

All Wales Study Leave Policy: for Doctors and Dentists in Training

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Health Education and Improvement Wales

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1 | Introduction

This policy aims to ensure that the General Medical Council's (GMC) [*Promoting Excellence: Standards for Medical Education and Training \(2015\)*](#), or equivalent, are met. These standards require that:

R3.12 Doctors in training must be able to take study leave appropriate to their curriculum or training programme, to the maximum time permitted in their terms and conditions of service.

This policy is underpinned by HEIW's 'Expectations Agreement' with Local Education Providers (LEPs) for the provision of postgraduate medical (including General Practice) and dental education and training.

2 | Review of the Policy

To ensure that this policy is fit for purpose, it will be reviewed on an annual basis or sooner if appropriate.

When the policy is reviewed, consultation will be sought from Local Education Providers, HEIW representatives, trainees and their representatives including BMA Cymru.

3 | Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to doctors and dentists entitled to Study Leave within HEIW as defined in Section 5: Eligibility.

Attendance at the following are **not** counted against the annual Study Leave allowance -

- Bleep-free teaching time within the Health Board/Trust in which the trainee is based
- Annual Reviews of Competency Progression
- Regional/local Core Curriculum/Learning Programmes
- Educational Development time
- Statutory training courses (including any local departmental training) required by employers.
- Specialty induction/bootcamp sessions and Specialty mandated HEIW delivered training.
- Involvement in NHS activities such as quality improvement, audit, risk management and clinical governance activities intrinsic to employment in the NHS.
- Meetings with HEIW's Professional Support Unit should be treated as any other health appointment (Occupational Health, GP etc) and trainees should be enabled to attend.

Study Leave, as defined in this policy, covers both time taken and funding requirements for undertaking Study Leave.

4 | Principles of Study Leave

The main uses of Study Leave will be for educational development opportunities designed to gain competences defined in each curriculum. Study Leave should:

- a. Enhance clinical skills, education and training.
- b. Be planned as far in advance as possible, as an integral part of the education and training process.
- c. Provide education and training not easily acquired in the everyday clinical setting.
- d. Support the delivery of curriculum outcomes.
- e. Be equitable across the Medical Education Centres and other Local Education Providers.

Trainees should not be contacted whilst on approved Study Leave.

5 | Eligibility

Trainees (including Less Than Full Time trainees) who are eligible for Study Leave are as follows:

- Foundation trainees
- Core Trainees (CT1, CT2, CT3 and CT4)
- Dental Core Trainees (DCT), Year 2 and above
- Specialty Trainees (ST1 – ST8)
- Specialty Trainees (Dental)
- Academic Clinical Fellow / Academic Clinical Lecturer posts
- Fixed Term Specialty Training Appointments (FTSTA)
- Locum Appointments for Training (LAT)
- Wales Clinical Academic Track (WCAT) trainees

The following trainees are **not** eligible for Study Leave under the terms and conditions of this policy:

- General Practice Trainees in Practice posts (GPST 1/2/3). There is a separate policy for those in primary care (general practice) posts available to view at: <https://heiw.nhs.wales/education-and-training/gp-training/trainees/study-leave/>
- Dental Foundation Trainees (DF1) (exists as study days in their programme of training)
- Dental Core Trainees (DCT), Year 1 (exists as study days in their programme of training)

The following doctors and dentists are not eligible for Study Leave under the terms and conditions of this policy:

- Locum Appointments for Service (LAS)

Study Leave for trainees on out-of-programme (OOP) experiences will not be supported financially as the funding will be required for the trainee filling the post vacated.

Trainees appointed to HEIW training programmes that rotate to Health Boards/Trusts/Deaneries outside HEIW should continue to follow this study leave policy.

6 | Entitlement

Time

Each trainee has an annual entitlement to Study Leave time and funding.

Foundation Doctors are entitled to 30 days across the 2 year programme. Further details of how study leave can be used can be found in the [Foundation School Guide](#).

Core and Specialty trainees (CT1 and CT2) and (ST1 – ST9) and (Dental Core Trainees Year 2 & 3 and Dental Specialty Trainees) are entitled to 30 days of Study Leave per year.

Trainees who are working less than full time will be allocated Study Leave time on a pro rata basis but will receive the full year funding allocation.

Trainees on parental leave continue to be entitled to take Study Leave, within their allowance, during their parental leave. This is a matter of personal preference for the trainee and in no circumstances should the trainee be explicitly asked to take Study Leave during their parental leave.

Trainees in Fixed Term Specialty Training Appointments (FTSTAs) and Locum Appointments for Training (LATs) who are employed for more than three months are entitled to Study Leave on a pro rata basis.

In the event that booked and approved Study Leave coincides with a period of sickness absence, the trainee should consult the NHS All-Wales Sickness Policy and seek advice from NWSSP and within the LEP in which they are based.

Time off in lieu

Time taken for Study leave counts as working time so should normally be taken on rostered working days; this includes online training which can be completed at a time convenient to the trainee.

However, if it is necessary to complete training on a non-working day (e.g. weekend or rostered day off) then a day off in lieu should be granted.

Time off in lieu must be included within the Study Leave application and trainees must agree the lieu day with their Educational Supervisor and a service manager e.g. rota co-ordinator, medical personnel etc at the time of applying for the Study Leave.

The lieu day should be taken within a reasonable timeframe of the Study Leave. This may be before or after the Study Leave.

The Educational Supervisors and the trainee have a responsibility to ensure that the trainee does not breach their contractual requirement on hours worked or the provisions of the European Working Time Directive.

The lieu day must be taken prior to rotation to a different Health Board as time off in lieu cannot be carried forward to a trainee's next placement.

Examinations

Leave to sit examinations is permitted for those necessary to the career advancement of the trainee in their chosen specialty.

Examination fees are not reimbursed from the Study Leave allocation.

Foundation doctors in training are not permitted to take Study Leave to prepare for specialist examinations.

Private Study

Leave for private study is allowed for all trainees above Foundation grade but is limited to a maximum of five days within the training year.

No expenses are paid for private study even if leave is granted.

Online Training

Online training may be accessed either as standalone courses or to deliver the theoretical aspects in preparation for a practical course.

When requesting Study Leave to complete online training, trainees should provide evidence of the indicative duration of the course as part of their Study Leave application, along with evidence of the cost of the course.

Following completion of online training, when claims for reimbursement of online study expenses are submitted these should be accompanied by confirmation of the amount of time actually taken to complete the course submitted.

In the case of online training that can be undertaken at any time, trainees are advised to complete training on a scheduled working day and to request the appropriate Study Leave time.

Other Paid Employment

No other paid employment or remunerative work can be undertaken during any period of Study Leave: infringement of this rule is a disciplinary offence.

Financial Support

The Study Leave budget and trainee allocations are defined annually by HEIW.

A trainee's Study Leave funding entitlement will be aggregated across a twelve month 'training year' period and calculated based upon a trainee's rotation start date (usually August but will vary depending on programme).

Trainees are eligible to utilise their Study Leave funding at any point during the individual's defined training year regardless of the LEP in which they are based. However, applications for Study Leave time can only be approved by the designated approver(s) for the post in which the Study Leave will be undertaken.

Any particular limits on the financial allocation of the Study Leave budget, for example the amount top-sliced to provide specialty All-Wales training days, must be specified in the study guidelines of a HEIW School responsible for a training programme.

Funding roll-over arrangements

Following a trial period during the COVID pandemic HEIW now implements a roll-over arrangement of any unused personal study leave budget for one year only (up to a maximum of the annual entitlement) into the subsequent training year.

This roll over arrangement only applies to study leave funding.

Funding can be rolled over for one year only. The study leave budget available in the next training year, following the roll over, will not exceed twice the annual entitlement.

The study leave allocation will be updated in line with the trainees annual training year (usually August but this will differ in the case as of individuals starting the programme in February or other times of the year).

This arrangement only applies to trainees who are staying in a training programme in Wales.

Personal Study Leave allowances can be viewed via Intrepid Leave Manager accounts. If this information is not available, or considered to be incorrect, trainees should contact their local Medical Education Manager in the first instance.

7 | Application Guidelines

All applications for Study Leave must be submitted through the Intrepid Leave Manager (ILM) via the Intrepid database.

Training for use of the ILM will be provided at LEP level.

All requests for Study Leave (including requests for Study Leave time only and whether a course a trainee wishes to attend is face-to-face or online) must be submitted via the ILM at least six weeks before the leave is required.

Requests for Study Leave 'funding only' must be submitted via the ILM. To avoid confusion for approvers and avoid possible delay, trainees should enter '0' in the 'number of days' field in the ILM and include a brief explanation in the 'comments' field.

Retrospective or late applications will not be considered unless in extreme circumstances, and if patient care is not compromised the leave may be granted.

An approval decision, which includes the degree of financial support, rests with the Educational Supervisor and Medical Education Manager (or designated leave approver) (or HEIW for GP trainees in practice posts).

All Study Leave requests must be approved by the designated leave approvers within one calendar month of the Study Leave request being submitted via ILM.

(Monthly reports may be requested by HEIW detailing outstanding Study Leave claims outside the acceptable timescale to monitor compliance.)

Claims for reimbursement of approved Study Leave expenses must be made within three months of the date the Study Leave took place.

8 | Approval Process

Study Leave must be agreed in advance to avoid disruption to services, and it must be supported and approved by a trainee's Educational or Clinical Supervisor. In certain cases this may be escalated to the Training/Foundation Programme Director for advice and guidance.

Authorisation of Study Leave is based on satisfaction of all the following five criteria:

1. **Availability:** the trainee can be released from their normal place of work to attend the requested Study Leave.
2. **Relevance:** approved Study Leave must be relevant to the trainee's educational needs, appropriate to their experience and supportive to the training programme which the trainee is undertaking.
3. **Eligibility:** that the trainee has sufficient remaining Study Leave time to cover the duration of the requested activity.
4. **Funding:** that the trainee has sufficient unallocated personal funding allowance, within the defined limits, to cover the costs of the activity (or the trainee has agreed to self-fund and has indicated this on the application form).
5. **Learning Agreement:** that an approved learning agreement or equivalent consideration of trainee learning needs has been provided to and considered with the relevant Educational or Clinical Supervisor.

9 | Course Fees and Expenses

Trainees need to be aware that the cost of courses can vary considerably and not all courses a trainee may wish to attend will be identified as a training need, or a feasible option within funding limitations.

In accordance with HEIW and LEP financial regulations, the following costs incurred for Study Leave will be considered for payment:

- Approved registration or course fees.
- Travel and subsistence expenses if no suitable courses are available locally; specifically, standard class train and coach fares and economy internal (UK) air fares.
- Mileage expenses for cars, passengers and pedal cycles, payable according to the LEP policy on expense claims.

Study Leave funding will only be granted in exceptional circumstances for overseas courses or conferences, according to the Health Board/Trust policy on expense claims.

10 | Management of the Study Leave Budget

Oversight of the Study Leave budget will be managed by the Medical Education Managers.

For Dental trainees (DCT2, DCT3 and Dental StRs) the Study Leave budget will be managed by the employing Health Board/Trust and not the Medical Education Manager.

Any decisions to change the arrangements for the management of the Study Leave budget will be made by the Postgraduate Medical Dean, HEIW in consultation with the LEPs.

Those responsible for managing the Study Leave budget must ensure that individual Study Leave decisions are recorded via the ILM. For quality control, they should work with their designated Regional Intrepid Officer to report on the number of applications approved/not approved, reasons for non-approval, budget spent, whether approved Study Leave was actually taken and reasons for approved Study Leave not being taken.

Actual expenses claimed for Study Leave must be recorded on the Intrepid database by the Medical Education Centre (leave approver for Dental). Details of Study Leave expenses should be made available to HEIW on request in line with financial accountability.

11 | Appeals Procedure

Refusal of Study Leave should be exceptional. A trainee who considers that their request for Study Leave is unreasonably refused has the right of appeal.

A trainee who wishes to appeal against a decision relating to Study Leave must do so using HEIW's appeals process.

The trainee should inform their Training/Foundation Programme Director of any Study Leave time or funding applied for that is refused, together with the reason for the refusal.

The trainee and the TPD and ES must first jointly attempt to resolve the issues at a local level. If the matter cannot be resolved then the trainee is able to escalate the concern.

A trainee should submit their appeal using the 'Notification of Study Leave Appeal' form (Appendix 1) clearly stating the reason(s) for the appeal and including any evidence that may support the appeal process. It is the trainee's responsibility to ensure the completed form is submitted to the Head of School within 10 working days of the decision to refuse Study Leave being communicated to the trainee.

An independent Appeals Panel will review all documentation submitted within 15 working days of notification of appeal.

The arrangement of an Appeals Panel will be directed by HEIW

The Appeals Panel will comprise the following members:

- i. Head of School/HEIW representative
- ii. The local designated Medical Education Manager from the LEP in which the appeal originated.

The Appeals Panel may meet via virtual collaboration rather than a physical meeting.

The Appeals Panel will consider the information submitted on the form and the appellant is not required to attend.

The decision of the panel and the reasons for making that decision, will be confirmed in writing to the trainee within five working days of the Appeals Panel decision.

The decision of the panel is final.

APPENDIX 1 – Notification of Study Leave Appeal Form

NOTIFICATION OF STUDY LEAVE APPEAL

Please complete all sections of the form.

Name:
Grade:
Specialty:
Names of Medical Education Manager or Leave approver for Dental:
I have informed the above named of my decision to appeal against the decision: YES/NO <i>Please delete as appropriate</i>
Details of Appeal:
Title of Course:
Dates of Study Leave:
Date of Online Leave Application:
Number of Days:
Study Leave Funding Required: YES/NO If Yes, please specify amount:
Funding Agreed:
Details of educational benefit of Study Leave:
Reasons for Appeal:
Signature: Date:

Please return the completed form to the Head of School/HEIW