC; retrospective applications will not be approved. GMC approval for the time to count towards CCT is a requirement of ['The Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications'](#).
- 3.6 Trainees would not be allowed to commence OOP if the application to the GMC is retrospective, unless it can be demonstrated there has been a failure of the process which was beyond the control of the applicant. In such circumstances the OOP may still proceed but the time will not count towards training until GMC approval is obtained. Trainees are reminded that approval also needs to be sought from the relevant Royal College/Faculty.

4. The Process

- 4.1 Trainees must discuss any proposed OOPT/R/E/P with their Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director (TPD) prior to submitting an application. They are obliged to consider the programme's whole training environment as part of the approval process. They will be able to inform a trainee as to how the proposed OOP fits in with the curriculum for the specialty (OOPT/R/E), and whether the programme can currently accommodate the application. If supported at this stage, the trainee should also inform their clinical department (rota organiser/clinical director/leave supervisor) of the intended OOP start and finish date.
- 4.2 The TPD must provide a statement as to whether they support or do not support the proposed application, which the trainee must attach to their application paperwork. Where applications are supported, the TPD must specify the areas of the curriculum that are relevant to the proposed placement (OOPT/R/E), together with an assurance that the programme can accommodate the gap and proposed return date. Where an application is not supported, the TPD must also provide a statement detailing the reasons why. Trainees applying for OOPR also require a statement from their research supervisor which outlines the programme of research and any associated funding.
- 4.3 Where a TPD supports an application, trainees should be aware that this is not final approval. Formal approval by the Postgraduate Dean is required and this function is delegated to the Lead Associate Dean for the Specialty.
- 4.4 The trainee must then apply for time OOP by completing and returning the application form to the Programme Support Manager (PSM) for the School (see section 21) at least 6 months in advance of the proposed start date. The 6 months' notice period starts on receipt of the paperwork by HEE - working across the North

West. Trainees must not commence OOP until they have received written confirmation of approval.

- 4.5 The PSM may delegate processing of the form to a HEE administrator; applications will be reviewed by the Associate Dean for the School, who is authorised to approve or reject applications on behalf of the Postgraduate Dean.
- 4.6 To assist completing the OOP application form, each type of OOP is described below in its own section. An incorrectly completed or incomplete application will **NOT** be processed and will be returned to the trainee.
- 4.7 If trainees are considering applying for **OOPC/P** for health or domestic reasons, they must explore other options first such as Less Than Full Time Training or statutory leave such as sick leave. Trainees must discuss such options with their TPD **and** the Lead Employer before proceeding with an **OOPC/P** application. Trainees must then apply to the PSM as outlined above.
- 4.8 Trainees wishing to apply for an extension to **OOPC/E/R/T** must discuss this with their TPD, complete the application form and return it to the relevant PSM at least 6 months before the expiry of the current OOP approval. The most recent ARCP documentation and Form R must be attached to the application. If the extension is a continuation of an existing post, the previous GMC approval remains, although additional time towards training would not be given beyond that already prospectively approved by the GMC. If the extension is to undertake a different post, a new, prospective application is required.
- 4.9 Trainees wishing to curtail their time OOP and return early to the programme must contact their TPD immediately to discuss their changed circumstances. Trainees must also make a formal application by completing the OOP cancellation and curtailment form and return it to the relevant PSM. Trainees are reminded that an early return to the programme cannot be guaranteed, given the arrangements that will have been implemented to accommodate the planned absence from the programme. In such circumstances, the trainee will remain OOP until the mutually agreed return date.
- 4.10 Trainees whose circumstances change whilst **OOPE/OOPC/OOPP** but wish to remain OOP for the approved time, must contact the relevant PSM immediately to discuss the change, who will then discuss this with the relevant Associate Dean.
- 4.11 Trainees should be aware that if they commence a period of OOP without having followed this application process and associated timescales, they will be deemed by the employer to be taking unauthorised absence. Failure to complete the required process may also be considered as non-engagement (Gold Guide 3.44) and may compromise revalidation.
- 4.12 Trainees should be aware that if after receiving OOP approval they subsequently receive an unsatisfactory ARCP outcome, OOP approval may be withdrawn.

5. Timescales

- 5.1 Trainees must indicate the dates (inclusive) that they anticipate they will be out of programme. Trainees must allow 6 months for the forms to be processed and GMC approval granted (if required) prior to the OOP start date. Start and end dates of the time OOP are normally expected to align with post change-over dates with the training programme.
- 5.2 Due to the number of necessary components involved in OOP approval, if a trainee fails to submit an OOP Application Form 6 months' in advance of the proposed OOP start date to the relevant PSM, it is likely that an otherwise acceptable application will not be processed by the proposed OOP start date. It should also be noted that many Schools in HEE - working across the North West and related Royal Colleges/Faculties have additional unique requirements that also apply to OOP, some of which may require significantly more than 6 months' notice for an application to be successful. As stated above in point 4.3, the 6 months' notice period starts on receipt of the paperwork by HEE - working across the North West and trainees must not commence OOP until they have received written confirmation of approval.
- 5.3 The timescales enable the Postgraduate Dean and those managing the programme to consider the impact of the application on the programme and to enable Host Organisations to make appropriate plans to maintain patient care and safety. It is acknowledged that there may be exceptional circumstances where a trainee may need to apply for urgent OOPC and not be able to give 6 months' notice. Please see section 20 for the eligibility criteria for urgent applications for OOPC. It is also acknowledged that the selection processes for some prestigious research awards and other national opportunities may not align with the 6 months' notice period. In such circumstances, trainees are advised to submit a prospective application for OOPR or OOPE as soon as possible.
- 5.4 Trainees must give at least 6 months' notice of their expected return date to the relevant TPD. They will be accommodated into the next suitable vacancy in their programme although it may take time for such a placement to arise. Trainees are therefore advised that their return to the programme may not be within six months of indicating their wish to return to training. In such circumstances, the trainee will remain OOP until the mutually agreed return date.

6. Application Approval

- 6.1 Trainees must supply all the details requested on the form. These details are essential to facilitate the approval process.
- 6.2 The order with which approval for OOPT or OOPR applications must be sought varies across the Royal Colleges. Some Royal Colleges require HEE approval first, whilst others will grant approval subject to HEE approval. Therefore, trainees must check with their Royal College when commencing the application process. Guidance should also be sought from the relevant PSM within HEE. Trainees should indicate whether they have obtained College approval for their OOP on the OOP application form. Although OOP must be approved by HEE and GMC to count

towards training, evidence of College approval is necessary for GMC to consider an application.

- 6.3 The application must be supported by the trainee's Educational Supervisor, TPD and Royal College (if applicable) and approved by the Postgraduate Dean, in order to be presented to the GMC. If trainees experience difficulty in securing all the required support, they are advised to contact the lead Associate Dean for their specialty. (As outlined in 6.2 above, enquiries regarding the order of the approval process should be directed to the relevant PSM).
- 6.4 Once completed, the form should be emailed to the relevant PSM. Contact details for the PSMs for all Schools are included in section 22 on page 21.
- 6.5 The HEE - working across the North West will then process the application and if it is approved, will forward it to the GMC for approval.

7. Personal Details

- 7.1 Personal details should be provided on the application form as accurately and fully as possible, including an indication as to whether a trainee will be on a visa during their time OOP. It is the trainee's responsibility to ensure any OOP request is within the regulations for their visa status. Any associated costs will be the responsibility of the trainee.
- 7.2 HEE/Royal College/GMC may need to contact a trainee during their OOP so full contact details for the period of OOP must be provided on the application form. If contact details change during the period of OOP, trainees must inform HEE - working across the North West and the Lead Employer.

8. National Training Number

- 8.1 Trainees retain their NTN whilst OOP, providing they comply with the requirements outlined within this policy and the conditions on which their application was approved.

9. ARCP Process and OOP

- 9.1 The annual ARCP process applies to **all** trainees who are OOP and they must submit the required information and may be expected to attend an annual review if based in the UK. The following information is required:
- Completion by the trainee of the Form R, Parts A and B to support revalidation
 - 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 clinical-based OOP - the normal assessment forms for the specialty, together with a Clinical Supervisor's report
 - For research-based OOP – a report on progress of research towards the stated objectives from the research supervisor
 - For career break OOP – update from trainee, which may include an Occupational Health report if applicable

- Confirmation of the return date agreed at the start of OOP
- In all cases where trainees are clinically active or working where a licence to practise is necessary, they must be able to demonstrate and document compliance with Good Medical Practice, including evidence of appraisal.

9.2 If in any doubt of the requirements, it is the trainee's responsibility to contact their TPD for further information, at least 4 months before the ARCP.

10. Revalidation and OOP

10.1 The Postgraduate Dean will remain a trainee's Responsible Officer (RO) whilst they are OOP and the designated body is Health Education North West Office.

10.2 Whilst trainees are OOP they will need to do the following, on at least an annual basis:

- Engage with and complete the requirements of any training component of the work they are undertaking, including provision of a Supervisor's Report, completion of online portfolios and any workplace-based assessments as specified by the specialty curriculum. This continues during any work overseas. Where possible the Educational Supervisor's report should be completed via the relevant e-Portfolio. If this is not possible a paper report should be completed
- Engage in and provide documentary evidence of involvement with the appraisal or review process in their Host Organisation, and retain any paperwork for submission to the ARCP panel
- Complete the Form R, listing any wider work that they perform, and answering the revalidation questions about any incidents, complaints, health and probity in readiness for revalidation
- Maintain their licence to practise, including their Postgraduate Dean RO connection on GMC Connect. Trainees should not relinquish their licence whilst OOP. Once appointed to the training programme trainees remain the responsibility of the Postgraduate Dean RO until they have completed their training and resigned their NTN.

11. Funding and Contractual Issues

11.1 Trainees whose OOPT/R/E/P applications are successful will be granted unpaid leave for the period of the OOP. HEE - working across the North West does not provide funding for periods out of programme and therefore trainees must seek external funding e.g. Clinical Research Fellowship.

11.2 Trainees must ensure that the Host Organisation offering the OOP post issues a statement of terms and conditions of service. Trainees are not eligible to claim expenses from HEE - working across the North West and it is the responsibility of the organisation hosting the post to meet any expenses associated with it.

- 11.3 **OOPT/E/P** placements must be fully funded as trainees cannot normally undertake other paid work whilst **OOPT/E/P**. Any additional paid work is at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean. This must be discussed and agreed prior to undertaking, and the trainee must have appropriate indemnity.
- 11.4 Trainees undertaking **OOPR** must also discuss and agree the scope of any clinical work at the time of their application, and ensure they have appropriate indemnity.
- 11.5 Salary payments for posts when **OOPT/R/E/P** are the responsibility of the Host Organisation and not the Lead Employer.
- 11.6 Trainees on **OOP** are not eligible to apply for funded study leave from HEE - working across the North West. Any study leave taken during the period of **OOP** must be funded either by the trainee or by the organisation hosting the post.
- 11.7 It is the responsibility of the doctor to contact the Lead Employer to establish how the **OOP** will affect their:
- i. Continuous employment
 - ii Incremental progression
 - iii Maternity leave entitlement
 - iv Employer's contributions to superannuation
 - v Any other employment issues
- 11.8 Doctors in training taking career breaks should get advice from their employers on all statutory rights in relation to career breaks.

12. NHS Pensions Guidance

- 12.1 Please follow the link below for guidance on NHS Pensions whilst **OOP**. Trainees may wish to provide a copy to their Host Organisation for their **OOP** placement (unless **OOPC**):

[NHS Pensions - Authorised leave/career breaks](#)

- 12.2 In addition to the above, trainees are also advised to discuss the impact of any time **OOP** on their pension commitments and entitlements with the Lead Employer **prior** to commencing **OOP**. This will enable them to make an informed decision as to whether they remain in the scheme whilst **OOP**.

13. Returning to Training

- 13.1 Trainees must liaise with their TPD towards the end of their period **OOP** to plan and agree a return to work programme that will ensure an effective return to the training programme whilst also maintaining patient safety. The details of this will vary according to each individual's stage of training, experiences whilst **OOP** including any clinical work undertaken, as well as the length of time away from the training programme.

14. Appeals

- 14.1 If trainees wish to appeal against a refusal to grant OOP, they should refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP), which can be found on the HEE - working across the North West website: <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>

15. Out of Programme Training (OOPT)
(Section 2.1 on the OOP Application Form)

Out of Programme Training is a period of clinical training outside the trainee's own training scheme, which may be abroad or within the UK, and is to be counted towards their CCT. The clinical experience must be clearly different to that which is available within the home programme. The duration of OOPT will normally be for a period of up to 12 months. Prospective GMC approval is essential. If the post has been previously recognised by GMC, HEE approval will be fast-tracked. Approval from the relevant Royal College must also be sought.

Process map overleaf

Out of Programme Training (OOPT) - Process map

Trainee discusses going on OOPT with Educational Supervisor and TPD. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees must apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and for their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



Trainee clarifies process for securing Royal College approval, seeking guidance from the College and PSM regarding the order for College and HEE approval (see 6.2 above). The application forms can be found on the Royal College and HEE websites.



Trainee completes HEE OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) and submits the application at least six months before the proposed OOP start date, along with the Royal College letter of support if required at this stage, to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.

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If approved, HEE will apply to the GMC for approval. Royal College approval must be available at this stage. The GMC review the application and if required, requests any additional information. Once reviewed, the GMC sends the HEE administrator a GMC approval letter.



Once approval is granted and GMC approval received, the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPT application and GMC confirmation letter to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return

NOT APPROVED



If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>

16. Out of Programme Training - Acting Up Consultant

Trainees can apply to take time OOP and credit time towards CCT as an 'acting up' consultant (AUC) if it is permitted in the relevant specialty curriculum. Posts must enable trainees to gain the competences, knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their curriculum. If the post is formally included in the approved specialty curriculum and is within the HEE North West area, additional prospective approval is not required from the GMC. If the post is in a different training programme, prospective GMC approval must be obtained. Where there is no provision for AUC in a specialty curriculum, the experience cannot be counted towards CCT and time cannot be applied for via the OOP process.

Trainees are advised to discuss the arrangement with their Lead Employer so they are aware of the contractual arrangements during this period.

The following conditions must be met in order to "act up".

1. Attachments are restricted to the UK, normally within the trainee's HEE region.
2. Attachments are restricted to the final year of training.
3. The trainee is only allowed to act up for a maximum period of 3 months (pro rata for LTFT trainees) prior to CCT.
4. The trainee must have a named Clinical Supervisor for the period of training in the hospital/organisation in which they are acting up. The Supervisor must be from the same specialty and be able to give advice not only on clinical matters, but also on administrative, ethical or legal matters. They must always be available for support, including out of hours or during on-call work.
5. The trainee must have access to a named Educational Supervisor in the same specialty in the same or a nearby hospital to provide managerial and specialty support.
6. The term "acting up" and not "locum" must be applied.
7. Locum consultant appointments cannot be taken up by trainees before they have achieved registration on the GMC specialist register. (Trainees who are post CCT and in their 'Period of Grace' are not eligible to 'Act Up' but will be expected to take up the post as a Locum consultant. Upon taking up such a post, they will be expected to resign their NTN).

Process map overleaf

Out of Programme Training - Acting Up Consultant – Process Map

Trainee discusses acting up with Educational Supervisor and TPD. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees must apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and for their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



If the time is to count towards CCT, the trainee clarifies this with the relevant Royal College, seeking guidance from the College and PSM regarding the order for College and HEE approval (see 6.2 above). The application forms can be found on the Royal College and HEE websites.



Trainee completes an OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) and submits the application at least six months before the proposed OOP start date, along with the Royal College letter of support if required, to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.



APPROVED



NOT APPROVED

The HEE administrator will seek GMC approval if the post is in another training programme. Once approval is granted the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPT application letter to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.

If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return.

17. Out of Programme Research (OOPR) *(Section 2.2 on the OOP Application Form)*

Trainees can apply for a period of dedicated research for a higher degree such as Ph.D. HEE - working across the North West will usually approve a maximum of three years of OOPR, with a possible further year extension dependent on individual circumstances. Extensions for a further year will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and will require the specific prospective approval of the Postgraduate Dean (Gold Guide 3.133).

It is acknowledged that a small number of PhDs require 4 years from the outset. In such circumstances, HEE will seek advice from its partner Higher Education Institutions to help assess the academic merit of the proposed research. The Lead Associate Dean for Integrated Clinical Academic Training will facilitate the assessment of such proposals. However, granting 4 years OOPR in the first instance is not the norm and trainees will be expected to provide detailed information to support any such request, which will require the specific prospective approval of the Postgraduate Dean.

An element of the time spent out of OOPR will be recognised towards the award of a CCT when the relevant curriculum includes such research as an optional element or there is a significant clinical training component.

Applications for OOPR must be supported by a statement from the research supervisor which confirms the programme of research and any associated funding. A copy of the statement must be attached to the application form.

Process map overleaf

Out of Programme Research (OOPR) – Process Map

Trainee discusses going on OOPR with Educational Supervisor and TPD. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees should apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and for their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



Trainee clarifies process for securing Royal College approval, seeking guidance from the College and PSM regarding the order for College and HEE approval (see 6.2 above). The application forms can be found on the Royal College and HEE websites.



Trainee completes HEE OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) and submits the application at least six months before the proposed OOP start date, along with the Royal College letter of support if required at this stage, to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.



APPROVED



NOT APPROVED

If approved, HEE will apply to the GMC for approval. Royal College approval must be available at this stage. The GMC review the application and if required, requests any additional information. Once reviewed, the GMC sends the HEE administrator a GMC approval letter.

If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>



Once approval is granted and GMC approval received, the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPR application and GMC confirmation letter to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return.

18. Out of Programme Experience (OOPE)
(Section 2.3 on the OOP Application Form)

Out of Programme Experience enables a trainee to undertake clinical experience that has not been approved by the GMC and will not contribute to the award of a CCT. Therefore, it is likely that the CCT date will need to be extended. The duration of OOPE will normally be for a period of up to 12 months. OOPE may benefit the trainee by enabling them to experience different working practices or gain specific experience in an area of practice or help support the health needs of other countries.

Out of Programme Experience (OOPE) Process map

Trainee discusses going on OOPE with Educational Supervisor and TPD. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees should apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and for their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



Trainee completes HEE OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) at least six months before the proposed OOP start date and submits the application to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.



APPROVED

Once approval is granted the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPE application to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.



NOT APPROVED

If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return.

19. Out of Programme Career Break (OOPC) (Section 2.4 on the OOP Application Form)

Out of Programme Career Break allows the trainee to take a planned career break to pursue other interests (e.g. domestic responsibilities, work in industry, developing talents in other areas and entrepreneurship). Periods of ill health should in the first instance be managed under the guidance of the Lead Employer's occupational health services as for other staff. OOPC is an inappropriate way of managing health issues (Gold Guide 3.140), which should be managed via the Lead Employer management of sickness absence policy.

Each application will be considered on their individual merits and prioritised on a need's basis. If all requests for a career break within a programme cannot be accommodated, priority will be given to trainees with any of the following:

- those with health issues where statutory leave or flexible training options have been explored and the benefits of OOPC have been identified and supported by Occupational Health
- those who have caring responsibilities for dealing with serious illness in family members that cannot be accommodated through flexible training
- those who have childcare responsibilities that cannot be accommodated through flexible training options
- (at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean) those with a clearly identified life goal which cannot be deferred.

OOPC lengthens the trainee's CCT date and GMC approval is not required. The duration of OOPC is normally for a period of up to 12 months, with a second year at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean, who may take into account prior periods out of training for other reasons. There are good educational and training reasons why an overall period out of training should be no longer than two years. Trainees may need to consider the effect of a career break on their ability to revalidate and maintain their licence to practise with the GMC. Any further extension beyond a two-year period may only be granted in exceptional circumstances with the prospective agreement of the Postgraduate Dean.

Generally, career breaks are limited to 2 years and trainees wishing to take longer will be required to relinquish their NTN and return to training via open competition. Trainees should be aware of the [GMC's expectations about the currency of examinations](#) when relinquishing their NTN.

If trainees are considering applying for OOPC for health or domestic reasons, they must explore other options first such as Less Than Full Time Training or statutory leave such as sick leave. Trainees must discuss such options with their TPD and the Lead Employer. The Lead Employer may arrange an Occupational Health review to inform the decision-making process. The outcome of these discussions must be documented and attached to the OOPC application.

Trainees who are OOPC for health or domestic circumstances must liaise with the Lead Employer to undertake regular Occupational Health review. Where trainees are exceptionally granted 2 years OOP, a review must be held 6 months prior to the return date. If at this stage it appears a trainee maybe unfit to return after 2 years, the Lead Employer's attendance management/sickness absence policy will be followed to determine the consequences for future employment.

It is acknowledged that, depending on the trainee's personal circumstances, they may wish or need to undertake some locum work whilst OOPC. Trainees can work up to a maximum of 40% in a week, equating to 16 hours. This cannot be exceeded and the scope of any such clinical activity must be defined on the OOP application for approval by the Postgraduate Dean. The only exception to the 40% limit is if a trainee is required to move abroad temporarily for family reasons and this must be discussed and agreed when the application is submitted. All activity which requires a licence to practise must have prior approval of the Postgraduate Dean and is subject to the usual revalidation processes. Trainees must also ensure they have appropriate indemnity. Before undertaking any paid employment when OOPC for health reasons, the trainee must first liaise with the Lead Employer to undertake an Occupational Health review to ensure any such employment will not be detrimental to the existing health condition.

Trainees are advised that any payment for work whilst OOPC cannot be made via the existing contract with the Lead Employer and must be paid directly by the employing organisation. Trainees also need to make an informed decision about whether to remain in the NHS Pension Scheme whilst OOPC and are advised to discuss their pension commitments and entitlements with the Lead Employer **prior** to commencing OOPC.

Trainees will need to undertake a return to work programme at the end of their period OOPC and this should be planned with the TPD and Educational Supervisor, prior to the scheduled return date.

[Process map overleaf](#)

Out of Programme Career Break (OOPC) - Process map

Trainee discusses going on OOPC with Educational Supervisor, TPD and Lead Employer. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees should apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



Trainee completes HEE OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) and submits the application at least six months before the proposed OOP start date to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.

APPROVED



Once approval is granted the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPC application to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.



NOT APPROVED

If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return.

20. 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 etc) 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.

21. Out of Programme Pause (OOPP) (Section 2.5 on the OOP Application Form)

Out of programme pause (OOPP) allows trainees in specialty training to step off the training ladder and undertake work in the NHS or a similar patient-facing role in the UK. Experience and competencies gained outside of training may then be considered on the trainee's return to their training programme. The duration of OOP will normally be for a period up to 12 months. A maximum of 5-10% of trainees in any speciality will be allowed OOPP and will depend on speciality size.

Out of Programme Pause (OOPP) Process map

Trainee discusses going on OOPP with Educational Supervisor and TPD. If supported in principle, trainee informs their clinical department of intended OOP start and finish date. Trainees should apply at least 6 months in advance to allow enough time for gaining approval and for their current Host Organisation to meet the needs of patients.



Trainee completes HEE OOP application form, with 2 signatures (TPD and Educational Supervisor) at least 6 months before the proposed OOP start date and submits the application to the relevant PSM for Postgraduate Dean approval.



APPROVED

Once approval is granted the HEE administrator sends a HEE OOP approval letter with a copy of OOPP application to: Trainee, Royal College, TPD and Lead Employer.



NOT APPROVED

If approval is not granted the PSM will write to the trainee with an explanation as to why their application has not been approved. Trainees have the right to appeal declined OOP. Please refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP) on the website <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>



Lead Employer writes to trainee to confirm contractual conditions relating to OOP, including continuing employment and failure to return.

22. Contacts

- [Associate Deans](#)
- [Specialty School Teams](#)
- [Lead Employer](#)