



Trainee Leave Policy

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1.0 Purpose

This policy outlines the types of leave a GP trainee may apply for and the process by which leave is managed. It does not impede trainees' entitlement to annual leave or study leave or any other entitlements as part of their employment contract.

The following principles provide an overarching position on leave from GP training:

- The overriding considerations are the requirements of the curriculum, fairness to trainees, patient safety and consistency;
- Leave taken during training may have an impact on a trainee's ability to meet the legal minimum professional competency requirements;
- Unless the trainee is on an extended leave, a grace period of 10 training days of time out of training per year may be applied, excluding annual and study leave and bank/public holidays. This, however, is not an accruing right, and it is not a substitute for additional annual or study leave;
- The Scheme Directing Team (SDT) may at their discretion forego the grace period and require a trainee to make up all days out of training missed;
- Outside the grace period, for every training day missed, the trainee will be required to make up that time away from training at a ratio of 1:1.
- Trainees on extended leave must make up all training days missed. This is due to the increased risk of skills and knowledge degradation that may occur following an extended absence that should be addressed.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Identifying the types of leave a trainee needs to apply for with the training programme via their training Scheme
- Determining what quantum of leave needs to be "made up" i.e. requires additional time in training.

Leave allowances granted by the Irish College of GPs ("College" or "the College") relate to leave from the training programme only. Annual leave agreed to between the employer and the trainee in their work contract is not covered in this policy. This policy does not impinge upon trainee's statutory or employment rights.

3.0 Policy statement

3.1 Definitions

The following definitions apply:

Ordinary statutory leave

Statutory leave to which all trainees are entitled and which all trainees take as a matter of course. This includes:

- Annual leave;
- Study leave; and
- Bank holidays

Ordinary statutory leave is agreed by the trainee with the employer and notified to the training programme.

Extraordinary statutory leave

Statutory leave to which all trainees are entitled, and which trainees take in specific circumstances.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Maternity leave
- Medically certified sick leave
- Bereavement/Compassionate leave
- Paternity leave
- Parental leave
- Parent's leave
- Adoptive leave
- Carer's leave
- Compassionate leave
- Force majeure leave
- Domestic violence leave
- Jury duty
- Unpaid leave for the care of a dependent

Extraordinary statutory leave is agreed by the trainee with the employer and notified to the training programme.



Exceptional leave

Non-statutory leave, which trainees may take in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the training programme and the employer. This includes but is not limited to:

- Out of programme research experience
- Career break
- Out of programme clinical experience
- Out of programme for approved clinical training

Exceptional leave from the training programme is agreed by the trainee with the training programme in the first instance, then with the employer.

Planned absences

Absences from training which are foreseeable and can be notified and/or applied for ahead of time.

Unplanned absences

Absences from training which are not foreseeable and are notified as soon as is practicable. These can include, for example, sick leave without a medical certificate.

Training days

Training days equal working days as defined in the NCHD contract or the full-time equivalent. The calculation of the grace period and extended leave is based on the number of training days missed. The remediation pathway will depend on whether the missed days are cumulative or consecutive.

Grace period

Number of training days away from the GP Training Programme that a trainee is not required to remediate. Under this policy, the grace period is the full-time equivalent of 10 training days.

Extended absence from training

An absence of more than 10 consecutive training days (2 calendar weeks) not accounted for by ordinary statutory leave.

3.2 General principles

GP trainees may take time away from their programme. This can include planned or unplanned time away that may impact progression toward certification.

GP trainees should be open and transparent about absences from training, in line with their HSE contracts and reporting responsibilities, and must notify their training scheme of all absences, planned and unplanned.



This allows the employer, trainee, scheme director and trainers to prepare for a seamless transition out of the programme and work on a plan for the return of the trainee. It also allows schemes directors to determine how much time in training needs to be made up where absences from training exceed allowed limits.

This ensures:

- The safety and continuity of care to patients;
- A standard and consistent approach and fairness to all trainees;
- The overall training duration set out by the curriculum is met;
- That leave is documented correctly;
- The absence is evident to employers, GP trainers and scheme directing team; and
- The number of queries between the trainers, HSE and the College is reduced.

Statutory leave is an entitlement for all trainees and is agreed between them and their employer in their work contract and then notified to the training programme. In general, trainees should try to take leave from each training post in a proportionate manner.

Training time will not be accelerated because of time away from training. All elements for nomination of CSCST including out of hours arrangements over the course of training must be achieved. While trainees are on leave, they are not entitled to participate in formal educational activities, including day release, associated with their current training phase.

3.3 Calculation of absence from programme

Calculations are made per training year (i.e. July to July at NCHD changeover dates) and based on training days missed. Any day missed that is required to be remediated must be done so at a ratio of 1:1.

It is assumed that trainees take all their ordinary statutory leave as usual.

Trainees may be permitted a grace period of 10 training days cumulatively per training year due to extraordinary statutory and exceptional leave or any other unplanned absence such as for example sick leave without a medical certificate without the need to make up time in training. However, on a case-by-case basis, the Scheme Director, considering the holistic educational needs of the trainee, may require a trainee to make up all or some of the training days missed within the grace period.

Any time over 10 training days of absence cumulatively per training year apart from ordinary statutory leave must be made up.

Also, trainees who are not progressing as expected (as determined by the competency and progression committee) must make up all absences except for ordinary statutory leave.

The reader is referred to the Policy on Managing Absences from Training for detail on the impact of time away from training depending on the length and whether the absence is cumulative or consecutive.



3.3 Recording, requests and notification

Aside from the rights and requirements under their employment contract, GP trainees who take leave must report it to the training scheme via their ePortfolio as soon as it is practically feasible.

Planned leaves must be recorded before departure, and applications, when required, submitted to the training scheme at least 6 calendar weeks before the leave is proposed to start unless it is impractical to do so.

Unplanned leaves should be reported as soon as it is practically and reasonably possible. Unplanned leaves are usually the result of extenuating and unforeseen circumstances. These are circumstances which are outside the trainee's control and can reasonably be considered to have been unforeseen and can be shown to have a direct and significant impact on the trainee. The College considers extenuating and unforeseen circumstances on a case-by-case basis. As a rule, unplanned, non-statutory leaves will not be approved. Failure to resume training or demonstrate extenuating and unforeseen circumstances by the trainee may result in disciplinary action.

It is the trainee's responsibility to track the number of training days missed in a training year (July to July) due to extraordinary statutory leave. Trainees who take more, or intend to take more, than 10 training days of leave cumulatively per training year (excluding ordinary statutory leave) must notify their Scheme. In this scenario, trainees will be required to remediate their time away from training beyond the grace period or in whole or in part at the SDT's discretion.

Trainees who are on leave for more than 10 training days consecutively, excluding ordinary statutory leave, are deemed to be on extended leave. Trainees need to notify their Scheme when this happens.

4.0 Exceptional leave

Trainees who wish to take exceptional leave must first apply through their scheme directing team.

4.1 Application for exceptional leave

Applications for leave must be submitted in writing using the Trainee Exceptional Leave Application Form. Verbal notice will not be accepted as a trainee's intention.

Trainees may apply for leave for a maximum of 26 calendar weeks. An additional request for exceptional leave for a maximum of 26 calendar weeks may also be submitted for a total maximum of 52 calendar weeks.

The total number of days away from training since the last application (except for ordinary statutory leave) must be added on the Application Form, stating the cumulative total of all periods of absence for review by the Scheme Director.



4.2 Review

The SDT will review an application for exceptional leave within 15 working days of receipt of all necessary documentation.

Requests for exceptional leave will be reviewed based on their merit at the discretion of the SDT. Cases may also be referred to the GP Training Directorate for decision.

Various factors will be reviewed, including:

- Timing of the absence
- History of absence
- Benefit to the trainee's education and professional development
- Benefit to the medical community
- Impact on the trainee's progress in the training phase

The SDT will notify the trainee of their decision in writing.

The Scheme Director and/or GP Training Directorate may recommend a deferral of commencement of training to the trainee in lieu of approving leave if it is practical and does not negatively impact recruitment of trainees or rotations and is not in breach of employment law.

5.0 Return from leave

For information on managing a return to training after an extended leave or making up time away, refer to the Policy on Managing Absences from Training. Managing return to work arrangements should be done in consultation with the employer.

6.0 Worked examples of leave calculations

6.1 Anne, who is going on maternity leave

Anne is 34 weeks pregnant and intends to take a total of 26 weeks of maternity leave. She has already had this approved by her employer. She is now notifying the training programme. She has taken her annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in this training year. Her period of leave is due to start in September.

Assuming Anne delivers at term and does not extend her period of maternity leave she:

- Must remediate all time away from training (26 weeks or $5 \times 26 = 130$ training days).

6.2 Mahrukh, who has had to take sick leave

Mahrukh had been admitted to hospital and is on medically certified sick leave. She estimates that she will require a period of 8 weeks from the onset of her illness to full recovery and resume training. Her period of absence started in January. She has taken her annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in this training year.

Assuming her timeline for recovery is as estimated, Mahrukh:

- Must remediate all time away from training (or $5 \times 8 = 40$ training days) upon her return to training

6.3 Sean, who is going on paternity and parent's leave

Sean's partner is due a baby on July 1. He has applied for both paternity leave and parents' leave, and both have been approved by his employer. He will be absent from training for a total of 9 weeks from 1 June 2024 to 22 July 2024. The changeover date this year is 8 July. He has taken annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in the training year to date.

Assuming his partner delivers at term, Sean:

- Can be absent for up to 10 training days in this training year without the need to make up training because there are only 5 training days missed in the training year (i.e. the training year before July 8)
- Must remediate all remaining time away from training upon his return to training because he is considered to be on extended leave for the new training year starting July 8 (9 weeks minus 1 week from the previous training year is 8 weeks or $5 \text{ training days} \times 8 \text{ weeks} = 40$ training days)

6.4 Geeta, who needs to take bereavement leave

In August, Geeta took 5 days of medically certified sick leave. In September, she took 3 days of unpaid leave to care for her mother who is a dependent. Her mother passed away in October and Geeta took a further 4 days of bereavement leave. This has been approved by her employer.

- Geeta has taken a total of 12 days of leave in this training year
- She is permitted a grace period of 10 training days which the SDT does not require her to make up because she is otherwise progressing as expected
- She thus needs to make up 2 training days

6.5 Adil, who has had to take sick leave

Adil has been admitted to hospital and is on medically certified sick leave. He estimates that he will require a period of 4 weeks from the onset of his illness to full recovery and resumption of training. His period of absence started in March. He has taken his annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in this training year.

At his last CPC, it was determined that Adil was not progressing as expected due to significant educational need(s).

Assuming his timeline for recovery is as estimated, Adil:

- Needs to make up all 4 weeks of his absence from training

6.6 Fiona, who intends to take parental leave

Fiona has applied for parental leave, and it has been approved by her employer. She intends to take one day's leave per week for a total of 28 weeks from September 2024 to April 2025. She intends to take her annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in this training year.

Fiona:

- Is permitted a grace period of 10 training days to which the SDT does not require her to make up
- She thus needs to make up at total of 18 days of training

6.7 Olu, who has applied for exceptional leave

Olu has applied for exceptional leave for a period of 12 weeks to undertake an out of programme period of research. This was approved in the first instance by his training scheme director in conjunction with the GP training directorate, and then by his employer. He intends to take his annual leave and study leave as usual and has taken no other statutory or exceptional leave in this training year.

Olu:

- Is considered on extended leave and has no grace period permitted
- He thus needs to make up 12 weeks in training or (12 X 5 = 60 training days)

7.0 Roles and responsibilities

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|-------------------------|---|
| GP Training Directorate | Review and approve/deny requests for exceptional leave submitted by the Scheme Director, where appropriate. |
| Scheme Director | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approve/deny requests for exceptional leave • Submit the trainee's application for exceptional leave to the GP Training Directorate as appropriate. • Notify the trainee of the outcome of the leave application within 15 working days. |
| GP Trainee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify and / or apply for their leave within a reasonable time period for the type of leave using either the Trainee Exceptional Leave Application Form or the Trainee Statutory Leave Notification Form. |

8.0 Related and supporting documentation

- Policy on Managing Absences from Training
- Trainee Statutory Leave Notification Form
- Trainee Exceptional Leave Application Form
- Remediation of Time Away Procedure
- Return to Training Procedure

9.0 Contact

GP Training Quality Assurance and Enhancement
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