

Guidance for Doctors in Training who wish to undertake Out of Programme Pause: A How-to Guide for trainees

What is Out of Programme Pause (OOPP)?

Out of programme pause (OOPP) allows trainees to step out of formal training for up to 12 months to undertake a non-training NHS or other UK based patient facing post. This includes clinical roles which also include non-clinical activities such as leadership, management and informatics which are within the relevant training curriculum.

OOPP has been subject to a limited pilot and following the COVID pandemic this pilot has been extended to cover all specialties across England, as part of a series of measures to address trainee wellbeing.

Section 1: Background

Trainees told Health Education England (HEE) that existing out of programme mechanisms (out of programme experience [OOPE], out of programme research [OOPR], out of programme career break [OOPC] and out of programme training [OOPT]) provided a degree of flexibility, however none of these mechanisms recognised that trainees sometimes wish to “pause” their training to undertake an NHS non-training post, gain further experience, take stock of their training, work in another related specialty, or concentrate on their wellbeing.

The initial pilot for OOPP was launched in Spring 2019, where OOPP was offered to Anaesthetics trainees in the East Midlands. Phase 2 commenced in summer 2019, with selected specialties in Wessex, North Central and East London, and the North East taking part, along with the remaining specialties in the East Midlands.

This phase 3 extension of the pilot will encompass all specialties across England for the next 12 months, in large part as a response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on trainee wellbeing.

The GMC has given its support to the principle that capabilities gained outside training programmes may be recognised towards CCT. Capabilities gained out of training need to be assessed once the trainee returns to training. OOPP differs from Out of Programme for Experience (OOPE) because in OOPE, none of the capabilities gained during OOPE can be directly counted towards a CCT. OOPP differs from OOPT in that the capabilities do not have to be prospectively identified and approved.

A robust external evaluation of the pilot is underway.

Section 2: Introduction

This guidance outlines the process and provides practical advice to enable doctors in training to undertake a period of Out of Programme Pause (OOPP).

The guidance is also intended to provide practical advice for Educational Supervisors and Training Programme Directors (TPD). However a separate guide for Faculty will follow shortly.

Section 3: Overview of OOPP Process

The flow chart below shows an outline of steps involved.



2.1 Before applying for OOPP (For Trainees)

When considering a period OOPP, you must discuss and agree your plans with your educational supervisor and TPD. This agreement is to ensure that OOPP is the most suitable option for you. In addition, your ES and TPD will have to consider the impact of you going out of programme has on the training program and service delivery.

Before applying for OOPP, you will need to consider the following:

- Time out of programme (OOP) will not normally be agreed until you have been in a specialty training programme for at least one year of training (unless at the time of appointment, deferral of the start of the programme has been agreed for leave on statutory grounds)
- You will need to have received either an outcome 1, 2, 10.1 or 10.2 at your most recent ARCP.
- If you feel undertaking OOPP would be beneficial for your wellbeing.
 - A discussion between you and your Educational Supervisor should take place and, where appropriate, the Educational Supervisor may explore if additional support is needed. This may involve discussion with the Professional Support and Wellbeing Service.
- You may wish to step out of training but also use the opportunity to gain capabilities that COVID may have prevented you from acquiring or consolidating during your training programme to date. You will need to consider the likelihood of gaining these capabilities in the post you will be taking up.

Notice period

Where possible in line with all applications to take time out of training, you will be normally expected to give six months' notice.

Where programmes are having to accommodate increased numbers of trainees with extensions in a training programme, local offices may be able to accommodate a notice period of less than 6 months. In the first instance you should contact your local HEE office to determine whether you can undertake OOPP with a shorter notice period.

When considering applying for OOPP you should keep HEE informed of plans as early as possible and continue to update on progress and any changes to plans to return to training on a regular basis. The deadline for applications for this round is 31st July 2021.

2.2 Application process

Once your educational supervisor and TPD have agreed that OOPP can be taken, two forms need to be completed

- An OOPP application form (see your HEE local office website)
- The OOPP "Initiation" form (contact your HEE local office)

The OOPP section of the OOP application form should be completed, together with the OOPP initiation document that sets out the plan for OOPP, the intended scope of practice, indications of possible capabilities that may be acquired, plans to return to training and any pertinent indemnity considerations.

When on OOPP, whilst your Responsible Officer will remain the Postgraduate Dean, you will come under the employment terms and conditions of your employing organisation where you will be working, which will also include the requirement to undertake an appraisal in line with your status as a GMC registrant.

Visa considerations

If you are on a tier 2 visa sponsored by HEE, please be aware that upon undertaking an OOPP post, visa sponsorship with HEE will be cancelled and you will need to apply for sponsorship with your new employer whilst undertaking the OOPP placement.

Upon returning to the training programme with HEE, you will need to reapply for sponsorship to the HEE Tier 2 team (you will not need to go through the recruitment process again and can commence directly back into training). If you are considering any other immigration route other than Tier 2 while out on OOPP you are advised to contact the Tier 2 team (tier2@hee.nhs.uk) before sponsorship is withdrawn as you may be subject to a 12 month cooling off period, set by the Home Office, before returning to training with HEE.

2.3 Return Process for OOPP – requirements for you and your educational supervisor

During your OOPP you should keep a clear record of your experience and reflections via a log book. This is a key component and evidence base required for the gap analysis process.

1. At a point of 3 months prior to the end of the trainees OOPP post, you must make contact with your ES or TPD for the following purposes:
 - a. To confirm whether you will be returning to their training programme at the originally intended date
 - b. To check if you wish to extend your OOPP placement
 - c. To ensure you have all the paperwork completed in readiness for the gap analysis
 - d. To ensure a meeting is scheduled to undertake the gap analysis

A Gap Analysis is to facilitate increased flexibility in post graduate medical education, through the provision of a framework for defining how training needs and capabilities could be considered on return to practice, including how those needing updating could be refreshed and any new capabilities gained could be assessed.

2. You would have an initial educational appraisal meeting with your Educational Supervisor on return to your training programme to review the experience and any capabilities gained during their OOPP. You may want all, some or none of your capabilities gained whilst OOPP to count toward your training. Guidance for undertaking this conversation can be found in Appendix A.
3. A gap analysis will be conducted with a judgement on what may have been achieved with respect to both Generic Professional Capabilities and specific curriculum outcomes. This would form the basis of a training plan and assessment plan.
4. Once the initial educational appraisal meeting has taken place, you will have an opportunity to demonstrate your skills and capabilities as part of your return to training programme. This would ideally be undertaken in the first three months following return to training, to allow you and your Educational Supervisor to ensure the training plan is appropriate and properly focus learning objectives in advance of the next Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP);
5. Following OOPP, if you and your Educational Supervisor do not want to count competences and did not feel an adjustment to the CCT date would be appropriate then there would be no requirement to do so. At the ARCP, a formal determination of outcome would be made with an adjustment to the CCT in light of demonstration of capabilities evidenced following return to training and the Educational Supervisor's report; this would be in accordance with Gold Guide and GMC guidance.

Section 4: Gap Analysis

The gap analysis will include:

- Review of the capabilities achieved in programme before going out of programme, including planned trajectory for completion of training
- Review of all evidence recorded during time out of programme including clinical skills and knowledge and technical skills, nature of experience and any senior colleague / supervisor reports with particular reference to degree of supervision
- Assessment of the OOPP experience in the context of the training trajectory to determine if the trainee is likely to have progressed to or beyond the expected capabilities.
- Agreement of the content of the learning agreement for the coming period of training, which will be formally assessed at the next ARCP.

Following the gap analysis, a learning agreement will:

- Define the generic and specialty specific capabilities which need to be achieved in the coming period before the next ARCP, including mandatory training
- Identify those capabilities provisionally approved by the gap analysis which have been achieved OOP and define how and where these are assessed by the Clinical Supervisor/Educational Supervisor (CS/ES) in the coming period of training
- Ensure that the provisional outcomes defined by the gap analysis are completed for review at the next ARCP.

The gap analysis tool will shortly be made available via HEE's national website and local offices.