

NIMDTA

Northern Ireland

Medical & Dental Training Agency

POLICY DOCUMENT

Specialist, Associate Specialist and Specialty Doctors' and Dentists' (SAS) Professional Development Fund: Guidance and Application Process.

(Northern Ireland Deanery)

2024 (Version 1.3)
SMT>G&R>Board

Policy Review Schedule

Date first Approved: 04/07/24

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Date of Next Review:

Policy Owner: Senior Education Manager

Amendment Overview

Version	Date	Pages	Comments	Actioned
2024 – 1.1	01/05/2024		New Policy drafted	Dr JA Forbes / J Cairns
2024 – 1.2	16/05/2024	7,8,9	Additional comments from SMC and Finance manager incorporated	Dr J A Forbes
2024 – 1.4	02/07/2024	6,7,8,9,10	Additional changes advised by Board incorporated	Dr J A Forbes D Hughes

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Executive Summary

The SAS Doctors' and Dentists' Professional Development Fund has been established to provide education, training and development opportunities for the SAS workforce in N.I. Funding is run on an annual basis and is in addition to standard Study Leave funding provided by employers supporting routine CPD.

This policy document aims to ensure consistent, transparent and equitable decision making whilst optimising the benefits gained from the NIMDTA SAS Professional Development Fund.

Questions you should be able to answer after reading this policy

Who is eligible to apply for SAS Professional Development Funding?

How to apply.

What is included and excluded from funding?

Evaluation required following successful funding bid.

Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency

The Role of NIMDTA can be found on the Agency website here:

[Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency \(nimdta.gov.uk\)](http://nimdta.gov.uk)

Policy or Policies Impacted

This policy may have an impact on the following:

- No policies impacted

Policy Influences

This policy has been influenced by the following:

- *Equality Summary Scheme*
- *Equality of Opportunity Policy*
- *European Law (EC Directive EC 93/16/EEC)*

This Policy to be read in conjunction with:

Application for funding for training and courses 2025-26

Flowchart for Applications

3-month post funded activity outcome evaluation form

Individual applications checklist

All the above documents can be accessed [here](#)

1. Introduction

The purpose of individual applications to the SAS Doctors' and Dentists' Professional Development Fund is to provide special financial assistance to individual SAS doctors towards the cost of carrying out a course of study or training. Successful funding applications should benefit the individual SAS doctor or dentist by extending their skills or roles, enabling them to develop new services or to improve existing services or to deliver them with less direct supervision. Some skills such as those in leadership or education will also benefit the wider HSC system. Funding will not be provided where it is otherwise available in trust study leave budgets.

2. Eligibility

All doctors and dentists working in substantive Staff Grade, Specialty Doctor/Dentist, Associate Specialist and Specialist (SAS) contracts within the HSC in Northern Ireland. Those on locum contracts or fixed-term contracts i.e. Clinical Fellow, Clinical Research Fellow, Teaching Fellow, LAS or any other doctor not on a substantive SAS contract are not eligible.

Applicants are expected to complete any funded training activity while still on a SAS contract.

3. Application Process and Documentation

3.1 Application Process

This funding is additional and complementary to the normal study leave funding provided by employers. Any courses which would be expected to be covered by study leave, or that would be considered to be mandatory training by employers, should continue to be applied for in the usual way via employers rather than from the SAS Professional Development Fund.

Applications will be considered by the SAS Professional Development Funding Panel, which includes the following staff from NIMDTA, Associate Dean for SAS career development or nominated deputy (Chair), Postgraduate Dean or nominated Deputy, Senior Business Manager or nominated deputy, and external to NIMDTA representatives i.e. Trust SAS Leads, a Medical Director Group Representative, a Lay representative, and in the case of Dental applications the Postgraduate Dental Dean or their nominated Deputy. This panel is quorate if at least 2 NIMDTA and 2 external members are present. If a panel member has any real or perceived conflict of interest with an application, they will refrain from the

discussion and decision-making around that application. This panel meets up to three times per year to consider funding applications and applicants will be informed of the outcome usually within 4 weeks of the panel meeting.

For courses extending over more than one financial year, funding can only be approved for one year at a time and a fresh application needs to be made annually except in exceptional circumstances. Where funding has been granted for the first year of a course, applications for funding for subsequent years will be given priority, as long as the previous year(s) were completed successfully, evidence of the need for and benefit from ongoing funding is provided and there is sufficient funding available in the SAS Development Fund budget.

The SAS Professional Development Fund panel will review and assess applications to prioritise funding based on the financial resources available and the following 5 key priorities of the SAS development fund:

- Enabling the SAS doctor to contribute to development of a new service.
- Enabling the SAS doctor to Improve and modernise an existing service.
- Enabling the SAS doctor to deliver services with less direct supervision.
- Extending the SAS doctors role to include education, leadership, QI/audit, research.
- Enabling the SAS doctor to complete competencies for Specialist post eligibility or Portfolio Pathway requirements.

The panel members may score each priority up to 3 points with a further up to 5 global score points to be awarded for overall impact on SAS doctor career development or patient care. If the number of applications received and assessed as suitable is in excess of the funding available, the lower scored applications will be advised to apply the following year as insufficient funding is available in the current financial year.

3.2 Educational activities that can be supported by the SAS Professional Development Fund

Educational activities that can be supported by the SAS Professional Development Fund:

- Generic skills, including leadership and management training, educational qualifications, communication skills, coaching and mentoring skills, medical ethics.
- Clinical skills, specialty specific training opportunities or requirements that can be shown to be important in extending the SAS doctors skills, roles or resulting in the SAS doctor delivering services under less direct supervision. The SAS doctor should demonstrate how the funded training will enhance patient care, improve existing clinical services or result in development of new clinical services. Funding must not be otherwise provided in Study Leave budgets.
- Top-up training to meet the requirements for the Portfolio Pathway, excluding secondments. The applicant must include evidence from Royal College/Specialty Advisory committee/GMC on the relevance of the activity to their PP application.
- Postgraduate university qualifications e.g. PG Certificates, Diplomas or Masters degrees that would not otherwise be funded but that can be demonstrated to meet the requirements of the SAS Professional Development fund. These can be in clinical or other areas.
- Courses to help build a portfolio towards career progression to a Specialist post.
- Other training and development opportunities that enhance the development of the individual doctor/dentist and the service they can provide to HSCNI.

Activities that will not be supported by the SAS Professional Development Fund:

- Mandatory courses provided by Trusts e.g. Advanced Life Support.
- Courses to support appraisal, such as appraisee or appraiser skills courses.
- Funding to support clinical audits or clinical research
- Other activity which would be expected by NIMDTA to be supported by employer Study Leave budget e.g. courses to update existing knowledge
- Examination fees, exam preparation courses or college fees
- Portfolio Pathway application fees.
- Books, journals, library services, computer equipment and software.
- Funding for backfilling when SAS doctors are seconded for training purposes

Other Expenses

Contribution towards reasonable travel costs within the UK will be considered. Approved expenses will be paid upon production of NIMDTA travel expense claim form with receipts. Value for money must be demonstrated therefore as always if the lowest cost travel option is not selected a clear rationale for the additional cost must be included in the application when being sent to the approver. Applicants may claim up to £120 per night towards overnight accommodation and subsistence for courses and events taking place outside London. Applicants can claim up to £150 towards overnight accommodation and subsistence for events in the London area.

3.3 Application Forms

The Application Form should be fully completed, including sponsoring support from each of:

- SAS Lead for employing trust, who can advise on completion of your application prior to submission &
- Head of Service or Clinical Director or Specialty Lead

3.4 Timeline and Process for Submission

Applications must be submitted a minimum of two weeks before the Development Fund Panel meets, though earlier application is encouraged if possible. Retrospective applications will not be considered. Late submissions received after the 2 week deadline will be deferred until the following panel meeting and the applicant advised. Applicants should allow sufficient time for their SAS Lead and either Head of Service/CD/Specialty Lead to review their application prior to submission.

All applications must be typed. Handwritten applications will not be accepted. Completed application forms, with all supporting documents, should be sent to sas.nimdt@hscni.net

4. Payment Process

Once an application is approved for funding, approved course fees can be paid by the applicant directly to the organiser and then claimed back from NIMDTA on submission of the appropriate claim form with accompanying evidence of payment eg receipt as proof of payment. The applicant should submit any approved expenses to NIMDTA within 12 weeks for reimbursement. Alternatively, the course fees may be able to be paid directly by NIMDTA to the course provider at the applicants request. It is the responsibility of the applicant to inform NIMDTA in advance whether they intend to pay and claim back fees or have NIMDTA pay directly on their behalf. Applicants must submit their claim for reimbursement within 12 weeks of completion of the funded activity and NIMDTA will reimburse within 30 days from receipt of the claim.

During the financial year 2024-2025, other than in exceptional circumstances, a maximum of £3000 will be funded for any individual SAS doctor per financial year. This will be reviewed for the financial year 2025-2026. If applying for funding for a course which costs more than £3000, the SAS doctor must ensure their application includes how the remaining course costs will be met.

5. Evaluation

Funding is awarded subject to commitment by the applicant and their sponsors to complete an online post funding evaluation form within 3 months of completion of their development activity. This will include evidence of the qualification obtained or achievement resulting from the funding, impact on the SAS doctor's development alongside service impact, any planned change to the SAS doctors role/service and timeline for that change. In the event of non-completion of the evaluation form, NIMDTA will contact the Trust Medical Director.

Acceptance of funding is also an acceptance that successful applicants case studies may be used to promote the SAS Professional Development Fund Programme to prospective applicants and in progress reports to the Department of Health and Board of NIMDTA.

6. Unsuccessful applications

In the event that an application is not approved by the panel, feedback will be provided to the applicant who will have the opportunity to amend the application and reapply in the next round of applications.