

GUIDANCE FOR TRAINEES WISHING TO TAKE TIME OUT OF PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION: TAKING TIME OUT OF PROGRAMME

The Gold Guide for training sets out the circumstances, purpose, eligibility and procedures that need to be followed if a trainee is to spend time out of the speciality training programme to which they have been appointed. The main points are summarised or reproduced below. Trainees should read this in conjunction with the Gold Guide for Training and local Deanery procedures

There are four types of Time “Out of Programme”

a) OOPC: Time Out of Programme for a Career Break, to pursue other interests, for domestic responsibilities or because of ill health.

b) OOPE: Time Out of Programme for clinical Experience, to gain additional or enhanced clinical experience that will not contribute to the award of CCT. The CCT date will be extended.

c) OOPT: Time Out of Programme for Approved Clinical Training, a trainee can seek prospective approval for clinical experience not otherwise available to them in their programme but which might well contribute towards gaining the competencies needed in order to be awarded CCT.

d) OOPR: Time Out of Programme for Research; a trainee can seek prospective approval for a period of time in research, some or all of which will count towards the award of CCT where the training received is relevant to the curriculum in question.

OOPC and OOPE do not require prospective approval by the RCPsych or GMC and approval for such time out of programme is through the trainees Deanery alone.

OOPT and OOPR both require prospective approval from the local Deanery and from the GMC. All applications must be reviewed by the QA committee at the RCPsych which will make a recommendation of approval to the GMC if the application is found to be appropriate. The GMC will not approve applications without College support.

2. GENERAL POINTS.

1. All OOP requests need to be agreed by the Postgraduate Dean and trainees must follow the local procedures. Trainees are advised to discuss their proposals as early as possible with their Training Programme Director.

2. At least three months notice is usually expected so that employers can ensure that the needs of patients are appropriately addressed. Trainees must not assume that approval will be given. Any commitments made before approval is received in writing are made at the trainees own risk. Trainees who depart from their programme without approval may be putting their employment at risk.

3. OOP will not usually be agreed until a trainee has been in a programme for at least

one year, unless at the time of appointment deferral of the start of the programme has been agreed, e.g., for statutory reasons.

4. Retrospective approval will not be given.

5. The trainee will need to submit annual Out of Programme paperwork and keep the relevant Training Programme Director informed.

6. For trainees undertaking approved training or research, their paperwork will form part of the ARCP process.

7. Trainees on fixed term or locum appointments for training will not usually be eligible for OOP except following bereavement or illness, but the period of their appointment will not be extended

8. The Speciality Curricula indicate that trainees in their final year of Advanced training (or possibly penultimate year in dual training) can undertake a three month 'acting up' consultant post in the speciality of their CCT. Such a period is usually seen as being part of the programme and an Out of Programme application is not usually required. Further information is given below.

9. Trainees should note that each Deanery will have its own process; some deaneries require college support before they will send the application to the GMC, others do so pending college support. The College QA committee is happy to review applications after the TPD and Head of School have given their approval. The success of any application is dependent upon approval from both Deanery and College.

3. CAREER BREAKS (OOPC)

Trainees can request a career break to pursue other interests, domestic responsibilities, work in industry or developing talents in other areas.

Some may also take a career break to deal with a period of ill health.

All OOPCs must be taken with the agreement of the postgraduate dean. There may be some factors which prevent a postgraduate dean allowing an OOPC, however, all requests will be considered on an individual basis.

The duration of an OOPC may be limited to two years. Trainees wishing to take longer OOPC will normally have to relinquish their NTN.

There is further important information on OOPCs and the circumstances when they are considered appropriate which can be found in the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 sections 6.84 to 6.88

4. TIME OUT OF PROGRAMME FOR CLINICAL EXPERIENCE (OOPE) NOT COUNTING TOWARDS A CCT

Trainees may seek agreement from their Postgraduate Deanery for out of programme time to undertake clinical experience which has not been approved by the GMC and which will not contribute to award of a CCT.

The request to take time out for such experience must be agreed by the Postgraduate Dean.

Trainees must use an out of programme document obtained either from the Postgraduate Deanery or Appendix 4 of the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 to make the request and this should be returned on an annual basis to the Deanery whilst the

trainee is out of programme.

Further information on OOPEs can be found in the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 sections 6.75 to 6.77

5. OUT OF PROGRAMME EXPERIENCE FOR APPROVED CLINICAL TRAINING (OOPT).

Trainees may wish to undertake clinical training outside of their training programme. If this training, in terms of achieving the required competencies, otherwise compliments the rest of their individual programme, it may be approved and count towards CCT.

Examples of such training might include

1. A period of time abroad in a different but relevant clinical environment where there is equivalent clinical and educational supervision.
2. An attachment with a non-psychiatric sub-specialist such as a neurologist where the competencies gained will contribute to the management of psychiatric cases
3. an opportunity to gain management or teaching skills

The GMC must prospectively approve clinical training out of programme if it is to be used towards a CCT award.

Clinical training which has not been prospectively approved cannot contribute towards the award of a CCT and will not be out of programme training (OOPT) but may be appropriate as out of programme experience (OOPE).

Please refer to GMC's website [Approval: Post and Programmes](#)

There are three stages to approval:

- A. Postgraduate Deanery
- B. College Support
- C. GMC approval

A. Postgraduate Deanery

A trainee wishing to count time spent in an OOP must apply in the first instance to the Postgraduate Dean by completing an out of programme form which can be obtained from the Postgraduate Deanery or Appendix 4 of the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010. Trainees must give their Deanery as much notice as possible (minimum three months notice) and follow the local Deanery procedures.

Trainees may retain their NTN whilst undertaking a clinical approved training opportunity, as long as the OOPT has been agreed in advance by the Postgraduate Dean and trainees continue to satisfy the requirements for annual review.

Trainees who undertake OOPT must submit the appropriate evidence of acquisition of competencies required by the relevant curriculum to the home Deanery's annual review panel, along with an annual OOPT document.

B. College Support

The Royal College of Psychiatrists recommends that when devising an out of programme training experience, the postgraduate deanery and training programme director/programme tutor should consider the GMC's nine generic domains.

Although the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 states that trainees must be in a training programme for at least one year, the College recommends that core trainees in psychiatry should complete at least 2 years at core training level before applying for out of programme.

All applications for out of programme counting towards award of a CCT will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance (QA) Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The committee will consider the application and give its view on the proposed OOPT in terms of its suitability to gain the relevant competencies. The committee will consider the trainee's training as a whole and may approve the OOPT for only part of the time out of programme. The committee places particular value upon the acquisition skills such as leadership that can only be gained through sustained membership of a multidisciplinary team; an application that includes a programme of fragmented posts may not be approved.

Trainees/Postgraduate Deaneries must submit the following information to the College QA Committee for support.

- 1. A copy of the out of programme application form** which must include the exact period of time of the OOPT, ie, start dates, completion dates and the amount of time the trainee wishes to count towards their CCT.
- 2. A job description and weekly timetable for the placement.**
- 3. Information on the trainee's overall training programme which must include:**
 - Details of previous relevant training in psychiatry as the application should compliment any relevant training previously undertaken.
 - Details on how the out of programme will fit in with the trainee's overall training programme.
 - Details of ARCP outcomes to date.
 - Information on where the trainee is in respect of curricula competencies gained.
 - Information on what CCT/endorsements the trainee is hoping to gain.
- 4. Details of evaluation and assessment during the out of programme training, ie, what evidence/assessments will be conducted during the period of out of programme to support curriculum outcomes.**
- 5. The OOPT application must map learning experiences to curriculum outcomes.**
- 6. If the period is non-clinical, the application must show how the existing competencies will be maintained during the period out of**

programme.

7. Details of educational and clinical supervision given during the period of out of programme.

8. If the applicant is a core trainee, they should demonstrate how the MRCPsych Examinations will fit in with their future training plan.

C. GMC Approval

Once the College QA Committee has reviewed the application, the trainee and Postgraduate Deanery will be notified.

The Postgraduate Deanery must then send the application to the GMC Quality Assurance section for approval.

Please note, the GMC will not give approval to out of programme applications without College support.

Once the application has been reviewed the GMC Quality Assurance Team will inform the Postgraduate Dean and the College of the outcome.

5.b Acting Up Consultant posts

As 'acting up consultant' posts are already approved as part of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Speciality curricula, they are in-programme experiences and GMC / College approval is not required. These important experiences are covered in more detail in the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 section 6.71 to enable Trainees and Training Programme Directors to decide if such an experience should be the subject of an OOPT or OOPE application.

The College believes that the curriculum as it stands is intended to prepare trainees to take on the responsibilities of a consultant. The curriculum highlights the incremental development of professional performance and divides training into different stages, the last being ST6, which is designed to be a year for specific preparation for consultant practice.

Up to a maximum of three months whole time equivalent spent in an 'acting up' consultant post may count towards higher training and CCT requirements without individual approval by the College/GMC provided that:

- the post is undertaken in the appropriate CCT specialty. Deanery approval must only be considered if the acting up placement is relevant to gaining the competencies, knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the relevant curriculum.
- it is on secondment from a higher training programme.
- the post is in the final year of training (or the penultimate year if the trainee is dual training).
- the approval of the Training Programme Director and Postgraduate Dean is sought.
- the trainee still receives one-hour per week educational supervision either

face to face or over the phone by an appropriately accredited trainer.

- All clinical sessions are devoted to the 'acting up' consultant post (ie, there must be no split between training and 'acting up' consultant work). Trainees may continue with their research and special interest sessions if they wish but must utilise their clinical sessions towards the 'acting up' consultant post.

The deanery's agreement to this special period of in-programme experience is essential. When considering a doctor's wish to work for a period as a consultant in an 'acting up' capacity, the local deanery/postgraduate training school will need to be mindful of GMC's generic standards for training. The deanery or school should be assured that the conditions for training are met, so the trainee has access to appropriate educational and clinical supervision, and the trainee's work is assessed and these assessments contribute to the ARCP process.

6. TIME OUT OF PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH (OOPR)

This section should be read alongside the relevant sections of the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 (6.78 onwards).

Time spent out of a specialty training programme for research purposes will be recognised towards the award of a CCT when the relevant curriculum includes such research as an optional element. Under such circumstances the GMC is not approving research per se, but is approving any training, including research, that is deemed to be appropriate and relevant to the CCT curriculum in question. The College must support the application for prospective approval.

Once prospective approval of the posts and programmes has been obtained it is still for the ARCP to confirm that the training (including relevant research) has been completed satisfactorily and satisfies the requirements of the curriculum. This will inform the College's recommendation to the GMC for the award of a CCT.

When OOPR does not count towards CCT requirements, GMC approval is not required.

Time taken out for research purposes is normally for a registerable higher degree, e.g., a PhD, MD or Master's degree and will not normally exceed three years. Trainees in their final year of training will not normally be granted OOPR.

OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR AN OOPR TOWARDS A CCT

There are three stages to approval:

- A. Postgraduate Deanery
- B. College Support
- C. GMC approval

A. Postgraduate Deanery

A trainee wishing to count time spent in an OOPR must apply in the first instance to the Postgraduate Dean by completing an out of programme form which can be obtained from the Postgraduate Deanery or Appendix 4 of the MMC Gold Guide, June

2010. Trainees must give their Deanery as much notice as possible (minimum three months notice).

Trainees may retain their NTN whilst undertaking an OOPR, as long as the OOPR has been agreed in advance by the Postgraduate Dean and trainees continue to satisfy the requirements for annual review.

Trainees who undertake an OOPR must submit the relevant section of the OOPR document to the annual review panel. This will ensure that the trainee keeps in touch with the Deanery and registers each year to renew their commitment to the training programme. It requests permission to retain their NTN and provides information about the trainee's likely date of return to the programme, as well as the estimated date for completion of training. It is the responsibility of the trainee to make this return annually.

B. College Support

Although the MMC Gold Guide, June 2010 states that trainees must be in a training programme for at least one year, the College recommends that core trainees in psychiatry should complete at least 2 years at core training level before applying for out of programme.

All applications for out of programme counting towards award of a CCT will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance (QA) Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The committee will consider the application and give its view of the proposed OOPR in terms of its suitability to gain the relevant competencies. The committee will consider the trainee's training as a whole and may approve the OOPR for only part of the time out of programme. The committee places particular value upon the acquisition skills such as leadership that can only be gained through sustained membership of a multidisciplinary team; an application that includes a programme of fragmented posts may not be approved.

An application for OOPR at core training will count for no more than 6 months towards completion of this stage of training. A research project that continues beyond the end of core training cannot count towards research at advanced training without a further OOPR application.

An application for OOPR at advanced training will count for up to six months of advanced training, and additional approved time may be credited depending upon the clinical content of the training. The committee will make note of clinical sessions that run alongside the research project as well as the clinical skills gained during the research. A project that includes regular clinical assessments will be credited more. The committee expects that an advanced trainee will have two sustained periods (e.g. 12 months) of involvement as a senior member of a multidisciplinary team and may make recommendations for the training that needs to follow a period in research.

Trainees/Postgraduate Deaneries must submit the following information to the College QA Committee for support.

- 1. A copy of the out of programme application form** which must include the exact period of time of the OOP, ie, start dates, completion dates and the amount of time the trainee wishes to count towards their CCT.

2. **A research protocol.**
3. **Weekly timetable**
4. **Information on the trainee's overall training programme which must include:**
 - Details of previous relevant training in psychiatry as the application should compliment any relevant training previously undertaken.
 - Details on how the out of programme will fit in with the trainee's overall training programme.
 - Details of ARCP outcomes to date.
 - Information on where the trainee is in respect of curricula competencies gained.
 - Information on what CCT/endorsements the trainee is hoping to gain.
5. **If the applicant is a core trainee, they should demonstrate how the MRCPsych Examinations will fit in with their future training plan.**
6. **Details of evaluation and assessment during the out of programme, ie, what evidence/assessments will be conducted during the period of out of programme to support curriculum outcomes.**
7. **The OOP application must map learning experiences to curriculum outcomes.**
8. **If the research is clinical in nature, details on how the existing competencies will be met during the OOPR and how these will fit in with the curriculum to which they are working.** This information should also include the number of clinical sessions per week.
9. **If the research is non-clinical in nature, information on how the existing competencies will be maintained during the period of out of programme should be included.**
10. **Details of educational, clinical and research supervision given during the period of out of programme.**

C. GMC Approval

Once the College QA Committee has reviewed the application, the trainee and Postgraduate Deanery will be notified.

The Postgraduate Deanery must then send the application to the GMC Quality Assurance section for approval.

Please note, the GMC will not give approval to out of programme applications without College support.

Once the application has been reviewed the GMC Quality Assurance Team will inform the Postgraduate Dean and the College of the outcome.

The College QA Committee will decide, based on the above information, on

whether to support the entire duration requested, or a part of the duration and will inform the postgraduate dean accordingly.

The above information, including deanery approval via the out of programme experience form, must be sent to GMC so they can approve the application prospectively. GMC gives the ultimate final approval in all out of programme applications.

Trainees can e-mail the GMC for further information on out of programme training on: OOPTapprovals@gmc-uk.org

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Quality Assurance Committee