

Training Handbook: Higher Specialist Training, Public Health Medicine 2025/2026





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Foreword

This document was prepared by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) and the Faculty of Public Health Medicine. It provides important information in relation to the Public Health Medicine Training Programme and the Rules and Regulations relating to it.

This Training Handbook replaces previously published documents and reflects the continuously evolving nature of training in the above specialty. It refers to published RCPI policies which should be read in conjunction with this Handbook.



Important

Information in this document is accurate at the date of publication. However, regulations are continually evolving and up-to-date information should be obtained from RCPI if in doubt. The most up-to-date version of this document will always be available on the [RCPI Website](#).

While other institutions are referenced, (e.g. Medical Council, Health Service Executive, National Doctors Training and Planning) we have given our interpretation of their regulations but the institutions themselves should be contacted for definitive information.

There is inevitably some repetition in this document as it is intended to be used as a reference. If regulations are unclear or seem contradictory, RCPI or the Specialty Training Body (The Faculty of Public Health Medicine) will determine the correct interpretation.



Governance of RCPI Training Programmes

Governance Structure

There are six accredited postgraduate training bodies under the umbrella of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland:

- Faculty of Occupational Medicine
- Faculty of Pathology
- Faculty of Paediatrics
- Faculty of Public Health Medicine
- Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Institute of Medicine

The accredited Training Body oversees the development and delivery of the postgraduate training programme.

The Faculty of Public Health Medicine oversees the delivery and development of the Higher Specialist Training (HST) programme in Public Health Medicine.

The day-to-day running of the programme is conducted by the National Specialty Director (NSD). The NSD runs the Specialty Training Committee (STC) for the Public Health Medicine training programme. A key responsibility of the NSD is to provide advice, career guidance and support to Trainees on issues relating to training, examinations and general queries relating to the specialty. The NSD and STC report to the Board of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine and meet quarterly at a minimum.

The duration of HST in Public Health Medicine is 4 years in supervised and approved training posts for Trainees who have completed their Master's in Public Health by the commence of the HST programme. Trainees who have not completed their Master's in Public Health or an equivalent degree course prior to commencing Year 1 of HST will have a 4.5 years programme duration.

RCPI Trainers

The aim of the College is to continue to strive for education and training excellence for all our Trainees, at all levels and in all locations across Ireland. Trainers play a crucial role in the delivery of our HST programmes. They guide Trainees along the path to becoming a specialist and help the next generation



of medical leaders reach their full potential. RCPI recognises that the quality of training depends largely on Trainers' clinical experience and expertise, along with their competence, aptitude, attitudes and abilities as good role models.

The primary focus of the RCPI Trainer is to oversee RCPI Trainees' development and education at all training levels through their involvement in teaching, training, evaluation and supervision. Normally, at HST level, no Trainer can have more than one HST Clinical Trainee. Under exceptional circumstances this rule may not apply.

The core responsibilities of the Trainer are to:

- Understand the requirements of training
- Meet with the Trainee in their first weeks in a post and agree the Trainee's Personal Goal Plan
- Facilitate attendance at educational activities
- Act as a supervisor to the Trainee
- Appraise the Trainee's progress at regular intervals during the post
- Provide feedback and motivation to the Trainee
- Monitor progress and performance
- Attend Trainee annual evaluations. Attendance is mandatory for Penultimate Year Evaluations only and highly desirable for first year Annual Evaluations.
- Complete the End of Post assessment and sign relevant activities in the Trainee's ePortfolio

A maximum of one training year can be spent with the same Trainer. The following criteria must be met to be a registered Trainer:

- Registered on the relevant Specialist Division of the Medical Council Register
- Registered on a Professional Competence Scheme
- Practising at consultant level/equivalent post in Ireland
- Complete the Physicians as Trainers Essential Skills course
- Complete the Trainer's Refresher course when required
- Fellow of the relevant training body (RCPI or one of our Faculties/Institutes). Please note, this is desirable but not mandatory.

Trainers must be accredited, CPD compliant, up to date with prescribed RCPI courses for Trainers, and they should be in good standing with the Faculty. The NSD, with the advice of the STC Committee if required, allocates the Trainee to a training site. Subsequently, the head of department, in consultation



with the liaison Trainer, will decide on the appointment of the Trainee to a Trainer. A different Trainer should generally be appointed for each Trainee on an annual basis. In a situation where a Trainer is not meeting core responsibilities, the situation will be reviewed by the NSD and Dean. Non-performing Trainers will not be permitted to continue as Trainers for PHM HST.

The RCPI Trainees' Committee

The goal of the RCPI Trainees' Committee is to represent Trainees' interests and work towards improving training. The Committee takes an active interest in postgraduate specialist training and acts as an important interface between Trainees and the College.

Members of the RCPI Trainees' Committee, including a representative from the HST in Public Health Medicine, represent Trainees on the College Council, the Advisory Committee and the Examinations Committee.

The Trainees' Committee is also responsible for the organisation of several Trainee Awards including:

- The Corrigan Medal
- The David Mitchell Award
- The William Stokes Award
- The Kate McGarry Prize
- The Dorothy Stopford Price Medal

Trainees are encouraged to get involved with the Trainees' Committee. For information on the Trainees' Committee please email trainees@rcpi.ie. For a list of current Trainees' Committee members and details on the role please see the [Trainee's Committee RCPI Webpage](#).

Training Post Evaluation

Each year, you will be required to complete a short online Training Post Evaluation. In it, you are asked to evaluate the training post that you have just completed. This includes the working conditions and the training-related supports available to you in that post.

Your honest feedback is enormously important to us, as it helps RCPI identify any issues affecting the quality of training in specific posts or sites, so that we can act and continue to drive improvements in training.



Regulations Relating to Higher Specialist Training

Point of Entry (Recognition of Prior Training)

Entry to the HST Programme is once a year, in July. Trainees enter year one of the programme.

Recognition of prior training, in most cases, is not possible. Trainees must complete all years and requirements of each programme to be awarded a Certificate of Successful Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST). Retrospective recognition may be considered, in some programmes, if the previous experience formed part of a recognised, structured training programme, successfully completed within the previous five years. Trainees will be expected to submit a full application with relevant supporting documentation including, logbooks, evaluations, curricula documents and appraisals.

Such requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This is applied for in advance of the first year Annual Evaluation through the Recognition of Prior Training Policy and any credit is subject to approval by the Evaluation Panel.

Training Posts and Organisation of Training

The duration of HST in PHM is 4 or 4.5 years in supervised approved training posts.

Phase One

The first 2 years are spent in a clinical post in a regional Department of Public Health (2.5 years if a Master of Public Health is undertaken in Year 1).

The earlier years in training will usually be directed towards acquiring a broad general experience of PHM under appropriate supervision. An increase in the content of hands-on experience follows naturally, and, as confidence grows and abilities are acquired, the Specialist Registrar will be encouraged to assume a greater degree of responsibility and independence. All trainees will participate in OOH Health Protection, where they will move to 5/7 rosters and work a 1:6 roster, under the supervision of the CPHM on call in the region they are assigned to. They will join the roster after a period of time where their trainer deems them competent and this will continue for the duration of training.

Phase Two

Training will normally include two to three specialised training attachments of six months duration each.



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These should occur during the final two years/eighteen months of training. The last six to twelve months of their training should be completed in a regional Department of Public Health other than the Department of initial appointment. During this period, they should gain leadership and management experience and act as CPHM level during that time

The training programme will provide opportunities to fulfil all the requirements of the curriculum of training for PHM. All Specialist Registrars are required to rotate through more than one location as approved by RCPI and the Faculty of PHM. Specialty training locations available may include: HSE National Health Intelligence Unit, Department of Health, , National Immunisation Office (NIO), HSE National Cancer Control Programme, Global Health Programme, National Screening Service, Office of National Director of Public Health, Office of the National Clinical Director for Health Protection Health Protection which includes the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), Child Health, National Health Improvement Office, National Health Service Improvement Office and the World Health Organisation. Available training sites may vary from year to year and additional locations may become available in the future. Relevant out of programme experience is allowed for a period of up to 6 months, if approved by the National Specialty Director. This is limited to the final two years of training.

In certain circumstances where, for example, a Specialist Registrar may wish to pursue further training in an area of special interest approved by the Faculty of PHM, the possibility of a further 12 months of training may be accredited i.e. for example post CSCST Fellowship, dependent on development and funding.



Phases of Training and Milestones

Year 1	Health Protection induction / on call Sit MFPHMI Part I for those who have not yet passed Part I. This is a requirement of the scheme. Completion of MPH/ Part I academic training for those undertaking this Initial coverage of core competencies in PHM Initial coverage of generic components
Year 2	MFPHMI Part I should be completed by the end of year 1 of training, and must be completed by the end of year 2 of training (requirement of scheme) Further coverage of core competencies in PHM Further coverage of generic components
Year 3/4	MFPHMI Part II preparation - initiation of Public Health reports (PHR) MFPHMI Part II completion expected by end of third year of training MFPHMI Part III completion expected by end of programme Health policy experience Advocacy experience Increase in leadership roles Senior public health experience at regional level Rotation through specialist sites as outlined above Rotation to a second Dept. of Public Health. Senior responsibility including shadowing/ acting for CPHM/SPHM on call. Further coverage of generic components

The structure of the training programme may vary according to the qualifications, experience and career intentions of the individual Specialist Registrar. There is a requirement to be on site at least 3 days in the first two years and in the final year of the training programme, and 2 days on site while on specialty placement.

A date of appointment to the approved post will be the starting point of the training programme and the Specialist Registrar will start in Year 1 of the training programme. Retrospective recognition may be granted if the Specialist Registrar is transferring from a similar training programme elsewhere. The Specialist Registrar will be formally advised of the date of enrolment into the training programme by the Medical Training Department. The Specialist Registrar will also be advised of the expected date of completion of Higher Specialist Training.

All training locations are inspected by RCPI. All trainers must be accredited by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine and RCPI.

Each post within the programme will have a named trainer and the programme is under the direction of the National Specialty Director(s). Progression of learning is documented in the progress log at regular assessments throughout the year. Trainers and trainees discuss progression during these assessments. Whilst trainee progress is ultimately at the discretion of the trainer, trainees can seek a

second opinion or appeal to the National Specialty Director(s) at any point during the training year.

The experience gained through rotation through different departments is recognised as an essential part of HST. Specialist Registrars should not as a rule remain in the same training location for longer than 2.5 years. Specialist Registrars should rotate trainers annually, where possible, in consultation with the NSDs on a case-by-case basis.

Other experience related to the Specialist Registrar's personal specialist interests and overseas experiences, if applicable, may be applied for, and requires educational approval to be obtained in advance.

Specialists/Consultants in PHM operate an out-of-hours service (this is a 24/7 on call service for health protection including infectious diseases, environmental health and public health emergencies). Therefore, Specialist Registrars will engage in on call activities at an early stage of training during their working hours to become competent in health protection. In the first two years this is at the level of first/second responder on call during working hours under supervision of CPHM/SPHM. In the 3rd year Specialist Registrars will be expected to take a lead in health protection incidents/investigations. In the final year, Specialist Registrars may work as acting Specialist/Consultant on-call during work hours. Specialist Registrars are responsible for ensuring they remain up to date with on-call issues and maintaining their on-call competencies throughout their cycle of training.

The Specialist Registrar will be entitled to a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST) on satisfactory completion of the training programme. To qualify for a CSCST, a Specialist Registrar must have satisfactorily completed HST based on annual reviews and have been awarded MFPHMI. On receipt of the Accreditation Committee's recommendation, the applicant will be notified whether issue of a CSCST has been authorised through the Medical Training Department.

Annual Allocation of Training Posts

The purpose of your Phase One training placement is to provide:

- the opportunity to work as an integral part of a public health team
- broad, generic experience across the domains of public health practice

The initial training placement is a decision for the NSD, informed by advice from a subgroup of the STC



where required. SpRs are informed of their initial training placement at least 12 weeks in advance of commencing training. Initial placements are for two years (whole time equivalent training time) and will be based in regional departments of public health, capable of providing training in all curriculum competency areas. Entrants without a master's in public health, or equivalent, and who need to undertake formal academic training to achieve this, will usually be required to spend 2.5 years in the initial training post (whole time equivalent training time). Site allocation for those undertaking part-time training will generally take place on a pro-rata basis. Decisions on training location are based on:

- Place (1st, 2nd etc) awarded by the panel at interview for HST
- Incoming SpR preferences
- Availability and geographic location of vacant training posts
- Fair distribution of posts across the training sites
- Availability of training posts with a sufficient number of Trainers meeting all RCPI criteria and working in sites that have been inspected and approved by RCPI

Participation of SpRs in academic Part 1 training does not influence decision-making regarding training placements.

Post swaps between trainees may, on occasion, be approved by the National Specialty Director(s) subject to the following parameters: Both parties involved must mutually agree to the change. No pressure or coercion should be involved, and full consent must be given by both trainees. All post swaps must be independently validated and approved by the Royal College of Physicians. This ensures that the swap complies with the programme and curricula requirements, and does not negatively impact the training objectives of either trainee

Training Site Environment

All training posts and the training environment are monitored by RCPI through the Training Site Quality Improvement (QI) model. This model evaluates the Trainee, Trainer and site environmental factors that influence training outcomes. Further information is available on the [Quality Enhancement Office Website](#)

Exams

Please note the most up to date information related to your Membership of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine Exams will always be available on the [Membership Examinations Webpage](#)

Facilities

Your training site must provide an appropriate training environment and facilities that will allow you to develop the knowledge, skills and clinical judgement essential for your specialty. Physical facilities should include enough space for research and study. You should also have access to professional literature and information technology.

We inspect all training locations approved for training to ensure that they meet these requirements and plan to introduce an accreditation process for this purpose.

Flexible/ Less Than Full Time Training

It is the policy of the RCPI training bodies to advocate for flexible training. Whilst the training programme is full-time, it is recognised that some Trainees may have individual circumstances that mean that training on a full-time, continuous basis would not be practical for them. All Trainees, with the exception of Year 1 BST's are eligible to apply.

Trainees can apply for flexible training through two routes:

- HSE Job Sharing
- HSE Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme

HSE National Flexible Training Scheme

The HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) operates a National Flexible Training Scheme, which allows a small number of Trainees to train part-time for a set period of time.

Applications may be made for flexible training by all Trainees excluding first year BST. This scheme is not recommended for final year Trainees. You must have a well-founded reason to apply, e.g. responsibility for young children or elderly relatives, or personal family circumstances. You cannot apply for flexible training in order to pursue other paid work or research.

Participation on the flexible training scheme will be restricted to a maximum of two years and will only be extended by NDTP in exceptional circumstances. This is to provide as many Trainees as possible with the option to train flexibly.

Please refer to the HSE website on [Flexible Training](#) in order to find the most up to date Flexible Training policy, application form and terms and conditions.

Job Sharing

Postgraduate Trainees on the HST Programmes can avail of job-sharing opportunities for a set period of time.

These posts involve matching 2 trainees in a site to share a 0.5 WTE post. Additional funding is available in some circumstances, allowing trainees to work at greater than 0.5 WTE for the duration of the job share.

A training post can be shared by two Trainees who:

- Are training in the same specialty *and*
- Are within two adjacent years of each other on the training programme

Applications may be made up to 12 months in advance of the proposed date of commencement of the job share post and received no later than the month of October of the previous year of commencement.

Please refer to the [Job-Sharing](#) policy document for more information on how to apply and further information on the regulations of job sharing.

Post Reassignment

In some instances, it may be necessary for Trainees to apply to have their allocation post changed to another training site. Please review the [Post Re-Assignment policy](#) for more information.

The aim of post re-assignment is to support Trainees who have had an unforeseen and significant change in their personal circumstances since the commencement of their current training programme which requires a change to the agreed post/rotation.

Leave of Absence

Leave of absence may only be taken in special circumstances only e.g. maternity leave or sick leave.

This leave must be applied for prospectively to the Specialty Coordinator using the Leave of Absence Application Form and approved by the National Specialty Director(s). CSCST dates will be amended, if

necessary, at this time.

HST Trainees may take up to three months consecutive leave of absence from training for maternity, paternity and related leave or sick leave only within the duration of the programme with no impact to their CSCST date. After three months, credit will no longer be accumulated and the date of CSCST will be extended accordingly.

Any changes to the approved leave of absence, must be brought to the attention of the Specialty Coordinator and further approval from the NSD(s) should be sought.

In the absence of special circumstances (e.g. maternity leave or sick leave), Trainees must complete the rotation they are allocated to for the duration of the post. If a Trainee is mid-post and wishes to take a leave of absence under circumstances that are not considered special, they are obliged to complete the post in order to fulfil the employment commitment to the clinical site.

When the cumulative duration of leave exceeds three months, the Trainee must make up this shortfall in training. Extended sick leave and its impact on the date of CSCST will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Trainees returning from a leave of absence must notify their RCPI Specialty Coordinator in writing with as much advance notice as possible. Trainees are not guaranteed a post immediately but will be given the first available post.

All applications for leave of absence should be made prospectively in writing to the NSD, via the Training Coordinator using the [RCPI Leave of Absence Form](#)

Maternity, Paternity and related Leave

Maternity, paternity and related leave should be discussed and applied for directly with your employer. You must also seek approval from RCPI through the leave of absence process as outlined above. Please refer to the [HSE website](#) for more details.

Parental Leave

If a Trainee takes parental leave, they will have to make up this time on the programme and the date of CSCST will be extended accordingly. This includes parental leave taken in blocks or as part of a



shortened week. the date of CSCST will be extended accordingly. You must also seek approval from RCPI through the leave of absence process as outlined above.

Out of Clinical Programme Experience (OCPE)

OCPE cannot be taken until Year 3 of the programme. A maximum of one-year credit for OCPE may be sought to pursue the following:

- A specialist training opportunity (for example a clinical fellowship) in Ireland or abroad approved by the training body; OR
- A dedicated research post approved by the training body; OR
- A suitable academic post approved by the training body

Trainees can receive up to 12 months credit towards their training programme on OCPE. If more than 12 months is spent in these posts, for example if a Trainee does 12 months in a clinical fellowship and 12 months research, only 12 months will be recognised towards completion of training.

Trainees must complete the [OCPE form](#) before taking up an OCPE research, clinical or lecturer post. All applications must be made prospectively. Sufficient time must be allowed for enquiries to be made about a proposed OCPE post if credit is to be awarded towards completion of Higher Specialist Training (HST). This form must be submitted to the Training Coordinator. Completed applications must be received at least six months before the proposed OCPE start date. OCPE is not guaranteed. The decision to allow a Trainee to go on OCPE is based on relevance of clinical experience, relevance of research, training rotation numbers and service requirements among other considerations.

Some Trainees may wish to spend two or three years in research leading to an MSc, MD, or PhD by stepping aside from the programme for a time. During this period the Trainee will not accrue training credit.

HST Taught Programme

The HST Taught Programme is an essential element of the HST curriculum. It consists of a series of modular elements spread across the years of HST covering essential training components such as communication, ethics, etc. The programme is delivered via a combination of self-paced online learning material, live virtual tutorials, and in-person workshops. Trainees will be assigned self-paced online content per quarter. This self-paced online content will be delivered via RCPI's virtual learning environment, Brightspace. Trainees will also attend two scheduled 2-hour virtual tutorials each training



year. Allocated tutorial dates will be provided before the start of the training year. Trainees must plan the time to complete requirements per quarter and to attend the virtual tutorials and specialty-specific workshops. For more information on the Taught Programme, please visit the [HST Taught Programme FAQ](#). All HST Trainees have to attend both the Summer and Winter Scientific Meetings in person and take every opportunity to present a poster.

Trainees are automatically given access to the Taught Programme once they are registered on the programme via the online digital hub. Some courses/study days require attendance in RCPI, some are completed online, and some may be organised in a local department or other setting.

For attendance at study days, courses, exams, and conferences including study leave, entitlement is as per the NCHD Contract for educational leave (up to 18 working days per 6 months). This leave must be agreed in advance with the employer.

If a Trainee completes a Master's in Public Health as part of their Programme, the Trainee is entitled to protected time while undertaking the course. The Trainee is entitled to 24 weeks of protected time (120 days).

The Master's in Public Health Programme can stretch over a period greater than 6 months. The equivalent protected time, over that period, should be a maximum of 24 weeks. The Trainee should be available for service work outside of the 120 days of documented protected time.

Audit

Trainees must take part in audit activities during HST and provide evidence of having completed the process. Audit activities must relate directly to a Trainee's practice. The Minimum Requirements for the Training section of the specialty curriculum outlines the requirements. Quality Improvement projects can be counted towards this requirement.

Teaching

Trainees are required to participate in teaching during HST. The knowledge and skills you are expected to acquire include:

- Postgraduate and multidisciplinary teaching
- Developing and delivering lectures
- Principles of adult learning, teaching and learning methods available and strategies



- Educational principles directing assessment methods including, formative vs. summative methods
- How to set effective educational objectives and map benefits to learners
- Design and delivery of an effective teaching event, both small and large groups
- Use of appropriate technology and teaching materials
- The value of regular appraisal and assessment in informing the education process

Acting up as a consultant

It is possible to 'act up' as a consultant in your final year on the programme for a maximum of **three months**. To be eligible, a Trainee must:

- Be in their Final Year on a HST Programme
- Be working in the relevant specialty under direct supervision of another Consultant
- Be acting up in an approved Substantive Consultant post within the same training site
- Be required to cover periods of leave for a Consultant in a substantive post – not to cover a long-term locum or to start a substantive post earlier than training completed.
- Trainees must have no significant outstanding training issues at their Penultimate Annual Evaluation that will have an impact on their ability to carry out the acting position.
- In line with HSE regulations for the appointment of locum / temporary consultant posts, no Higher Specialist Trainee –including flexible Trainees – is permitted to “act up” during their flexible training post
- Application form to be completed by Trainee including work plan for the post and agreed and signed by both the NSD and supervising Consultant
- An application form which is available from your HST Coordinator, must be completed in typed format and submitted back to the coordinator. If you are unaware of your coordinator you can submit to training@rcpi.ie
- You must also receive written approval from senior clinical and public health management at the site and submit a copy of this to the HST Coordinator for the attention of the NSD
- Once the application form is submitted and verified you will be issued with notification of approval
- If any of the application details change you must contact the HST Department with an update

Annual Evaluations

The Annual Evaluation of Progress (AEP) is the formal method by which a Trainee's progression through their training programme is monitored and recorded each year. The evidence to be reviewed by the panel is recorded by the Trainee and Trainer in the Trainee's e-Portfolio.

Trainees are required to undergo an annual evaluation process. This evaluation will usually take place in the RCPI administration offices in Dublin. Trainees must attend the evaluation. At the AEP, recommendations will be highlighted and approved by the Evaluation Panel. These recommendations will be shared with the Trainee's next assigned Trainer. The recommendations will be recorded and saved in the Trainee ePortfolio. Evaluations take place from April to June.

The evaluation panel includes the National Specialty Director for your specialty and a Chair. During the evaluation, the panel will review the ePortfolio and an evaluation pack. The Penultimate Year Assessment (PYA) is attended by an Extern, and trainees are required to pass this assessment to move into the final year of the programme.

At the end of your evaluation, the panel will agree on a list of recommendations for the following year. Further information on the Annual Evaluation process can be found in the [HST Progression Through Training HST policy](#).

Duration of Training Programme

Usually, no more than two years, maximum, can be added to the duration of the training programme. If the required duration of HST training is four years, that plus two years, means a total of six years to achieve CSCST. This includes Trainees who participate in flexible training. The revised training requirements and CSCST date for Trainees on extended leave of absence who return to the programme will be assessed on an individual basis.

Requests to extend beyond two years will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Withdrawal from the Training Programme

If a Trainee wishes to withdraw from a Training Programme before their expected CSCST date, they must first notify their Specialty Training Coordinator and Trainer of their wish to withdraw from the Training Programme. The trainee should give at least four weeks written notice of their wish to leave



their current training post. The Specialty Training Coordinator will organise an exit interview with the trainee and the National Specialty Director(s), which the trainee is expected to attend. The trainee can complete a [Pre-exit interview Questionnaire](#) ahead of this to ensure all details are captured in relation to exit. Leaving the programme without giving reasonable notice or explanation to the NSD(s) is not acceptable behaviour.

Please note it is a requirement of the college to notify Medical Manpower on your site of your intention to leave the programme once we are notified.

HST Completion Criteria - Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST)

For a Trainee to be awarded a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST), Trainees are required to:

- Complete the full duration of the programme in HST posts that are approved for HST as allocated by the Training Body
- Achieve all outcomes as set out in the specialty curriculum
- Attend relevant study days
- Attend mandatory courses listed in the specialty curriculum
- Maintain an up-to-date and correctly completed ePortfolio as evidence of satisfactory completion of training
- Attend and satisfactorily pass annual evaluations and have been awarded training credit through this process

Failure to complete any of the above may result in a Trainee having their training time extended.

CSCST Ceremony

Once a Trainee has successfully completed all the requirements of the specialty programme, they will be awarded a CSCST. This allows Trainees to apply for specialist registration with the Medical Council of Ireland. Trainees will be invited to a conferring ceremony where they will be awarded a CSCST certificate



Supports for Postgraduate Medical Trainees

ePortfolio

ePortfolio is an electronic logbook for recording essential information about training, educational and evaluation activities. Trainees are required to maintain an up-to-date ePortfolio throughout HST, as it is an official record of satisfactory completion of training.

Trainees must complete an ePortfolio during their training programme. All Trainees will be given access to the RCPI ePortfolio which is set up depending on the specialty of the Trainee. Trainees must complete minimum requirements for their specialty. Details on the minimum requirements can be found in each specialty curriculum. The ePortfolio is also used to conduct Trainee Evaluations and end of post feedback.

The ePortfolio is the Trainee's record of their training and the information in the ePortfolio is owned by the Trainee. RCPI and the IOG provide the ePortfolio system via ePortfolio for the Trainees to record their training programme requirements. This is not a log of all the activity of a Trainee and is provided so a Trainee can record the mandatory components of the training programme. This is the Trainees record and RCPI has no authority to share with third parties unless authorised to do so.

Following completion of the training programme a Trainee will have access to the ePortfolio for three years, at which point Trainees can download all their records. Access to ePortfolio after three years will not be possible.

RCPI provide several training videos on how to use your ePortfolio. As you rotate through posts, your Trainers are required to verify recorded information and sign off evaluations. To do this, they will need to log into the RCPI website and open ePortfolio.

Trainees must update their ePortfolio at key points, listed below.

At the start of the year

- Check that personal details are correct
- Check that the details of post and Trainer are correct
- Review the training curriculum and requirements for the specialty. The curriculum and specialty requirements are reviewed every year, so Trainees need to be aware of any changes

At the start of each post

- Trainees must meet with their Trainer within the first six weeks to agree on the personal goals plan. The personal goals plan must be recorded on ePortfolio and the Trainer must sign it off



During each post

- Trainees must enter training and educational activities on ePortfolio
- Complete workplace-based assessments as they happen

At the end of each quarter and at the end of the post

- Trainees must ensure ePortfolio is up to date and signed off by the Trainer
- Meet the Trainer to complete the End of Post Form

At the end of each training year

- Trainees must make sure that the ePortfolio is up to date and signed off by the Trainer in preparation for the End of Year Evaluation
- Complete the annual evaluation form with the Trainer in advance of the Evaluation

At the end of your training programme

- Make sure that the ePortfolio is up to date and signed off by the Trainer in preparation for the Final Year Evaluation

RCPI Benefits

We are pleased to offer you a range of benefits to support all trainees on our training programme:

- Free attendance at Masterclasses, St Luke's Symposium as well as events and webinars organised by our Faculties and Institutes.
- Assistance with applying for a Student Leapcard for discounted fares on transport services
- Free four-month subscription to a BMJ OnExamination Package – request an access code by emailing Training@rcpi.ie. To redeem your voucher and activate your four-month subscription, You can log into [BMJOnExamination](#)

RCPI Training Site Offices

RCPI training site offices are local, knowledgeable sources of information and support for Trainees, Trainers, Members and Fellows based in the following hospital groups:

South/South West Hospital Group office

The RCPI South/South West Hospital Group office is located in Office 2.60, School of Medicine,



Brookfield Health Sciences Complex, College Rd, UCC, Cork. The office is open Mondays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Thursdays 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Mairead O’Hea - Email: maireadohea@rcpi.ie

Saolta Hospital Group office

The RCPI Saolta Hospital Group office is located in the Academic Office, Nurses Home in University Hospital Galway. The office is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings 08:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Sheila Kelly -Tel: 091 893151, Email: SheilaKelly@rcpi.ie

University of Limerick Hospitals Group Office

The RCPI UL Hospitals Group office is located in the Postgraduate Training Department, Room 2938, Ground Floor, Nurses Home, University Hospital Limerick. The office is open in the morning Monday to Thursday 08:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Dovile Lee -Tel: 061 588264, Email: dovilelee@rcpi.ie

RCPI Trainee Representatives

RCPI Trainee Representatives have been appointed to training sites across Ireland. There is one Trainee Representative for Public Health Medicine. In addition, there is a Trainee Representative for each year of training.

The Trainee Representative is there to help Trainees stay connected to RCPI while in training. He or she acts as a conduit between Trainees and the Faculty, sharing important information about training and giving feedback and vice versa.

The Trainee Representative is an important point of contact for Trainees seeking clarification or direction relating to training and education matters and is expected to encourage and support improvements to educational facilities that will improve training delivery, for example examination tutorials, journal access, journal clubs and Trainer engagement.

They are also expected to encourage open and honest feedback from Trainees on their training experiences.

Where possible, Trainee Reps also attend the RCPI QI visits at their hospital site(s).

The Trainee Representative is appointed each year for a period of one year, with applications for new appointments normally opening in June. It's an ideal opportunity to take up a formal role in the Faculty and put your management skills into action.

Trainees can apply to become a Trainee Representative if they meet the following criteria:

- An SpR in a clinical post in Higher Specialist Training
- Clear assessment/training record of at least 12 months prior to their application
- Interest in education and training

Trainees are encouraged to apply to be a Trainee Representative.

From 2020, on the basis of an election organised by the Trainees, there will be an SpR on the Board of the Faculty:

- The term of office will usually be for one year
- Any SpR may put themselves forward if they have completed at least 1 year in training and have at least 1 year of training remaining
- As for all Board members, if there is a potential conflict of interest/sensitive subject for discussion relevant to that person, the SpR would absent himself/herself for that discussion at the meeting
- The SpR will have full voting rights

Arising from a recommendation by the RCPI Trainee Committee, the Trainee Representative will report to the Trainee on the Board who in turn will be a member of and report to the RCPI Trainee Committee. For information on that please email Trainees@rcpi.ie.

HSE Financial Support Schemes

Clinical Course & Examination Refund Scheme for NCHDs

This HSE scheme is open to all NCHDs. The HSE Clinical Course and Examination Refund Scheme covers the cost of examination fees and clinical courses such as Advanced Cardiac Life Support.

There is an approved list of clinical courses and examinations qualifying for this refund scheme contained



in the [HSE Clinical Course & Examination Refund Scheme Document](#). The full cost of an approved examination/course taken on after this date is eligible to be refunded for the **first sitting of the exam**. Applicants must hold HSE NCHD contract 2010. Subsequent sittings of the same exam are ineligible for any payment under this scheme. However subsequent sittings may be claimed from the HSE Training Support Scheme (TSS).

Specialist Training Fund for Higher Specialist Trainees

The Specialist Training Fund was introduced by the HSE to support Trainees in HST participation in education and training activities in addition to the mandatory elements of HST provided by their training body.

This scheme is open to higher specialist Trainees (SpRs) registered on the Higher Specialist Training Programme. The funding available to each HST Trainee is €500 per year of training and the fund rolls over if not claimed in a particular year. Trainees can claim for participation in relevant non-mandatory educational activities (such as attendance at conferences) from the Specialist Training Fund is for Higher Specialist Trainees.

The [Specialist Training Fund for Higher Specialist Trainees HSE Document](#) contains a detailed explanation of the Scheme. Trainees who are eligible to avail of this fund must submit the signed reimbursement form and return it with original receipts and a certificate of attendance (if applicable) to Training@rcpi.ie to claim your refund. All applications must be signed and approved by the current Trainer or training director as set out by the Training Body.

Training Support Scheme (TSS)

This scheme is in addition to existing financial supports such as the Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme and the Higher Specialist Training Fund. Funding is allocated based on Grade. Funding is available pro-rata for doctors employed on shorter contract durations.

A list of approved clinical courses, conferences and examinations that can be claimed for under the TSS are listed on the [Financial Supports HSE Website](#)

Professional Support (Health and Wellbeing)

The health and wellbeing office provides professional services to Trainees who require additional support during their training programme. This can include any of the following areas:



- Mental/physical health issues which impact on training progression
- Interpersonal conflict or difficulties
- Professionalism competencies development such as communication, assertiveness, building relationships
- Complaints made by Trainees or about Trainees
- Difficult working environments/conditions including bullying which was not resolved locally
- Burnout
- Career guidance
- Mentoring
- Advice and referral to other services such as Occupation Medicine, Health Committee, psychology and psychiatry
- Advice and referral to additional resources such as course, books, online resources, mentors

The health and wellbeing service is available to RCPI Trainees only and forms part of their training programme where required. As such, it is not a confidential service. Trainees are referred by their Trainers, NSDs or they may self-refer into the service. All supports can be reviewed via the [Health and Wellbeing Website](#)

Trainee Awards

Further information on all awards can be found on the [RCPI Trainee Awards Website](#)

David Mitchell Award for Audit

The David Mitchell Award is awarded by the Trainees' Committee in RCPI. It recognises audits that improve patient care and/or specialist education and training. The winning Trainee or team of Trainees receives an educational grant worth €1,000 for a single

Trainee or €1,500 for a team of Trainees.

William Stokes Award for Research

The William Stokes Award is awarded by the Trainees' Committee in RCPI. It recognises research of the highest standards carried out by Trainees in Higher Specialist Training. The winning Trainee receives the William Stokes Award and an educational grant worth €4,000. The award is open to all Trainees currently undertaking Higher Specialist Training with RCPI.

Dorothy Stopford Price Medal

The Dorothy Stopford Price Medal recognises excellence in research or audit on vaccination, immunisation or control of infectious diseases and its potential impact on public health. The medal is awarded by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine to honour this pioneer in infectious disease control in Ireland. This competition is open to all Trainees.

Fellowships/Scholarships

A number of Fellowships/Scholarships are available for Trainees to apply each year. This list below is not exhaustive, and Trainees are encouraged to discuss potential opportunities with their Training Director.

HSE Dr Richard Steeven's Scholarship

The [Richard Steevens' Scholarship](#) was established by the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2007, arising from a recommendation of the Report of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Group. This important initiative provides a valuable opportunity for specialist medical Trainees to spend time training in centres of excellence abroad and to bring the skills gained back to the Irish health service.

Post CSCST Fellowships

RCPI in association with the HSE has established a register of approved Post-Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST) Fellowship posts in the Irish health service.

These Fellowships allow Trainees to gain training or experience which is not currently available on the RCPI Higher Specialist Training programmes, or which a Trainee may need for a particular consultant post with a special interest. These Fellowships offer training opportunities for doctors who are within two years of obtaining a CSCST.

The additional training is designed to expose Trainees to subspecialties and advanced clinical skills. The posts will offer:

- A structured educational experience designed to deliver the requirements of a particular subspecialty which are not readily available within HST



- A supervisor with authority and accountability for the fellowship post
- Opportunities for audit and research
- An enhanced salary

Where appropriate, the post will fulfil training body requirements and HSE employment requirements for consultant posts. All posts are evaluated and approved by the appropriate training body. In order to be eligible for these posts Trainees must have successfully completed a RCPI Higher Specialist Training programme within the last two years.

HSE Aspire Fellowships

[The NDTP Aspire \(Post CSCST\) Fellowship](#) awards have resulted from the collaborative efforts of HSE's Acute Hospitals' Division, Mental Health Division, National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) and the Post-Graduate Medical Training Bodies in Ireland. The NDTP Aspire Post CSCST Fellowships are Fellowships funded by NDTP and recognised through the training body.

Successful Aspire Fellows receive:

- SpR salary and headcount for the duration of the fellowship
- Eligibility to access the Higher Specialist Training Fund during the fellowship
- Formal recognition of achievement following completion of the fellowship from the relevant Irish Post Graduate Medical Education Body/Bodies
- A high-quality fellowship experience in Ireland that will improve competitiveness for positions within Ireland
- A logbook provision for logging all activities during the fellowship
- A formal evaluation process during the fellowship

Wellcome–HRB Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT)

The Wellcome – Health Research Board Irish Clinical Academic Training ([ICAT](#)) Programme is a unique all Ireland cross-institutional, comprehensive national programme for Clinician Scientists based at six major Irish universities and their affiliated hospital groups. The partner universities include Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Galway, Queen's University Belfast, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University College Cork. At its core is an integrated programme spanning 6-7 years of seamless, supported and mentored academic and clinical training targeting future academic leaders.



ICAT's mentorship scheme spans the entire duration of specialist medical and postgraduate academic training. At the time of completion, ICAT fellows will have graduated with a PhD at their chosen university/ institution and achieved CCST (RoI) / CCT (NI) in their chosen specialty. The ICAT Programme adopts a dynamic training focus whereby the emphasis shifts and leads the ICAT Fellow from (i) learning how to start a research career as a PhD candidate, (ii) to successful completion of a PhD, (iii) to establishing independence through novel thought and independent research funding.

Policies and Procedures

There are a number of other [HST Policies and Procedures](#) that Trainees may refer to throughout the duration of their training programmes. Below is a summary of these policies and procedures.

RCPI Policies

- Roles and Responsibility of a Trainer
- Post Reassignment Policy
- Job Sharing Policy
- Progression through Training: Higher Specialist Training
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Appeals Policy: Postgraduate Training
- Disciplinary Process for Postgraduate Specialist Training
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Grievance Policy: Postgraduate Training
- HST Allocation Policy

Other Relevant HSE Policies

- Specialist Training Fund Policy
- Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme
- Training Support Scheme



Review

This Handbook shall be subject to review every year from the date of approval of this document by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Approved By:	Date
Faculty of Public Health Medicine	July 2025