

GP Trainee Study Leave Policy (GP Practice and Hospital placements)

Health Education and Improvement Wales

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1 | Introduction

This policy aims to ensure that the General Medical Council's (GMC) [Promoting Excellence: Standards for Medical Education and Training \(2015\)](#), or equivalent, are met. These standards require that:

R3.12 Doctors in training must be able to take Study Leave appropriate to their curriculum or training programme, to the maximum time permitted in their terms and conditions of service.

This policy is underpinned by HEIW's 'Expectations Agreement' with Local Education Providers (LEPs) for the provision of postgraduate medical (including General Practice) and dental education and training.

2 | Review of the Policy

To ensure that this policy is fit for purpose, it will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner if appropriate.

When the policy is reviewed, consultation will be sought from Local Education Providers, HEIW representatives, trainees and their representatives.

3 | Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all GP Trainees entitled to Study Leave within HEIW as defined in Section 6: Entitlement.

Attendance at the following are not counted against the annual Study Leave allowance -

- Bleep-free teaching time within the Health Board/Trust in which the trainee is based
- Annual Reviews of Competency Progression
- Regional/local Core Curriculum/Learning Programmes (with the exception of the GP 'Half Day Release' from practice posts)
- Educational Development time
- Statutory training courses (including any local departmental training) required by employers.
- Specialty induction/bootcamp sessions and Specialty mandated HEIW delivered training.
- Involvement in NHS activities such as quality improvement, audit, risk management and clinical governance activities intrinsic to employment in the NHS.
- Meetings with HEIW's Professional Support Unit should be treated as any other health appointment (Occupational Health, GP etc) and trainees should be enabled to attend.

Study Leave, as defined in this policy, covers both time taken and funding requirements for undertaking Study Leave.

4 | Principles of Study Leave

The main uses of Study Leave will be for educational development opportunities designed to gain competences defined in each curriculum. Study Leave should:

- a. Enhance clinical skills, education and training.
- b. Be planned as far in advance as possible, as an integral part of the education and training process.
- c. Provide education and training not easily acquired in the everyday clinical setting.
- d. Support the delivery of curriculum outcomes.
- e. Be equitable across the Medical Education Centres and other Local Education Providers.

Trainees should not be contacted whilst on approved Study Leave.

5 | Eligibility

Trainees (including Less Than Full Time trainees) who are eligible for Study Leave are as follows:

- General Practice Trainees in hospital and practice posts (GPST 1/2/3)

6 | Entitlement

Time

Trainees have an annual entitlement to Study Leave time and funding. The entitlement is shown in sessions and each session is equal to half a day which is 4 hours.

GP Trainees in Hospital posts

GP trainees in a **6-month** hospital placement are entitled to 30 sessions of Study Leave, 10 of which are already incorporated into the HDR. Therefore, a total of 20 Study Leave sessions remain for courses, to write up research.

When GP Trainees are in a hospital post, Postgraduate Centre Administrators are expected to keep a record of the number of sessions that GP Trainees request to take off for Study Leave.

Study Leave must be relevant to the trainee's educational needs, appropriate to their experience and supportive to the training programme which the trainee is undertaking

GP Trainees in a GP Practice post

GP trainees in a **6-month** GP Practice placement are entitled to 30 sessions of Study Leave, 20 of which are already incorporated into the half day release (HDR). Therefore, a total of 10 Study Leave sessions remain for courses and to write up research.

HDR is mandatory attendance and is monitored by the local education team, who will check absent trainees are on approved leave e.g. annual leave or sickness leave.

During any break in the GPST HDR this session should remain an educational session. It can be used in a self-directed manner or for targeted educational activity in agreement between the trainee and trainer, i.e. the trainee still has seven clinical and three educational sessions that week.

When trainees take leave during the week the ratio of clinical: educational sessions should be maintained with flexibility being exercised by both the practice and the trainee when required. A suggested and appropriate balance for any given week might be:

- 5 Day working week: 7 clinical: 3 educational sessions
- 4 Day working week: 6 clinical: 2 educational sessions
- 3 Day working week: 4 clinical: 2 educational sessions
- 2 Day working week: 3 clinical: 1 educational session
- 1 Day working week: 2 clinical: 0 educational sessions

(Or the pro rata amount for those trainees in LTFT placements).

When GP Trainees are in a General Practice post, GP Practice Managers are expected to keep a record of the number of sessions that GP Trainees request to take off for Study Leave.

Trainees who are working less than full time will be allocated Study Leave time on a pro rata basis but will receive the full year funding allocation.

Trainees on parental leave continue to be entitled to take Study Leave, within their allowance, during their parental leave. This is a matter of personal preference for the trainee and in no circumstances should the trainee be explicitly asked to take Study Leave during their parental leave.

In the event that booked and approved Study Leave coincides with a period of sickness absence, the trainee should consult the NHS All-Wales Sickness Policy and seek advice from NWSSP and within the LEP in which they are based.

Examples of acceptable use of study leave

- Leave to sit examinations
- Time to write up research
- Private Study (limited to 10 sessions in a 12-month post & 5 sessions in a 6-month post)
- Courses and webinars that supplement areas of the GP Curriculum e.g., Child Health Surveillance, Minor Surgery, GP Hot Topics. (In the case of online training that can be undertaken at any time, trainees are advised to complete training on a scheduled working day and to request the appropriate Study Leave time)
- Subscriptions to GP CPD Programmes e.g., Red Whale GP CPD
- Diplomas e.g., Sexual Health & DRCOG
- Attendance at RCGP Conferences

Examples of unacceptable use of study leave

- Courses and conferences held overseas (these may be granted in exceptional circumstances)
- Attendance at conferences of other specialties

- Pursuing special medical interests with less relevance to the GP Curriculum
- Trainees who act as representatives on professional committees should apply for Professional Leave.
- Trainees who assist with teaching/assessing at medical schools should apply for Professional Leave.

Aspirational courses that go beyond the GP Curriculum and are to further the development of particular interests may be approved in exceptional circumstances, but prior approval should be sought from HEIW.GPTraining@wales.nhs.uk

Time off in lieu

Time taken for Study Leave counts as working time so should normally be taken on rostered working days.

However, if it is necessary to complete mandatory training on a non-working day (e.g. weekend or rostered day off) then a day off in lieu should be granted.

Time off in lieu must be included within the Study Leave application and trainees must agree the lieu day with their Educational Supervisor and a service manager e.g. practice manager if in a GP practice post or rota co-ordinator, medical personnel if in a hospital post etc at the time of applying for the Study Leave.

The lieu day should be taken within a reasonable timeframe of the Study Leave. This may be before or after the Study Leave.

The lieu day must be taken prior to the trainees' rotation as time off in lieu cannot be carried forward to a trainee's next placement.

The Educational Supervisors and the trainee have a responsibility to ensure that the trainee does not breach their contractual requirement on hours worked or the provisions of the European Working Time Directive.

Examinations

Leave to sit examinations is permitted for those necessary to the career advancement of the trainee. Examinations are in addition to the allocated amount of study leave to which there is no limit.

Examination fees are not reimbursed from the Study Leave allocation.

Private Study

Leave for private study is allowed for all trainees above Foundation grade but is limited to a maximum of five days within the training year and is deducted from the Study Leave allowance.

No expenses are paid for private study even if leave is granted.

Online Training

Online training may be accessed either as standalone courses or to deliver the theoretical aspects in preparation for a practical course.

When requesting Study Leave to complete online training, trainees should provide evidence of the indicative duration of the course as part of their Study Leave application, along with evidence of the cost of the course.

Following completion of online training, when claims for reimbursement of online study expenses are submitted these should be accompanied by confirmation of the amount of time actually taken to complete the course submitted.

In the case of online training that can be undertaken at any time, trainees are advised to complete training on a scheduled working day and to request the appropriate Study Leave time.

Other Paid Employment

No other paid employment or remunerative work can be undertaken during any period of Study Leave: infringement of this rule is a disciplinary offence.

Financial Support

The Study Leave budget and trainee allocations are defined annually by HEIW.

A trainee's Study Leave funding entitlement will be aggregated across a twelve month 'training year' period and calculated based upon a trainee's rotation start date (usually August).

Trainees are allocated a budget of £600 per training year.

Trainees are unable to use their Study Leave budget to claim for exam fees, professional registrations, RCGP Portfolio fees, books, or equipment.

All claims for reimbursement from the Study Leave budget should be made via the SEL e-expenses system after approval has been granted on Codi.

Trainees are eligible to utilise their Study Leave funding at any point during the individual's defined training year regardless of the LEP in which they are based. However, applications for Study Leave time can only be approved by the designated approver(s) for the post in which the Study Leave will be undertaken.

The Welsh Government Universal Incentive Scheme for trainees that were recruited up to and including February 2023 allows GP Trainees in Wales to claim for the first sitting of both their AKT & RCA exams (approximately 2000) that should normally be sat in programme. Claims for reimbursement of exam fees should be made via the SEL e-expenses system.

Out of programme experience

Study leave for trainees on out of programme (OOP) will not be supported financially as the funding will be required for the trainee filling the post vacated.

Maternity leave

Trainees on maternity leave continue to be entitled to take Study Leave and expenses, within their allowance, during their maternity leave. This is a matter of personal preference for the trainee and in no circumstances should the trainee be explicitly asked to take study leave.

Other paid employment

Other paid employment must not be taken during any period of study leave. Infringement of this rule is a disciplinary offence.

Funding roll-over arrangements

Following a trial period during the COVID pandemic HEIW now implements a roll-over arrangement of any unused personal Study Leave budget for one year only (up to a maximum of £600) into the subsequent training year.

This roll over arrangement only applies to Study Leave funding.

Funding can be rolled over for one year only. The Study Leave budget available in the next training year, following the roll over, will not exceed £1200.

The Study Leave allocation will be updated in line with the trainees annual training year (usually August but this will differ in the case as of individuals starting the programme in February or other times of the year).

This arrangement only applies to trainees who are staying in a training programme in Wales.

Personal Study Leave allowances can be viewed via Codi Leave Manager accounts. If this information is not available, or considered to be incorrect, trainees should contact their local Medical Education Manager in the first instance.

7 | Application Guidelines

All applications for Study Leave must be submitted through the Codi Leave Manager via the Codi database.

Training for use of the ILM will be provided at LEP level.

All requests for Study Leave (including requests for Study Leave time only and whether a course a trainee wishes to attend is face-to-face or online) must be submitted via the ILM at least six weeks before the leave is required.

Requests for Study Leave 'funding only' must be submitted via the ILM. To avoid confusion for approvers and avoid possible delay, trainees should enter '0' in the 'number of days' field in the ILM and include a brief explanation in the 'comments' field.

Retrospective or late applications will not be considered unless in extreme circumstances, and if patient care is not compromised the leave may be granted.

An approval decision, which includes the degree of financial support, rests with the Educational Supervisor and Medical Education Manager (or designate) (or HEIW for GP trainees in practice posts).

All Study Leave requests must be approved by the designated leave approvers within one calendar month of the Study Leave request being submitted via ILM.

(Monthly reports may be requested by HEIW detailing outstanding Study Leave claims outside the acceptable timescale to monitor compliance.)

Claims for reimbursement of approved Study Leave expenses must be made within three months of the date the Study Leave took place.

8 | Approval Process

Study Leave must be agreed in advance to avoid disruption to services, and it must be supported and approved by a trainee's Educational or Clinical Supervisor. In certain cases this may be escalated to the Training Programme Director for advice and guidance.

Authorisation of Study Leave is based on satisfaction of all the following five criteria:

1. **Availability:** the trainee can be released from their normal place of work to attend the requested Study Leave.
2. **Relevance:** approved Study Leave must be relevant to the trainee's educational needs, appropriate to their experience and supportive to the training programme which the trainee is undertaking.
3. **Eligibility:** that the trainee has sufficient remaining Study Leave time to cover the duration of the requested activity.
4. **Funding:** that the trainee has sufficient unallocated personal funding allowance, within the defined limits, to cover the costs of the activity (or the trainee has agreed to self-fund and has indicated this on the application form).
5. **Learning Agreement:** that an approved learning agreement or equivalent consideration of trainee learning needs has been provided to and considered with the relevant Educational or Clinical Supervisor.

9 | Course Fees and Expenses

Trainees need to be aware that the cost of courses can vary considerably and not all courses a trainee may wish to attend will be identified as a training need, or a feasible option within funding limitations.

In accordance with HEIW and LEP financial regulations, the following costs incurred for Study Leave will be considered for payment:

- Approved registration or course fees.
- Travel and subsistence expenses if no suitable courses are available locally; specifically, standard class train and coach fares and economy internal (UK) air fares.

- Mileage expenses for cars, passengers and pedal cycles, payable according to the LEP policy on expense claims.

Study Leave funding will only be granted in exceptional circumstances for overseas courses or conferences, according to the Health Board/Trust policy on expense claims.

10| Management of the Study Leave Budget

Oversight of the Study Leave budget will be managed by the GP section in HEIW.

Any decisions to change the arrangements for the management of the Study Leave budget will be made by the Postgraduate Medical Dean, HEIW in consultation with the LEPs.

Those responsible for managing the Study Leave budget must ensure that individual Study Leave decisions are recorded. For quality control, they should work with their designated Regional Codi Officer to report on the number of applications approved/not approved, reasons for non-approval, budget spent, whether approved Study Leave was actually taken and reasons for approved Study Leave not being taken.

Actual expenses claimed for Study Leave must be recorded on the Codi database by the Medical Education Centre. Details of Study Leave expenses should be made available to HEIW on request in line with financial accountability.

11 | Appeals Procedure

Refusal of Study Leave should be exceptional. A trainee who considers that their request for Study Leave is unreasonably refused has the right of appeal.

A trainee who wishes to appeal against a decision relating to Study Leave must do so using HEIW's appeals process.

The trainee should inform their Training Programme Director of any Study Leave time or funding applied for that is refused, together with the reason for the refusal.

The trainee and the TPD and ES must first jointly attempt to resolve the issues at a local level. If the matter cannot be resolved then the trainee is able to escalate the concern.

A trainee should submit their appeal using the 'Notification of Study Leave Appeal' form (Appendix 1) clearly stating the reason(s) for the appeal and including any evidence that may support the appeal process. It is the trainee's responsibility to ensure the completed form is submitted to the Head of School within 10 working days of the decision to refuse Study Leave being communicated to the trainee.

An independent Appeals Panel will review all documentation submitted within 15 working days of notification of appeal.

The arrangement of an Appeals Panel will be directed by HEIW

The Appeals Panel will comprise the following members:

- i. Head of School
- ii. The Director of GP Education and a Senior Manager from within HEIW which is not involved with GP Training.

The Appeals Panel may meet via virtual collaboration rather than a physical meeting.

The Appeals Panel will consider the information submitted on the form and the appellant is not required to attend.

The decision of the panel and the reasons for making that decision, will be confirmed in writing to the trainee within five working days of the Appeals Panel decision.

The decision of the panel is final.

APPENDIX 1 – Notification of Study Leave Appeal Form

NOTIFICATION OF STUDY LEAVE APPEAL

Please complete all sections of the form.

Name:
Grade:
Specialty:
Names of Medical Education Manager:
I have informed the above named of my decision to appeal against the decision: YES/NO <i>Please delete as appropriate</i>
Details of Appeal:
Title of Course:
Dates of Study Leave:
Date of Online Leave Application:
Number of Days:
Study Leave Funding Required: YES/NO If Yes, please specify amount:
Funding Agreed:
Details of educational benefit of Study Leave:
Reasons for Appeal:
Signature: Date:

Please return the completed form to the Head of School