

Self-Development Time (SDT) FAQ's for Foundation Trainees (and their Supervisors)

What is self-development time?

Self-development time is being introduced for all Foundation doctors in England as a result of the Foundation Programme Review carried out by Health Education England (HEE). It is time which will be formally included in the personalised work schedule of a Foundation doctor to allow them to carry out non-clinical activities related to their curriculum or career exploration, it is similar to the Supporting Professional Activity (SPA) time included in consultant contracts.

When will SDT be introduced?

SDT will be piloted in a limited number of foundation posts across England from April 2020. Implementation for all English Foundation doctors will take place at the beginning of August 2021.

How much time will be given for SDT?

Health Education England has suggested an average of 1 hour per week for FY1 doctors and 3 hours per week for FY2 doctors. During the pilot phase some trusts will try different time allocations and the feedback on this may lead to a change in the HEE recommendation for the full implementation.

What am I meant to do during SDT?

SDT is intended to be used for non-clinical activities that are essential for meeting the curriculum requirements for successful sign-off at ARCP or for developing future career plans – examples include meeting with supervisors, working on the ePortfolio, carrying out Quality Improvement work, formally reflecting on your clinical practice, and exploring career opportunities. Fuller descriptions of intended uses of SDT can be found in the [Intended Uses of SDT Time](#) document.

What if my work schedule already includes time for these activities?

Where trusts or individual departments have already included such time in work schedules it is expected that this will be re-named as SDT.

Does SDT have to be given every week?

No – it is expected that many trusts will want to amalgamate several weeks of SDT to be taken at one time, for example four weeks of SDT for an FY1 could be given as 4 hours, in one afternoon, once a month. Such arrangements may well work better for both Foundation doctors and service delivery.

Who decides when the SDT is timetabled?

According to the Terms and Conditions of Service (2016) for doctors in training, Educational Supervisors are accountable for ensuring that a personalised work schedule, based on the generic work schedule for the post, is agreed with their supervisee. SDT should be included in both the generic work schedule and the final agreed personalised work schedule. In many Foundation posts the responsibility for discussing and agreeing the personalised work schedules will be delegated to the named Clinical Supervisor.

How do I plan and record SDT?

Your plans for, and use of, your SDT should be included in the regular discussions with your Educational Supervisor. Making a Personal Development Plan, and regularly updating this

throughout the year, will help identify non-clinical activities you should undertake during SDT. The ePortfolio does not contain a specific section for documenting use of SDT but the evidence you gather of progress in achieving your PDP objectives, along with the records of your Educational Supervision meetings, will show how the SDT has been used.

What if I am working LTFT?

You should be given SDT pro-rata to the percentage of whole time equivalent you are working.

Do I have to do the same thing in SDT each week?

No - your non-clinical and career development needs will vary as you progress through Foundation training and it is important to regularly review these and how you will use your SDT to achieve success.

How does using SDT for career exploration differ from taster days?

Foundation doctors are expected to develop career planning skills and to proactively explore and plan their career options. SDT can be used for activities to support this, such as gathering careers information from internet resources (such as Royal College websites or the [Health Careers](#) website), seeking advice from relevant clinicians, and taking time to reflect on career options and plans. Whereas taster days are meant to provide a much longer opportunity, usually of several days to a week, for experiencing one or more specialties and are provided out of the Foundation doctor's study leave allowance.

Can I do e-learning in SDT?

Yes – using SDT to do e-learning to further your knowledge about areas that are in the curriculum, have been identified in your reflections, or are related to your career planning are all very appropriate uses of the time. SDT is not, however, meant to be used for mandatory e-learning done as part of trust teaching programmes or for doing mandated trust electronic induction and essential training packages.

What if I do not get the SDT?

In the first instance discuss this with your named Clinical and Educational Supervisors, as they are responsible for your personalised work schedule they should be able to support you in getting the appropriate SDT. If the situation cannot be resolved with the help of your supervisors, you should talk to your Foundation Training Programme Director.