

Supporting Flexible Training During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Managing Less Than Full Time (LTFT) Training

1. As the COVID-19 pandemic and second surge intensifies, NHS service providers are developing workforce plans to manage anticipated workload pressures. Postgraduate medical trainees provide a significant contribution to service and are an essential part of these plans. A number of recent communications have been circulated in relation to this planning process, for example, the provision of opportunity for academic trainees to return to a full-time clinical setting for a period of time.
2. Health Education England (HEE) has received an overwhelming number of responses from trainees currently working and training on a Less Than Full Time (LTFT) basis asking how they can provide additional support.
3. HEE supports the following principles to facilitate Less Than Full Time (LTFT) trainees into frontline service:
 - **LTFT trainees who would like to return on a full-time basis:** This should only be considered where appropriate in accordance with health and personal circumstances
 - **LTFT trainees who wish to increase their current working percentage:** This should only be considered where appropriate for the individual
 - **LTFT trainees who wish to remain LTFT:** Trainees will be supported in staying on their current WTE.
 - **On return to business as usual:** Trainees will automatically have the right to reduce their current working percentage and resume their original LTFT working arrangements.
4. Trainees considering these options may want to speak to their Educational Supervisor or Training Programme Director in the first instance before contacting their Local Office and employing Local Education Provider (LEP) to formally confirm their intentions. If increased hours are not sustainable these can be returned to previous levels.
5. Currently, HEE will continue to both honour existing arrangements and accept new LTFT applications. However, this is something that will be subject to further review in accordance with workforce pressures and need, as is required by the Gold Guide.
6. As per HEE guidance issued in July 2020, LTFT Category 3 applications in Emergency Medicine, Paediatrics, and Obstetrics and Gynaecology remain open, with implementation timelines reinstated at local office discretion in accordance with the Code of Practice.
7. We know you are all fully committed to responding to the needs of the patients and NHS at this unprecedented time and are deeply grateful for your continued hard work and commitment.

Management of Requests for Out of Programme (OOP) Activities

8. During a resurge phase of the COVID-19 virus, Out of Programme requests for Research (OOPR), Training (OOPT) or Experience (OOPE) or Career Break (OOPC) will continue to be considered. Approval of requests will be at the discretion of each postgraduate dean.
9. As part of our commitment to support trainees during and post COVID-19, HEE has extended our Out of Programme Pause (OOPP) initiative to postgraduate medical trainees across all specialties.
10. Recognising the impact of the pandemic on trainee wellbeing, OOPP provides up to a 12-month break from training and the opportunity to gain competencies which may have been missed during the pandemic. Doctor's experience and competences gained during an OOPP will be considered on return to their training programme.