Northern Ireland

General Practice Specialty Training

Study Leave

Guidance on Study Leave for GP Trainees

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Produced by the GP Specialty Training Team

What is Study Leave?

Study leave is defined as leave that allows time, inside or outside of the workplace, for formal learning that meets the requirements of the curriculum and personalised training objectives. This will include regional educational events where the time is protected.

Time for Study Leave is not an automatic entitlement for any trainee. Providers of medical education are reminded of the basic principle that every trainee's educational needs should, where possible, take precedence over purely service needs, as long as patient safety is not compromised. Study leave should therefore be well planned and spread throughout the trainee's training programme.

What is Study Budget?

Study budget is defined as funding to facilitate attendance at approved training events.

There is a clearer definition of how the study budget should be used to support individual professional development.

This includes:

- Covering costs of educational courses/activities that support curriculum attainment
- Agreement that NHS Trusts will cover costs of all mandatory training required to fulfil the trainee's clinical role which are not part of the specialty curriculum
- Guidance on what the study budget will not cover e.g. College examination fees

Gold Guide 10th Edition 2024

The Gold Guide states that access to study leave should form part of the educational contract between Postgraduate Deans and providers of postgraduate medical educational placements.

It highlights the Postgraduate Deans responsibility to ensure less than full time (LTFT) trainees have equitable access to study leave.

Doctors on maternity or paternity leave can access study leave and budget for training events.

The Gold Guide also encourages trainees on career breaks to keep up to date by attending educational events but stipulates that there is no entitlement to study budget for this.

Attending NHS Trust statutory and mandatory training is not counted as study leave.

Study Leave allowance for trainees

GP Trainees are entitled to a maximum of 30 days study leave in a calendar year. The study leave year runs for 12 months from the first Wednesday in August. Leave days and funding cannot be carried over from one year to another.

All applications for study leave will be considered on an individual basis, bearing in mind the trainee's priority is to achieve a CCT in General Practice.

The General Practice department reports to the GP Specialty Training Committee on all study leave applications which have been and have not been approved.

Trainees must ensure that they are covered through their indemnity provider for any study leave opportunities they may undertake.

The time allocation for study leave relates to the number of working days missed over the leave period of 30 days. Weekends should only be counted when they coincide with a duty period.

How many study leave days are provided by the Deanery during the GP Training Programme?

30 (minus days that are used up in the regular teaching and training provided through the local school programmes)

Trainee Grade	Days already used by GP specialty school programme	Days remaining available for Personal use of Study Leave
GPST 1	11 + 1.5*	17.5
GPST 2	24*	6
GPST 3	25*	5

* Number of days may vary

A doctor on a contract of employment of less than 12 months' duration is entitled to study leave on a pro rata basis.

Less than Full Time Trainees (LTFTs)

Less Than Full Time trainees are entitled to an annual study leave allowance 'pro-rata' to their sessional commitments. On occasion it may be necessary to extend the study leave allowance in any one year depending on the individual's training requirements. However, the allowance over the entire training programme will remain proportional to the sessional commitment.

Trainees on an extension

GP Trainees who are undertaking an extension to training are eligible to apply for study leave pro-rata to their extended training time. All applications for study leave will be considered on an individual basis, bearing in mind appropriateness to the stage of training and the priority is to achieve a CCT in General Practice. Where a trainee is undertaking their extension Less Than Full Time (LTFT), the study leave time allowance will be applied on a pro-rata basis according to their working time equivalent (WTE).

Parental Leave

Where a doctor takes parental leave their entitlement to study leave continues, and this may be taken during 'keeping in touch' days or will otherwise accrue to be taken at a later date.

Research Trainees

Research Supervisors should ensure that funding for research includes an element for relevant study leave, including presentation of papers at national and international meetings.

LTFT trainees will have the costs of events reimbursed at the same rate as full time trainees. Academic Trainees will have equitable access to the study budget.

What are my responsibilities when planning study leave?

Trainee

- Discuss personal development plan and educational activities with named Clinical supervisor (CS) and / or Educational Supervisor (ES) at start of training placement and note in your Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Complete learning agreement with ES at your induction meeting
- Identify a relevant course or period of leave and complete the GP Specialty School study leave application form Apply for Study Leave

Management of Study Leave

The proposed use of study leave must be relevant to the individual's educational needs and appropriate to his or her experience. Study leave must be planned well in advance and application made at least one month ahead. Retrospective claims will not be approved.

If an application is made late and insufficient time is given for approval to be considered then study leave may not be granted.

Applications for study leave must be made to the appropriate employing supervisor. During a hospital placement, the Clinical Supervisor or during a GP practice placement, the GP Trainer.

This approval does not include funding approval as this is managed centrally by NIMDTA. Where this is not known at the time of making the application, approval must be sought at a later stage.

Application Procedure

- Discuss personal development plan and educational activities with named Clinical supervisor (CS)/Educational Supervisor (ES) at start of training placement and note in your Personal Development Plan (PDP)

- Complete learning agreement with ES at your induction meeting

1. Retrospective claims will not be approved

2. Identify a relevant course or period of leave. All applications for study leave must be made on the approved study leave request form which is available by download on the GP section of the NIMDTA website. Trainees must request study leave even if funding is not required. https://www.nimdta.gov.uk/general-practice-training/study-leave-support-and-guidance/

3. Applications must be supported by the hospital Clinical Supervisor or GP Trainer dependant on the training post at time of application. When Trainees are in a Hospital placement, approval must also be sought from the Trainee's Lead Consultant for Rota/Rota Administrator at least 6 weeks prior to submitting the study leave application

4. Applications should be submitted via the online form Apply for Study Leave not later than 4 weeks before the date of proposed leave for the GP Study Leave Panel to approve in accordance with the policy

5. Update your Portfolio with evidence of attendance after event

6. If/when the application is approved then GP Trainees must make a subsequent claim for refund of any associated expenses on NIMDTA claim form. Claim forms should be returned to business.management@hscni.net within 4 weeks of the study leave event. All receipts must be attached along with a fully completed course evaluation form.

7. Payment should usually be made within 30 days of receipt of the claim form.

All applications for study leave will be considered on an individual basis, bearing in mind the trainee's priority is to achieve a CCT in General Practice. The General Practice department reports to the GP Specialty Training Committee on all those study leave applications which have been and have not been approved. Trainees must ensure that they are covered through their indemnity provider for any study leave opportunities they may undertake. The time allocation for study leave relates to the number of working days missed over the leave period of 30 days. Weekends should only be counted when they coincide with a duty period.

What is approved for Study Leave?

- Claims for travel and subsistence connected to Regional and Locality training days may be approved. Please note that Trainees do not need to make an application for study leave to attend the Regional or Locality days

- Travel, time off or subsistence will normally be supported for examinations (exam fees are not supported)

- The core GP curriculum is covered by courses organised by the Deanery, therefore any requests for attendance at external courses must deliver **in addition to the GP programme.** Minor surgery and joint injection course are **not** covered under study leave as these are provided through the Deanery programme.

- Study leave is usually given to areas which will contribute significantly to service delivery in NHS General Practice e.g. Family Planning training, or a specific qualification e.g. Diploma in Mental Health, Diploma in Child Health etc. Other areas of specialist interest may not be covered.

- Please note, Diploma in Occupational Health and other occupational medicine related activities are **not** covered under study leave.

- Leave may be granted for trainees to participate in medical student OSCE examinations. Funding will not be granted for this.

SUCCESS Programme

For those trainees who have been unsuccessful in a previous exam attempt, study leave and funding for one approved exam preparation and revision course for each of AKT and SCA may be approved, as part of their engagement with the SUCCESS programme. Please see criteria below:

- One or more exam fails at AKT/SCA in the course applied for
- Exam preparation course for AKT/SCA examinations from an approved course provider ***(please see list below)****
- One course only will be approved for each of AKT and SCA
- Up to £750 funding per course (up to max £1250 per training year for all courses)
- Online or in-person courses
- Up to 3 days study leave to attend course
- Application through usual study leave process
- No retrospective applications will be considered

***List of Approved Providers**

- Emedica
- RCGP
- Fourteenfish
- Native medical education
- SCA Revision
- Dr Omar's 80% Clinical Knowledge Course

At present, only trainees who are engaged in the SUCCESS programme will be considered for study leave/funding for exam preparation courses.

Taster weeks

A maximum of five private study days may be used from a trainee's study leave allowance to gain experience in another specialty relevant to GP provided the following criteria are met:

- That there is support from the Clinical Supervisor
- That there is support from the GP Program Director or GP Associate Director
- That any time away from the workplace will not have a significant adverse impact on service delivery
- That you notify your indemnifying organisation prior to commencing any attachment and receive written confirmation from them that appropriate indemnity is in place for you throughout the duration of the attachment. This confirmation should be uploaded to the eportfolio prior to the commencement of the experience
- That appropriate reflection(s) relating to this experience are documented within the eportfolio.

What is not approved for study leave?

- Enrolment on to training programmes and payment for portfolio access
- Statutory and mandatory training which should be supplied by the employers e.g. ALS and other life support courses which are not curriculum requirements – Individual applications may be considered in exceptional circumstances
- Other employer-related leave
- Professional examination fees at any point of training
- Any examination fees for standalone diplomas/certificates
- Courses for specialty examinations during GP Programme without a previous failed attempt
- Interview Leave
- Private Study Time
    - Taking time off to prepare for an exam is not supported through study leave in General Practice. Trainees in General Practice posts already have protected time in their weekly timetable and opportunities at locality days for self-directed learning
- Courses outside Northern Ireland will not normally be supported if they are available locally
- Study leave should not normally be granted to a doctor already holding a higher qualification in that field of study
- Retrospective study leave claims are not paid

- Consideration of value for money:

  There are limitations to the amount which can be reclaimed outlined on the Trainee expenses form. Normally only one overnight stay will be approved outside Northern Ireland

  - If booking flights/ travel arrangements please remember Trainees must take advantage of the most economical options.

Mandatory Exams

Exam	Leave Time allowed (not taken from study leave allowance)	Fee reimbursement	Travel and Subsistence
AKT	☑	☒	☑
SCA	☑	☒	**N/A**

Specific courses for trainees requiring extra support

Individualised plans will be considered following discussions with Programme Directors.

Mandatory Courses

Exam	Leave Time allowed (not taken from study leave allowance)	Fee reimbursement	Travel and Subsistence
BLS*	Provided by NIMDTA for ST3 Trainees only	**N/A**	**N/A**
Safeguarding	Provided by NIMDTA for ST1 and ST3 Trainees	**N/A**	**N/A**

* *NIMDTA provides **BLS Courses** for ST3 Trainees only; Study Leave for BLS will be supported for all other Trainees*

Level 1

Non-Mandatory Highly Recommended courses for GP Trainees (apply for funding up to £750 per event – not funded if have had greater than £1250 funded in the training year)

Qualification	Information	Study leave allowance	Fee reimbursement Up to £750
European Certificate in Essential palliative care	https://www.pah.org.uk/courses/european-certificate-in-essential-palliative-care/	☑ 4 days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Post Graduate Diploma in Mental Health QUB	https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-taught/mental-health-pgdip/#overview	☑ 6.5 days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Diploma in Child Health	Diploma in Child Health (DCH) - about | RCPCH	☑ For exam and any travel	☒ Only travel and subsistence permissible
Diploma of Royal college of obstetricians and gynaecology	https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/drcog/	☑ For exam and any travel	☒ Only travel and subsistence permissible
Diploma in Diabetes	e.g. Postgraduate Diploma in Diabetes (Online Delivery) | University of South Wales – taught course on line	☑ 10 days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Diploma in Geriatric Medicine	https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/diploma-geriatric-medicine	☑ For exam and any travel	☒ Only travel and subsistence permissible
Introduction to Dermoscopy Certificate	https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/professional-development/available-training/short-courses/view/an-introduction-to-dermoscopy	☑ 5 days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Diploma in COPD or asthma	http://respiratorymatters.com/diplomas	☑ 5 days	☑ for e-learning courses Grant of up to £750

Letter of competency for IUCD	Education & Training - Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (fsrh.org)	☑ up to 5 days	☑ £75 per half day training – application for 6 sessions to start £450 plus £174 registration fee if required Total £624 ☒ Payments only available for practical training sessions , not for OTA
Letter of competency for Subdermal Implants	Education & Training - Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (fsrh.org)	☑ up to 5 days	☑ ☑ £75 per half day training – application for 6 sessions to start £450 450 plus £174 registration fee if required Total £624 ☒ Payments only available for practical training sessions , not for OTA
DFSRH Diploma application 1	Education & Training - Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (fsrh.org)	☑ 3 days***	☑ £625***
DFSRH Diploma Application 2	Education & Training - Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (fsrh.org)	☑ up to 3 days**	☑ £75 per training session half day

DFSRH Diploma application 3	Education & Training - Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (fsrh.org)	☑0.5 day	☑£175 per training session half day
STIF Course Sexually Transmitted Infection Foundation Course	https://www.stif.org.uk/theory-course/	☑2 days	☑up to £300
Diploma in Dermatology	Practical Dermatology (PgDip) (full time distance learning) (1 year) - Study - Cardiff University	☑up to 7days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Diploma in Musculoskeltal Medicine Exam only	Exam Details - Diploma in Musculoskeletal Medicine | The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (rcsed.ac.uk)	☑ if necessary	☒ Only travel and subsistence permissible if necessary
Diploma in Sports and Exercise Medicine	Sport and Exercise Medicine PG Dip at University of Bath (postgraduatesearch.com)	☑up to 7days	☑ Grant of up to £750
Postgraduate Certificate Clinical Education	Clinical Education (PgCert) | Courses | Queen's University Belfast | Courses | Queen's University Belfast	N/A	☑ Grant of up to £750

*** Level 1 £625 - £250 Registration Fee, support of trainer and 4 clinical sessions @ £75 per session

Level 2 £75 per session for additional training if required for practical accreditation

Above costs may change

Please note - This list is not exhaustive and consideration will be given to other courses/ exams where further information has been provided by the trainee. These will be assessed on an individual case by case basis on their relevance to the GP training curriculum and aiding progress to CCT. Specialist interest topics may not be covered.

Level 2

Non-mandatory – highly desirable

Attendance at conference relevant to GP training / curriculum	e.g. RCGP – Preference will be given to these trainees presenting posters, Balint Conference within UK or Ireland etc	☑ up to 3 days	☑ Grant of up to £250 to include travel and subsistence
GP update courses (not already covered in deanery programme)	**One** GP update course can be applied for each year of GP Specialty Training: • NB Medical https://www.nbmedical.com/webinars/ • Red Whale GP Update (gp-update.co.uk) (From 6.8.25 RCGP One day essentials are no longer supported under study leave) GP NI webinars are no longer supported under study leave	☑	☑ Grant of up to £250

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