

COVID-19 and Trainee Progression in 2020 (update III) – 27 April 2020

Please note this is primarily a UK-based document.

You can find the JCST's previous statements [here](#) and a separate statement from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) [here](#).

The JCST is an advisory body to the four Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and Ireland. It works closely with the Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs), the General Medical Council (GMC), the Confederation of Postgraduate Schools of Surgery (CoPSS), and Trainee and Specialty Associations.

Trainees' wellbeing and provision remains a high priority for all and we are continuing to work to find the safest and most pragmatic solutions to the current situation. We hope the information below addresses some of the current queries and offers further support and clarity.

This document includes updates and advice on the following:

- Wellbeing support
- ARCP management and outcome 10
- Training Interface Group (TIG) Fellowships
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Useful links

Given the rapidly changing nature of the current situation, the advice below may be subject to further changes.

Wellbeing support

As mentioned in previous statements, local offices and deaneries encourage trainees to go to their Trust's or Health Board's Director or Associate Director of Medical Education, or to their Educational Supervisor, Training Programme Director, Associate Postgraduate Dean or Programme Support Unit, if they need additional support.

A number of additional resources are also available at:

- Royal College of Surgeons of England – [Confidential Support and Advice Service – Helpline](#)
- NHS England/Improvement – includes a package of [wellbeing support](#), designed to help all NHS staff take steps to maintain their physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing. It includes:
 - a free wellbeing support helpline, providing confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice, including coaching, bereavement care, mental

health and financial help on **0300 131 7000**, available from 7.00 am – 11.00 pm seven days a week

- a 24/7 text alternative to the above helpline - simply text **FRONTLINE** to 85258
- [online](#) peer to peer, team and personal resilience support, including through [Silver Cloud](#), and free mindfulness apps including [Unmind](#), [Headspace](#), [Sleepio](#) and [Daylight](#).
- NHS Scotland – NHS Inform website [here](#)
 - Further resources also available on the Scotland Deanery website [here](#)
- NHS Wales – [Staff Wellbeing COVID-19 Portal](#)
- NHS Northern Ireland – NIDirect website [here](#)
- The Intensive Care Society's website [here](#)
- The [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges](#)' (AoMRC) website – includes a number of resources and advice.

ARCP management and Outcome 10

The four Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs) have recently published guidance on the management of ARCPs during the COVID-19 outbreak and the new outcome 10 – you can find it [here](#). We are now working with the SEBs on how this guidance and the new outcome will be applied in surgery.

We hope to be able to release further details in the next few days.

Training Interface Group (TIG) Fellowships

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt routine training, assessment and national selection. We understand this causes significant anxiety for all trainees, including TIG trainees who are near to, or at, the end of their training and awaiting appointment to a Consultant post.

The impact of COVID-19 on training is unfolding week by week and although we cannot form definite plans at the moment we are hoping to restart the TIG Fellowships as soon as it is reasonable and to do so with the minimum disruption to the Fellows, the training units and the TIG programme as a whole.

Training rotations in April and June have been deferred and previous JCST guidance can be found [here](#). The situation for August 2020 rotation is currently under review by the GMC and the four Statutory Education Bodies. The outcome of this decision will be shared as soon as possible.

Throughout this difficult time we realise that clinical exposure and experience during COVID-19 for trainees is variable across the whole of the UK. The Statutory Education Bodies have indicated that Out of Programme placements (which include TIG fellowships) cannot be permitted at present. This means that TIG fellowships due to start in June cannot do so. The impact of this is different for **current TIG Fellows**, those who had expected to start a TIG Fellowship in June 2020 (**new TIG appointees**) and those aspiring to apply to the Fellowship scheme in the future (**aspiring TIG applicants**).

The intention is that TIG Fellowships will remain 12 months in duration, but we will continue to review this as circumstances change and the situation evolves.

When TIG training recommences there will be a number of issues to address:

1. Current TIG Fellows

Many current TIG Fellows have been redeployed to their home deaneries/local offices to support the COVID-19 response. Trainees will return to their TIG placements to complete training if:

- They choose to
AND
- They need to continue further training to complete the TIG curriculum*

*These trainees will have first priority when it comes to allocating TIG posts as they become available again.

If the TIG Fellow was close to the end of their TIG training before redeployment then their portfolio will be assessed by the TIG group and completion of TIG training will be considered in collaboration with the trainee. Therefore, it may not be necessary to return to their TIG placement.

A minority of TIG Fellows have stayed in their TIG placements during the COVID-19 pandemic, their training will continue until the end of their placement. Experience acquired will be assessed in the usual way.

Those trainees who elect not to return to TIG training after redeployment and who have not completed the majority of the TIG curriculum, will have recorded the clinical skills and competences achieved in the Fellowship in their ISCP portfolio. However, a certificate of completion of TIG training cannot be awarded if the curriculum has not been completed – please see point above about those near the end of their TIG Fellowship.

Any trainee leaving their TIG Fellowship either temporarily or permanently will need to inform the JCST office. The trainee will need the agreement of the host TIG unit and their home deanery/HEE local office/Training Programme Director/School of Surgery.

2. New TIG appointees

The start of TIG Fellowships will be delayed and the preferred training post may not be available if the TIG Fellow, who was in that post previously, needs to return to it (see above).

If a new appointee's preferred post is already occupied by a current TIG Fellow, then several issues are raised:

- The training capacity of the unit
- Funding available to cover multiple salaries*

*If funding is available for multiple salaries, and there is sufficient training capacity in the same unit, the two Fellows can commence their posts simultaneously.

If a training unit does not have the training capacity for multiple Fellows, then the new TIG appointee will have the option to accept a vacancy in another training unit or have the option to delay the start of their Fellowship. This would have an impact at the next recruitment round.

3. Aspiring TIG applicants

National selection for TIG placements due to start in late 2020 to 2021 has been delayed and the application process may be potentially changed further due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Trainees will not be disadvantaged if they have not been able to sit the intercollegiate exam during the COVID-19 crisis (even if this means the exam has to be sat during the TIG Fellowship).

The number of TIG posts and units available in 2021 may be affected by the aftermath and impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 TIG Fellows.

More information about 2021 placements will be updated as the situation becomes clearer.

Out of Programme (OOP)

We are aware that some readers experienced difficulties with accessing Health Education England's (HEE) Out of Programme guidance so we are including a new link [here](#). If you come across difficulties with this link please go to HEE's website [here](#) – you will find the document in the 'Training' tab under *Guidance on facilitating the return of trainees on flexible training pathways - 9 April 2020*.

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) guidance continues to be available [here](#).

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) also includes guidance on Out of Programme on their FAQs page [here](#).

Useful links (updated)

- 1) [Gold Guide](#) (8th edition) released on 31 March 2020
 - includes derogation to GG8: 4.91 in response to COVID pandemic and impact on trainee progression assessments (ARCP) [here](#)
- 2) [Association of Surgeons in Training \(ASiT\)](#) webpage
 - includes COVID-19 resources
- 3) [British Orthopaedic Trainees' Association \(BOTA\)](#) website
 - includes latest COVID-19 updates
- 4) [GMC advice for Doctors](#) webpage
 - includes advice on doctors working outside their normal field of practice; doctors' own health; prioritising access to treatment; and more
- 5) [Health Education England \(HEE\)](#) webpage
 - includes section dedicated to trainees [here](#)
- 6) [NHS Education for Scotland \(NES\)](#) and [Scotland Deanery](#) webpages
 - includes useful documents section [here](#)
 - includes guidance on the need to balance increased calls for service delivery with training requirements and describes how training safety will be assured in more detail within Scotland
- 7) [Health Education and Improvement Wales \(HEIW\)](#) webpage
 - includes sections dedicated to trainees [here](#) and trainers [here](#)

- [guidance for Health Boards](#) – describes the need to balance increased calls for service delivery with training requirements and describes how training safety will be assured in more detail within Wales.
- 8) [Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency \(NIMDTA\)](#) webpage
 - includes FAQs and other information for trainees
- 9) Advice from the [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges](#)
 - overarching COVID-19 resource page [here](#)
 - guidance on exams for those in training [here](#)
- 10) Additional guidance and advice on COVID-19 is also available at:
 - [Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#)
 - [Royal College of Surgeons of England](#)
 - [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#)
 - [Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland](#)
- 11) Additional guidance and advice on COVID-19 is also available at:
 - [Society of Cardiothoracic Surgery \(SCTS\)](#)
 - [Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland \(ASGBI\)](#)
 - [Society of British Neurological Surgeons \(SBNS\)](#)
 - [British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons \(BAOMS\)](#)
 - [British Association of Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeons \(ENT UK\)](#)
 - [British Association of Paediatric Surgeons \(BAPS\)](#)
 - [British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons \(BAPRAS\)](#)
 - [British Orthopaedic Association \(BOA\)](#)
 - [British Association of Urological Surgeons \(BAUS\)](#)
 - [Vascular Society](#)

Please refer to JCST's previous statements [here](#) for additional links.

The following topics were addressed in previous JCST's statements released on:

- [17 April 2020:](#)
 - Wellbeing support
 - National Selection
 - [Guidance for recording COVID-19 experience in ISCP](#)
 - ARCPs management
 - Out of Programme (OOP)
 - Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC)
- [1 April 2020:](#)
 - National Selection
 - Training Interface Group (TIG) Fellowships
 - FRCS examination
 - Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC)
- [19 March 2020:](#)

- MRCS and Progression to ST3
- Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP)
- Workforce and training vacancies
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Trainee time off due to illness/self-isolation
- Training post rotations

Trainees and trainers (TPDs, AESs and CSs) should communicate regularly to enable trainees' concerns to be discussed openly and ways forward to be found. We encourage regular communication to ensure trainees are given the support they need.

The JCST will continue to endeavour to support trainees and trainers during these trying times, and will update all those involved in training on a regular basis as we monitor the situation.

This update will be posted as a news item on the [JCST](#) and [ISCP](#) websites and will be shared on Twitter [@JCST_Surgery](#).