**Specialty Tasters in the Foundation Programme – North of Scotland Region**

**Definition of a Taster**

A taster is a period of time, usually one to five days, spent in a specialty in which a Foundation Trainee has not previously worked. Its purpose is to enable the development of insight into the work of the specialty and promote reflection on potential career pathways.

**Background**

One of the original aims of the Foundation Programme was to ensure that trainees have access to a wider range of specialties in a variety of care settings prior to selecting a career path. Currently, most Foundation trainees are exposed to a maximum of six specialties before they enter for specialty training, but only 4 by the time they apply for specialty training. Because of this, there is a demand from some trainees for short “tasters” in other specialties.

There is evidence that any experience in a specialty, however brief, can be influential in a career choice. There are currently 60 medical specialties and 32 sub-specialties in the UK. Medical undergraduates are unlikely to have the opportunity during their training to experience all specialties.

All Taster Day attachments should be tailored to the individual requirements of a trainee and be well-planned and focused. In order to support these experiences trainees must agree a set of aims and objectives that will be achieved during the Taster Day experience. Aims and objectives must be submitted as part of the Taster Day Evaluation and be included as part of a trainees e-portfolio.

To fully benefit from tasters, foundation doctors should discuss their career aspirations with their educational supervisor and review their requirements for tasters and the timing around the middle of the F1 year.

A trainee who is decided in his/her career options will have different requirements to a trainee who is unsure about their future specialty. The doctor who is still undecided is likely to benefit from several short sessions in different specialties. The intention of taster sessions should be reflected upon by the trainee and recorded in the Reflections domain of the e-portfolio and titled ‘Taster Day(s) Experience’. This should be presented by the trainee as an outline Learning Plan to the hosting unit. The Learning Plan should be agreed between the clinical unit and the trainee on initial application.

After each career taster session, aims and objectives must be updated as part of the Taster Day Evaluation form and be included as part of a trainees e-portfolio.
It is recognised that there are already many examples of good practice in this area and this document aims to support clinical units in developing career exploration for their trainees.

Trainees are recommended to visit the resources for Taster sessions:

Developing High Quality Tasters

The purpose of a taster experience is to:
- Enable the doctor to gain a small amount of clinical experience in a specialty in which they have not worked whilst a medical student or foundation trainee;
- Enable to doctor to explore in closer detail what a career in a specialty might entail – skills, attitudes, behaviours, essential aptitudes;
- Compare the taster specialty with others already experienced;
- Meet clinicians and explore career pathways in less mainstream specialties; and
- Explore opportunities available in small specialties and those specialties which have traditionally been undersubscribed.

The components of a taster experience may include:
- Opportunity to find out what is needed to succeed, progress or enjoy this specialty in terms of skills, attributes and behaviour.
- Time with senior clinician(s) in the specialty, observing work, discussing careers pathways, future opportunities and work life balance issues. This should include some time for 1:1 discussions
- Time with current trainees (of various grades) in the specialty, observing work, discussing what life is like as a trainee in the specialty, work life balance, how their careers choices were made, current and future shift patterns, exams, curricula and entry to specialty. This should include some time for 1:1 discussion.
- Time with key workers who support the specialty such as Nurse practitioners, professions allied to medicine, community specialists, operating department practitioners and laboratory staff.
- Opportunity to participate in hands on activities under direct supervision
- Opportunity to attend specialty education / training events e.g. multidisciplinary team meeting, trainee tutorial, skills lab or an audit meeting

Currently we are unlikely to approve tasters in medical or surgical units as it is not feasible that medical graduates/FY trainees have no experience in these parent specialties. The training programmes open to FY doctors are Core Training programmes in medicine and surgery, therefore subspecialty experience is not relevant at this stage of training. Subspecialty tasters are encouraged during Core Training.
Scotland Foundation School  
Taster Days Evaluation

Please fill in this form when you have completed your Taster Day(s) and upload a copy to your e-Portfolio

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<th>Location/Specialty of Taster Day(s)</th>
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<th>Dates of Taster Days (from-to)</th>
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**Evaluation/Reflection:**

- **Why did you choose this specialty for your ‘taster’ session, and what did you hope to achieve?** E.g. outline the reasons for completing the taster

- **What did you experience during the session?**

- **What were your aims and objectives of experiencing this specialty?** E.g. Prior to the Taster, in what specific ways do you think you might be suitable for the speciality?

- **How has this experience helped you to achieve aims and objectives?** E.g. what did you find the post valuable learning experiences and how did they match your needs. What was the most challenging?

- **Did the session meet your expectations?** (please tick)  
  - Yes  
  - No

- **How would you rate your Taster Days?**  
  - Poor  
  - Average  
  - Good  
  - Excellent

- **Signature**

- **Date**
Trainee approaches Foundation Programme Director and/or Educational Supervisor for careers advice and theoretical permission to participate in "Taster Session" (max 5 days). FPD can advise of contact details in required dept.

Trainee completes study leave application from NES TURAS website – time only, no expenses
https://turas.digital.nes.scot.nhs.uk/account/login

Suitable dates negotiated by trainee (up to 5 days) between ward and taster location. A Learning Agreement should be proposed by the Trainee and agreed with the supervising clinician in the clinical unit. This agreement should be titled as Taster Experience and documented in the Reflective domain of the trainee’s e-portoflio.

Study leave application signed by Educational Supervisor

Study leave application signed by Foundation Programme Director

Trainee attends taster. Confirmation of attendance should be sought from hosting unit.

Taster Day Evaluation form completed and entered into Reflective domain of e-portfolio.

After Reflection a trainee may wish to follow up the Taster session. Options include time focussing on newly identified learning outcomes, or time in another specialty.
(Max 10 days Taster, subject to approval of FPD)