

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Trainees

***The following advice is based upon the information available as of 2nd November 2020.
This remains subject to change as the situation develops so please monitor our
communication channels for updates.***

<i>Updated sections</i>	<i>Date updated</i>
June 2020 version (black text)	<i>10th June 2020</i>
<i>Update (red text)</i>	<i>2nd November 2020</i>

This document has been produced to provide guidance for you as you work and train during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Medical Deanery within HEIW ensures the provision of high-quality training for trainee doctors in Wales, who are employed by local Health Boards and Trusts. As your employer your Health Board is best placed to answer any questions you have regarding pay, leave, sickness, maternity, self-isolation, working hours and conditions. The Medical Deanery at HEIW will provide guidance to you and your employer to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on your training as far as possible.

Therefore, if you have questions relating to employment and contractual issues please contact the Medical Workforce/Human Resources department at your hospital or Health Board. We have received several queries relating to such issues and have already passed them on to the Workforce Directors group to develop an agreed response.

Please note – On 10th June 2020 the Welsh Government, BMA, HEIW and NHS employers have recently released guidance entitled “Joint statement on annual leave, study leave and public holiday arrangements for doctors and dentists in training during the Covid-19 pandemic.” Please ensure you are familiar with the guidance within this document.

Guidance from the Medical Deanery, HEIW

Redeployment and Supervision

Q I have been asked to work in a private hospital will this impact my training?

HEIW is working with all of the Health Boards to ensure that the private hospitals have GMC recognition as approved training sites. This work should have been completed prior to you undertaking any work in a private hospital. HEIW would also advise trainees undertaking work in private hospitals to check with their employing Health Board and indemnity provider to ensure appropriate cover is in place.

Q. if I am redeployed will I be provided with return to work support when I return to my normal training programme?

Support, on an individual basis, will be available for trainees who have been deployed as a result of the COVID response. We suggest that you keep in touch with your Educational Supervisor and Training Programme to determine what support, if any, you may require. In addition, please read the Health, Wellbeing and Support section within these FAQs for other aspects of support.

Q. I am at a critical time point in my training will I be prioritised and not redeployed?

We would urge all trainees who are at a critical point in their training programme, usually defined as someone about to complete training and obtain a CCT or complete Core Training to discuss this with their TPD and ES to ascertain what outstanding competencies are required to enable programme completion at ARCP and explore options to achieve these. **HEIW has issued pandemic surge guidance to Health Boards to ensure trainee redeployment is managed in a staged way for as short a time as possible and with the trainee and HEIW involved in the process.**

Q. Will I be deployed to a field hospital away from my current hospital?

All field hospitals in Wales will be aligned to Health Boards and so will be locally based. You may be approached by your current Health Board to support your local field hospital where this is the case Health Boards will need to provide clear guidance around the induction and supervision arrangements in place.

Q. I am concerned that I may be asked to work in an area where I have limited/no recent experience.

You may be asked to work in another acute specialty or to cover acute medical patients. Health Boards have been advised to ensure you have access to appropriate induction, senior support and supervision which is of key importance when working in an unfamiliar setting. You should work at a level of seniority commensurate with your skills and experience. You should not feel that you are being asked to undertake work you are not able to do. Patient care should always remain the absolute priority and so if you have concerns please discuss these with your supervising consultant. Where redeployments take place HEIW has asked that trainees stay in same HB unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be dealt with on a case by case basis. HEIW has also highlighted to Health Boards that clear induction and supervision arrangements are essential requirements.

Q. I am a GP Trainees and have been asked to contribute to the rota for the Health Board Covid Hubs. What should I do?

HEIW advises that the responsibility for deciding whether a GP trainee should work in a Covid Hub lies with the trainee's host training practice. When deciding whether it is appropriate for the trainee to work at the hub, the practice should consider the acceptability of the Standard Operating Procedures in place. They should also consider the

level of clinical supervision, workload intensity, the complexity of the clinical decision making and the level of experience and capability of the individual trainee.

We currently envisage that GP trainees will work be working in the same system that their host practice chooses to employ so that if the trainee's host practice is not contributing to covering the rota, then the trainee should not either.

We recognise that the situation is changing rapidly and we will keep this advice under review.

Study Leave, Teaching and Exams

Q. Will our 30 days per year allocation for study leave be rolled over?

The statement issued by the BMA/WG/HEIW and NHS Employers on 10th June 2020 confirms that unused personal study budget from the 2019–20 year will be rolled forward into the 2020–21 year and added to the personal budget usually made available for that year, thereby ensuring no-loss of training funds support. [The addendum to the study leave policy issued on 23rd September provided further information and guidance in relation to the roll over of study leave allocation but also guidance on online courses and requesting time off in lieu.](#)

Q. Will our mandated teaching be cancelled and what impact will this have on our progression

[On 9th September the Statutory Education Bodies issued principles for educational organisations during pandemic surges.](#) Within this document guidance is provided in relation to formal education and practical experience. Training Programmes and organisations have been asked to make arrangements to ensure online delivery of formal education where possible. This online resource can be recorded, stored and made available to trainees at a time convenient for them. Protected time for learning should still be provided.

Q. What if the course I was scheduled to attend was mandatory for my job role i.e. ALS, safeguarding etc and my current cover is due to expire?

You should discuss this with your ES and TPD to ascertain whether the course is a requirement for you to continue to practice in your current role. If it is, you should inform your employing organisation (Clinical Director) as soon as possible.

Q. My College has cancelled exams during the pandemic but these are required for me to progress when are these restarting?

[Royal Colleges have been exploring options and developing implementation plans for restarting exams.](#) The majority of exams are being delivered online. Royal College websites will provide the most recent information relating to exam arrangements for their specialties along with their plans for prioritising candidates nearing CCT completion where applicable.

ARCPs

The COVID pandemic posed considerable challenges to the undertaking of this summer's ARCPs and to the ability of trainees to meet the curricula requirements.

An early decision was made that ARCPs should proceed and that, where possible, no trainee should be delayed in progressing with their training.

As a result of the 4 SEBs working with the GMC, Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties agreed derogation of the UK established processes and new "no fault" outcomes (10.1 and 10.2) training were created <https://heiw.nhs.wales/files/covid-19-enabling-progression-at-arcp-v2/>.

Changes to the summer ARCP process included:

- Redefining the composition of ARCP panels to facilitate as many ARCPs as possible to be carried out.
- Ascertaining the minimum curriculum requirement compatible with maintaining patient safety for each speciality for each year of training to inform when a trainee can progress.
- Identifying compensatory evidence that ARCP panels could consider when normal evidence was not available.
- Prioritising ARCPs when there were pre-existing significant concerns about the clinical capability/fitness to practise/revalidation of the trainee or where the trainee was at a critical progression point in their programme
- Introduction of two new ARCP Outcomes which recognised that the trainee was achieving progress and developing competences/capabilities at the expected rate, but that acquisition of some capabilities had been delayed by the impact of COVID-19.
- Panels were convened virtually rather than face to face.
- Flexibility in the delivery of Post ARCP feedback with those trainees who receive an outcome indicating a concern with progression, meeting virtually with their TPD or ARCP plane to receive feedback.

In September the 4 SEBs issued a [statement](#) confirming the extension of these arrangements up to and including March 2021.

Q. What is the difference between an Outcome 10.1 and 10.2

It must be stressed that both outcomes are non-fault outcomes issued to trainees as a result of COVID.

10.1 – indicates the trainee's progress is satisfactory but the acquisition of competencies/capabilities has been delayed by COVID-19 disruption. This is applicable when the trainee is NOT at a critical progression point (i.e. CCT, completion of training programme (note variations for the end of Core Training), end of FY1 and FY2) or when the trainee is at a critical progression point in their programme, **but** the relevant Medical Royal College or Faculty has amended the curriculum and mandated that the competences/capabilities can be acquired at the next stage of training.

10.2 – indicates that progress is satisfactory, but the acquisition of competencies/capabilities has been delayed by COVID-19 disruption. This is applicable when the trainee is:

- at a critical progression point in their programme where there has been no derogation to normal curriculum progression requirements given by the relevant Medical Royal College or Faculty (e.g. specific professional examination or mandatory training course).

- at the critical progression point of approaching CCT and additional training will be required before the trainee can complete their training.

Q. Will I be entitled to an extension to my training programme after being awarded an Outcome 10.

All trainees issued with an Outcome 10.2 will be entitled to additional training time. Trainees issued with an Outcome 10.1 at the end of their Core programme will be provided with the option to

1. Progress to a higher training programme – if recruitment into higher training facilitates this
2. Leave the programme and acquire the missing capabilities outside of training
3. Stay in the core programme taking advantage of additional training time to acquire the missing capabilities, as already indicated in the published ARCP guidance developed for this year. Please note however that any additional training time used under this mechanism will count towards the overall extension time available to you during the duration of your training programme.

Q. I am concerned that I will not be able to complete the required number of workplace based assessments for my ARCP. Will this mean I will be issued with an Outcome 2 or 3?

The Statutory Education Bodies have requested specific information from Royal Colleges to inform ARCP decision aids to be used during this COVID period.

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/files/covid-19-management-of-arcp/>

The Medical Royal Colleges have been asked to provide guidance for ARCP panels describing acceptable compensatory evidence (with examples) that ARCP panels could consider where normal evidence (such as WBAs) is not available due to the current situation. Medical Royal Colleges have also been asked to provide clear specialty-specific criteria for non-progression.

Q. I have already used up the maximum time allowed for training extensions as detailed in the Gold Guide. If I am issued an Outcome 10.2 and require additional training time will this be agreed?

The Outcome 10.2 is a non-fault code and therefore as a result of COVID your training will need to be extended. Therefore, where additional training time will be required this will be supported.

Q. Will I still be required to complete a Form R as part of my ARCP requirements given the deferral of revalidation?

Yes. All trainees as part of their ARCP requirements will need to complete a Form R.

Q. Can I have my ES meeting/Appraisal via Skype?

ES and appraisal meetings can take place virtually, e.g. by Skype, where needed and with the consent of the trainee and trainer. Where an appraisal meeting is conducted on Skype this will be noted in the appraisal summary.

Q. My specialty also has a penultimate (PYA) face to face meeting will this take place?

PYAs will remain suspended until further notice, but the benefits of the process for individual trainees should be maintained by ensuring there are enhanced local supervision arrangements for all and targeted support from the JRCPTB where need is identified. An update on the [Temporary suspension of Penultimate Year Assessments \(PYAs\) for physicianly specialties](#) management of PYAs was released in October provides further information.

Q. I was due to revalidate late this year what impact has COVID-19 had on this?

The GMC announced doctors with revalidation dates prior to 16th March 2021 will have their revalidation dates moved back by one year. For those trainees who are due to CCT during this period HEIW will continue to process your revalidation requirements.

Recruitment and Rotations

Q. I am planning to apply for specialty training for entry in 2021 what are the plans going forward for recruitment?

Specialty recruitment will proceed for posts commencing from August 2021 although the timeframes and delivery methods will differ from previous years, Applications to specialty training programmes will be made via Oriel. There is a new version of Oriel being used for 2021 recruitment <https://new.oriel.nhs.uk/Web>.

The timelines for each recruitment round can be accessed [here](#). Please note Round 2 for ST3/ST4 uncoupled specialties is being brought forward with applications opening in November 2020.

Following widespread consultation a number of general principles have been developed that all specialties must follow for selection into programmes for 2021.

- Recruitment plans have been developed with the anticipation of further COVID disruption and are deliverable regardless of social distancing or restrictions in place.
- There will be no face to face, in person interviews throughout the duration of the 2021 recruitment process.
- Applicants should be aware of the selection process in place for the specialty before they submit an application.
- Where self assessment is used, evidence should be verified
- Where application numbers exceed interview capacity, shortlisting processes can be adopted.
- Interview processes will be undertaken digitally, as a single interview panel.

Each specialty has developed two approved recruitment plans, known commonly as Plan A and Plan B.

Plan A is the specialty's preferred selection process and will include a combination of selection processes. Plan B will be adopted on a specialty by specialty basis should delivery of Plan A become impossible.

Further information on the recruitment and selection process can be obtained from the specialty training and oriel websites together with specialty specific information available from the lead recruiting organisation.

OOP and LTFT

Q. I am a LTFT trainee who changed their hours as a result of the COVID pandemic. Will this result in an automatic calculation of my CCT date?

No trainee will be disadvantaged by any changes that took place during the COVID pandemic. No automatic recalculation will be made. Any changes to your CCT will be individualised to your experience.

Q. I am due to go OOP in February will I still be able to go as planned?

Out of Programme placements should continue to be supported for trainees during a pandemic surge wherever possible – as these may be ‘once-in-a-programme’ opportunities.

Please see separate OOP/LTFT/Parental Leave guidance on HEIW COVID website:

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/covid-19/>

Q. I am a current LTFT trainee and wish to return to full time work or increase my hours to help the service deal with the COVID crisis. Who do I need to discuss this with?

Discuss with your local department and TPD in the first instance. For further information please see separate OOP/LTFT/Parental Leave Guidance on HEIW COVID website:

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/covid-19/>

Support, Health and Wellbeing

Please access the Staff Wellbeing COVID resource which has been specifically developed in response to COVID-19: [NHS Wales Staff Wellbeing Covid -19 Resource](#)

The Professional Support Unit at HEIW is ready to take your calls and offer support and advice (Contact: HEIW.professionalsupport@wales.nhs.uk).

Q. I am currently at home shielding as unable to work due to an ongoing health condition is there anything I can do to support the NHS?

There are several ways in which you can support ongoing activities. Your Health board should be able to advise you with this. or alternatively HEIW can provide help and support. HEIW is currently looking at all trainees who fall into shielding categories so we can explore individualised plans depending on circumstances. If you fall into this category please contact HEIW@wales.nhs.uk and a member of our Deanery team will be in contact with you.

Q. I am in the highly vulnerable category and continuing to shield on advice from the Chief Medical Officer or my own doctor.

You should have completed a COVID-19 risk assessment and be having regular discussions with your employer about the safest pattern of work including workplace modifications or having the correct equipment to continue working e.g. a laptop. You should have also had

discussions with your ES/College Tutor/Training Programme Director about developing a bespoke training plan to support you to meet curriculum requirements as much as possible. If this has not happened please contact HEIW.PostgraduateDean@wales.nhs.uk

During the period of shielding ongoing work could include, but is not limited to, virtual clinics, telephone triage activities, QI, research, leadership/management, teaching, developing guidelines etc.

Q. I am a trainee on the third trimester of pregnancy

Whilst there is currently no evidence to show that pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19, pregnant women have been classified as moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution.

The Royal College of Obstetricians has developed guidance for pregnant women in the third trimester of pregnancy and their employers.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-09-10-occupational-health-statement-rcog-rcm-fom.pdf>

Individualised risk assessment should be conducted between employers and pregnant women and discussions should occur about the safest pattern of working which in some circumstances could include non-patient facing work.

Q. What can I do to look after myself during this high-pressure time?

It is important that we all acknowledge that this is a uniquely stressful time, and it is okay to not be okay. The 'NHS Wales Staff Wellbeing Covid-19 Portal' provides a range of health & wellbeing resources to support you all at this difficult time.

<https://leadershipportal.heiw.wales/go/cp92la>

At much as possible, keep things "normal" outside work – stay topped up on food, drink, and sleep. Avoid alcohol and tobacco as stress-relievers. Stay connected with family and friends through the telephone and internet.

Whether or not you're at work, it might not be as easy to stay active while restrictions are in place. But exercise is an important part of feeling healthy and normal.

Keep up to date on government updates – but steer clear of unreliable or anxiety-inducing sources of information, especially online. It can be helpful to restrict your time on social media.

Q. Where can I get some support for myself when I'm feeling stressed or anxious about work?

Seeking support from colleagues, friends and family, as well as from professional sources is a good idea. The professional support unit at HEIW is ready to take your calls and offer support and advice. The PSU is also looking at developing online group drop in sessions where you can seek general advice about training or wellbeing. We will also be delivering interventions such as mindfulness and yoga exercises.

Find a "buddy" at work whom you feel you can talk to – or offer to be one for someone else.

Additional Resources

- HEIW Coronavirus website where information and statements relating to training and trainees are posted. <https://heiw.nhs.wales/covid-19/>
- Health Education England has launched a dedicated Coronavirus e-learning programme <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/coronavirus/>