A Guide to Out of Programme for Experience (OOPE) in the Scotland Deanery

The Scotland Deanery is committed to giving doctors who are in our training programmes opportunities to extend their experience by allowing them a chance to leave their programmes to gain experience that the programme may not afford them. As with other forms of OOP (OOPR, OOPC), this is a discretionary system, & the needs of the applicants have to be balanced with the needs of the trainees who remain in programme. Gaps in rotas which cannot be filled adversely affect the learning of those who remain in programme, & Training Programme Directors (TPDs) have to take account of this, particularly when rotas are constituted with trainees from different training programmes – eg medical receiving rotas may have foundation, core medical and GP trainees all as participants.

In decoupled programmes, it has been common that such experience is gained between finishing core and starting higher training, with a natural break occurring. We became aware of some concerns that runthrough trainees were at a disadvantage when seeking OOPE because of pressure of rotas. In addition, the experience being sought was very heterogeneous, with some posts containing “good” experience, and others seemingly being more focused on pure service delivery. With this in mind, we convened a short life working group to define and clarify the circumstances when OOPE should and would be granted in the Scotland Deanery, in keeping with the Gold Guide guidance. The group involved trainees, HR representatives, DMEs and experts in medical education and simulation. The aims were to be more facilitative, but also to better define a standard of OOPE that might be sought to ensure a good experience for those involved.

- Out of Programme Experience (OOPE) should aim to deliver ‘recognisable achievements’ that are beyond the requirements of the specialty curricula, and that would enhance a trainee’s future practice. This could include enhancing skills in medical leadership, medical education, simulation training or patient safety.

- The expected ‘recognisable achievements’ that are anticipated from an OOPE, and how the post will be structured and the how the doctors in training will be supported / mentored to achieve these objectives should be described and submitted with the OOPE application. It is expected that ‘recognisable achievements’ could not be achieved other than by taking time OOP.

- ‘Recognisable achievements’ have been agreed for OOPE in relation to academia and simulation training. Where an application is to enhance the development of other skills, these anticipated ‘recognisable skills’ should be outlined in the application.
o With the exception of OOPE supporting Government Global Health Partnership or Global Citizenship working in developing countries such as Malawi, the expectation is that OOPE opportunities would have little service commitment and typically no more than 20%.

o OOPE will be limited to one-year and only exceptionally would 2 years be approved.

o On completion of the post, trainees should be provided with a summary of their achievements similar to that provided for the SCLFs.

o There will still be a requirement for trainees to complete OOPE application forms providing supporting information (as above) and individuals who sign these should clearly understand in what capacity their signature is being provided i.e.
  o the educational supervisor’s signature recognises that a discussion has been undertaken with the trainee and that they support the request on behalf of the career intentions of the trainee.
  o the Training Programme Director’s signature denotes that release of the trainee will not adversely affect delivery of the programme to other trainees.
  o the trainee will provide all information about the post, especially the objectives, which should be included in the request form.

A Scotland Deanery OOPE reference group will be constituted to review the experience gained on placements, and to gain knowledge of the kinds of experience trainees will have gained during their OOPE. This will inform future decision making on OOPE. The group will, as examples,
  o Look at ‘recognisable achievements’, drawing upon appropriate external advice, as required
  o Examine the appropriateness of the experience for the level of training
  o Assess the balance of service to experience gained in the post
  o Identify any issues around the source of the funding of the post supporting OOPE
  o comprise at least 3 individuals from the cohort of the 4 Deans/2GP Directors plus 2DMEs, at least 50% of whom must be from the Deanery. The group will be supported by a TPM Manager or Team Lead.

o Ideally, a hierarchy of OOP opportunities should be established in order to provide transparency around the prospective decision-making of different requests from the same programme.
3.128 Trainees may seek agreement for OOP to undertake clinical experience that has not been approved by the GMC and that will not contribute to award of a CCT or CESR(CP)/CEGPR(CP). In these circumstances, it is likely that the CCT date will need to be extended. The purpose of such OOP could be to:

i. gain professional skills that would enhance a trainee’s future practice. This could include enhancing skills in medical leadership, academia, medical education or patient safety.

ii. enhance clinical experience and skills related to but not part of the curriculum for the individual so that they may experience different working practices or gain specific experience in an area of practice

iii. support the recommendations in Global Health Partnerships: The UK Contribution to Health in Developing Countries (2007), which recommends that:

“An NHS framework for international development should explicitly recognise the value of overseas experience and training for UK health workers and encourage educators, employers and regulators to make it easier to gain this experience and training... Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) should work with the Department of Health, Royal Colleges, medical schools and others to facilitate overseas training and work experience.”

3.129 The request to take time out for such experience must be agreed by the Postgraduate Dean following the same rules as outlined above for OOPT (other than the requirement for prospective approval from the GMC). The OOP document must be used to make the request, and this should detail the rationale for the application and the specific competences to be acquired during the period of OOPE. This document must be returned on an annual basis to HEE, NES, the Wales Deanery or NIMDTA while the trainee is out of programme. OOPE will normally be for up to one year.