

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Dental Core and Dental Specialty Trainees

The following advice is based upon the information available as of 23rd March 2020. This remains subject to change as the situation develops so please monitor our communication channels for updates.

Firstly, thank you. From all at HEIW we understand that this is a period of immense worry and uncertainty and we would like to take this opportunity to express huge gratitude to our trainee workforce for all the work they are currently doing. We understand that you will be unsure how things will be in future months from a training perspective and appreciate the concern this may be causing you.

This document has been produced to provide guidance for you as you work and train during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dental Deanery within HEIW ensures the provision of high-quality training for trainee dentists in Wales, who are employed by local Health Boards. 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. However, The Dental 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.

Guidance from the Dental Deanery, HEIW

Redeployment and Supervision

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

It is possible that you may be asked to work in another healthcare setting. Consideration of redeployment of trainees is appropriate in exceptional circumstances such as these. As such you may be redeployed to meet the needs of 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 supervisor.

Study Leave, Teaching and Exams

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

Planned Courses organized through HEIW have initially been cancelled for the next 12 weeks. You will be expected to attend your place of work on study days to be redeployed as appropriate by your employer.

Each specialty has been asked to review their future teaching commitments and ascertain whether these sessions can be delivered in a different way i.e. via skype or through recorded sessions that can be made available to you to watch when you are free to do so.

In terms of your progression this will be reviewed at your ARCP/RCP and if satisfactory progress was being made prior to the COVID-19 outbreak the panel will take these extenuating circumstances into consideration and award the most appropriate ARCP/RCP outcome alongside an action plan for meeting any outstanding requirements.

Q. Am I still entitled to my allocated and timetabled study time during this period?

HEIW are looking at ways of delivering outstanding timetabled study days by electronic means, but at the present time DCTs and StRs should report to their usual place of work to assist Health Boards with their response to the pandemic.

Q. If our study leave is cancelled will we be left out of pocket?

If the course you were scheduled to attend has also been cancelled we will work with the provider to provide the course using an alternative method of delivery, or issue you with a full refund, or to offer you an alternative date.

Where the course has not been cancelled but you are unable to attend due to your involvement in the COVID-19 response we would recommend that you contact the course provider to ascertain whether you can postpone your attendance to a later date or request a refund.

We are awaiting further guidance in relation to reimbursement from NHS Wales and Welsh Government and further information will follow in due course.

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 the next sitting of the exam which is required for me to progress.

The dental faculties of the Royal Colleges have paused all examinations (Exams for Doctors in Training - see Appendix 1). However, there are ongoing discussions to explore the option of delivering these examinations in a different way. HEIW will inform trainees of the arrangements for assessment when the details are known.

Trainees who have had examinations cancelled will continue to be supported. If the new date of the examination takes them beyond their current CCST date, training will be extended to accommodate this with a view to award of an outcome 6 (Gained all required competences; will be recommended as having completed the training programme (and for award of a CCST, as applicable) if appropriate immediately after the exam results are known.

Trainees on run through will be eligible to count training time and experiences from their original CCT to the rescheduled exam sitting towards their post CCST training.

ARCPs

The management of ARCPs over the coming months will vary across specialties and grades. The ARCP panel will consider each case individually to determine which ARCP outcome to award and what future development objectives to set within an agreed future time period. We anticipate, however, that given the situation and the impact this will have on training over the coming months to see an increase in the number of Outcome 2s awarded at ARCP. An Outcome 2 enables the trainee to progress to the next level of training but signals that there are some competences that have not been fully achieved and need to be further developed during the next placement. It is not expected, at that point in time, that the rate of overall progress will be delayed or that the prospective date for completion of training will need to be extended or that a period of additional remedial training will be required.

The following provides some guidance and key advice going forward.

Q. My ARCP/FRCP is scheduled for the early summer. Will it still go ahead and what happens if I have not completed the required workplace-based assessments in my portfolio?

All specialties have been advised that they need to review the way in which the ARCPs will be delivered over the summer.

Trainees will **not** be required to travel to attend the ARCP for feedback; instead this may be delivered via skype or in a subsequent meeting with your TPD or ES.

Certain specialties will be impacted more than others and in cases where ARCPs may have to be postponed, we will be asking specialties to prioritise those trainees who are scheduled to complete their training programme this summer along with those trainees who are reaching a critical time points in their programmes when making such arrangements.

If you miss progression assessments, examinations and training due to COVID-19 it is important that you discuss this with your Educational Supervisor prior to the ARCP and highlight this in your e-portfolio.

We will be working with the Dental Specialty Training Advisory Group and Dental Core Training Advisory Group to develop clear plans to deliver missed training opportunities once the pressure reduces. ARCP / RCP 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.

We are aware of the strain that COVID-19 will put upon training. Specialty specific training opportunities may be more difficult to access. Although difficult, we would encourage you to seek out the positives and learn from your experience during the pandemic. Reflecting on new roles that you make take on such as leadership or teaching of skills to others are valuable training opportunities.

Q. What happens if my StR ARCP is postponed? Can I still progress?

StRs cannot officially progress to your next level of training until you have had your current years competences signed off, however, if you have completed the competences required in your current training year you can work towards your next year's competences between September and your new ARCP date and evidence these in your portfolio. If, however, you have not met your current competence requirements we would advise you discuss this with your ES and develop an action plan to address this in the time available between September and your new ARCP date.

Recruitment

Q. I am due to attend my interview but am having to self-isolate what are my options?

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and recent developments with regards to social distancing, a decision has been made to cancel all face to face specialty recruitment interviews with immediate effect.

We would therefore advise you to await communication from the recruiting organisation or contact them to discuss the contingency arrangements in place for your specialty. Dependent upon the specialty and format of the interview, you may be offered a Skype interview or an alternative date.

We appreciate that this is a worrying time for applicants and further information and FAQs relating to recruitment will be posted as soon as possible on the following websites

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-information-trainees>

<https://www.scotlanddeanery.nhs.scot/covid-19/>

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

<https://www.nimmdta.gov.uk/>

In the event that an alternative is not made available to you and you are a Wales trainee and plan to remain in Wales for your next stage of training please contact HEIWrecruitment@wales.nhs.uk so that we can explore options with you.

Q. I have a national recruitment interview for a placement starting in September 2020, will this go ahead?

We are awaiting confirmation from the Medical and Dental Recruitment and Selection sub-group regarding the recruitment process for 2020-21, but currently all Dental recruitment processes are suspended.

Q. Will the DCT rotation length remain 12 months as normal? Will we be expected to remain in our current posts after September 1st 2020?

It is expected that all DCT trainees will vacate their existing posts on 01 September 2020. It is expected that a recruitment will take place to allow trainees to progress to new posts from 02 September 2020.

Support and Wellbeing

Pastoral care will be vital during this difficult time. Normally your first point of contact will be through your Clinical Supervisors, Educational Supervisor, Training Programme Director or Associate Dean.

Alternatively 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 self-isolating but have no symptoms - what should I do?

- If you are self-isolating due to contact with someone symptomatic, you can continue to work remotely.
- The expectation is to work from home on your portfolio, undertake self-directed learning or any specific other/additional tasks or projects.
- As HEIW trainees, you will all continue to be remunerated and it is important to use this time wisely and respectfully.
- The requirement to demonstrate that you are acquiring the necessary profession / clinical skills and knowledge can continue when practicable.

Q. I am self-isolating and have symptoms - what should I do?

- Please follow current government guidance and self-isolate for seven days if you develop symptoms.

- Stay at home if you have either:
 - i. a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
 - ii. a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.
- Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.
<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>
- If you have symptoms of coronavirus, you'll need to stay at home for 7 days
- If you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.
- If you must stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.
- If you live with someone who has symptoms, you should self-isolate for fourteen days and if you develop symptoms during this time revert to a seven-day self-isolation and the advice above.
- For updated information, see the link:
<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>
and for Symptoms and isolation guidance:
<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

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.

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8

If you have been asked to self-isolate and stay away from work, there is advice here about maintaining good mental health during this time.

<https://fourthventricle.com/mental-well-being-during-social-distancing/>

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. You could still go on that run or cycle but you may wish to observe more distance from other people than you normally do (two metres). Find some tips on exercising at home here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/get-inspired/32416767>

Keep up to date on government updates – but steer clear of unreliable or anxiety-inducing sources of information, especially online.

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 people of Christchurch, New Zealand, have faced two serious events in the past decade that had a lasting impact on their whole population. Find out about their campaign to help people cope here – “It's All Right”.

<https://allright.org.nz/our-projects/practical-tips/>

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

Q. How can I support others who are struggling because of the COVID-19 situation?

Providing psychological first aid can be important to keep our whole workforce mentally healthy. The following link provides some further guidance:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44615/9789241548205_eng.pdf;jsessionid=DF86C6389EE5E6B194F8F61DD6A7E187?sequence=1

Specific guidance for how to support children can be found here:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2

Specific guidance for how to support older and vulnerable adults can be found here:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8