

North West Training Programme Management

Period of Grace Guidance Notes

1. Introduction

Please note that the following Guidance regarding the Period of Grace does not apply to General Practice postgraduate doctors, or those completing core training.

The Gold Guide states:

3.94 UK SEBs and training organisations must comply with and implement relevant Department of Health guidance; therefore, trainees must ensure that they are eligible to apply for a consultant post before submitting the application. Trainees must not be interviewed more than six calendar months prior to their anticipated CCT date. Trainees must only apply if progress has been satisfactory (Outcome 1 at last ARCP) and if it is anticipated that the final ARCP outcome will recommend that training is completed by the time the suggested CCT date is reached.

(Gold Guide 9th edition, 3.94)

Although postgraduate doctors in training can apply for consultant posts up to six months before their anticipated CCT/CESR(CP) date, not all are either able to do this or are successful in their applications. For this reason, many postgraduate doctors are currently eligible to take a six-month period of grace. The purpose of this is to offer continued employment (at speciality registrar level) to doctors who have completed training and not yet obtained a consultant post. The extension to employment contract is for a time limited period up to a maximum of six months as set out in the 2016 Junior Doctor Contract.

The postgraduate doctor is no longer considered to be in training, but in post for the purposes of service. As the doctor is no longer in training, they are not eligible to make applications or enter into arrangements during their period of grace which are normally available to doctors in training (e.g. Inter-Deanery Transfer, Out of Programme etc). However, the postgraduate doctor in training will retain their NTN during the Period of Grace.

If a postgraduate doctor has requested a Period of Grace and then accepts a consultant post or locum consultant post which starts before the end of the Period of Grace, they must resign from their training programme with effect either from the CCT date or following the appropriate period of notice (see Termination below for full details). In doing so the National Training Number (NTN) is relinquished and the right to a Period of Grace is given up; there is no option to return to training in that training programme.

Postgraduate doctors in training with a contract date that exceeds their CCT date (e.g. those working Less than Full Time) should resign with effect from their CCT date.

2. Length of Period of Grace

The standard Period of Grace is six calendar months following the date of CCT/CESR(CP). There is no pro-rata modification for Less Than Full Time (LTFT) doctors in training.

In exceptional circumstances the Postgraduate Dean may agree to extend the Period of Grace up to a maximum total of twelve calendar months. To do this, the postgraduate doctor must gain the support of their Training Programme Director (TPD) and then write to the Postgraduate Dean within the normal timeframe for requesting a Period of Grace (see below).

3. Requesting a Period of Grace

Postgraduate doctors are required to notify their Postgraduate Dean or nominated deputy of their intent to take up a Period of Grace at a minimum of 6 months prior to the date of CCT/CESR(CP). If the Period of Grace Request Form is not submitted by the required deadline, the TPD will not arrange a Period of Grace for the postgraduate doctor in training. The postgraduate doctor in training's NTN will be relinquished at point of sign off for CCT/CESR(CP).

There is no guarantee that late requests can be accommodated and so postgraduate doctors should adhere to the request deadline.

The postgraduate doctor should have a discussion with their TPD to support their decision as to whether or not a Period of Grace will be required. Whilst it is recognised that the period of grace is set within the 2016 contract and all specialty postgraduate doctors on that contract are entitled to a POG, adequate notice and planning is required to assess capacity and availability of suitable posts. Therefore it is essential that doctors engage in that discussion with the TPD in a timely way.

ACLs are entitled to a period of grace in the same way as other specialty postgraduate doctors. How the period of grace is used is dependent on how the specific doctor is funded.

4. Confirmation of a Period of Grace

A doctor can only commence a Period of Grace post if they have been recommended to CCT/CESR(CP) by receiving an ARCP outcome 6 signifying the satisfactory completion of either Higher Specialty Training or Run Through Training. It is not possible to complete a Period of Grace at the end of a Core Training Programme to bridge any gaps between commencement of a Higher Specialty Training Programme.

The Period of Grace commences from the date of the recommendation for CCT/CESR(CP) indicated on the ARCP Outcome 6 form. The Period of Grace is time-limited and can only be taken up by a doctor in training who is yet to relinquish their NTN.

5. Statutory Leave during the Period of Grace

If a postgraduate doctor takes statutory leave during the Period of Grace, the period is suspended on the date the statutory leave starts. The doctor will need to submit a new Period of Grace intent form for the remaining time (maximum 6 months' total time inclusive of time used prior to statutory leave and time following return from statutory leave) to request continuation of the Period of Grace on return from leave.

6. Placement Location and suitability

Postgraduate doctors wishing to take up a period of grace will be informed of their placement in line with the standard rotation and allocation process. Whilst every effort should be made to enable doctors to continue for the six-month Period of Grace in suitable posts if they so wish; placement is subject to the availability of posts within the programme. Therefore, specific location placement of specific sub-specialty attachments may not be possible.

The POG will not necessarily be in the same place of work as the final training placement. Whilst HEE is committed to finding a post, this may involve a non-training post.

7. Termination

Once the postgraduate doctor has requested a period of grace, three months' notice is required to terminate in line with NHS Employers' Junior Doctors Terms and Conditions for StR level doctors in training². This is to ensure that the employing Trust are given adequate time to make provision to fulfil service needs.

Once the postgraduate doctor has commenced the Period of Grace, should they wish to leave the post prior to the end of the agreed period, the usual notice period of three months from the date of the resignation letter is required. If the doctor chooses not to accept the Period of Grace, they will relinquish their NTN number and the right to the Period of Grace is given up. They are not required to follow the resignation procedure; their training post will simply come to an end at the expected CCT/CESR(CP) date subject to satisfactory completion of the training programme.

In exceptional cases, a postgraduate doctor may wish to resign with less than three months' notice. In such cases the early resignation process must be followed.

8. Extension

It may be that doctors with a CCT have difficulty in obtaining a consultant level post and have not achieved employment by the end of the six-month Period of Grace. Extensions to the 6-month period of grace are not normally approved, however in exceptional circumstances might be considered at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean.

9. Employment rights

Doctors in the Period of Grace will not be expected to undertake research or other training orientated sessions except as explicitly agreed with the relevant specialty school. Doctors will not be eligible for HEE funded study leave as this is for meeting CCT requirements. However, they can receive time for ensuring revalidation requirements are met. Doctors in a Period of Grace are entitled to statutory leave i.e. annual leave, and sick leave according to Lead Employer policy. They should also be allowed to attend departmental education sessions as appropriate.