Out of Programme Standard Operating Procedure

Yorkshire and the Humber Deanery

Workforce Training and Education, Yorkshire and Humber, NHS England

Name of Document	**Out of Programme (OOP)**
Category	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - PGDiT management **This SOP is only applicable to relevant programmes within Specialty Training.**
Audience	External
Purpose	This document is one of a suite of Standard Operating Procedures to support the management of PGDiTs 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 Core and Specialty Training' (The Dental Gold Guide). Please refer to the most recent versions.
Authorised by	Yorkshire and Humber Deanery SOP Delivery and Development Group
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Next Review Date	SOP to be reviewed in line with any future Gold Guide revisions, or every 12 months, whichever comes first.
Document Author/Reviewer	Umakanth Kempanna, Foundation School Director Kellie Wallace, Business Manager

Version	Date	Author/Reviewer	Notes Reason for Change, what has changed, etc
1	April 2013		New guidance
2	September 2014		Updates in line with organisational change
3	March 2016		Branding changes.
4	April 2016		Inclusion of GP step-on step-off
5	August 2017	Nick Sowerby	Reviewed with no changes.
6	July 2020	Becky Travis	Alignment to HEE SOP, introduction of OOP Pause pilot, incorporation of Foundation and Dental, Gold Guide v8, amendments to GP step-on step-off and HEE branding.
7	March 2024	Rachel Noble and Naomi Koziol	Rebranded to NHS England. Updated in line with National SOP. GP step-on, step-off removed.

8	January 2025	Rachel Noble	Updated in line with National SOP and Gold Guide
9	January 2026	Umakanth Kempanna, Kellie Wallace	Reviewed to ensure alignment with National SOP and Gold Guide. Inclusion of an Intent form as appendix for STP and Dental (pending decision from Primary Care) Update of STP email addresses

Document Status

This is a controlled document. Whilst this document may be printed, the electronic version posted on the SharePoint site is the controlled copy. Any printed copies of this document are not controlled.

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.

Contents

Introduction

1.1 Overview

PGDiTs may seek to spend some time out of the training programme (OOP) to which they have been appointed. All such requests need to be agreed in advance by the Postgraduate Dean (PGD) or Postgraduate Dental Dean (PGDD) as applicable. PGDiTs are therefore advised to discuss their proposals with trainers as early as possible.

1.2 Purpose of this guidance

This guidance outlines the arrangements for the application and approval of OOP within the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following: NHSE Standard Operating Procedure for Out of Programme (OOP) Guidance Aug 2024 [1]

➢ A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK (The Gold Guide). V10 ; August 2024 [2]

➢ A Reference Guide for Dental Specialty Training in the UK (The Dental Gold Guide) September 2025 [3]

➢ NHSE Supported Return to Training (SuppoRTT) Guidance V8; April 2023 [4]

➢ NHSE OOP Sponsorship Guidance [5]

1.3 Doctors and dentists covered by the guidance

This guidance applies to all dentists in Specialty training programmes as defined within the Dental Gold Guide [3].

This guidance applies to all postgraduate medical doctors appointed to General Medical Council (GMC) approved Specialty training programmes (Gold Guide 1.3) and includes:

➢ Foundation;

➢ Core;

➢ Higher;

➢ GP Specialty;

➢ Postgraduate doctors appointed to Run through Specialty programmes;

➢ Postgraduate doctors appointed to higher and run through Specialty programmes who are OOP with the permission of the 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 doctors and those with backgrounds other than Medicine.

1.4 Doctors and dentists on programmes not covered by the guidance

➢ Locum Appointments for Training (LATs);

➢ Doctors in stand-alone Foundation posts;

➢ Dental Foundation;

➢ Dental Core.

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. OOP Categories

Postgraduate doctors and dentists in training (PGDiTs) may apply for a period of OOP for varying reasons; within each category there are specific requirements for approval by the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery. The following principles apply to all PGDiTs eligible for OOP.

2.1 OOP Experience (OOPE)

PGDiTs may undertake OOPE if they wish to gain professional skills which would enhance their future practice. This could include enhancing skills in medical leadership, academia, education or patient safety; or enhancing clinical skills related to (but not part of) the curriculum. Such experience may benefit the PGDiT (e.g. working in a different health environment/country) or may help support the health needs of other countries, e.g. with Médecins Sans Frontières, Voluntary Service Overseas, global health partnerships.

Medical and Dental PGDiTs appointed to NHSE Leadership and Management Fellow positions should normally apply for OOPE.

2.2 OOP Research (OOPR)

This category is utilised when a PGDiT wants to undertake a period of research, leading to an MD or PhD. Not normally permitted in the final year of training.

2.3 OOP Career Break (OOPC)

PGDiTs may apply for a planned career break (e.g. domestic responsibilities, travel, develop work in another industry).

2.4 OOP Training (OOPT)

This category may be utilised when a PGDiT undertakes clinical training, which is not part of their training programme. Training time may be included with agreement (and in accordance) with processes defined within this document.

2.5 OOP Pause (OOPP)

This category may be utilised when a PGDiT wants to step off formal training for up to 12 months, to undertake an NHS or other patient facing UK-based non-training post. This flexibility can be a vital tool to support PGDiT wellbeing however is not normally permitted in the final year of training. Not currently available to Dental Training.

3. Application Requirements

3.1 Application form and notice periods

PGDiTs wishing to apply to take OOP must have the written agreement of the PGD/PGDD (or nominated Deputy). In NHSE, applications will normally be considered by the Head of School or nominated deputy. Requests should be made by accessing the application form from the NHSE Yorkshire and the Humber website and submitting it to the relevant Programme Support Team.

It is expected that PGDiTs should discuss and apply to the PGD/PGDD and their Training Programme Director for any OOP. Applications to the PGD/PGDD should be submitted within the six-month windows in advance of the proposed start date, within the relevant application window as outlined on the NHSE Yorkshire and the Humber website. This is in order to meet the Code of Practice requirements.

Applications which do not meet the 6-month deadline are only agreed in exceptional circumstances. PGDiTs who apply for OOP with less than 6 months' notice, are required to submit a covering letter with their OOP application, explaining the reason(s) why their application is being submitted after the deadline. If PGDiT is unsure when their OOP will start, they should complete a notice of intention form to provisionally apply for an OOP and discuss with their Training Programme Director (TPD) in advance to avoid disruption to rotations. The Intention Form is only applicable for PGDiTs in Dental or Specialty Training Programmes, not Foundation or General Practice Training Programmes.

If funding or a fellowship is being applied for prior to the 6-month OOP application window, this must be discussed with the TPD and/or Head of School in advance of that application. The Head of School will provide guidance as to the likelihood of the OOP being approved in the future 6-month window – in other words provisional approval must be sought before any application for funding or fellowship. If provisional approval has not been granted, the PGDiT should not proceed with the application for funding or fellowship.

The following timeframes will be adhered to when an OOP application is received within Yorkshire and the Humber:

- PS teams process and log applications within 2 weeks of receipt
- Approvers approve applications within 4 weeks of being logged
- PS teams notify trainees of outcome within 2 weeks of decision

3.2 Minimum time in training

Commencement of OOP will not normally be agreed until a PGDiT has been in a training programme for a least one year (with 2-years post-registration experience where applicable). OOPs may also be considered in the final year of training if the PGDiT is on a trajectory for an ARCP outcome 6.

3.3 ARCP outcomes

A PGDiT would usually need to be on an outcome 1 at the ARCP that most recently precedes the start date of the OOP.t to be granted a period of OOP.

3.4 Training Number requirements

PGDiTs will retain their training number for the duration of the OOP, unless the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) / Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST) date falls within this time.

3.5 Maintaining contact details

PGDiTs must ensure that NHSE has an up-to-date contact address, e-mail address and contact number throughout the period of OOP. The details must be provided on the application form.

3.6 Immigration sponsorship

PGDiTs who have immigration requirements (including a Tier 2 or Skilled Worker visa sponsored by NHSE) must ensure that they have referred to the NHSE OOP Sponsorship Guidance [5]. The guidance is set out by the NHSE National Overseas Sponsorship Team and impacts sponsorship arrangements based on OOP types. This includes sponsorship cancellations, alternative visa arrangements and re-application requirements. Further information can also be found on our [website](#).

3.6 Withdrawal of OOP applications

Prior to a period of OOP being approved and/or commencing, where a PGDiT wishes to withdraw their application, they should do so in writing to the Training Programme Director and NHSE YH Programme Support Team at their earliest opportunity.

4. Medical Core and Specialty Training Arrangements

4.1 Approval of OOP for core/lower training

Occasions where OOP is granted for core/lower PGDiTs are likely to be exceptional, given the short length and the nature of the training programme.

PGDiTs are normally approved for one period of OOP per training programme, including dual CCT programmes (Gold Guide 3.143). Exceptional circumstances to approve further OOP periods for a PGDiT may be considered by the PGD when there are sound educational reasons.

OOPT will normally be for a period of up to one year (Gold Guide 3.159).

OOPR approval will not normally exceed 3 years. In exceptional circumstance, and with prospective approval by the PGD, applications may be extended for a further year up to a maximum of 4 years in total (Gold Guide 3.168). PGDiTs in their final year of training will not normally be granted OOPR (Gold Guide 3.172).

The duration of OOPC will normally be a period of up to one year. PGDiTs applying for OOPC should refer to the Gold Guide (3.176 i-xii), which details arrangements for the planning and management of a career break.

OOPP will normally be for a maximum of 1 year.

4.2 Royal College and/or Faculty endorsement

Before requesting OOP Training or Research (OOPT/R), PGDiTs must seek support for the application from the appropriate Royal College or Faculty and comply with their requirements (Gold Guide 3.158 and 3.166). The College/Faculty will indicate the length of time the OOPT/R should count towards CCT, where relevant. The PGDiT's CCT date will be re-assessed on return to the programme in the light of educational progress and the time left in programme.

4.3 General Medical Council endorsement

The General Medical Council (GMC) is the only body which can educationally approve OOPT/R to count towards the award of a CCT. NHSE is required to apply for prospective GMC approval for any OOP which is to count towards a CCT or CESR(CP)/CEGPR(CP) on behalf of the PGDiT; this application is required to include support from the relevant College/Faculty.

If prospective approval for OOP is not sought from the GMC, then it cannot count towards a CCT or CESR(CP)/CEGPR(CP). Applications must be submitted to the GMC in advance of the OOPT/R; the GMC will not approve applications retrospectively.

Where OOPT is in a GMC approved programme within the same specialty, an application for further GMC approval is not required.

4.4 Academic Training

A PGDiT taking a period of OOP will end their academic award. If a PGDiT wishes to continue their Academic Clinical Fellowship/Clinical Lectureship, then they will need to apply to the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

PGDiTs wishing to take OOP for research, or an appropriate higher degree, should seek the prospective agreement of the PG Dean. PGDiTs with agreement from the PG Dean will retain their training number (Gold Guide 3.141).

4.5 GMC revalidation requirements

Whilst on any OOP, the PGD remains the Responsible Officer. PGDiTs should ensure that whilst on OOP, they continue to meet all requirements of the revalidation process. This should be confirmed prior to the OOP if any information is required by the local NHSE YH Revalidation Team.

Those on OOP are advised to retain their license to practise with the GMC.

5. Medical Foundation Training Arrangements

5.1 General principles

Occasions when OOP is granted for Foundation PGDiTs is likely to be exceptional given the length and the nature of their training. The duration of time out of the Foundation programme will usually be 12 months to avoid Foundation doctors becoming out of phase with the Foundation programme.

Foundation Schools will typically only approve OOP at the end of F1 so that the time out is taken between the end of F1 and the beginning of F2. Time out during F1 or F2 placements will only be considered in exceptional circumstances [Gold Guide 3.151].

OOPE is not normally available in Foundation Training (Gold Guide 3.144).

OOPR will be approved only in exceptional cases and usually restricted to one year (Gold guide 3.164).

5.2 GMC provisional registration

F1 doctors should be familiar with GMC regulations for provisional registration, in particular the maximum duration permitted. Further information is available on the GMC website (Gold Guide 3.153).

5.3 F1 and overseas OOP

Foundation doctors who take time out of the Foundation programme during F1 to undertake training outside the UK, will require a Certificate of Experience from their Medical School confirming they have successfully completed the requirements of F1 in order to apply for full GMC registration. No other evidence will be accepted.

If the Foundation doctor cannot provide the evidence for the Certificate of Experience, they are not eligible for full registration and will be limited to applying for provisional registration on their return to the UK. Further guidance can be found on the GMC website [Gold Guide 3.153].

5.4 LATs/Stand-alone Foundation training

PGDiTs undertaking LAT/stand-alone Foundation posts cannot request time out of their post. Where time needs to be taken away from work (e.g. following bereavement or for illness), the service gap may be filled, but the PGDiT's fixed-term appointment contract will not necessarily be extended.

6. Dental Specialty Training

6.1 Approval of dental applications

All applications for OOP will require approval from the PGDD, who will also consider (where relevant), what time counts towards training.

Where an OOPE has taken place outside the UK, the PGDD (in conjunction with the Specialty Advisory Committee [SAC]) will consider the value of the training and its contribution to competences within the curriculum.

All PGDiTs are encouraged to undertake research, and a period of OOPR may not be necessary for placements under 6 months. The PGDD (in conjunction with the SAC) will determine whether OOPR is necessary and advise the PGDiT accordingly.

PGDiTs in their final year of Dental Specialty Training will not normally be eligible for OOPR.

6.2 Acting Up/Locum Consultant applications

The OOP application form should not be utilised by Dental Specialty PGDiTs for applications related to Acting Up or Locum Consultant appointments. PGDiTs are advised to refer to the NHSE YH Acting Up to Consultant Guidance which is available on the website.

7. Application Process

7.1 General principles

PGDiTs must complete the application form available on the website and submit it to the relevant Programme Support Team (details available on the application form).

PGDiTs must complete the application form in full and provide all supporting documentation required as part of the process. Forms which have missing information, or have been completed incorrectly, will be returned to the PGDiT for correction and will not be processed until rectified.

PGDiTs should discuss the OOP with their Educational Supervisor and their Training Programme Director prior to submission of their application.

The Training Programme Director will review the application based on appropriateness for the PGDiT and their Programme. The PGD/PGDD (or nominated

deputy) will make the final decision to approve, reject or request further information. GMC approval processes will be followed where appropriate.

Some Colleges have additional requirements as part of the OOP application process. PGDiTs should contact their relevant College to ascertain requirements.

PGDiTs will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application.

In instances where applications are refused, PGDiTs may appeal the decision in writing to the PGD/PGDD and NHSE YH will respond within 10 working days. The PGD/PGDD's decision is final.

7.2 Changes to approved applications

PGDiTs wishing to extend or curtail periods of OOP must have the approval of PGD/PGDD. They should also discuss changes with supervisors and the Training Programme Director in the first instance, and at the earliest opportunity.

A formal application must be submitted to extend OOP, normally at least 6 months in advance of the initially approved end date. The PGDiT should submit details outlining the reason(s) for the extension and have the support of their clinical/research supervisor (where applicable) and Training Programme Director.

In addition, PGDiTs wishing to extend OOP (T or R) should consult College/Faculty guidance, to clarify what time can count towards CCT. Dental Specialty PGDiTs should contact the PGDD for clarification.

PGDiTs should use the application form available on the NHSE YH website to apply for an extension.

Where a PGDiT intends to curtail their OOP, normally 6 months' notice will be required, and the PGDiT should contact their supervisor(s), Training Programme Director and the NHSE YH Programme Support Team regarding their proposed change. Curtailments will normally be agreed by the PGD/PGDD.

The PGDiT will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application to extend or request to curtail their OOP.

8. OOP and the Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP)

PGDiTs on OOP are required to engage with the ARCP process. The ARCP Panel should receive documentation from the PGDiT on the OOP Request and Annual Review Form (Appendix 4 of the Gold Guide). This should include what the PGDiT has been undertaking during their OOP time, in instances when the OOP is not recognised for training.

8.1 ARCP and OOPE

If the OOP period is to gain clinical experience which will not contribute towards the competences required by the training programme (OOPE), an annual OOP Request

and Annual Review Form should be submitted, including an indicative intended date of return.

8.2 ARCP and OOPR

If the purpose of the OOP is research, the PGDiT must produce a research supervisor's report together with the annual OOP report form. This should reference that appropriate progress in research is being made, along with achievement of the relevant degree (if appropriate).

If there is prospective approval by the GMC for the OOPR to contribute to the CCT or CESR(CP)/ CEGPR(CP), formal assessment documentation must be submitted annually to the ARCP Panel.

8.3 ARCP and OOPC

If a PGDiT is undertaking a career break, an OOP Request and Annual Review Form should be submitted by the PGDiT to the ARCP Panel for consideration. This should indicate that the PGDiT is still on a career break and include an indicative intended date of return.

8.4 ARCP and OOPT

If the PGDiT is on OOPT which has been prospectively approved by the GMC (where applicable) and that will contribute to the competences of the PGDiT's programme, an Outcome 8 should not be used. Instead, a routine assessment of progression should be made and an Outcome 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 should be awarded by the ARCP Panel.

8.5 ARCP and OOPP

If a PGDiT is undertaking an OOPP, an OOP Request and Annual Review Form should be submitted by the PGDiT to the ARCP Panel for consideration. This should indicate that the PGDiT is still on an OOP Pause and include an indicative intended date of return.

Any relevant competencies gained during the OOPP will be reviewed at the next ARCP upon recommencement to the training programme.

9. Employment and Contractual Arrangements

9.1 Contractual implications and employer liaison

PGDiTs whose OOP applications are successful will normally be granted unpaid leave for the period of the OOP. PGDiTs should ensure that the organisation/authority offering the OOP issues a statement of terms and conditions of service to the individual.

It is the responsibility of the PGDiT with their current employer to establish how OOP will affect their:

- ➢ Immigration/visa status;
- ➢ Continuous employment;
- ➢ Incremental progression;
- ➢ Parental leave entitlement;
- ➢ Employer contributions to superannuation;
- ➢ Any other employment matters.

PGDiTs taking career breaks are strongly advised to obtain advice from their employers on all statutory rights and contractual arrangements. PGDiTs may also wish to refer to guidance produced by their trade union (where applicable).

The Deanery is not responsible for any contractual issues that arise by PGiDT taking a period of OOP.

9.2 Statutory leave and extension to OOP

Where PGDiTs are undertaking a period of OOP and take statutory leave (e.g. sickness, maternity, parental, adoption, etc.), the organisation providing the OOP placement will determine whether the placement can be extended.

Where a placement is extended (for any reason), the PGDiT will need to apply for an extension to their OOP.

9.3 Sickness absence and OOP

It is expected that OOP will not normally be used in conjunction with managing ill health or sickness absence. PGDiTs who require leave on health grounds should discuss the matter with their employer.

9.4 Study leave arrangements and entitlements during OOP

PGDiTs on OOP are not normally eligible to apply for funded study leave from the Specialty study leave budget except for OOPT (Out of Programme Training).

10. Return from OOP and Supported Return to Training

PGDiTs are advised to refer to the Supported Return to Training (SuppoRTT) Guidance [5] in conjunction with this guidance.

Return to programme should be planned, both before and during the period of OOP and at least 6 months' notice should be given. If return to programme is earlier than initially planned, and the curtailment or change to return date has been formally agreed, there is no guarantee that a placement will be available. However, every effort will be made to identify a programme placement at the earliest opportunity.

Other points to consider include:

- ➢ Contractual implications, including immigration status and visa requirements. PGDiTs are advised to discuss returning to training with their employer.

> ➢ In the interest of patient safety, an assessment should be made by the School to agree an appropriate plan for return to clinical training. The School will need to consider the type of OOP, length of time out of training, maintenance of clinical skills throughout the OOP, etc. Liaison with the NHSE YH Supported Return to Training (SuppoRTT) Team should be considered; further information can be found on the NHSE YH website SuppoRTT pages.

> ➢ All PGDiTs returning from an OOP should have a return to practice programme organised for them, which may include a phased return to clinical practice. This will be accelerated as practically as possible but may result in the delay of recommencement to training.

> ➢ Upon return from OOP, an Educational Supervisor review should occur early on for the above reasons, to ensure that any support required to return to the training programme is put into place at the earliest opportunity.

11. Bibliography

1. NHSE, Out of Programme (OOP) Guidance, Standard Operating Procedure, 2024 Aug.
2. NHSE, Department of Health, A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK, The Gold Guide, 10th ed. 2024 Aug.
3. UK Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEND), Department of Health, A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Dental Specialty Training in the UK, The Dental Gold Guide, 5th ed. 2025 Sept.
4. NHSE Yorkshire and the Humber, Supported Return to Training Guidance, V8. 2023 Apr.
5. NHSE OOP Sponsorship Guidance, 2023 Mar.

12. 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 8 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.

13. 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.

14. Appendices

OOP Application Form can be found on our [website](#).

OOP Intention Form can be found on our [website](#).