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| **Name of Document** | **Period of Grace** |
| **Category** | Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)  **This SOP is only applicable to relevant programmes within Specialty Training.** |
| **Purpose** | This document is one of a suite of Standard Operating Procedures to support the management of trainees across England. This SOP is aligned to the principles of ‘A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK’ (The Gold Guide) and ‘A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Dental Core and Specialty Training’ (The Dental Gold Guide). Please refer to the most recent versions.  Since 2020, Foundation Training is embedded within the Gold Guide. Therefore, the NHS England suite of SOPs applies to all doctors in training, including Foundation, unless specified otherwise. Please note that Foundation-specific differences are highlighted in purple font in the Gold Guide.  Within the SOP, whenever reference is made to the Postgraduate Dean, it refers to the NHS England English Dean/Postgraduate Dean or their nominated representative who will be responsible for managing the process on their behalf.  Throughout the document, unless otherwise stated, the term ‘trainee’ refers to postgraduate doctors in training and also applies to public health trainees with a medical or non-medical qualification.    This SOP is intended to be a guide to encourage consistency of practice across England. Due to the complex nature of training, there will be occasions where Postgraduate Deans will apply their discretion in enacting this SOP to take account of individual circumstances and varying local structures (e.g. Lead Employer).    English Deans are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with a duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and ensure inclusive opportunities are available to all with regards to age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief in the design and delivery of all our services. English Deans aim to meet and exceed their statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by adopting a continuous improvement approach.  This suite of SOPs will be routinely screened against relevant Equality and Diversity documentation. |
| **Authorised by** | Health Education England Deans (HEEDs), now English Deans |
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| **Next Review Date** | SOP to be reviewed in line with any future Gold Guide revisions, or every 12 months, whichever comes first |
| **Document Author** | English Deans and Senior Managers Group (formerly HEED & HEED Senior Managers Group) |

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Author** | **Notes**  Reason for Change, what has changed, etc |
| 1 | 17/09/2019 | HEED | Document signed off at HEED |
| 2 | 28/04/2021 | HEED | Document signed off at HEED |
| 3 | 11/10/2022 | HEED | Document signed off at HEED |
| 4 | 19/07/2023 | HEED | Document signed off at PGMDE Operational Oversight Group |

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| Related Documents   * *Gold Guide 9th Edition: A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK:* [https://www.copmed.org.uk/gold-guide/gold-guide-9th-edition](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/RvNQCwKv9ig579NSViV9S?domain=copmed.org.uk) * *Terms and Conditions of Service for NHS Doctors and Dentists in Training (England) 2016:* <https://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Documents/Pay-and-reward/Junior-Doctors/NHSDoctorsandDentistsinTrainingEnglandTCS2016VERSION8231219.pdf> |

# 1. Introduction

Please note that the following guidance regarding the Period of Grace (POG) does not apply to General Practice trainees or those completing core or Foundation training.

The Gold Guide states (GG9: 3.94-3.96):

*UK Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs) and training organisations must comply with and implement relevant Department of Health guidance; therefore, trainees must ensure that they are eligible to apply for a consultant post before submitting the application. Trainees must not be interviewed more than six calendar months prior to their anticipated CCT date. Trainees must only apply if progress has been satisfactory (Outcome 1 at last ARCP) and if it is anticipated that the final ARCP outcome will recommend that training is completed by the time the suggested CCT date is reached.*

*There may be instances when the six-month period is interrupted by statutory leave. In those circumstances, it is a decision for the potential employer as to whether the trainee is eligible for the consultant post.*

*Once a doctor has been entered on the specialist register, they are able to take up a substantive, fixed-term or honorary consultant or general practitioner post in the NHS. There are different arrangements for Foundation Trusts, which can be found at* [*https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/the-medical-register/a-guide-to-the-medical-register/specialist-registration*](https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/the-medical-register/a-guide-to-the-medical-register/specialist-registration)

Although trainees can apply for consultant posts up to six months before their anticipated CCT/or CCT via CESR(CP) date, not all are either able to do this or are successful in their applications. For this reason, many trainees are currently eligible to take a Period of Grace. The purpose of this is to offer continued employment (at specialty registrar level) to doctors who have completed training and not yet obtained post-CCT employment. The extension to employment contract is for a time limited period up to a maximum of six months as set out in the 2016 Junior Doctor Contract.

The doctor is no longer considered to be in training, but in post for the purposes of service. As the doctor is no longer in training, they are not eligible to make applications or enter into arrangements during their Period of Grace which are normally available to trainees (e.g., Inter-Deanery Transfer, Out of Programme etc). However, the doctor will retain their National Training Number (NTN) during the Period of Grace.

If a doctor has requested a Period of Grace and then accepts a consultant post or locum consultant post which starts before the end of the Period of Grace, they must resign from their training programme with effect either from the CCT date or following the appropriate period of notice (see Termination below for full details). In doing so the NTN is relinquished and the right to a Period of Grace is given up; there is no option to return to training in that training programme.

# 2. Length of Period of Grace

The standard Period of Grace is six calendar months following the date of CCT/ or CCT via CESR (CP). There is no pro-rata modification for Less Than Full Time (LTFT) trainees.

In exceptional circumstances the Postgraduate Dean may agree to extend the Period of Grace up to a maximum total of twelve calendar months. To do this, the trainee must gain the support of their Training Programme Director (TPD) and then write to the Postgraduate Dean within the normal timeframe for requesting a Period of Grace (see below).

# 3. Requesting a Period of Grace

A suggested form can be found at **Appendix 1: Period of Grace Intent Form**.

Trainees are required to notify their Postgraduate Dean or nominated deputy of their intentions regarding taking up a Period of Grace placement ideally 6 months, but a minimum of 12 weeks prior, to the date of CCT/ or CCT via CESR/(CP). If a notification is submitted within this timeframe, then the doctor should usually be guaranteed a Period of Grace post.

If the request is not submitted by the required deadline, the TPD may not be able to arrange a Period of Grace for the trainee. In such circumstances, the trainee should include a covering letter with their POG form detailing why sufficient notice was not able to be provided.

Trainees should have a discussion with their TPD to support their decision as to whether or not a Period of Grace will be required. Whilst it is recognised that the Period of Grace is set within the 2016 contract and specialty trainees are entitled to a POG, adequate notice and planning is required to assess capacity and availability of suitable posts. Therefore, it is essential that doctors engage in discussion with the TPD in a timely way.

# 4. Confirmation of a Period of Grace

Trainees will usually have two weeks in which to accept or decline an offered POG post. Once the post has been accepted the trainee is usually required to work from the expected CCT/or CCT via CESR(CP) date to the end of the agreed timeframe or to work a normal notice period commencing from the expected resignation letter date if opting to leave early.

If the offer of the post is declined, the individual will relinquish their NTN and the right to a POG is given up; there is no option to return to training in that training programme. If the trainee gets an Outcome 3 at ARCP, their Period of Grace rights are reset.

A trainee can only commence a Period of Grace post if they have been recommended to CCT/ or CCT via CESR (CP) by receiving an ARCP outcome 6 signifying the satisfactory completion of either Higher Specialty Training or Run Through Training.

It is not possible to complete a Period of Grace at the end of a Core Training Programme to bridge any gaps between commencement of a Higher Specialty Training Programme.

The Period of Grace commences from the date of the recommendation for CCT/or CCT via CESR (CP) indicated on the ARCP Outcome 6 form. The POG is time-limited and can only be taken up by a trainee who is yet to relinquish their NTN.

# 5. Statutory Leave during the Period of Grace

If a doctor takes statutory leave during the POG, the period is suspended on the date the statutory leave starts. A new Period of Grace intent form would need to be submitted for the remaining time (maximum 6 months’ total time inclusive of time used prior to statutory leave and time following return from statutory leave) to request continuation of the POG on return from leave.

# 6. Placement Location and suitability

Doctors wishing to take up a Period of Grace will be informed of their placement in line with the standard rotation and allocation process. Whilst every effort should be made to enable trainees to continue for the six-month POG in a preferable post(s), the specific location placement and/or sub-specialty attachments will be determined by the availability of posts within the programme.

The POG will not necessarily be in the same place of work as the final training placement. Whilst NHS England is committed to finding a post, this may involve a non-training post. As the doctor has completed their training, they have no training needs so their POG placement will not take priority over training needs of other pre CCT doctors.

# 7. Termination

Once the trainee has requested a Period of Grace, three months’ notice is required to terminate in line with NHS Employers’ Junior Doctors Terms and Conditions for STR level doctors in training. This is to ensure that employers/Local Education Providers are given adequate time to make provision to fulfil service needs.

Once the trainee has commenced the POG, should they wish to leave the post prior to the end of the agreed period, the usual notice period of three months from the date of the resignation letter is required.

If the doctor chooses not to accept the Period of Grace, they will relinquish their NTN number and the right to the POG is given up. They are not required to follow the resignation procedure; their training post will simply come to an end at the expected CCT/or CCT via CESR(CP) date subject to satisfactory completion of the training programme.

In exceptional cases, a trainee may wish to resign with less than three months’ notice. In such cases the employer’s early resignation process must be followed and the Postgraduate Dean or nominated deputy informed at the same time.

# 8. Extension

It may be that doctors with a CCT have difficulty in obtaining a consultant level post and have not achieved employment by the end of the six-month Period of Grace. Extension is typically not available but may be considered at the discretion of the Postgraduate Dean.

# 9. Employment rights

Doctors employed in a Period of Grace post must be employed under the 2016 terms and conditions of service and have access to all the provisions of the TCS, except for those relating to education and training.

Doctors in the Period of Grace will not be expected to undertake research or other training orientated sessions except as explicitly agreed with the relevant specialty school. Doctors will not be eligible for NHS England funded study leave as this is for meeting CCT requirements. However, they can receive time for ensuring revalidation requirements are met. Doctors in a POG are entitled to statutory leave (i.e., annual leave, and sick leave) according to the placement provider’s policy. They should also be allowed to attend departmental education sessions as appropriate.

# APPENDIX 1: PERIOD OF GRACE INTENT FORM

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| **Personal Details** | |
| **First name:** |  |
| **Surname:** |  |
| **Mobile number:** |  |
| **Email address:** |  |
| **Training Details** | |
| **NTN:** |  |
| **Training Specialty:** |  |
| **Expected CCT/** or CCT via **CESR(CP) Date:** |  |
| **Scheduled ARCP Date:** |  |
| **Final Placement Trust:** |  |
| **Intention to take up a Period of Grace**  *Please indicate below whether or not you intend to take up the offer of a Period of Grace commencing from your expected CCT/* or CCT via *CESR(CP).* | |
| **I confirm that I intend to take up the offer of a Period of Grace to commence from the expected CCT/** or CCT via **CESR(CP) date stated above subject to satisfactory ARCP outcome. I understand that I will be required to work the required notice period with the arranged employing trust commencing on the expected CCT/** **or CCT via CESR(CP) date should I subsequently wish to resign from the post** *(please attach an additional sheet should you wish to submit any supporting information to be considered by the TPDs in the allocation of your post)*  **I confirm that I do not wish to take up the offer of a Period of Grace following the award of an outcome 6 at my next ARCP and the award of CCT/ or CCT via CESR(CP). I understand that I will therefore relinquish my NTN on the date of CCT/ or CCT via CESR(CP) and will not be able to return to a training post in this specialty**  **I declare that the information given on this form is correct.**  **Trainee Signature:** **Date:** | |

***Please return this form to xxxxxxxx***