

Study leave for GP trainees: FAQs to accompany the NES cross-specialty guidance.

How much study leave am I entitled to as a GP trainee?

Trainees are permitted up to a total of 30 days' study leave per academic year. One week would normally be regarded as 5 working days plus 2 days of personal time for a full-time trainee. Less than full-time trainees (LTFTTs) are entitled to study leave on a pro-rata basis.

Study leave must be requested and approved in advance. The expectation is that this would be in time to allow rota and cover arrangements to be put in place, and in all circumstances, should not be less than six weeks before the date of the start of the proposed leave. There is no mechanism for approving study leave retrospectively.

Who needs to approve my study leave?

This is done at two levels.

Service level approval for study leave is given by the Clinical Supervisor / Educational Supervisor for the post affected by the leave. This approval should be for the educational activity and for the specific dates requested. This allows for management of service provision and fair distribution of leave amongst clinical staff.

Deanery level approval, including approval of funding, is given by the Training Programme Director. This allows the TPD to have an overview of your study leave requirements and requests and facilitates fair distribution of resources for study leave amongst the trainees as a group.

What happens after I get initial approval from my supervisor? How do I submit it for deanery approval?

Study leave requests are managed through TURAS. As part of the submission you must complete a self-declaration, confirming that you have supervisor approval. All requests are then considered by TPDs for funding approval.

Why does my TPD need to approve my study leave request?

The Training Programme Director has responsibility for monitoring individual trainee's study leave allowance and for fair distribution of the study leave budget between all trainees. At induction, you will have the opportunity to find out which educational activities will automatically be granted study leave. TURAS does not currently allow additional information to justify a request for study leave. If you are not sure if your request is appropriate you can contact your TPD for advice. A TPD may e-mail a trainee for further clarification before considering approval. You should be prepared and able to justify why you wish to attend a specific course.

All requests will be considered by the TPD who will make a judgement as to whether the request is reasonable, taking into account the GP curriculum, your individual learning needs, time and cost involved, along with equity of distribution.

TPDs can decide "Approved with Funding", "Approved without Funding" or "Not Approved".

What about my regular educational release training?

A number of days of your study leave allowance are automatically allocated for your Educational Release Programme (ERP). The exact number is determined locally and may include days for activities such as induction. If you do not attend these sessions, you will not normally get the study leave time back in lieu. However, if there are exceptional circumstances, a decision about this can be made on an individual basis by your TPD.

You do not need to apply through TURAS for educational release teaching, unless claiming expenses when a TURAS application needs to be made. Approval is automatically granted, and your attendance will be recorded through the sign-in sheets at the sessions.

Can I get my travel and subsistence costs reimbursed?

Travel and subsistence costs are claimable but should be reasonable. The TPD will not normally approve funding for travel to a course where an equivalent is available locally.

If you want to apply for a more distant course e.g. for personal reasons, you may still be eligible for study leave for the course fee. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

What about getting study leave for MRCGP exams?

GP trainees can take the MRCGP AKT and CSA exams four times each during their training time. Trainees would normally be expected to apply for a day's study leave to sit an exam. It has previously been agreed that, due to implications to the rest of the study leave budget, travel and subsistence will not be financially supported from within the GP study leave budget for MRCGP exams.

What about study leave for MRCGP exam preparation courses?

The four regions of the Scotland deanery have developed their own local methods of supporting trainees in exam preparation. These have been developed taking into account the region's geography, trainee demographics, and facilitator resources. Each region is therefore able and willing to support trainees' attendance at distance/national courses to different extents to ensure that no individual trainee is disadvantaged. The principle is that trainees should, wherever possible, attend the course provided locally. Study leave will only be granted for courses approved or accredited by the RCGP.

Am I entitled to study leave for private exam preparation?

One week of private study for the first attempt at an exam will usually be approved if you have not used all of your study leave. The days do not need to be sequential. For any further attempts, private study time would require to be approved at the discretion of your supervisor and TPD.

Rather than routinely taking a week off for private exam study, consider whether this is the best way of preparing for you, as taking this time will detract from other educational opportunities available to you throughout your programme.

I'm interested in taking exams other than MRCGP - can I get financial support for these other exam preparation courses?

Intended learning should be linked to the GP curriculum and specific to your individual learning needs as a GP trainee. Study leave approval can be based on your future career as a GP. Study leave for diploma courses/exams (including distance-learning) can be approved for time but not for funding. Examples include DFSRH, DCH, diabetes, dermatology, medical education.

If a specific course is a requirement for the post and not funded by the health board, e.g. BLS/ALS, then such requests will be funded.

I am keen to act as the AiT representative at a meeting - do I need study leave for this?

The deanery supports AiT representation and attendance at NES/ Specialty Association/ Committee meetings, as well as attendance at meetings of national importance e.g. BMA rep. RCGP rep. Study leave is not required for all of these activities - attendance as a trainee representative at NES meetings does not require study leave. For other meetings, you may apply for "Special Leave" to your employer - NES HR for primary care or Hospital HR if working there. Time spent on these meetings should be logged in your e-portfolio and should not be to the detriment of your training. You should get permission to attend from your ES/CS. Seven days a year is usually considered to be reasonable - beyond this there should be a discussion with your supervisor and TPD. It may be possible to apply for Special Leave, but this is limited in quantity. Excessive amounts of time taken off may result in extension to training time with alteration to your CCT date.

I have been asked to be part of a deanery quality management visit –do I need to take study leave for this?

If you are involved in a quality management visit this should come out of your study leave time.

However, the deanery feels that trainee representatives on quality management visits should not be

disadvantaged if they have exceeded their study leave limit, and special leave should be considered in this situation. It may be possible for 7 days of special leave to be granted for positions of national or international importance. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

I'd like to take study leave during a period when I'm not scheduled to work-is this possible?

Study leave can only be taken from days that you are normally rostered to work so is unlikely to be approved for weekend days as in a GP post you will not likely be rostered to work on a Saturday or a Sunday. If an exam is scheduled for a weekend day, Trainees may wish to consider requesting an exam preparation day for the Friday before.

Can I get study leave whilst on maternity/paternity or sickness leave? What about if I am out-of-programme?

If you are away on maternity leave you have the option to use the Keeping-in-Touch (KIT) days for this. However, if you are sitting AKT or CSA whilst OOP then they will not be approved for a day in lieu. Study leave would not normally be approved during OOP.