

Out of Programme Pause (OOPP): Trainee Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

What is Out of Programme Pause and how does it differ from other forms of out of programme?

Trainees told Health Education England (HEE) that existing out of programme (OOP) 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.

Out of programme pause (OOPP) allows trainees to step out of formal training to undertake an NHS or other patient facing UK based non-training post. This flexibility initiative can be a vital tool to support trainee 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.

The scope of the pilot has been supported by the GMC, and this phase 3 extension of the pilot will now encompass all specialties across England until July 2023, in large part as a response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on trainee wellbeing. A robust external evaluation of the pilot is underway led by Cardiff University. Of those surveyed as of March 2022, nearly 50% said they were more or far more likely to stay in training as a result of OOPP.

This pilot initiative also gives trainees the opportunity to have any capabilities gained whilst out of training assessed upon their return and these may contribute to their training trajectory. OOPP differs from out of programme for experience (OOPE) because in OOPE none of the experiences or capabilities /capabilities gained can be directly counted toward CCT.

Out of Programme Pause Pilot - Extension

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Health Education England (HEE) is committed to supporting trainees during and post COVID-19, by ensuring mechanisms are in place to support trainee's wellbeing and educational provision. As a result, HEE is exploring how to utilise existing flexibility offers to provide this support and is available in all postgraduate specialties

By extending the pilot to all trainees in all specialties we will add to the wellbeing package available post-COVID by providing trainees with an opportunity to take a break from their current training post. At the same time, trainees who undertake OOPP will also have the opportunity to gain capabilities which they may not previously have been able to due to the impact of the pandemic.

The application window for this iteration of the pilot extends until July 2023. Therefore, your OOPP post may extend past this window. Please also visit your HEE Local Office website for further information on the process.

This will also provide the opportunity to increase the scale of the pilot, with further data to support a robust evaluation of the programme.

The extension of the Out of Programme Pause (OOPP) pilot now includes all specialties across postgraduate medical education in England (up until July 2023) and trainees will be able to undertake up to **12 months** Out of Programme Pause. As of March 2022, 50% of all OOPP trainees surveyed said they were more or far more likely to stay in training as a result of the initiative.

Out of Programme Pause: Trainee FAQs

I applied for Out of Programme Pause under the first iteration of the pilot, will anything change?

For those trainees who undertook OOPP as part of the original pilot (see first section), the terms and conditions of your OOPP will not change.

Who should apply for Out of Programme Pause under this iteration of the pilot (from July 2020)?

- Trainees who wish to take a break from training and expect to receive either an outcome 1, 2, 10.1 or 10.2 at their next ARCP.
- Trainees who feel it would be beneficial for their wellbeing.
 - The appropriateness of OOPP should be discussed between the trainee and Educational Supervisor. If appropriate the Educational Supervisor may liaise with the Professional Support and Wellbeing service to explore if alternative or additional further support is needed for the trainee.
- Trainees who want to step out of training and also use the opportunity to refresh, consolidate or perhaps gain additional capabilities (which will be assessed on return) as a consequence of the impact of COVID.
- Time out of programme on OOPP will not normally be agreed until you have been in a HEE approved 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).
- Please note that the application window for this iteration of the pilot extends until July 2023. Therefore, your OOPP post may extend past this window.

What is the difference between OOPP and OOPE?

OOPP provides you with the ability to step out of training and potentially have any capabilities you may have gained whilst on your OOPP counted towards your CCT following appropriate clinical assessment.

OOPP remains an opportunity for you to step out of training and gain additional experience outside your specialty curriculum. This experience will not be counted towards your CCT.

Further information outlining the differences between each OOP can be found in the table at the end of this document.

What roles can I undertake?

To proceed with OOPP you must take a patient facing role with a UK registered organisation. Whilst the majority of roles would therefore be based in the UK, this does allow you to undertake roles overseas with organisations such as MSF.

Who is responsible for organising my clinical OOPP post?

Your educational supervisor and training programme director may be able to suggest suitable posts. HEE recommends the following aspects are considered when choosing your OOPP post:

- Will there be sufficient supervision?
- Will you be working at a GMC approved training site? Please note it is not mandatory that it has to be a GMC approved site but working at a GMC approved training site may reflect the likely nature of your experience.
- Will you be working alongside an existing group of trainees? This may give you the benefit of peer support.

Do I need to have a confirmed offer of a post before applying for OOPP?

Unlike other forms of OOP, you will need to have an offer for a confirmed post when applying for OOPP. Your TPD/Educational Supervisor will need to be confident it is a suitable placement for you, taking into account your level of training and the support that will be available. Any post (and any changes) must be within your scope of practice. Please contact your HEE Local Office.

What is the process for applying for OOPP?

If you would like to take a period of OOPP you must discuss and agree this with your educational supervisor and training programme director. This agreement is to ensure that going on OOPP does not cause significant disruption to the training programme or have a significant effect on service delivery.

The application can proceed once details of when and where you will be spending the time OOPP have been confirmed. The OOPP section of the OOP form should be completed, together with the OOPP initiation document that sets out your plan for OOPP, your intended scope of practice, indications of possible capabilities you may acquire, plans to return to training and any pertinent indemnity considerations. You should also go over your “gap analysis” form with your educational supervisor at this stage.

How much notice am I required to give?

Where possible, in line with all applications to take time out of training, you will be expected to give three months' notice. When you are considering applying for OOPP you should discuss with your TPD/Educational Supervisor in the first instance to explore possible scenarios for your return to training. In addition, please keep your HEE local office 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.

Where programs are having to accommodate increased numbers of trainees with extensions, local offices may be able to accommodate a notice period of less than 3 months.

Must the OOPP be only for 1 year or could I request to undertake OOPP for 6 months?

In this pilot OOPP can be undertaken for up to 12 months. Applications will be accepted if you wish to apply for a shorter period pending approval. This will be managed by the HEE Local Office.

Is there a way to convert a pending OOPE to an OOPP?

We suggest you speak with your Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director to discuss feasibility. Where possible HEE will try to accommodate this.

Does the OOPP start date need to fit with rotation dates?

Not necessarily but it is important you give as much notice as possible of your OOPP application to allow for arrangements to be put in place during your absence. Your local HEE office will be able to advise.

Is it possible to undertake an inter-deanery transfer if you are on an OOPP?

OOPP arrangements are at the discretion of your current training region and prospective regions are not obliged to maintain these arrangements for new trainees. For this reason, if you are currently on OOPP should not apply for a transfer which will take place before your return to the training programme as you will not be eligible for an IDT.

Instead, you should apply during the application window that would allow for a transfer after your return to training and within the national timetable for transfers during that window of IDT.

Trainees who are out of programme will be required to submit additional ARCP outcome forms. Further information can be found here on the [Inter Deanery Transfers](#) page of the Specialty Training website.

Financial

Who can I speak to about how this will affect my pay, pension and employment rights?

You should be aware that any time spent out of programme in a non-NHS setting will have an effect on both your cumulative NHS service and your continuous employment. This has practical implications for employment rights such as pay, pension entitlement, maternity leave and pay, parental leave, and other entitlements. If you are considering going OOP, you can speak to your employer and, if you are a member, the BMA, for further advice on these issues.

Will my pension be affected by taking time out of training?

Your NHS pension may be affected due to a break in service if you are working for a non-NHS organisation. For further advice speak to your employer, trade union and/or the NHS Business Services Authority.

Who will be my employer whilst out of programme?

The employer will normally be the organisation paying your salary during your period working on OOPP. Your Responsible Officer will remain your Postgraduate Dean.

Can I apply for study leave funding whilst on OOPP?

Study leave will only be funded by your programme if it is for a clear curriculum requirement for your individual specialty. If you choose to take it whilst on OOPP, then this would mean you would not be eligible to fund it again once you have re-joined the training programme.

Employer mandated training should be funded by the employer. Please speak to your employer who will be able to advise on whether additional study leave and funding can be provided by them in accordance with their local terms and conditions for taking time off for study leave.

Visas/Sponsorship

If you have a visa sponsored by HEE, please be aware that for the duration of the pause from training you would need to source an alternative immigration status or new sponsor for the 12 month period. This is because HEE's sponsor licence states we can only sponsor trainees whilst they are on a training programme.

When you would return from the OOPP, you would have to then apply for a new Certificate of Sponsorship from HEE, by contacting the National Overseas Sponsorship Team (sponsorship@hee.nhs.uk) and will need to apply for a further visa for the remainder of your training which can incur a cost.

It is essential that if this scenario occurs, information is sent to the National Overseas Sponsorship Team (sponsorship@hee.nhs.uk) within 5 working days of the change so that this can either be reported to the Home Office or for sponsorship to be withdrawn in a timely manner. Please contact your local HEE office for further advice.

Revalidation**Who will my Responsible Officer be whilst out of programme?**

Whilst on OOPP, your RO will remain your postgraduate dean. The specific considerations around revalidation are outlined below. You will be asked to identify the RO of the employing organisation you will be working with during your OOPP in your OOPP initiation form, where this is applicable.

What process will I need to go through to ensure my revalidation is up to date?

The process for ensuring revalidation requirements are met whilst out of training is on COPMed's ['Guidance to ensure doctors in postgraduate training meet revalidation requirements across full scope of practice' document](#).

Whilst OOPP, you need to engage with the revalidation governance arrangements of your employer and submit details of work undertaken, involvement in significant events and any complaints and compliments about your work in your ARCP form R.

Do I need to undertake an appraisal with my employer whilst on OOPP?

Yes. Undertaking an appraisal with your employer will provide helpful documentation for the gap analysis. You may also wish to request a report from your clinical supervisor at your place of employment to provide further supplementary evidence.

Returning to training

Do I have to return to training?

Whilst you are not obliged to return to your training programme from a period on OOPP, a decision not to return should be communicated formally to HEE in line with an appropriate notice period relevant to the level of training. You will need to indicate your intention to resign from the training programme giving the appropriate notice (see Gold Guide) and your wish to relinquish your national training number.

What happens should I not return to my training programme?

As above.

What is the process for returning to training?

You would return from OOPP and have an initial educational appraisal meeting with your TPD or an appropriate deputy such as your Educational Supervisor to consider the experience and any capabilities gained during your OOPP. A 'gap analysis' will be conducted with a judgement on what you may have achieved with respect to both Generic Professional Capabilities and specific curriculum outcomes. This would form the basis of the Learning agreement determined from the provisional outcome of the gap analysis.

Once the initial educational appraisal meeting has taken place, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate the skills and capabilities gained OOPP. 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 with properly focussed learning objectives in advance of the next Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP).

Following OOPP, if you and your TPD/ Educational Supervisor do not want to count capabilities and do not think you would wish to be considered for an adjustment to the CCT date then there would be no requirement to do so.

The gap analysis and accompanying Educational Supervisor report and supplementary evidence will be provided to the ARCP panel. Where it is decided that you do not wish to count capabilities this decision will be provided to the ARCP panel and no adjustment to CCT date would be made.

At the ARCP any adjustment to the CCT would be determined from evidence of demonstration of capabilities gained during OOPP based on the Educational Supervisor's report, the provisional gap analysis outcome and the learning agreement. This is in accordance with Gold Guide and GMC guidance.

When returning to training you may wish to utilise the Supported Return to Training (SuppoRTT) programme and further information can be found on the [SuppoRTT page](#).

What is the 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 based on the provisional outcome of the gap analysis, for the coming period of training, which will be formally assessed at the next ARCP.

The Gap Analysis form can be found in the OOPP How to Guide which is available via your local HEE office and the national [HEE webpage](#).

How much notice do I need to give of my intention to return to training?

You should plan your return to work with your Educational Supervisor/Training Programme Director, who work on behalf of the Postgraduate Dean. This discussion should take place 3 months prior to your scheduled return date.

What if the OOPP post comes to an end earlier than expected?

In the unlikely scenario that your Out of Programme post comes to an end sooner than expected, you should contact your HEE office as soon as is practically possible to facilitate a return to your training programme. This will be subject to programme capacity. Once returning, the standard process for assessing capability gained whilst in the OOPP post will commence.

Will I return to my previous training post?

Where possible you will return to your original training post. However as with all other Out of Programme returns there is some risk that you may not be able to return to your previous post.

It is recommended you discuss your options with your TPD/Educational Supervisor prior to applying for OOPP and keep your HEE local office updated with your intended date of return.

Will going OOPP affect my ability to go on other forms of OOP within my training programme?

Other forms of OOP will remain available but applying to go on other OOP opportunities will be subject to the normal procedures whereby the relevant specialty school and the Postgraduate Dean would make an informed decision in each case, in line with all other such applications.

Key Differences between OOPs

OOPP	OOPT	OOPE	OOPC	Other
Allows a flexibility in both the gaining of and consolidating capabilities whilst on OOPP, where trainees can demonstrate these upon return to training and have	Placement must be pre-approved with defined capabilities.	Any capabilities gained cannot be considered upon return.	Allows a break from medicine if desired which trainee may find appropriate in terms of wellbeing.	For some trainees contemplating a break, PSW and OH support may be more appropriate

them approved at ARCP.				than going OOP.
Trainees do not need to remain subject to curricula requirements and won't be required to undertake Workplace-Based Assessments (WBA). However, any capabilities that contribute to training would be done so in a way that was consistent with the requirements of the curriculum.	Trainees do not need to remain subject to curricula requirements, however they must remain within the remit of the OOP-T approval.		Trainees will be completely out of medicine.	
The need for a return to training programme will be determined by discussion with educational supervisor.	As per usual guidance.	As per usual guidance.	As per usual guidance.	