

Acting Up as a Consultant Standard Operating Procedure

Yorkshire and the Humber Deanery

Workforce Training and Education, Yorkshire and Humber, NHS England





Name of Document	Acting Up as a Consultant
Category	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - Trainee management This SOP is only applicable to relevant programmes within Specialty Training.
Purpose	This document is one of a suite of Standard Operating Procedures to support the management of trainees across England. This SOP is aligned to the principles of 'A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK' (The Gold Guide) and 'A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Dental Foundation, Core and Specialty Training' (The Dental Gold Guide). Please refer to the most recent versions.
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Document Author/Reviewer	Rachel Noble, Programme Support Manager

Version	Date	Author/Reviewer	Notes Reason for Change, what has changed, etc
1	September 2012		New guidance
2	March 2014		Minor changes in line with organisational change
3	January 2015		Minor changes to reflect the Gold Guide position on LTFT and Academic Acting Up opportunities.
4	March 2016		Amended in line with new HEE branding guidelines
5	January 2017	Nick Sowerby	Amended to reflect revised School allocation within Programme Support
6	August 2019	Becky Travis	Updates to branding, HEE SOP, Gold Guide (version 7) and the Dental Gold Guide incorporated.
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8	January 2025	Kellie Wallace	Updated in line with National SOP and Gold Guide
9	January 2026	Rachel Noble	Updated in line with National SOP and Gold Guide



Document Status

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This document is not intended to be interpreted as a policy statement. This is a local guidance document for faculty and staff in the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery to enable consistency of application; it is recognised there may be exceptional circumstances when deviation from this guidance may be required.

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1. Introduction



1.1 Overview

Acting up provides doctors and dentists in training with the experience of navigating the transition from postgraduate doctor/dentist to consultant, whilst maintaining the supervision and training plan required of doctors or dentists in training.

Medical Specialty doctors in training who are within one year of their anticipated completion of training date (CCT) are eligible to act up as consultants, for a fixed-term period of three months (pro rata for individuals training less than full time [LTFT]).

Specialty dentists in training may act up as a consultant/specialist within six months of their completion of specialty training date (CCST) for individual sessions, or longer periods of time until the end of their training.

Doctors and dentists in training should normally apply prospectively for acting up opportunities. Acting up placements will require appropriate supervision arrangements. Applications which do not meet the application notice period and placement requirements stated within this guidance will not normally be accepted.

There may be some situations in which the Postgraduate Dean (or nominated deputy) may exercise discretion to extend the acting up offer, to aid patient care and ensure patient safety (e.g., pandemics or events of a catastrophic nature).

1.2 Purpose of this guidance

This guidance outlines the arrangements for approval of acting up to consultant opportunities within NHS England's Yorkshire and the Humber Deanery.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with:

- Gold Guide 10th Edition: A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK
- Dental Gold Guide 5th Edition: A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Dental Foundation, Core and Specialty Training in the UK
- NHS England Standard Operating Procedure for Acting Up as a Consultant

Licensing bodies and some Colleges/Faculties have guidance and/or additional requirements when applying for Acting Up to Consultant posts. It is the responsibility of the individual doctor or dentist in training to check their respective curriculum, Royal College/Faculty and licensing body guidance and fully comply with any requirements.

1.3 Doctors and dentists covered by the guidance

This guidance applies to all medical doctors appointed to GMC approved Specialty training programmes (Gold Guide 1.2, 1.3) since 1st August 2007 and includes:

- Higher trainees.
- Specialty trainees appointed to run through specialty programmes.
- Trainees appointed to higher and run through specialty programmes who are out of programme with the permission of the Postgraduate Dean (PGD).



- Clinical Academics appointed to higher and run through specialty programmes e.g. Academic Clinical Fellowships and Clinical Lectureships on these Specialty Programmes.
- Public health trainees with backgrounds other than Medicine.
- Specialist Registrars (SpRs) appointed before 1st August 2007.

This guidance also applies to all specialty dentists appointed to dental specialty training programmes as defined within the Dental Gold Guide.

1.4 Doctors and dentists not covered by the guidance

Foundation (including Dental Foundation), Core Training (including Dental Core), Lower Specialty Training and GP Specialty doctors are not eligible for acting up placements.

1.5 Equality and diversity

The Yorkshire and Humber Deanery is committed to ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity are always applied in the delivery of education and training. This guidance is based upon the principles of natural justice, fairness, equality and reasonableness, as supported by legislation, and should be applied with those principles in mind.

2. Eligibility for Acting Up Opportunities

2.1 Acting up opportunities

Opportunities to act up are not available to all doctors and dentists and are only possible if the opportunity arises, and an employing or host local education provider/Trust extends an invitation.

Doctors and dentists should normally **apply for acting up opportunities 16 weeks prior to the proposed start date**, to meet the national Code of Practice requirements.

Doctors and dentists acting up as consultants will need to always have appropriate named supervision arrangements in place, including supervision during on call. Approval will only be considered if the acting up placement is relevant to gaining competences, knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the curriculum.

To retain access to the Period of Grace, a doctor/dentist in training must complete their period of 'Acting Up' before they reach their CCT/CCST date. Access to acting up opportunities once CCT/CCST date is reached is not normally available.

2.2 Doctors in postgraduate medical specialty training

Doctors in training who intend to act up should normally be **within one year** of their anticipated CCT date.

Those with current unmet objectives, outcomes 2 or 3 at Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) or outstanding competences, are not normally eligible to apply to act up.



When in an 'acting up' position, the term 'acting up' and not 'locum' must be applied for doctors who still hold a National Training Number (NTN). Although acting up often fulfils a genuine service need, it is not the same as being a Locum Consultant.

Doctors will maintain their National Training Number (NTN) throughout the acting up opportunity and the Postgraduate Dean will remain the Responsible Officer for the purposes of revalidation. It is the responsibility of the individual and organisation hosting the doctor who is acting up, to report applicable matters in conjunction with revalidation to the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery Revalidation Team.

Acting up will normally be for a period of three months (normally pro rata for doctors working LTFT). However, length of periods approved for acting up as a consultant may be specified in the relevant curricula and, where referenced in a curriculum, specific provisions around acting up roles need to be adhered to.

Recognition of the period of acting up is subject to conditions set by the Colleges/Faculties and the competences contained within their curricula. These conditions vary between Colleges. It is therefore important that the doctor in training is aware of their own College guidance on acting up prior to applying.

If the specialty curriculum does not refer to a period of acting up as a consultant, then the subsequent acting up period will not be recognised as training by the relevant College/Faculty and GMC, and therefore cannot be counted towards training time.

A doctor in training will only be permitted to act up in the same organisation in which they are currently occupying a training post. Only in very exceptional circumstances will an application for acting up in a different local education provider be accepted. This would require approval from the Postgraduate Dean (or nominated deputy).

If applying for an opportunity outside the UK, the doctor in training will need to consult the Out of Programme policy and submit an application, noting the GMC and College/Faculty requirements. If prospectively approved, it may be possible for trainees to count the acting up time towards training.

Doctors who are post-CCT are not normally eligible to act up, but individuals could take up an arrangement as Locum Consultant. Although acting up often fulfils a genuine service need, it is not the same as being a Locum Consultant. Upon taking up a Locum Consultant post, trainees will be required to resign their National Training Number.

2.3 Dentists in postgraduate specialty training

Dentists in training intending to act up should normally be within six months of their CCST date, provided they have passed the relevant examination, have satisfactorily completed training to date and are deemed by their Educational Supervisor to be competent to undertake the role.

Dentists can normally credit time towards training as acting up if this has been prospectively approved by the Postgraduate Dental Dean, as Out of Programme for Training (OOPT).

Acting up will normally be for a period of three months (normally pro-rata for dentists working LTFT). Dentists can act up for individual sessions or longer periods of time (until end of training). Such appointments do not affect the CCST date or grace period.



CCST holders in Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry must have completed 18 months (pro-rata) in a post-CCST appointment before acting up.

Acting up is not the same as trainees undertaking a locum placement within six months of their CCST date. Dentists will maintain their National Training Number (NTN) throughout the acting up opportunity.

Dentists must participate with the ARCP process to confirm the provisional period of OOPT permitted to count towards the overall training period. The period of recognition may be reduced if the training placement did not provide the expected competences.

3. Application Process

3.1 How to apply for acting up approval

Before commencing an acting up position, doctors and dentists in training must formally apply using the application form a **minimum of 16 weeks** before the anticipated start date of the prospective acting up period. Due notice is required in accordance with the Code of Practice. In exceptional circumstances, the minimum application deadline may be waived, with consent from the Postgraduate Dean (or nominated deputy) and the Doctor's current placement provider.

Applicants are responsible for completing Sections A, B and C and arranging the completion of Sections D and E. Upon completion, they should send the form (along with evidence of support for the arrangement from the relevant local education provider[s]) to the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery electronically to the relevant email address listed at [Contact Us Link](#)

3.2 Review of application

Upon receipt, the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery Programme Support Team will arrange for the application to be reviewed by the Postgraduate Dean/Postgraduate Dental Dean or their nominated deputy (usually a Deputy Dean or Associate Dean).

The Programme Support Team will notify the doctor or dentist of the outcome, which will normally be a copy of the completed form and an accompanying letter, sent by email. The outcome will also be communicated to the faculty and local education provider(s) names in the application.

The opportunity to act up is not always available and is given on a case-by-case basis therefore there is no appeals process.

3.3 Recording the application outcome

The Programme Support Team will upload a copy of the application form to the doctor or dentist's Trainee Information System (TIS) record, amend the placement record and ensure the rotation grid is updated to reflect any approved acting up opportunities as necessary.

4. Equality Impact Assessment



Under the Equality Act, the need for public bodies in England to undertake or publish an equality impact assessment of their policies, practices and decisions was removed in April 2011 when the 'single equality duty' was introduced. Public bodies must still give "due regard" to the need to avoid discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all protected groups when making policy decisions and are required to publish information showing how they are complying with this duty.

5. Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness

This Operational Guidance will be reviewed in accordance with updated or new guidance published by COPMeD, COPDEND, NHS England, the General Medical Council, the General Dental Council, or any other organisation as applicable. New iterations of this guidance will be ratified by the Postgraduate Dean's Senior Team within the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery.