ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

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# OCPE (OUT OF CLINICAL PROGRAMME EXPERIENCE)

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS OCPE?

OCPE stands for Out of Clinical Programme Experience and is time taken out of your training programme to pursue:

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

## WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA?

OCPE can only be taken once you have completed Year 2 or 3 of your training programme. Doctors on all HST Training Programmes are eligible to apply for OCPE. Please refer to your specialty curriculum and Training Handbook for further specialty specific information.

All Trainees on the HST Obstetrics and Gynaecology Training Programme must complete their last six months on the training programme in a full-time clinical post as allocated by the Institute.

OCPE cannot be taken on the Neonatology programme until the second year on the programme. This means that Trainees cannot start the programme on OCPE.

OCPE is not guaranteed, the decision to allow a Trainee to go on OCPE is based on a number of factors, including but not exclusive to, relevance of clinical experience, relevance of research, training rotation numbers, service requirements etc. The required paperwork must be submitted to the specialty NSD for approval in advance.

## HOW MUCH CREDIT CAN I GET?

A maximum of one year credit for OCPE may be sought.

If more than 12 months is spent in these posts, Trainees will only receive 12 months credit towards their training programme and the CSCST date will be extended accordingly. If a Trainee does 12 months in a clinical fellowship and 12 months research, only 12 months will be recognised towards completion of training.

In addition to previously completing OCPE, 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 if 12 months OPCE credit was awarded previously.

## WHAT FELLOWSHIPS CAN I GET CREDIT FOR?

Fellowships must be pre-approved by the specialty NSD provided the fellowship is deemed relevant to the specialist training programme.

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Some fellowships you may wish to consider include the RCPI Management Fellowships, CMO/ Healthcare Leadership Fellowship, the Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme* and the Irish Clinician Educator Training (ICET) Programme.

*Please note the ICAT Programme is not considered OCPE as Trainees remain on their Training Programme while undertaking a PhD. For more information, please contact your specialty Programme Coordinator.

## WHAT FELLOWSHIPS OR BURSARIES CAN I APPLY FOR?

Some fellowships that you can apply to through RCPI include, the RCPI Management Fellowships, Dr Richard Steeven's Scholarship and the ICET Programme (Irish Clinician Educator Training Programme).

There are other specialty specific scholarships and bursaries through professional societies, and it is advisable to discuss these opportunities with your NSD.

## WHAT ARE THE RULES ON CLINICAL WORK DURING OCPE?

Clinical work during OCPE will depend on your specialty and on the type of work you are undertaking on your OCPE. It is best to discuss this with your specialty NSD at the time of planning to ensure that any requirements are included in your plan.

For example, for HST Obstetrics & Gynaecology, a minimum clinical workload needs to be maintained during OCPE. Please see page 22 of the Training Handbook for the parameters for this. For HST Gastroenterology, Trainees undertaking OCPE are expected to maintain their Endoscopy skills, and this should be discussed with the NSD in advance.

## CAN I GET CREDIT IF I UNDERTAKE A TUTOR ROLE?

It is best to discuss this with your specialty NSD when submitting your OCPE proposal. In most cases, you are unlikely to receive credit for a tutor role alone. The tutor role would likely need to be part of a Masters in medical education, or part of a fellowship/ programme, such as the ICET (Irish Clinician Educator Training Programme).

## WHAT TRAINING FUNDS AM I ELIGIBLE FOR DURING OCPE?

If you hold the HSE NCHD contract during your OCPE, you will have access to the TSS (Training Support Scheme) and CCERS (Clinical Courses and Examinations Refund Scheme) funds. These funds cannot be accessed without holding the HSE NCHD contract. If you have accrued funds in the Specialist Training Fund, these can be accessed during your OCPE via RCPI, however, the Specialist Training Fund is not added to while on OCPE. For more information on the Training funds, please visit the Medical Creers website.

## DO I NEED A SUPERVISOR WHILE ON OCPE?

Yes, you will need to have a supervisor for your fellowship, research or academic post. This does not have to be an approved RCPI Trainer, but someone you are working with as part of your OCPE work. Please

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inform your specialty Programme Coordinator in RCPI so that they can set your supervisor up on ePortfolio for you so that they can sign off on any forms you need to complete.

If you are undertaking any clinical work during your OCPE, you will need a Trainer to be added to your ePortfolio also. Please inform your specialty Programme Coordinator so that they can add your Trainer to your ePortfolio.

## DO I NEED TO COMPLETE MY EPORTFOLIO?

Yes, you will need to complete some forms on ePortfolio while on OCPE, such as, a Personal Goals Form, Quarterly Assessments Forms and the End of Year Evaluation form.

If you have any clinical commitments/ requirements while on OCPE, you should complete the relevant forms as usual.

## WILL I HAVE AN END OF YEAR EVALUATION?

Yes, Trainees on OCPE will be invited to an End of Year Evaluation to discuss their experience with the NSD and any future plans. An End of Year Evaluation Form will also need to be submitted on ePortfolio.

## DO I NEED TO ATTEND STUDY DAYS?

It will depend on the specialty, so it is recommended to discuss Study Day requirements with your NSD when submitting your OCPE proposal. Many Trainees on OCPE recommend attending Study Days during OCPE to keep up to date and keep in touch with other colleagues and Trainers on the training programme. It is also advisable to update your ePortfolio when you do attend Study Days.

## DO I NEED TO ATTEND MANDATORY COURSES WHILE ON OCPE?

If you have any outstanding mandatory courses that you should have completed earlier in your programme, this is a good opportunity to catch up on those. Trainee will not be signed off for CSCST if any of mandatory courses have not been completed by the End of Year Evaluation at the end of the final year.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO TAKE UNEXPECTED LEAVE?

If you need to take leave unexpectedly while on OCPE, you will need to follow the Leave of Absence process as outlined in the Training Handbook. You will need to submit a Leave of Absence form and submit this to your specialty Programme Coordinator and NSD. You should also discuss this with your Trainer and/or Supervisor. Depending on the amount of leave to be taken, this may result in a later CSCST date.

You will also need to follow HR policy with your employer.

## DO I NEED TO MAINTAIN MY IMC REGISTRATION WHILE ON OCPE?

If you remain in Ireland, you will need to maintain your IMC registration. If you have an NCHD contract while on OCPE, you will remain on the Trainee Specialist Division. If you don't have an NCHD contract, you will be moved to the General Division.

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Doctors on the General Division are legally required to enrol in a Professional Competence Scheme (PCS) They must record CPD activities (e.g., courses, audits, clinical practice) and submit an annual Statement of Participation.

If you are abroad for OCPE, it is not mandatory to maintain your IMC registration, however, it is advised that you do so as it is a long process to get back on when you return and there are additional fees attached.

## WILL TAKING OCPE AFFECT MY FINAL CLINICAL YEAR?

Depending on the specialty, some Trainees may take their OCPE as the final year of their programme, whereas others must complete their final year as a clinical year. It is best to discuss with your NSD what is recommended for your specialty.

## HOW WILL MY SALARY AND BENEFITS (PENSION) BE AFFECTED?

The Trainee's salary will depend on the contract(s) they hold during their OCPE. In most cases, the salary earned while on OCPE is less than the salary offered via the HSE's NCHD contract. The ICET programme is notable, in that they offer equivalent salaries to those that would be earned as an SpR with the HSE's NCHD contract. Regarding pensions, Trainees who commenced employment with the HSE after 2013 will be on the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS). One does not need to apply for a career break if they have been on the SPSPS. If a Trainee re-enters the HSE after their OCPE, they will continue to contribute to their existing pension. If a Trainee is on a pre-2013 pension scheme with the HSE, they will need to discuss a career break with the HSE prior to going on OCPE.

## WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION?

Trainees will need to indicate their intention to undertake OCPE in the Training Intentions form that is sent by the specialty Programme Coordinator in September. The OCPE form and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Programme Coordinator in Autumn of the year prior to OCPE, by the date specified in communications.

# TOP TIPS

Here are some top tips from Trainees who have already completed OCPE:

- Before going on OCPE, talk to trainees in higher years, or new consultants in your specialty who have recently completed OCPE. There may be nuances specific to your specialty that you need to consider.
- Start planning for an OCPE well in advance - one year beforehand at the very least.
- Consider the financial implications of OCPE - most HST trainees will earn less during OCPE than during their clinical years.
- If you are going to do a research degree (MD, PhD) consider the fees- how much are they, who will be paying them, and for how many years.

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- If undertaking clinical work while on OCPE, ensure you have appropriate clinical indemnity cover to do so.
- This document is useful if you need to apply for a career break.
- Ask for advice from as many people as possible, even those not in your specialty as there are lots of opportunities out there.
- OCPE is what you make of it; you have to be self-driven to achieve what you want in the timeline that you want to get it done. Nobody else will be driving the timeline for your OCPE and a year passes very quickly.
- You need a good plan and good mentors who you trust to make sure you will get through whatever it is you are aiming to do. This is especially important if you are undertaking research for a MD or PhD.
- Schedule progress meetings with supervisors; it'll help keep you motivated and accountable to the goals you've set out.
- Get your RCPI mandatory courses done before you go on OCPE if you can.
- Clarify what your clinical commitments might be with different roles and make sure what you choose will facilitate you in your specific career goals not just doing them because someone offers you an opportunity.
- Enjoy it!

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