



Royal College of
General Practitioners

COGPED

Committee of GP Education Directors

**GUIDANCE ON MANAGING TIME OUT OF TRAINING
FOR GENERAL PRACTICE**

COMMITTEE OF GENERAL PRACTICE EDUCATION DIRECTORS
ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
April 2019

Update

In the most recent review the following principles were agreed:

- The overriding considerations are legislation, fairness to trainees, patient safety and consistency
- Training should be referred to in terms of phases rather than years
- A penultimate phase of training review undertaken routinely by GPSA will help to identify early on when CCT dates may need to be extended
- When statutory leave is taken, the training 'clock' stops
- Time out of training without it having to be made up is not an entitlement, therefore there is no such thing as absence allowance and the determination on whether absence should be made up is not discretionary
- 14 days of exceptional time out of training per training phase is Gold Guide and GMC policy compliant. It is also generous given the short nature of the GP training programme but is not considered de facto dangerous
- A precedent for the amount of time that could be taken out of training without being made up has been tested and should be continued

Implementing the GMC's Time out of Training position

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 in one training phase should trigger a review of their acquisition of competence, possibly with a triggered ARCP panel. This wording is replicated in the Gold Guide v7. The challenge for GP training is that three years is the legal minimum time required. This does not allow for much, if any, flexibility. Roles in managing absence from training are set out thus:

"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. The GMC also support the use of targeted training to assist trainees in demonstrating the curriculum competencies without the need for an extension to training.

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."

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 recommendation for CCT at random 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

Calculation of time in training will continue to be made using calendar days. 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.

Application

- A maximum of 14 calendar days of exceptional time out of training will be permitted per phase of training, i.e. ST year
- Any time over 14 calendar days absence per ST year must be made up in calendar days
- A further 7 days flexibility may be applied to any absence in the final phase of training (ST3) only
- The total amount of exceptional time out of training permitted over the full duration of training is therefore 7 weeks
- For trainees whose progress is not satisfactory, all absence should be made up although 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, simplifies the process and mitigates the risk of surprises later in training

Recording absence

The purpose of guidance around recording absence is to:

- ensure a standard and consistent approach
- ensure that the minimum durations of training requirements are met
- ensure that it is documented correctly
- make absence evident to both LETBs/Deaneries and the RCGP GPSA team
- reduce the number of queries between the RCGP and LETBs/Deaneries
- improve efficiency

The GMC Time Out of Training statement outlines 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

- Trainees must declare all absence on their Form R, or SOAR form before each ARCP panel
- 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 for any reason that is non-annual leave, non-study leave.
- Absences of 29 days or less should not be documented on the ePortfolio post list

- Absences of 30 consecutive days or more should be recorded on the ePortfolio as a post, 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
- If unplanned absence is taken after an Outcome 6 has been issued, it is the trainee's responsibility to notify the deanery who should inform the GPSA team as soon as possible.
 - If this absence pushes the total absence for ST3 over the agreed 21 days, it is possible that the trainee will need to return to training and their CCT date extended
 - If this is the case, a roll back of the Outcome 6 ARCP will need to be requested of the TeP Helpdesk, informing GPSA simultaneously, as the recommendation for CCT may need to be withdrawn.
- If a trainee has a phased return to work, the decision on whether or not the phased period should count towards training should be made on a case by case basis in discussion between the deanery and the trainee. If any phased period is to count it should normally be at least 50% WTE.

Implementation

Upon agreement of the content of this guidance, it should be shared with all deaneries via COGPED, and the GPSA team will add it to the resource portal for deanery administrators and update any relevant RCGP web pages in order to provide clear information for trainees.

The GPSA team is happy to work with deaneries, providing training materials, and targeted training sessions at the RCGP or the deanery.

This guidance should be implemented and accepted as current and standard from April 1st 2019 and should be reviewed after two years.

Types of absence

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

- Sickness absence
- Maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Compassionate leave
- Parental leave
- Carer leave
- Sabbaticals
- Jury service

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 do not need to know about these episodes of leave except for annual leave accrued during maternity leave which should be recorded. These types of leave do not count as time off from training and are therefore not included for calculation purposes:

- Annual leave
- Study leave
- Professional leave (up to 5 days per year of pre-approved exceptional leave for non-clinical roles linked to GP training and the GP curriculum, such as representation at relevant meetings)