

Out of Programme (OOP) Policy & Process North West (Dental, GP & Hospital)



Document Title	Out of Programme Policy and Process
Purpose	To provide guidance to Dental, GP, Hospital specialty resident doctors & dentists, Clinical/Educational Supervisors, Training Programme Directors/Heads of School, NHSE operational staff, Host Organisations and Lead Employers on the policy and process to be followed for Out of Programme applications from GP, Hospital Specialty resident doctors and Dentists in training.
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Time Out of Programme (OOP)

The purpose of Out of Programme (OOP) is to allow a resident doctor/dentist to gain additional clinical experience, clinical training or to undertake a period of research outside the training programme to which they were appointed. Resident doctors/dentists may also request to take a career break or a pause in training.

OOP options exist to support the resident doctor in achieving their individual educational/personal needs, subject to the approval of NHSE North West. As per the Gold Guide (10th edition) 3.143/Dental Gold Guide (5th edition) 4.30 OOP can only be taken with the agreement of the Postgraduate/Primary/Dental Dean, who will consult/delegate as necessary with those managing the specific training programme.

There are some limiting factors to approving OOP including:

- The ability of the programme to fill resulting gaps in the interests of patient care and others on the training programme
- The capacity of the programme to accommodate the resident doctor/dentists' return at the end of the planned break
- Evidence of the resident doctor/dentists' on-going commitment to and suitability for training in the specialty.

Therefore, resident doctors/dentists must not assume that their request will be approved.

Further detail about OOP can be found in the Gold Guide (10th edition) 3.143 – 3.176/Dental Gold Guide (5th edition) 4.30 and on the GMC website [GMC/Out of programme \(OOP\)](#). Each Royal College also has specific requirements relating to OOP and resident doctors are advised to contact their College for further details.

Resident Doctors/Dentists may be approved for more than one OOP per training programme (including dual and triple CCT programmes) if the OOP period does not compromise clinical skills and currency.

All requests for a second period of OOP will require Postgraduate/Primary/Dental Dean's approval. Normally, OOPs that run consecutively would not be approved. However, the Dean has discretion to consider exceptional circumstances and approve OOPs where there are sound educational reasons to do so (e.g. academic trainees may be required to undertake time out of programme for clinical experience (OOPE) in preparation for OOPR to undertake a PhD degree).

Resident doctors/dentists retain their NTN whilst OOP, providing they comply with the requirements outlined within this policy and the conditions on which their application was approved.

Eligibility

Full details of out of programme guidance can be found in sections 3.143 – 3.176 of the Gold Guide (10th edition)/ Dental Gold Guide (5th edition) 4.30 - 4.47 and on the GMC website:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/out-of-programme>

Resident doctors/dentists are advised to familiarise themselves with this guidance, and with the OOP guidance from the relevant Royal College, before proceeding with their application.

OOP will not normally be granted, unless a resident doctor/dentist has been in post for one year. Core resident doctors (except for Academic Clinical Fellows (ACFs)) are therefore eligible for OOP after satisfactorily completing their first year of training, as are resident doctors in ST3 posts in uncoupled specialties.

However, occasions where OOP is granted for core resident doctors are likely to be exceptional (usually for **OOPC**), given the short period and the nature of their training. The time spent OOP when in core training does not count towards CCT.

ACFs would only be allowed to undertake OOP on completion of their post.

OOPs may be considered in the final year of training if the trainee is on track for an ARCP outcome 6.

A resident with insufficient progress at the ARCP or with unmet objectives identified at their ARCP will not normally be granted a period of OOP.

It is possible that some of the time spent **OOPT** or **OOPR** may be counted towards CCT. This must be prospectively approved by the Royal College and GMC; retrospective applications will not be approved. GMC approval for the time to count towards CCT is a requirement of '[The Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications](#)'.

GP only: Applications for experience or to obtain qualifications to become a GP with an extended role (GPwER) will **not** normally be approved as the competencies required fall outside the curriculum. It is recommended that this training should be completed after achieving CCT.

Academic Programmes

Academic Clinical Fellows (ACFs) and Academic Clinical Lecturers (ACLs) are on a different programme type that is funded via NIHR and an Academic Recruitment process, as such there are differences in how these posts work in relation to OOP.

ACFs

If an ACF doctor/dentist wishes to undertake **OOPR** (typically to undertake a PhD Fellowship) the Academic component will end at the point of commencement, and on return from **OOPR** will continue run through training in the specialty in which the ACF post was advertised.

Normally applications for **OOPE/T/E/C** during an ACF programme will end the ACF post and resign the run-through national training number (NTN) if appointed to an uncoupled specialty. For exceptional circumstances it can be reviewed on a case by case basis.

ACLs

If an ACL doctor/dentist wishes to undertake OOP this will end the clinical lecturer post, and the resident will re-join the clinical training programme only on their return.

OOPE cannot be used to delay CCT/CCST dates.

NIHR guidelines will be referenced for all academic post arrangements:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/iat-guide#nihr-acfs>

Categories of OOP

OOP for Clinical Training (OOPT):

Allows the resident doctor/dentist to spend time in clinical training that has been prospectively approved by the GMC, and which is not part of the resident doctor/dentist's current specialty training programme. This may be abroad or within the UK and is to be counted towards their CCT. The clinical experience must be clearly different to that which is available within the home programme.

The duration of **OOPT** will normally be for a period of up to 12 months. Approval from the relevant Royal College must be sought, and GMC approval requested.

Hospital Specialities Only: *This includes time 'acting-up' as a consultant – please refer to OOP – Acting Up (AUC) Policy. 'Acting Up' is limited to 3 months, pro rata for LTFT resident doctors, and can only take place in the final year of the programme.*

OOP for Clinical Research (OOPR):

Allows the resident doctor/dentist to undertake research, normally for a higher registerable degree, e.g. PhD. Time spent out of programme for research purposes can be recognised towards the award of CCT when the relevant curriculum includes such research as an optional element. A separate application to the Royal College should be made for this approval, followed by GMC approval.

Applications for **OOPR** must be supported by a statement from a research supervisor which confirms the programme of research and any associated funding/employment.

The duration of **OOPR** is normally up to a maximum of 3 years, with a 4th year in exceptional

circumstances which requires the prospective approval of the Postgraduate Dean. If undertaking **OOPR** on a Less than Full Time (LTFT) basis, this would normally be pro-rata – Gold Guide (10th edition) 3.168/

OOP for Clinical Experience (OOPE):

Allows the resident doctor/dentist to gain clinical experience, which is not a requirement of the specialty training programme curriculum. This does not require prospective GMC approval and does not count towards CCT. This includes experiencing different working practices or gaining specific experience in an area of practice or helping support the health needs of other countries.

The duration of **OOPE** will normally be for a period of up to 12 months.

OOPE cannot contribute to the award of CCT and the training programme is paused whilst out of training. CCT date will be extended according to the dates of **OOPE**.

OOP for Career Break (OOPC):

Allows the resident doctor/dentist to take a planned career break to pursue other interests (e.g. domestic responsibilities, work in industry, developing talents in other areas and entrepreneurship).

Reasons in relation to ill health should in the first instance be managed under the guidance of the Lead Employer occupational health services. **OOPC** is an inappropriate way of managing health issues (Gold Guide (10th edition) 3.174/ Dental Gold Guide (5th edition) 4.46). Further guidance on training and health is outlined in the Gold Guide 3.177 – 3.182. If resident doctors are considering applying for **OOPC** for health reasons or domestic circumstances, they must explore other options first such as Less Than Full Time Training or statutory leave such as sick leave.

Whilst **OOPC** the training programme is paused. CCT date will be extended according to the dates of **OOPC**.

The duration of **OOPC** is normally for a period of up to 12 months, with a second year at the discretion of the Dean. Requests for an extension to **OOPC** over 12 months must be re-applied for and will be reviewed by the Dean for consideration of exceptional mitigation in accordance with Gold Guide (10th edition) 3.176 iv.

There are good educational and training reasons why an overall period out of training should be no longer than two years. Resident doctors/dentists may need to consider the effect of a career break on their ability to revalidate and maintain their licence to practise with the GMC. Resident doctors/dentists wishing to take longer will be required to relinquish their NTN and return to training via open competition. Resident doctors should be aware of the [GMC's expectations about the currency of examinations](#) when relinquishing their NTN. Dentists in training should consult GDC.

OOP Pause (OOPP) – *Hospital Specialities only:*

Allows resident doctors in specialty training to step off the training ladder and undertake work in the NHS or a similar patient-facing role in the UK. Experience and competencies gained outside of training may then be considered on the resident doctor's return to their training programme.

The duration of **OOPP** will normally be for a period up to 12 months.

Whilst **OOPP** the training programme is paused. CCT date will be extended according to the dates of **OOPP**.

Experience and competencies gained outside of training may be considered on the resident doctor's return to their training programme. This would usually be discussed with the ES and TPD and assessed at the next ARCP panel.

A maximum of 5-10% of resident doctors in any speciality will be allowed **OOPP** and will depend on speciality size.

OOP Principles

Resident doctors/dentists must discuss any proposed OOP with their Educational Supervisor (ES) and Training Programme Director (TPD) prior to applying. ES & TPDs are obliged to consider the programme's whole training environment as part of the approval process and will be able to inform a resident doctor as to how the proposed OOP fits in with the curriculum for the specialty, and whether the programme can currently accommodate the application.

If supported at this stage, the resident doctor/dentist if aware of their placement for the period, should also inform their clinical placement (rota coordinator/TSTL/College Tutor) of the intended OOP start and finish date.

Resident Doctors/Dentists must present their ES and/or TPD with all information related to the OOP application to be submitted with the formal application. Where applications are supported, the TPD must provide a statement of support which specifies the areas of the curriculum that are relevant to the proposed placement (**OOPT/R/E**), together with an assurance that the programme can accommodate the gap and proposed return date.

Where an application is not supported, the TPD must also provide a statement detailing the reasons why and discussed with the resident doctor/dentist.

Where a TPD supports an application, resident doctors/dentists should be aware that this is not final approval. Formal approval by the Postgraduate/Primary/Dental Dean is required and this function is usually delegated to the Lead Associate Dean.

If resident doctors/dentists are considering applying for **OOPC/P** for health or domestic reasons, they must explore other options first such as Less Than Full Time Training or

statutory leave such as sick leave. Resident doctors/dentists must discuss such options with their TPD and the Lead Employer before proceeding with an **OOPC/P** application, after which support to do so from their TPD can proceed with an application.

Resident doctors/dentists whose circumstances change whilst OOP but wish to remain OOP for the approved time, must contact the TPD and Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School team immediately to discuss the change, this will then be escalated with the relevant Associate Dean for consideration.

Resident doctors/dentists must advise TPDs and the Dental/GP/Hospital Speciality team of any matters which may affect their CCT date (e.g. statutory leave (maternity/sickness)) during their period of OOP which may require an extension to OOP and/CCT.

Resident doctors/dentists should be aware that if after receiving OOP approval they subsequently receive a developmental ARCP outcome, OOP approval may be withdrawn.

Application Process

The resident doctor must apply for time OOP by completing the application form to be sent to the Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School team (see section 21) **at least 6 months** in advance of the proposed start date.

The Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School team will receive a copy of the application submitted via the online form, as well as an acknowledgement email sent to the applicant with a list of required supporting information. The team will only process the application once the resident has responded with the list of supporting attachment **within 5 days** of submission. The relevant team will check all fields and documents are complete, and will be then sent to the Associate Dean, who is authorised to approve or reject applications on behalf of the Postgraduate/Primary/Dental Dean.

If approved/declined an email will be sent confirming the outcome. All documents will be saved onto TIS for future reference, as well as attached to the email. It is important residents fully review the obligations required whilst OOP and is highlighted in this email.

For **OOPT/R** application where time is requested to be counted towards training, the Dental/GP/Hospital Speciality School team will use submitted applications and documents to submit and upload to the GMC/GDC to gain the prospective approval if required. A GMC/GDC approval letter will normally follow the application after it has been submitted, and will be stored on TIS and emailed.

Resident doctors/dentists wishing to apply for an extension to **OOPC/E/R/T** must discuss this with their TPD and follow the same application process at least 6 months before the expiry of the current OOP approval. The most recent ARCP information should be included in the statement, and a Form R must also be attached to the application. If the extension is a continuation of an existing post, the previous GMC/GDC approval remains. Additional time towards training would not be given beyond the previous application request, as this will have been prospectively approved by the GMC/GDC.

If the extension is to undertake a different post, a new OOP application is required.

[Request for Time Out of Programme \(OOP\) – Fill in form](#)

Please also review: Supporting Documents.

Supporting Documentation

All applications will be received via an online form and should only be completed when the necessary approvals have been made via the TPD/HoS and documentation is available.

The completed application will be automatically sent to the Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School relevant to the programme. A receipt of the application will be sent to the email address provided, and the team will be notified of this. You will have **5 working days** to submit the documentation and evidence required for your application, as listed below:

Documents/Evidence which need to be attached to an application:

- TPD/HOS Endorsement
- Educational Supervisor Endorsement
- Job Description (**OOPT/E/R**)
- Research Overview and Timetable (**OOPR only**)
- Royal College Approval (if requesting time to count toward training)
- Confirmation of employment/funding arrangements at Host Organisation (for **OOPR/T/E/P**)

Reapplications/Extensions:

- TPD/HOS Endorsement
- Educational Supervisor Endorsement
- Confirmation of employment/funding arrangements at Host Organisation (for **OOPR/T/E/P**)
- Research statement & rationale for extension (**OOPR only**)
- Last ARCP Outcome
- Form R part A & B – completed via TIS Self Service and downloaded.
- If requesting further prospective approval for time to count towards training:
 - Royal College Approval (if confirmed)

Curtailment of OOP

Resident doctors/dentists wishing to curtail their time OOP and return early to the programme must contact their TPD immediately to discuss their changed circumstances. Resident doctors must also make a formal application by completing the OOP cancellation and curtailment form and return it to the Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School team. Resident doctors/dentists are reminded that an early return to the programme cannot be guaranteed, given the arrangements that will have been implemented to accommodate the planned absence from the programme. In such circumstances, the resident doctor/dentist will remain OOP until the mutually agreed return date.

If resident doctors/dentists wish to appeal against a refusal to grant OOP, they should refer to the Appeals Process (Non-ARCP), which can be found on our website:

<https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/policies-procedures>

Timelines

Residents must abide by the 6 months' notice period for OOP application, which starts on receipt of the application by NHSE North West. Resident doctors/dentists must not commence OOP until they have received written confirmation of approval.

Resident doctors should be aware that if they commence a period of OOP without having followed this application process and received confirmation/approval, they will be deemed by the Lead Employer to be taking unauthorised absence. Failure to complete the required process may also be considered as non-engagement (Gold Guide 10th edition 3.44) and may compromise revalidation.

Due to the number of necessary components involved in OOP approval, it should be noted that alongside the application process within NHSE North West there may also be additional unique requirements applicable to the Royal Colleges that also apply to OOP, some of which may require more than 6 months' notice for an application to be successful. Subsequently requests for time to count towards training needs Royal College approval to allow Dental/GP/Hospital Speciality teams to request accreditations from the GMC.

It is acknowledged that the selection processes for some prestigious research awards and other national opportunities may not align with the 6 months' notice period. In such circumstances, resident doctors are advised to submit a prospective application for **OOPR** or **OOPE** if they have applied and are awaiting an outcome. Evidence of this would be required to seek the prospective approval.

There may also be exceptional circumstances where a resident doctor may need to apply for urgent **OOPC** and not be able to give 6 months' notice. Each application will be considered on their individual merits and prioritised on a need's basis. Priority is usually given for the below circumstances:

- health issues where statutory leave or flexible training options have been explored and the benefits of **OOPC** have been identified and supported by the Lead Employer occupational health
- caring responsibilities for dealing with serious illness with family members that cannot be accommodated through flexible training
- childcare responsibilities that cannot be accommodated through flexible training options

Funding & Contractual Obligations

Resident doctors/dentists whose OOP applications are successful will be granted unpaid leave from the Lead Employer for the period of the OOP. **NHSE and Lead Employer does not provide funding arrangements or secondments** for periods out of programme and therefore resident doctors must seek salary payments and terms & conditions of employment via the host organisation.

Resident doctors/dentists are not eligible to claim expenses from NHSE or Lead Employer and it is the responsibility of the organisation hosting the post to meet any expenses associated with it.

It is the responsibility of the doctor to contact and confirm with the Lead Employer how the OOP will impact if not employed by another NHS organisation:

- Continuous employment
- Incremental progression
- Parental leave entitlement
- Employer's contributions to superannuation
- Any other employment issues

Resident Doctors/Dentists on **OOPC** should get advice from the Lead Employer on all statutory rights in relation to career breaks.

Resident Doctors/Dentists must engage with onboarding and pre-employment checks from Lead Employer in anticipation of returning from OOP, following any deadlines to ensure readiness for returning to programme/placements.

Any additional paid work must be declared in the application form and is at the discretion of the Postgraduate/Primary/Dental Dean via the Associate Dean's approval. If agreed prior to undertaking, the resident doctor must have appropriate indemnity.

Study Leave will only be available to trainees who are **OOPT**. There must be clear evidence linking the application to the specific curriculum requirement for the trainee's individual specialty.

Other OOP types may be able to access Supported Return to Training funding/opportunities in preparation for returning from OOP: <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/supported-return-to-training>

NHS Pensions Guidance

Please follow the link below for guidance on NHS Pensions whilst OOP. Resident doctors/dentists may wish to provide a copy to their Host Organisation for their OOP placement (unless **OOPC**):

[NHS Pensions - Authorised leave/career breaks](#)

In addition to the above, resident doctors/dentists are also advised to discuss the impact of any time OOP on their pension commitments and entitlements with the Lead Employer **prior** to commencing OOP. This will enable them to make an informed decision as to whether they remain in the scheme whilst OOP.

Visa/Sponsorship

NHS England can continue to sponsor some **OOPT** and **OOPE**, for example if they are within an approved training placement in NHSE, for all other OOPs NHSE would need to **withdraw sponsorship** for the duration of the OOP. A new Certificate of Sponsorship will need to be sought at the host organisation for the OOP duration, and applications made in good time for the proposed start date.

For full details on the types of OOP and sponsorship implication, resident doctors and dentists should contact the NHSE National Overseas Sponsorship team on england.sponsorship@nhs.net or consult the Sponsorship OOP guidance as linked below.

When returning to training, NHSE will be able to provide trainees with a Certificate of Sponsorship (without the requirement for recruitment) so that they can apply for a further sponsored Skilled Worker visa. **Residents should ensure they leave sufficient time to process this to re-commence back on the end date of OOP.**

When an OOP has been approved, trainees must complete the Reporting Form and submit to the NHSE National Overseas Sponsorship team to confirm the dates of the OOP: <https://medical.hee.nhs.uk/medical-training-recruitment/medical-specialty-training/overseas-applicants/overseas-sponsorship-guidance/out-of-programme-oop-and-your-sponsorship>

ARCPs whilst OOP

The annual ARCP process applies to **all** resident doctors/dentists who are OOP and they must engage and submit the required information which may include attending an annual review if required. The Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School will inform of the next ARCP

date usually via email. The following information is required to be uploaded to ePortfolios and TIS Self Service:

- Form R - Parts A and B to support revalidation
- An annual OOP report form (this can take the form of the resident doctor's original OOP application form if no changes have taken place)
- **OOPE/T** - normal assessments required for the specialty as appropriate, together with a Clinical Supervisor's report
- **OOPR** – a report on progress of research towards the stated objectives from the research supervisor
- **OOPC** – statement/reflections from resident doctor/dentist, which may include an Occupational Health report if applicable
- Confirmation of the return date agreed at the start of OOP
- All resident doctors who are clinically active or working where a license to practice is necessary must be able to demonstrate and document compliance with Good Medical Practice, including evidence of appraisal via the ePortfolio and declaring all work on the Form R.

It is the responsibility of the resident to engage and clarify the requirements for ARCP within the notification period of ARCP. Gold Guide edition 10 (4.89)

Revalidation

The Postgraduate/Dental Dean will remain the resident doctor's Responsible Officer (RO) whilst they are OOP and the designated body is NHS England, North West.

By engaging with the ARCP process is evidence of revalidation. Which includes the annual review of:

- Requirements of any training component of the work they are undertaking, including provision of an Educational Supervisor's Report, completion of online portfolios and any workplace-based assessments as specified by the specialty curriculum. This continues during any work overseas.
- Engagement in and providing documentary evidence of involvement with the appraisal or review process in their Host Organisation, and upload any submissions to the ePortfolio for review by the ARCP panel
- Completion of the Form R, listing any wider clinical work, and answering the revalidation questions about any incidents, complaints, health and probity in readiness for revalidation
- Maintenance their license to practice, including their Postgraduate Dean RO connection on GMC Connect. Resident doctors/dentists should not relinquish their license whilst OOP. Once appointed to the training programme resident doctors remain the responsibility of the Postgraduate/Dental Dean RO until they have completed their training and resigned their NTN.

Returning to Training

Resident doctors/dentists must respond and comply with onboarding requirements from the Lead Employer when contacted to do so. This is usually 3 months prior to recommencement of training.

Resident doctors must liaise with their TPD towards the end of their period OOP to plan and agree a return to work programme that will ensure an effective return to the training programme whilst also maintaining patient safety.

Additionally, the Dental/GP/Specialty School SuppoRTT champion will normally engage with the resident doctor/dentist and their Educational Supervisor to ensure a discussion on a return to training, with any necessary support mechanisms implemented such as enhanced supervision prior to the return date. <https://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/supported-return-to-training>

The details of this will vary according to each individual's stage of training and experiences whilst OOP including any clinical work undertaken, as well as the length of time away from the training programme.

Resident Doctor Application Checklist

✓ Out of Programme (OOP) Application Checklist

Before Applying

- ☐ Discuss proposed OOP with your Educational Supervisor (ES) and Training Programme Director (TPD) **at least 6 months** prior to application.
- ☐ Ensure the programme can accommodate your absence and return.
- ☐ Review relevant guidance:
 - Gold Guide (10th edition)
 - Dental Gold Guide (5th edition)
 - GMC/GDC OOP guidance: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/out-of-programme>
 - Royal College OOP guidance
- ☐ Confirm eligibility (e.g. minimum 1 year in post, satisfactory ARCP outcome).
- ☐ Consider impact on CCT, revalidation, and license to practice.

Application Submission

- ☐ Complete the OOP Application Form.
- ☐ **Submit at least 6 months before proposed start date, if not have provided rationale.**
- ☐ Attach all required documentation (see below).
- ☐ Submit to the online form to be directed to Dental/GP/Hospital Specialty School team.

Required Documentation

For Initial Applications:

- ☐ TPD/HOS Endorsement
- ☐ Educational Supervisor Endorsement
- ☐ Job Description (OOPT/E/R)
- ☐ Research Overview & Timetable (OOPR only)
- ☐ Royal College Approval (if confirmed)
- ☐ Confirmation of employment/funding arrangements at Host Organisation (OOPR/T/E/P)

For Reapplications/Extensions:

- ☐ TPD/HOS Endorsement
- ☐ Educational Supervisor Endorsement
- ☐ Confirmation of employment/funding arrangements at Host Organisation (OOPR/T/E/P)
- ☐ Research Statement & Rationale for Extension (OOPR only)
- ☐ Last ARCP Outcome
- ☐ Form R Part A & B (via TIS Self Service)
- ☐ Royal College Approval (if requesting further time to count towards training)

Additional Considerations

- ☐ If applying for OOPT/OOPR, ensure Royal College prospective approval is sought.
- ☐ If applying for OOPC/P for health/domestic reasons, explore other options first (e.g. LTFT, statutory leave).
- ☐ Declare any additional paid work and confirm indemnity arrangements.
- ☐ Discuss NHS Pay & Pension implications with Lead Employer.
- ☐ For visa holders, contact NHSE National Overseas Sponsorship team: england.sponsorship@nhs.net

Returning to Training

- ☐ Engage with onboarding process with Lead Employer 3 months before return.
- ☐ Liaise with ES, TPD and SuppoRTT champion to plan return.

Application Form: [Request for Time Out of Programme \(OOP\) – Fill in form](#)