

## NHS EDUCATION FOR SCOTLAND GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTING STEP ON STEP OFF TRAINING (SST); DEFERRED ENTRY GPST; WIDENING OUT OF PROGRAMME (OOP) IN GP SPECIALTY TRAINING (GPST).

### Rational for the proposal

The options for step on step off training (SST), deferred entry to GP Specialty Training (GPST) and widening of OOP opportunities have been proposed in order to increase flexibility and maximise recruitment into GP training in Scotland. The rationale is that allowing greater flexibility in GP programmes which are currently restricted because of the shorter duration of the programme (three or four years whole time equivalent) compared to other specialties with longer training programmes (five to seven years) might make GP training more attractive to potential applicants and act as a positive incentive for recruitment.

### Background to the development of the proposal

These two options for step on step off training (SST) have been considered together as the regulatory framework covers similar elements and the generic principles are considered as a whole.

Step on step off training (SST) should be differentiated from multiple entry points. From August 2016, SST will give GP specialty trainees the option of “stepping off” to benefit from a range of opportunities such as clinical fellowships and academic opportunities secure in the knowledge they can return to the programme at the same stage of training at which they left.

Currently the option for deferment to allow for a “time out”<sup>1</sup> does not exist as the Gold Guide (v 5 2014) paragraph 6.20 only allows deferments to specialty and core training on statutory grounds (e.g. maternity/adoption leave or ill health) with the exception of Defence Medical Services (DMS) only, where training may be deferred for DMS operational reasons.

The changes outlined to enable SST are inconsistent with Gold Guide but for practical reasons Gold Guide derogation has not been possible and therefore Scotland, HEE and Wales have elected to develop a separate policy (summarised below) for GP specialty training in respect of SST, deferred entry and widening OOP only.

*This policy sets out the framework for Step on Step off Training (SST) for GP Specialty Training programmes. SST will have specific rules relating to deferment and time out of programme which differ from those stated in the main body of the Gold Guide. **SST will only apply to doctors appointed to GPST in Scotland from August 2016.***

*SST has been introduced in order to enhance recruitment into GP ST because of the strategic requirement to facilitate the expansion of the GP workforce.*

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<sup>1</sup> The “time out” refers to opportunities such as a year out for overseas work or travel prior to the commencement of training and will hopefully attract trainees who would otherwise delay their decision.

*SST is designed to give GP specialty trainees more flexibility in deciding if and when they may take time out from their training programme, or defer the start of their training. Other than the changes relating to availability of deferment and time out of programme delineated in this policy and any published guidance, the general rules, restrictions and criteria for time out of programme (OOP) as detailed in this edition of the Gold Guide will still apply. From August 2016, SST will give GP Specialty Trainees the option of “stepping off” to benefit from a variety of opportunities such as clinical fellowships and academic opportunities secure in the knowledge they can return to the programme at the stage of training at which they left.*

The eligibility criteria for out of programme option (OOP) are set out in the Gold Guide (paras 6.75 – 6.96) which include all four categories, OOP Training (OOPT); OOP Experience (OOPE); OOP Research (OOPR) and OOP Career break (OOPC). The facility is currently under used by GPSTs and those that do use it (small numbers) are for OOPC many of which relate to child care or health issues.

## Step on Step off Training opportunities in GPST

**SST options may only be used once in the course of a GP specialty training programme.** For example if the option to defer the start of training (other than for statutory reasons) is used then further SST options would not *normally* be available later in training.

**SST Option 1- For deferred start** – Deferments give successful applicants the opportunity to defer GP training (for a maximum of 12 months) before the GP training programme starts.

This is to facilitate early options for SST, subject to approval by the Postgraduate Dean.

**Trainees should have indicated on their application form that they are interested in deferment** and formal applications for deferment must be made within two weeks of acceptance of the GPST programme offer.

Criteria:

- Successful at GP recruitment and be appointable with all competencies demonstrated.
- Limited to a maximum of one calendar year and would normally be for a minimum **of six months**.
- Allocation to a GP training programme is dependent on the ranked score at the time of recruitment with an obligation to return to the programme previously accepted. Failure to do so means that applicants relinquish their entitlement to the programme and would have to reapply for GPST.

Trainees are required to confirm a date for the start of the deferred programme at least six months before the planned start date.

### **SST Option 2 - Out of programme applications for time out during programme**

SST will enable doctors on GPST to take time out of programme for a range of opportunities as detailed below. Applicants wanting to take time out before the programme starts should consider options set out above: SST Option 1- For deferred start.

#### 2.1 OOP part way through ST1 or between ST1 and ST2 (OOP for SST).

The start date for a period of time out of training (OOP for SST) would not normally be agreed until a trainee has been in a training programme for at least six months (whole time equivalent) of the first year of training (ST1).

The criteria set out in the Gold Guide for aligning with post and programme end dates will apply. The trainee must also give the usual *minimum three month period of notice* to the Postgraduate Dean and their employer prior to commencing OOP for SST as currently set out in the current Gold Guide (6.76). Continued approval for OOP for SST is conditional upon the following criteria being met:

Criteria:

- Satisfactory completion of ST1
- ARCP Outcome 1 at end of ST1
- *Or if applying for OOP part way through ST1 MUST have as a minimum satisfactory progress at interim educational supervisors review.*
- Timing of OOP to be aligned to start dates for placements in programmes and should NOT affect service delivery.
- Trainees are required to confirm a return to programme at least six months before the planned return date (or three months where the period off programme is less than six months).

2.2 OOP between ST2 and ST3 or part way through ST2\*

This is allowable under current rules but is included in this policy document for information.

\*Prior approval may be conditional upon criteria in 2.2 being met.

- Satisfactory completion of ST2 with
- ARCP Outcome 1 at end of ST2
- *Or if applying for OOP part way through ST2 MUST have ARCP Outcome 1 for last ARCP at the end of ST1 and satisfactory progress at interim educational supervisors review*
- Timing of OOP to be aligned to start dates for posts in programmes and should NOT affect service delivery.

Please note that OOP part way through ST3 is not permitted under this proposal as it may cause disruption to the ST3 year and frustrate competency development. Normal exceptional criteria for health and mitigation apply.

Opportunities that might be used for Step on Step off/OOP must meet the eligibility criteria set out in this document and associated guidance.

- Clinical Fellowships and standalone academic opportunities – OOPE/OOPT /OOPR (OOPT, and also OOPR if it is to count towards training, require prospective approval from GMC & RCGP)
- Clinical experience in other specialties - OOPE
- *Clinical experience in other specialties (as above) might be used to widen the scope of practice and enhance post CCT career opportunities.*
- Clinical SST options related to GPST could be OOPT \* requires prospective approval from GMC & RCGP for OOPT

- Non-clinical SST options – OOPC (as currently detailed in the Gold Guide 6.75)

The requirement for satisfactory progress (including exams) may be justified on educational grounds. Prolonged time out of programme (greater than three months) can have an adverse effect on the educational progress of trainees with identified additional support requirements (outcome 2 or 3 at ARCP) as they could become deskilled and regress in their training. An OOP at this point has the potential to adversely affect their training outcome.

**Periods out of programme (OOP) for whatever reason are likely to delay the CCT date which will be recalculated at the next scheduled ARCP.**

*Moya H Kelly*

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