

Taking RCGP Examinations Whilst Trainees are not at Work – Advice for ADs, TPDs and Educational Supervisors

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There are times when GP trainees would like to take the AKT and/or the CSA exam whilst they are not currently in training. For instance, whilst on maternity leave, OOP or on sick leave. The RCGP examination regulations do not include advice on this as they consider it to be a Deanery decision. This guidance has been produced by the GP School in the East of England to help educators reach appropriate decisions about this issue following an explicit discussion with individual GP trainees on both their readiness to sit the exam and their physical ability to do so. This discussion should be fully documented as an Educators Note on the GP trainee's Eportfolio. It may be necessary to take advice from the PSU, the lead employer and/or Occupational Health, as relevant to the individual GP trainee.

In essence, it is necessary for the trainee

- to be prepared well enough for the exam that they have a realistic chance of success
- to be well enough to take the exam whilst they are not at work
- to be aware that they will sign a declaration for the RCGP on the day of the exam to say that they are well enough to sit it
- to be aware that they will usually **not** subsequently be able to ask for the fact that they were on sick leave or maternity leave at the time to be taken into account by the RCGP if they happen to fail the exam
- to have an active National Training Number (NTN)

Periods Spent OOP or During Maternity Leave

It is possible for GP trainees to take an exam on a Keeping in Touch (KIT) day during maternity leave. The issue to consider when making this decision is whether or not the trainee is well enough to take the exam then. For instance, a trainee who is nearing the end of a straight forward period of maternity leave is likely to be fine whereas a trainee wanting to take an exam soon after delivery or who currently has a pregnancy-related health complication is not likely to be well enough to take the exam.

Sick Leave

The general advice from the Single Employer is that GP trainees should **not** be undertaking any work (paid or unpaid), study or training whilst on sick leave as they have been assessed as not being fit for work. The only circumstances in which they could do any of these things would be when the trainee has written approval in advance from their line manager. During their return to work interview, trainees have to declare whether or not they have undertaken any of these activities with a clear statement that a failure to declare this truthfully might lead to disciplinary action and a referral to the Counter Fraud team for investigation.

However, the reasons for sick leave can vary, as can trainees themselves and how they are affected by that illness. Additionally, Occupational Health might have assessed the trainee to be not well enough to undertake a normal day's work at the practice but to be well enough to participate in learning events, including taking exams.

So, we would suggest that the most appropriate GP educator (likely to be a TPD) should have a detailed discussion with the GP trainee concerned to establish their individual circumstances and whether or not the trainee meets the essential criteria listed on the previous page. Please seek advice from PSU, the single employer and/or Occupational Health as needed and then record your decision as an Educator Note on the trainee's Eportfolio.

Additionally, please be aware that a ST1 trainee going OOP at the end of their ST1 year is not yet an ST2 trainee and so is not eligible to take their AKT. Likewise with the CSA with respect to trainees going OOP at the end of their ST2 year, they would not be eligible to take the CSA.

In **summary**, these are not absolute guidelines and the circumstances of each individual GP trainee should always be taken into account during a robust and documented discussion.

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