



Guidance on managing time out of training for general practice

October 2021

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.

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.

Types of absence

17. 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

18. 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.