

Study leave guidance for GP Trainees April 2013

Study leave enables trainees to direct their own learning, meet their educational needs as set out in their personal development plan, and cover the wide range of knowledge and skills required by the RCGP curriculum. This guidance note has been produced to provide GP trainees with the information they require for a broad understanding of their entitlements to study leave and how the process works.

National standards on study leave can be found in the GMC publication "[Generic standards for specialty including GP training. September 2009, updated October 2010](#)"

Deanery organised teaching as part of a GP training programme

GP training programmes tend to include regular teaching sessions to help trainees cover the curriculum. There are a number of non-standard terms that may be used across the deaneries to describe these deanery-organised locally-provided specialty-specific educational sessions. These teaching sessions may be funded by taking part of the individual trainee's study budget allowance. Similarly, deanery or training programme organised training sessions are often taken from trainees study leave allocation. This may form a substantial part of the study leave allocation so trainees are advised to check with their deanery so they know how many days of study leave they have remaining.

The management of time away from the workplace for GP trainees

Trainees must be supplied with straightforward instructions on how to apply for study leave. This may be available online or trainees may be sent this information once they have been accepted onto a training programme.

The GMC publication "[Generic standards for specialty including GP training. September 2009, updated October 2010](#)" states:

6.19 - Trainees must be made aware how to apply for study leave and be guided as to appropriate courses and funding.

6.21 The process for applying for study leave must be fair and transparent, and information about a deanery-level appeals process must be readily available.

Approval is likely to be required for all study leave. Depending on local guidance, this may need to be sought from one or more of Training Programme Director (TPD), Educational Supervisor (ES) and Clinical Supervisor (CS). It is therefore advisable to make the request for study leave at the beginning of the placement or with an appropriate period of notice. It is good practice to seek support from your educational supervisor before you apply for study leave even when it is not mandatory.

It is important to plan study leave around clinical duties and rotas to ensure there is sufficient clinical cover and safe patient care. If any request cannot be supported because of service arrangements, it should still be submitted to help the programme director identify where further efforts may be needed in order to cater for the needs of trainees.

Where a trainee attends a course outside their working hours (e.g. at a weekend, or in the evening after work) this should not be deducted from their annual study leave entitlement.

Study leave request process

The TPD has a responsibility for all the educational activities that are considered to fall within the training programme. Trainees should expect to be released to attend educational sessions that are provided as part of the specialty training programme. Where attendance at any number of these sessions is mandated then any audit of applications for leave should reflect this.

Study leave is regulated and GP trainees should have employment contracts that stipulate annual study leave entitlement (for example 30 days per year). While study leave is described in terms of a number of days entitlement per year, most trainees will rotate through two or more placements per year when in hospital posts. It is therefore important for trainees to negotiate their study leave allocation across the year with their clinical and education supervisors, rota co-ordinators, medical staffing and the Postgraduate Medical Education Department.

Clinical cover will likely need to be arranged to cover study leave, either where the request is made in advance of the rota being allocated or to change a rota that has already been produced. Some types of rota arrangements may mean that there are limited options for trainees to swap shifts to attend events that are held on fixed dates.

As part of the request process, it may also be necessary to request fees and other expenses associated with a study event. Trainees should also be aware that they may have to book a place on some study events.

It is important that study leave is not be used to satisfy the employer's requirements for mandatory training.

Auditing and GMC quality assurance

The GMC hopes their Quality Improvement Framework will align the efforts of different organisations. Quality assurance (QA) includes all the policies, standards, systems and processes in place to maintain and enhance the quality of medical education and training in the UK.

Standards, requirements and outcomes for GP specialty training are being aligned with foundation programmes and other specialties. These are included within the publication "The Trainee Doctor" for which a major review is planned for 2013. [The current document can be found here.](#)

2012 saw discussions about major revisions to the questions and indicators included in the National Survey of Trainee Doctors. Within the category of educational process, it was agreed that the indicator on study leave will be retained.

Many Annual Deanery Reports include comments about improving access to and reducing administrative delays concerning study leave. http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/annual_deanery_reports.asp