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Addysg a Gwella Iechyd
Cymru (AaGIC)
Health Education and
Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Out of Programme Policy

November 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1. HEIW support applications to take time Out of Programme for residents wishing to; obtain clinical training (OOPT), clinical experience (OOPE), undertake a period of research (OOPR) or a career break (OOPC).
- 1.2. This policy must be read in conjunction with the most recent version of the [Gold Guide](#).

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance on the OOP process to all resident doctors in Wales on Welsh Training Programmes (including WCAT) outlining the key OOP principles, application processes, timelines and resident stakeholder responsibilities.
- 2.2 For residents wishing to undertake opportunities to develop a broader career portfolio at the same time as their clinical training an application should be made to alter their %WTE status through the LTFT policy. The exception to this is where the opportunity will count towards training time and this should be applied for via this OOP policy.
- 2.3 This policy is not for LAT residents as they cannot request time out of programme as per the Gold Guide.
- 2.4 This policy is not for resident doctors undertaking sub-specialty training as part of their training programme in Wales (PHEM, PEM, Stroke only). Instead, residents will receive formal written confirmation of their appointment which they can share with the respective College. If you intend to complete your sub-specialty out of Wales then the OOP Policy must be adopted.

3. Principles

- 3.1 OOP applications can only be agreed if they have formal prospective approval by the Postgraduate Dean or a nominated deputy.
- 3.2 Applications must be submitted using the [HEIW application form](#) and sent to:
Secondary Care: heiw.secondarycare@wales.nhs.uk
General Practice: heiw.gptraining@wales.nhs.uk
- 3.3 If the OOPT/OOPR is to count towards training time, the resident must obtain approval from the relevant Royal College or Faculty after receiving provisional approval in writing from the Secondary Care or GP team at HEIW.
- 3.4 If the OOPT/OOPR is not already in a GMC approved training site, then HEIW will seek prospective approval from the GMC on behalf of the resident.
- 3.5 Applications will not normally be agreed until a resident has been on a training programme for at least one year.
- 3.6 Out of Programme (OOP) approval for core residents is expected to be rare, given the shorter length and focused structure of core training. Typically, only an OOPC (Out of Programme Career Break) would be considered during this period, and only in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.7 There are time limits for the duration of OOPs and extensions. These are detailed in the Gold Guide and Annex 1.
- 3.8 Resident doctors may be approved for more than one OOP per training programme however

it is unlikely that OOPs would be approved to run consecutively.

- 3.9 Doctors in training will retain their National Training Number (NTN) for the duration of their OOP. OOP cannot extend beyond the CCT date and any resident wishing to spend time out of programme post CCT will be required to relinquish their NTN on reaching their CCT thereby waiving their period of grace.
- 3.10 A resident's period of grace (POG) begins on the CCT date, so the individual must be back in the training programme at that time to access their POG.
- 3.11 Resident doctors on OOP are still required to engage in the ARCP and revalidation process (see Annex 1). Residents must maintain their license to practice while on OOP as well as their connection with HEIW as their Designated Body for revalidation.

4. Application process and timescales

- 4.1 The timeline below should be followed to ensure timely approval of applications. The Postgraduate Dean may exercise discretion in some exceptional circumstances:

Before OOP start date	Action
>6 months	Discuss plans with Educational Supervisor and Programme Director.
>6 months	Check College requirements if applicable.
6 months minimum	Submit fully completed application to HEIW for approval.
3 months	Confirmation of OOP

- 4.2 All application forms must be completed in full and received a minimum of **6 months** before the proposed start date of the OOP. Residents are advised to check if there are any local deadlines specific to their School/Specialty.
- 4.3 Prior to making an application, residents should speak to their ES and Programme Director to determine the suitability of the proposed OOP and to ensure the post meets educational needs.
- 4.4 HEIW recognise that some OOP opportunities may be advertised at points in time that do not align with the timetable as outlined in 4.1. In these cases it is advised that residents submit a provisional OOP application. HEIW will issue a conditional approval letter pending outcomes such as an interview or funding confirmation. The OOP must be confirmed two months prior to the intended start date.
- 4.5 Resident doctors should make themselves aware of their College requirements regarding OOP application and approval processes and must ensure that they provide information to support their application as and when required.
- 4.6 The approval process will:
- Consider the wider impact on the training programme.
 - Ensure contractual notice periods are met and appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard against any potential impact on patient safety.

- Consider prioritising requests where there is “over subscription” giving priority to exceptional personal circumstances. If applicable, resident doctors may be asked for flexibility around OOP dates to facilitate requests.
 - Will be dependent on the specialty and deanery arrangements.
- 4.7 Residents should be cognisant of the date they wish to commence the OOP in relation to their current contractual obligations and the rotation date of the wider programme, with as much alignment as possible.
- 4.8 Written confirmation will be provided to the resident doctor and any other relevant key stakeholders once the application has received full approval, including (where applicable) approval from HEIW, the College, and the GMC.
- 4.9 Residents must give a minimum of two months’ notice to withdraw from an approved OOP. If HEIW agrees to cancel the OOP it may either be converted to an alternative OOP or a suitable placement on the programme offered, a post in a preferred sub-specialty or location cannot be guaranteed.
- 4.10 Resident Doctors who wish to apply for an extension to their previously agreed OOP must submit the appropriate application form at least **6 months** prior to their original planned end date.

5. Return to the Training Programme

- 5.1 HEIW cannot guarantee the date or the location of the residents’ return placement. It is therefore important that both HEIW and the TPD are advised well in advance of a resident’s wish to return to clinical training. HEIW will attempt to identify a placement as soon as possible but the resident doctor should indicate their intention and preferred time of return as soon as they are able to do so and this may even be before they leave to undertake their OOP.
- 5.2 All doctors in training returning from an OOP should have a return to training programme planned for them which may involve a phased return to clinical practice.

6. Acting Up As A Consultant

- 6.1 Doctors in training who are within one year of their anticipated CCT are eligible to 'Act-Up' as consultants, to a maximum period of three months (pro rata for LTFT). The minimum amount of time allowed to act up is 1 month.
- 6.2 Residents will retain their National Training Number (NTN) during the period of acting up.
- 6.3 Acting up is not to cover sickness but rather to benefit the resident doctor.
- 6.4 When in post the term 'Acting Up' and not 'locum' must be applied and time spent 'Acting-Up' may be recognised towards a training programme leading to the award of a CCT.
- 6.5 Before 'Acting Up' residents must obtain formal approval from the Postgraduate Dean or Deputy and the Training Programme Director. Applications must be sent to HEIW a minimum of 8 weeks before the proposed start date.
- 6.6 Resident doctors are NOT eligible to “Act-Up” after the CCT date. In these cases residents

would be required to resign their National Training Number (NTN).

- 6.7 'Acting Up' applications are accepted only for positions located in Wales. Residents are only allowed to act up within Wales, specifically in the Health Board where they are placed and for the duration of the acting up period. 'Acting up' placements must be in sites approved by the GMC for training. Anyone wishing to 'Act up' outside of these parameters must apply for an OOPT.

7 Employment status and Continuous Service

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the resident doctor to prospectively seek clarification from their employing organisation (NWSSP) about any impact their proposed OOP time may have upon:
- Continuous employment
 - Incremental progression
 - Maternity leave entitlement
 - Employer's contribution to superannuation
 - VISA status and impact - it is important that doctors in training from overseas are aware of the impact that undertaking OOP, and therefore leaving the training programme, may have on their visa and right to return to work in the UK
 - Any other employment issue
- 7.2 Resident doctors are not entitled to relocation/excess travel or study leave funding from HEIW during the OOP period.
- 7.3 Any doctor in training taking parental leave whilst OOP will need to liaise with their relevant employing organisation to confirm salary and leave arrangements relevant to their circumstances. Where this extends the OOP period an extension application should be submitted to HEIW at the earliest opportunity.

Annex 1

	OOPC	OOPE	OOPR	OOPT
Purpose	To take a planned Career Break.	To gain professional skills and experience that would enhance future practice.	To undertake a period of research	To undertake clinical training that is not part of the training programme.
Duration	No more than one year	No more than one year	No more than three years	No more than one year
Time counted towards training	No	No	If requested. The Royal College will indicate the length of time that will count towards CCT.	Yes. The Royal College will indicate the length of time that will count towards CCT.
ARCP requirements and outcomes	Outcome 8	Appropriate Supervisor Report. Outcome 8	Appropriate Academic Supervisor Report. Outcome 8 or standard outcome if time is counted towards training.	Educational Supervisor Report & standard required portfolio evidence. outcome 1,2,3,4,5 or 6 depending on circumstances
Revalidation	Annual submission of a completed Form R.	Annual submission of a completed Form R and	Annual submission of a completed Form R	Annual submission of a completed Form R