

Study Leave Guidance for Psychiatry Postgraduate Doctors in Training
North West School of Psychiatry

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been designed to assist Postgraduate Doctors in Training in Psychiatry, referred to as Postgraduate Doctors in this guidance, who are applying for Study Leave. However, it will also assist Clinical & Lead Supervisors, TPDs, Rota Coordinators and Specialty Study Leave Administrators who may be involved in the application process.
- 1.2 This document is intended to provide speciality specific guidance for Postgraduate Doctors who are applying for Study Leave and should be used in conjunction with the NHS England Postgraduate Medical & Dental Education Study Leave Guidelines.

2. Purpose of Study Leave

- 2.1 Study Leave should normally be planned as an integral part of a training programme and should be used to provide education and training not otherwise easily acquired in the workplace setting. It should be discussed and agreed with the Clinical and Educational Supervisors, with reference to the relevant curriculum competencies.
- 2.2 Educational activities within Study Leave time should support Postgraduate Doctors to achieve their curriculum activities and therefore improve the care offered to patients.
- 2.3 Study Leave activities should routinely be part of the appraisal dialogue with outcomes contributing to assessments. They should also be part of the documentation accumulated by doctors for revalidation.

3. Entitlement to Study Leave

- 3.1 The GMC's "Promoting Excellence" states that "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".
- 3.2 Any Study Leave request is however subject to the need to maintain NHS services and therefore must be authorised by the employing Trust.
- 3.3 Postgraduate Doctors have a Study Leave allowance of 30 days per year. LTFT (less than full time) Postgraduate Doctors will receive equitable access to Study Leave, which will in practice be a pro rata time allowance.
- 3.4 For CT1 and CT2 Postgraduate Doctors, approximately 27 days of their Study Leave allowance will be taken up by attendance at the MRCPsych Core Psychiatry Programme (12 days) and the Local Academic Programme (15 days). However, it is accepted that Postgraduate Doctor may not be able to attend all these 27 days due to other commitments such as on call shifts, annual leave, sickness etc. A further 2 days of Study Leave are therefore allowed on a discretionary basis to compensate for this. CT1 & CT2

Postgraduate Doctors will therefore have a total of 5 days of discretionary Study Leave allowed, in addition to their attendance at the Regional & Local Academic Programmes.

- 3.5** A minimum of 70% attendance per year at the Regional & Local Academic Programme is expected in order to meet ARCP requirements. Postgraduate Doctors who do not meet this minimum attendance rate may not have other discretionary Study Leave agreed.
- 3.6** It is not compulsory for CT3 Postgraduate Doctors to attend the Regional & Local Academic Programmes, assuming they have met minimum requirements for attendance in previous years. It is however expected that they will attend their Local Programme to contribute to discussions for case conferences and journal club, unless they have other commitments or have insufficient study leave remaining.
- 3.7** Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) Postgraduate Doctors are required to be released to attend their compulsory University teaching days, in addition to and irrespective of their use of Study Leave to attend the MRCPsych and Local Academic Programmes.
- 3.8** Attendance at an MRCPsych examination should be applied for as a day of Study Leave.
- 3.9** CT3 Postgraduate Doctors can request up to a maximum of 7 days leave per year for personal study.
- 3.10** The time allowance for LTFT Postgraduate Doctors is calculated pro rata. For example, a Postgraduate Doctor working LTFT at 60% would have an allowance of 18 days per year. However, a Postgraduate Doctor may request to take greater than the pro rata allocation within a calendar year to enable them to take advantage of particular learning opportunities, with a corresponding reduction in the subsequent Study Leave allowance for the time remaining within that core training year. LTFT postgraduate doctors will have access to the same financial budget per year as full time postgraduate Doctors.
- 3.11** When calculating Study Leave, all the days carrying a liability for expenses are counted, including weekends and Bank Holidays. Time spent travelling to and from the event is also counted.
- 3.12** Study Leave may be granted above the general limit allowed on a discretionary basis, provided safe service delivery can be maintained and there is clear educational benefit to the trainee.
- 3.13** Study Leave is not an entitlement but an allowance, enabling Postgraduate Doctors to enhance the learning opportunities available to them. It is expected that Postgraduate Doctors will meet their Clinical Supervisor and where possible their Educational Supervisor to plan Study Leave within the context of their personalised professional development plan.
- 3.14** TPDs should consider applications for educational activity which is relevant to the curriculum and which will contribute to the Postgraduate Doctor's individual learning plan. They will also need to assess each individual

application in relation to the needs of other Postgraduate Doctor on the programme, ensuring equality with other Postgraduate Doctor. **To enable TPDs to understand the value of the course to the Postgraduate Doctor's PDP, a short document detailing how the educational activity meets their learning needs will be required on application.**

- 3.15** Study Leave includes but is not restricted to participation in:
- The Regional & Local Academic Programmes
 - Teaching or examining
 - Presenting at professional conferences
 - Attending specialist clinics
 - Sitting examinations
 - Private Study (not research)
- 3.16** Study Leave for exam preparation purposes can now be considered as they may reduce the number of extensions of training as a result of exam failure. For a 12-month pilot period from April 2024, Postgraduate Doctors can apply for funding for one exam preparation course per exam over the course of training, including question bank subscription or CASC preparation (i.e. one course for paper A, one course for paper B, one course for CASC). Funding can only be provided up to the nominal study leave amount each year, as these courses are not required for curriculum.
- 3.17** Study leave will only be available for those in OOPT where there is clear evidence linking the application to a specific curriculum requirement.
- 3.18** Trainees who are absent from work for the following reasons are not generally eligible for study leave:
- maternity/paternity leave
 - sick leave • adoption leave
 - compassionate paid/unpaid leave
 - any other paid or unpaid leave i.e. jury service.
- 3.19** In exceptional circumstances, study leave may still be possible for some trainees in the above categories. Trainees should seek clarification of the contractual and medical indemnity issues with the relevant Lead Employer and the provider of the course/conference/educational programme which they have applied to attend. This should then be shared with the TPD to inform the decision making process.
- 3.20** Study Leave in OOP will only be available to trainees who are Out of Programme, OOPT. There must be clear evidence linking the application to the specific curriculum requirement for the trainee's individual specialty.

4 Study Leave Funding

- 4.1** Recent changes within NHS England guidance state that there is now no longer a formal individual cap to the budget. However, the notional Study Leave budget per year per Postgraduate Doctor is approximately £767. Applications will therefore be considered on an individual basis. This financial allocation is not an entitlement but an allowance. It is however expected that funding that is, in exceptional circumstances, granted in

excess of the estimated value is to support activities that have been clearly validated as educationally appropriate within the Postgraduate Doctors' learning plan.

- 4.2 In CT1 and CT2, a proportion of the budget is top-sliced to provide the Regional & Local Academic Programmes. This will vary dependent on course costs but still leaves around 60% of study leave budget for educational activity. CT1 and CT2 can still apply for study leave for educational activities within the 7 days available.
- 4.3 Study Leave funding is not available for exam fees, but travel, accommodation and subsistence can be applied for. For 1st and 2nd exam attempts, leave with pay plus expenses can be applied for. Subsequent attempts are eligible for paid leave only.
- 4.4 For overnight accommodation within London, the overnight rate should not exceed £150 per night, proof of payment and confirmation of number of days and dates are required, this applies to stays outside of London as well. For overnight accommodation outside London including overseas should not exceed £120 per night.
- 4.5 Travel expenses can be reimbursed @ 23p per mile, up to a maximum of a standard class return from a trainee's base hospital to the course/conference venue.
- 4.6 Subsistence payments can be claimed up to a maximum of £20 per day. Itemised receipts are required for payment to be approved.
- 4.7 Travel expenses to and from the Regional & Local Academic Programmes are not covered by the Study Leave budget and should be applied for from the Postgraduate Doctor's local Trust.
- 4.8 If a training program provides a particular course, then alternative or additional similar courses will not usually be funded unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- 4.9 Postgraduate Doctors are encouraged to utilise Early Bird registrations to maximise their study leave budget.
- 4.10 The TPD will review and decide upon the most appropriate course, taking into account quality and cost.
- 4.11 The Study Leave budget year runs from 1st March – 28/29 February. The Study Leave year runs from Aug - Aug. The time will be taken from the leave year in which the 1st day of the Study Leave falls, and not from the year in which it was applied for.
- 4.12 Educational activities considered for Study Leave may include the payment of a course/conference fees, in which situation the Postgraduate Doctor can request a contribution or in some cases the whole fee. **The degree of support provided will depend on the presence of an individual learning plan with clear objectives and as assessment of how the educational activity aids attainment of these objectives. The Postgraduate Doctor is expected to include details of this in application and absence of this may lead to application being rejected.**

5 International Study Leave

- 5.1** Requests to attend international study courses/conferences will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances, including:
- The presentation of specific research findings from within a NIHR recognised academic clinical fellowship or clinical lectureship
 - For the presentation of research undertaken as part of a clinical training programme where the training course is not available in the UK
 - Where the course or activity is part of the College curriculum or guidelines on required training.
 - Where the training course is not available in the UK, and where the course or activity is set out as a mandatory requirement of college training to reach the required standard to practise.
- 5.2** Applications for international study leave where the Postgraduate Doctor will be presenting should take priority.
- 5.3** The course/conference must provide a clearly stated curriculum outcome and there must be a documented discussion with the ES as to how it meets curriculum requirements. A full programme should be provided.
- 5.4** One international meeting, providing all the other curriculum requirements are met, will be considered during core training.
- 5.5** If attending an international event is evidenced to be cheaper than a UK alternative/equivalent, then the international opportunity can be approved and will not count as the one international meeting approved.
- 5.6** International study leave could occur when the learning outcomes from the course/conference are not available in the UK. Locations as close to the trainee's base as possible should be expected.
- 5.7** NHSE will consider funding EITHER the full cost of the course/conference OR the full cost of economy travel and accommodation, whichever is the lower amount.
- 5.8** Overnight accommodation rate should not exceed £120 per night in line with the agreed maximum rate for study budget claims.
- 5.9** Subsistence expenses will not normally be reimbursed by NHSE.
- 5.10** If a Postgraduate Doctor wishes to fund a period of international study leave by other means, this can be considered for approval of time only, as long as the activity aligns to the individual PDP.
- 5.11** Any working days spent travelling to or from such an event would be required by the Postgraduate Doctor to be taken as annual leave.

- 5.12 The final decision for support for overseas events rests with the relevant Associate Dean, on behalf of the Postgraduate Dean.

6 **Application Process**

- 6.1 CT1 & CT2 Postgraduate Doctors are not required to submit applications for leave to attend the Local & Regional Teaching Programmes.
- 6.2 Applications for study leave should be made via the Accent system <https://accent.hicom.co.uk/Portal/Live/Web/> Applications should be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance of the leave date.
- 6.3 **Alongside an application, Postgraduate Doctors are required to attach an explanation of how the learning activity will allow them to meet their curriculum requirement.**
- 6.4 In general the deadline for return of any expense claim forms is 3 months from the 1st day of the course (or before end of February, whichever comes first).
- 6.5 Study Leave expenses are paid via salary.
- 6.6 Postgraduate Doctors must ensure their local role coordinator is made aware of any planned Study Leave. It is ultimately the trainee's responsibility to swap any on call or other commitments arising during the planned Study Leave period.

April 2024