



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Trainers (in Secondary Care)¹

The following advice is based upon the information available as of 26th March 2020.

This remains subject to change as the situation develops so please monitor our communication channels for updates.

This document has been produced to provide guidance for you as you work and supervise trainees during the COVID-19 pandemic. HEIW has produced a similar 'Frequently Asked Questions for Trainees' which can be found here - <https://heiw.nhs.wales/covid-19/> along with further sources on information and support for trainers and their trainees.

If you have questions relating to employment and contractual issues please contact the Medical Workforce/Human Resources department at your hospital or Health Board.

In signing the All Wales Medical Trainer Agreement you have demonstrated a commitment to the important trainer role and the provision of high quality training, as well as contributing to a suitable learning environment for trainees. The Medical Deanery at HEIW and Local Education Providers (Health Boards and Trusts) have committed to supporting you in your trainer role and will provide guidance to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on your role and medical training in general as far as possible.

Guidance from the Medical Deanery, HEIW

Provision of Supervision

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances, trainers and Local Education Providers may need to depart from established training processes and practices and we will seek to be pragmatic, responsible, supportive and proportionate in our expectations of trainers, but supervision of trainees remains paramount.

Due to additional clinical / managerial commitments resulting from the coronavirus outbreak, I am concerned I will be unable to provide appropriate supervision to a trainee. What should I do?

We understand that demands on clinical services and increasing requirements for trainees and trainers to support NHS healthcare providers in managing the care of acutely ill patients are placing unprecedented demand on the learning environment. This has already resulted in disruption or cancellation of training activities and trainees being directed to alternative tasks and / or locations to support the COVID-19 response.

¹ As defined in the All-Wales Medical Trainer Agreement (Secondary Care and Undergraduate Education) medical Trainers are appropriately trained and experienced doctors who are responsible for the education and training of medical students and/or postgraduate medical trainees that takes place in an environment of medical practice. A Trainer provides supervision appropriate to the competence and experience of the students or trainee and training environment. He or she is involved in and contributes to the learning culture and environment, provides feedback for learning and may have specific responsibility for appraisal and/or assessment.

Flexible working by healthcare professionals, including trainers and trainees, to support patient and population needs will be essential, but it is imperative that this is considered in the context of patient and trainee safety. Paramount therefore is ensuring that trainees have adequate and appropriate clinical supervision, that they feel 'looked after' and supported, and that you find ways of evidencing this. Your primary responsibility is to ensure trainee welfare and that trainees continue to practise safely.

We fully recognise pressures on delivery of training roles over forthcoming weeks, but they are as important as ever in supporting colleagues and trainees. We hope that you will continue to work collaboratively with, and provide support for, others who contribute to the training and supervision of trainees as well as others in the multi-professional workplace with roles in the management and delivery of education and training.

There will inevitably be an impact on anticipated learning and we acknowledge that time available to undertake educational supervision activities such as completion of Workplace-Based Assessments and Educational Supervisor reports may be limited, but these remain important in relation to trainee progression and at a time when many trainees will have heightened anxiety regarding these and their progression more generally.

Learning opportunities from providing support to address the COVID-19 response are significant and could be reflected in trainees' e-portfolio (or indeed your own appraisal and revalidation). Please encourage trainees therefore to maintain reflection from an educational and personal perspective on an ongoing basis.

I have been advised to self-isolate. What should I do about supervision responsibilities?

We are aware that a number of trainers are currently self-isolating or have been advised to do so by local Occupational Health services. If you are self-isolating please arrange for an appropriate colleague to provide clinical supervision for trainees during your absence and inform the relevant Training Programme Director.

If you are able, you may consider alternative ways in which educational supervision responsibilities can be provided for trainees, for example, holding meetings via Skype.

I am not a recognised trainer, but am currently the only Consultant working in my department. What are my responsibilities to trainees working in my area?

Our primary concern is that trainees have adequate clinical supervision in place to enable them to work in a way that is safe for them and the patients in their care. A pragmatic approach is therefore required in the short term; where there are limited numbers of staff available to supervise trainees we acknowledge that supervision may not be provided by 'recognised trainers', but it must be provided.

You may wish to familiarise yourself with trainer responsibilities as set out in the All-Wales Medical Trainer Agreement - <https://quality.walesdeanery.org/trainer-support> (and, in time, sign up via the Trainer Agreement Gateway) and any local guidance on the trainer role, but your immediate priority is to ensure that clinical supervision is provided and that trainees feel supported.

I am concerned my trainee has been given inappropriate responsibilities or is being asked to work outside their scope of practice. Whom should I contact?

Trainees may be asked to work in another acute specialty or to cover acute medical patients. Health Boards have been advised to ensure they have access to appropriate induction, senior support and supervision which is of key importance when working in an unfamiliar setting. They should work at a level of seniority commensurate with their skills and experience and should not feel that they are being asked to undertake

work you are not able to do. Trainees with concerns have been advised to discuss these with their supervising consultant.

Responsibility for deployment of trainees from their current placement to an alternative specialty/location to support the COVID-19 response sits with Associate Medical Directors for Education (or a delegated deputy). All trainee movement is subject to regular review by AMDs with any concerns escalated to the Postgraduate Dean, so the AMD should be your first point of contact. Faculty Teams will also be notified of changes to trainee locations and scope of work and can therefore provide support where required.

My trainee has offered to move to support the COVID-19 response/I have received a request for my trainees to move to provide additional support in other clinical areas/specialties. What are my responsibilities to them?

As the COVID-19 outbreak progresses HEIW recognises that there may be circumstances in which trainees may be required to offer assistance/support outside of their usual training pathway and contracted duties. In these circumstances it is essential that systems are in place to ensure trainee welfare, that trainees continue to practise safely and are not exposed to risks to themselves, their families, colleagues and patients through their work and training.

Where movement of trainees is required, arrangements will be discussed prospectively by Health Boards (Associate Medical Director for Education or delegated deputy) with the Postgraduate Dean. Movement within a Health Board will then be discussed with the relevant Head of School/TPD and Clinical Directors in affected departments, so please work with them to facilitate this.

Trainees moved to a different clinical area/specialty must be adequately supervised and be informed of the identity and contact details of their Named Clinical Supervisor.

Note - This guidance relates to movement of Core and Specialty Trainees (including GP) only. The process for the movement of Foundation trainees is being led as a separate exercise by HEIW.

Public Health Wales has developed a package of information and links to support healthcare staff – ‘COVID-19. This has been shared with Health Board leads as a single point of reference for NHS Wales’ organisations and you may find the guidance for useful for supporting trainees.

My trainee has asked me a question related to their employment contract (for example pay/leave/maternity/sickness). Where can I direct them to?

Trainees should be advised to contact their employing Health Board or Trust’s Medical Workforce/Human Resources department. Employers will be best placed to answer any questions regarding pay, leave, sickness, maternity, self-isolation, working hours and conditions.

Assessment and ARCPs

The four UK statutory education bodies have been liaising closely to consider contingency arrangements for postgraduate medical education and training processes during the COVID-19 outbreak and will continue to monitor and advise as required over the coming weeks.

Activities such as audit and quality improvement have been suspended in our department due to the coronavirus outbreak. What effect will this have on my trainee’s ARCP?

The impact on trainee progression is significant but there is a huge amount of effort across the UK going in to development of contingency plans on a four country basis to minimize the impact on individual trainees, trainers, specialties and training environments. The position regarding ARCP requirements is likely to change as we progress through the crisis and further guidance will be issued in due course.

HEIW will be working with specialties to develop clear plans to deliver missed training opportunities once the pressure reduces. ARCP panels will be advised to introduce an element of flexibility for trainees who have missed training opportunities as a result of supporting the COVID-19 response. Royal College guidance is also expected in a number of key areas to support consistency across the UK.

My trainee is worried because they are not achieving the speciality competencies required for progression through ARCP. What should I tell them?

We are aware of the strain that COVID-19 will put upon training. Speciality specific training opportunities to achieve competencies may be more difficult to access.

Trainees cannot officially progress to the next level of training until they have had the current year's competencies signed off but Royal Colleges are currently working to develop specialty-specific guidelines as to how these can be met with as much flexibility and pragmatism as possible. If they have completed the competencies required in the current training year they can work towards next year's competencies between August and any new ARCP date and evidence these in their portfolio. If, however, trainees have not met their current competence requirements they have been advised to discuss this with their Educational Supervisor. You should therefore work with them to develop an action plan to address this in the time available between August and their new ARCP date.

It is possible that trainees may not rotate to their next training placement as originally planned (rotations planned for April and May have already been cancelled) or if they do they may be required to spend further time in their current subspecialty, particularly if due to the COVID-19 response they have missed essential educational activities/targets that cannot be achieved in the next placement. HEIW will continue to monitor this alongside Training Programme Directors and will make further details available as soon as we are able to do so.

Health and Wellbeing

I am concerned about a trainee's health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak. How can I help ensure they get the right support?

Please be alert for the trainee whose conduct, health, progress or performance gives cause for concern. The Professional Support Unit at HEIW is available to offer support and advice - HEIW.professionalsupport@wales.nhs.uk

Advise trainees to keep up to date on government updates – but steer clear of unreliable or anxiety-inducing sources of information, especially online. It is important that we all acknowledge that this is a uniquely stressful time, and it is okay to not be okay.

The following trainee-led website provides access to a range of sources of support for trainees – www.covidcare.me

The additional stress from the coronavirus outbreak is affecting my health and wellbeing. Whom should I contact?

Your primary point of contact for personal support should be your employing Health Board's Occupational Health Services.

Faculty Leads for Trainers also have a specific responsibility to support you in delivery of your trainer role and can be contacted for operational and pastoral support.

If you require support or advice regarding a specific situation involving a trainee, HEIW's Professional Support Unit is happy to offer help - HEIW.professionalsupport@wales.nhs.uk

The Professional Support Unit is also compiling an extensive list of resources to support you and your trainees. This is being shared with PSU Leads, Training Programme Directors, Heads of Schools, Faculty Leads and Foundation Programme Directors and will be updated on an ongoing basis.

You may also find the following additional sources of support useful –

COVID-19 Frontline Wellbeing - <https://www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk/covid-19-frontline-wellbeing>

BMA Wellbeing Support Services - <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/work-life-support/your-wellbeing> or telephone 0330 123 1245.

My Trainer Role

Due to additional clinical / managerial commitments resulting from the coronavirus outbreak I cannot fulfil my professional development requirements or engage in appraisal for the educational component of my job plan. Will I maintain my status as 'recognised trainer' on the GMC register?

We recognise that there will be less time to devote to your trainer role and professional development over forthcoming weeks. The GMC's register of recognised trainers is updated by HEIW on a regular basis so please be assured that there is no risk of recognition automatically 'expiring' or individuals losing recognition due to inability to fulfil these role requirements.

Will I need to complete the GMC National Trainer Survey this year?

The GMC acknowledges the current pressures on trainers and has decided to postpone this year's national training surveys, which were due to launch on 24th March 2020. They will continue to monitor the situation and hope to run them later this year.

Who can I contact for further advice or with any other questions regarding my trainer role?

If you have any other queries relating to your trainer role or delivery of trainer responsibilities at this time, please contact HEIW@wales.nhs.uk This email address is monitored daily.