



## Guidance on managing time out of training for general practice March 2022

### Introduction

1. The following principles provide an overarching position on time out of GP training and are underpinned by GMC and Gold Guide positions:
  - The overriding considerations are the requirements of the curriculum, fairness to trainees, patient safety and consistency
  - Training should be referred to in terms of phases rather than years
  - The training programme is 36 months wte (whole time equivalent) and all trainees should aim to complete all of this time in training
  - Usually, 14 days of exceptional time out of training per training phase plus an additional 7 days in ST3 may be applied.
  - This permits a maximum of 7 weeks which is generous given the short nature of the GP training programme but is not considered to impact progression or patient safety
  - Time out of training without it having to be made up is not an entitlement, and the determination on whether absence should be made up is by the ARCP panel
2. This guidance should be implemented and accepted as current and standard from October 2021 and should be reviewed after two years. Points 17 to 23 were approved and added in March 2022, replacing other separate pieces of guidance.

### Implementing the GMC's Time out of Training position

3. The GMC's [Time out of Training Position Statement](#) says that absence of trainees should be monitored by Local Offices/Deaneries through the ARCP process. Absence of more than 14 working days or more in one training phase should trigger a review of whether the end of training date needs to be extended and is dependent on their acquisition of competence. ([Gold Guide v8](#) 3.189) The GMC approved curriculum for GP training is three years. This does not allow for much, if any, flexibility. Roles in managing absence from training are set out as follows:
4. *"The administration of the absence and any extension to training will be undertaken by the relevant deanery in consultation with the relevant College/Faculty where necessary. The GMC support deaneries implementing this guidance flexibly to reflect the nature of the absence, the timing and the effect of the absence on the individuals' competence. Examples of this flexibility are outlined in the FAQs.*

**Q:** How will the GMC ensure that deaneries implement this requirement fairly and consistently?

**A:** The GMC will monitor extensions to training via the review of ARCP data.”

5. In addition to this, the GMC has an established monthly QA schedule with each College and Faculty. This is proportionate to the number of recommendations made. The GMC selects a random sample of recommendations for CCT and asks Colleges and Faculties to provide evidence to show that requirements have been met, including:
  - The trainee’s posts all add up to the appropriate duration for the programme – and if not, there is an explanation of why this is the case
  - Any changes to completion date (due to sickness, maternity leave, part time working etc) have been correctly adjusted.

## Calculations

6. Calculation of time in training is made using calendar days (wte). The RCGP calculator is the standard method of calculation which can be used by deanery staff but should not be published nor shared with trainees.

## 7. Application

- The ARCP panel should make the decision on whether absence should be made up in line with this guidance and amend the CCT date accordingly on an ongoing basis
- Fourteen (14) days of exceptional time out of training is permitted per phase of training, i.e. ST year
- Any time over 14 days absence per phase of training should be made up
- A further 7 days may be applied to any absence in the final phase of training (ST3)
- The total maximum amount of exceptional time out of training permitted over the full duration of training is therefore 7 weeks (49 days)
- Exceptional time out of training can normally only be applied to absences within the relevant training phase and is usually not carried over to the next phase
- For trainees whose progress is not satisfactory, all absence should be made up
- Short periods of exceptional time out of training might be subsumed within an extension for performance reasons.
- This removes any discretion at ST1 and ST2 panels to approve more than 14 days of exceptional time out of training in each training phase. This simplifies the process and mitigates the risk of surprises later in training.

## Recording absence

8. The purpose of guidance around recording absence is to:
  - ensure a standard and consistent approach and fairness to all trainees
  - ensure that the overall training duration set out by the curriculum is met
  - ensure that it is documented correctly
  - make absence evident to both Local Offices/Deaneries and the RCGP GPSA team
  - reduce the number of queries between the RCGP and Local Offices/Deaneries
  - improve efficiency

9. The Gold Guide and the GMC Time Out of Training statement outline that it is the responsibility of the trainee to report absences to the deanery, and the responsibility of the deanery to administrate and record these absences. It should also be evident that an ARCP panel has taken all absence into consideration.

#### Application

10. It is the responsibility of the trainee to be honest and open and to act with integrity (as per the GMC's [Good Medical Practice](#)). Absence must be reported to the deanery via the relevant processes and will be shared with the College and the GMC.
11. Trainees must record all absence contemporaneously and in calendar days. This should be done upon return to work and added to the absence recording tool in the Trainee Portfolio. In addition, trainees must declare all absence on their Form R, or via the agreed deanery process before each ARCP panel. This is all in addition to reporting absence to an employer.
12. The total number of days absent since the last review must be added to the box on the ARCP form by the panel stating the cumulative total of all periods of absence in this review period
  - If absence is declared after the ARCP panel, this should be added to the total on the next ARCP form
  - The total should include any exceptional time out of training
13. Absences of 29 days or less should not be documented on the Trainee Portfolio as a stage of training by the administrator.  
Absences of 30 consecutive days or more should be recorded on the Trainee Portfolio by the administrator as a stage of training, including if that absence has prior approval or is for statutory reasons
  - if the absence is taken during a placement that the doctor then returns to it should be documented in date order
  - all entries should run chronologically and concurrently with no overlapping dates
14. If unplanned absence is taken after an Outcome 6 has been issued, it is the trainee's responsibility to notify the deanery and their employer.
  - There is no requirement for the CCT date to change or a recommendation for CCT withdrawn.
  - The Outcome 6 will stand as a robust record that all mandatory requirements for CCT have already been met
15. Although the EU Directive does not apply in the UK, if the minimum requirements relating to GP training (6 months specialty. 6 months general practice and 36 months overall - allowing for absence as described in this guidance) are not met, there may be implications for the trainee should they wish to work outside of the UK post CCT. The deanery should make the trainee aware of this and record this as an Educator note or on the final ARCP form.

16. If a trainee has a supported, phased return to work, this period should not normally count towards training time. The period that is not counting towards training time should be clearly labelled as such on the post list in the Trainee Portfolio. However, if a decision is made in agreement with the trainee that a phased return to work should count towards training time, this should be made contemporaneously and should normally be at least 50% wte. Ideally, the reasons for this decision should be stated in an Educator Note, or on the relevant ARCP outcome form.

### **Managing absence at the end of training**

17. The deanery should be aware of trainees who may have planned leave (such as parental or planned sick leave) beginning close to their CCT date and should try to monitor them closely to ensure that the deanery is aware of any changes to training as early as possible. In principle, a plan should be developed for each of these trainees, and they should be managed individually and in line with the current Gold Guide.
18. If a trainee's absence coincides with the end of training, and they will have completed the requirements for CCT by their planned end of training date, there is no need for them to return.
- An ARCP panel is held as normal in the 2 months before planned completion.
  - Ideally, the final ESR should be done as close to the final panel as possible so that in the event of unplanned absence when a return to training is required, it will still be in date and will not need to be redone.
  - If an Outcome 6 is issued, the trainee applies for CCT.
19. If a trainee is required to return to training for any length of time, an Outcome 6 should not be issued prior to their absence to allow them to retain their NTN.
- A doctor cannot return to training once they have been added to the GP register.
  - An ARCP panel held prior to the absence should award an Outcome 1 if progress is satisfactory.
  - A further review should be held after return to training within 2 calendar months of the CCT date to confirm if an Outcome 6 can be issued.
  - A new Form R / SOAR or equivalent, must be completed when the trainee returns to training with any new health issues or significant events declared.
  - A new ESR is only required if the one completed prior to the period of absence is out of date (more than 2 months of training time between ESR and panel) or the time away from training is more than 12 months.
  - If there is any absence after an Outcome 6 is issued this should be managed in line with point 14.

### **Prolonged absence and fragmented training**

20. If a period of continuous absence is 12 months or more in total (including any accrued annual leave) a period of additional training is necessary to ensure capabilities have been maintained.
- The trainee should return to training for sufficient time to allow a new ESR to be completed and maintenance of capabilities to be assessed (up to three calendar months may be required for this).
  - An ARCP panel is held when the trainee is approaching completion of training.

- A new ESR and contemporaneous evidence of learning should be presented to the panel - this might include log entries and WPBAs.
  - If less than three calendar months are completed on their return to training, the ARCP form must include a statement confirming that the panel is satisfied the trainee has maintained the capabilities for general practice.
  - *As with all trainees, any performance issues that may occur following the award of an Outcome 6 are dealt with via the Responsible Officer for revalidation.*
21. For continuous periods of absence more than six months but less than twelve months, the deanery must be satisfied that the trainee has not lost their skills.
- A new ESR is only required if the one completed prior to the period of absence is out of date (more than 2 months of training time between ESR and panel)
  - Contemporaneous evidence of learning should be presented to the panel even if there is no need for a new ESR - this might include log entries, WPBAs and an Educator note confirming that the trainee has maintained their capabilities.
  - The first ARCP form on return to training must review capabilities and contain a statement confirming that the trainee has maintained the capabilities for general practice.
  - If there is not sufficient evidence to support maintenance of capabilities the panel may award an extension to training.
  - Where a trainee returns to training for less than 2 weeks there may not be any new evidence for a new ARCP panel to review. If an ARCP panel was held and an Outcome 1 issued confirming all requirements for CCT were met prior to the leave and a new ESR is not required, the final ARCP should include the following statement:  
 'The trainee gained all the capabilities for completion of training before the period of absence commenced however, we were unable to recommend Outcome 6 at this point in training as it was more than two months before the completion of training date'.
22. Where training is fragmented by multiple absences in a condensed period, the trainee may not have been in training for long enough for a formal assessment to take place.
- The first ARCP panel on return to training must review evidence of capabilities.
  - The ARCP form must contain a statement confirming that capabilities have been achieved despite the fragmented training.

## Parental leave

### 23. Keeping in Touch (KIT) days

A trainee may work for up to a maximum of 10 keeping in touch (KIT) days which do not have to be consecutive during parental leave.

- They are considered employed days where a trainee is paid to be in training.
- KIT days would not normally count towards training, however if there is evidence of education attained on a KIT day, this should contribute to the overall assessment of training.
- It should be noted that the acquisition of evidence is not the primary intended purpose of KIT days.
- A trainee may also choose to take an exam on a KIT day if supported by the deanery.

## Types of absence

24. Types of absence considered exceptional time out of training which are required to be made up, and that should be documented, are normally statutory types of leave which include:

- Sickness absence (including for COVID)
- Maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Compassionate leave
- Parental leave
- Carer leave
- Sabbaticals
- Jury service
- Industrial action strike
- MoD responsibilities
- Professional leave ([work outside the requirements of the curriculum](#))
- Shielding or self-isolation due to pandemic (where remote training is not possible)
- Annual leave accrued during times of exceptional leave periods as above

25. The following types of leave are managed by the Local Office/Deanery as they are either linked to training or are employment related. The RCGP does not need to know about these episodes of leave except for annual leave accrued during extended periods of absence or maternity leave which should be recorded in the Trainee Portfolio:

- Annual leave accrued from time in training
- Study leave
- Representation at relevant meetings or trade union activity (up to 5 days per phase of training of pre-approved exceptional leave for non-clinical roles linked to GP training)

These types of leave do not count as time off from training and are therefore not included for calculation purposes.