

**Training Handbook:
Higher Specialist Training
Pathology
July 2023**

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Foreword

This document has been prepared by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) and provides important information in relation to the Faculty of Pathology Training Programmes. The purpose of the document is to also outline the Rules and Regulations pertaining to specialist training for the following programmes:

- Chemical Pathology
- Clinical Microbiology
- Haematology
- Histopathology
- Immunology
- Neuropathology

This document replaces previously published documents and reflects the continuously evolving nature of training in the above specialties. The document also refers to the published RCPI policies which should be read in conjunction with the Training 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 on this document will always be available on www.rcpi.ie.

While other institutions are referenced (e.g. Medical Council, Health Service Executive, National Doctors Training Planning), we have given our interpretation of their regulations but the institutes 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 will determine the correct interpretation.



Governance of the 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 & Gynaecologists
- Irish Committee on Higher Medical Training

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

In Pathology the Faculty of Pathology oversees the Basic Specialty Training for Histopathology and the Higher Specialty Training Programmes in the pathology specialties.

Basic Specialist Training (BST) is two years in duration and Higher Specialist Training (HST) is four - five years in duration (specialty dependent).

The Director of Training and Education for the Faculty of Pathology oversees the delivery and development of the Pathology BST and HST training programmes. Supporting the Director of Training are the National Specialty Directors and Regional Specialty Advisors.

In Basic Specialty Training in Histopathology the National Specialty Director(s) has/have been appointed to oversee the development and delivery of the BST Programme. Supporting the National Specialty Director are the Regional Speciality Advisors (RSA). Each BST region has an appointed RSA overseeing the delivery of the regional programme



At Higher Specialist Training each specialty training programme has (an) appointed National Specialty Director(s) (NSDs). The NSD(s) chair(s) the Specialty Training Committee (STC) for their HST specialty training programme. A key responsibility of the National Specialty Director(s) is to provide advice, career guidance and support to trainees on issues relating to training, examination and general queries relating to the specialty. The NSD and STC report to the Faculty of Pathology Education and Training Committee and meet at a minimum quarterly.

The function of the Faculty of Pathology Education and Training Committee is to actively participate in the development and delivery of postgraduate specialist training in the defined specialties, under the governance of the Training Body. The Committee is responsible for delivery of the training programmes in the defined specialties in accordance with decisions made by the Training Body. All decisions and proposals for changes relating to development and delivery of the training programmes in the defined specialties must be approved by the Training Body prior to implementation by the Committee.

RCPI Trainers

Trainers play a crucial role in the delivery of our Basic and Higher Specialist Training 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 to a large extent on Trainers' clinical experience and expertise, along with competence, aptitude, attitudes and abilities as good role models. The aim of the College is to continue to strive for education and training excellence for all of our Trainees, at all levels and in all locations across Ireland.

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. At HST level it is recommended that no Trainer should have more than one HST Clinical Trainee. At BST level it is recommended that no Trainer should have more than two RCPI Trainees.



The core responsibilities of the Trainer are

- Meet the Trainee and understand requirements of training
- Agree a training plan at commencement of post
- Facilitate attendance at educational activities
- Act as a supervisor to the Trainee
- Provide feedback to Trainee
- Attend Trainee annual evaluations
- Monitor progress and performance
- Completing the End of Post assessment and signing relevant activities in ePortfolio.
- Appraising the trainee's progress at regular intervals during the post

One clinical year maximum can be spent with the same trainer (including post call ward round where relevant).

The following criteria are required 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 in Ireland
- Fellow of the relevant training body (RCPI or one of our Faculties/Institutes) - This is desirable but not mandatory

Further detail on the role of an RCPI trainer can be found in [Role and Responsibilities of the Trainer 2016](#).

Training Site Environment

All training posts are monitored by RCPI through the Training Site inspection process. The purpose of a training site inspection is to determine the ability of an institution to deliver Higher Specialist Training and Basic Specialist Training in a specialty, according to the requirements as defined by the relevant curriculum of training.



The inspection panel advises on the suitability after a detailed interview with consultant Trainers, Trainees and management representatives, with an inspection of the facilities. All posts will be expected to conform to statutory guidelines on hours and condition of work for doctors in training.

Facilities

Your training location/hospital 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 regularly inspect all training locations approved for training to ensure that they meet these requirements.

Trainee Committee

The RCPI Trainees' Committee is the 'voice' of Trainees in RCPI. They represent Trainees on College Council, the Advisory Committee, the Irish Committee on Higher Medical Training, each STC and the Examinations Committee.

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

They are also responsible for the organisation of a number of Trainee Awards including:

- the Corrigan Medal
- the David Mitchell Award
- the William Stokes Award
- the Kate McGarry Award
- the Dorothy Stopford



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

Training Post Evaluation

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

The evaluation is completely anonymous. You are not asked for any identifying information such as your name, date of birth or RCPI ID number.

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 take action and continue to drive improvements in training.



Regulations relating to Higher Specialist Training (HST)

Point of Entry (Recognition of Prior Learning)

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

Recognition of prior learning, in most cases, is not possible. Trainees must complete all years and requirements of each programme in order 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 structured training programme. Such requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This is applied for in advance of the first year Annual Evaluation in writing to the NSD and any credit is subject to approval by the Evaluation Panel.

Training Post

The first two years of HST must be spent in training posts in Ireland.

When you are accepted into HST with RCPI, you are generally required to take up a full-time SpR post in the July of your first year. You are required to spend at least two years in approved HST training posts in Ireland before undertaking research or out-of-clinical-programme experience. You cannot defer your first year of HST or start HST in a research year.

During the annual allocation of training posts, we will endeavour to be as flexible as possible, within the confines of your training programme requirements, to allow you to develop a subspecialty interest.

If exposure to an essential specialty requirement is missing from your programme, we will make appropriate arrangements, for example day release or secondment.



Annual allocation of Training Posts

In September of each year you will be asked to submit a *Training Intentions Form*, on which you state your intentions for the following year of training. Your National Specialty Director (NSD) uses these forms to allocate posts for the following year and calculate how many places are available for new Trainees.

If you intend entering a full-time clinical SpR post in your third and subsequent years, you can also indicate your preferred site on the Training Intentions Form. While we cannot guarantee that you will be placed in one of your preferred posts, we will try our best to place you where you want to go. It is important to return your Training Intentions Form even if you plan to undertake out of clinical programme experience (OCPE). If you have applied for OCPE or a flexible training post but don't have confirmation at the time of submission, you still need to let your NSD and HST coordinator know so that they can keep this in mind when preparing for recruitment and allocation. Remember, you cannot undertake research or out-of-clinical-programme experience in your first two years of HST. If you don't submit your Training Intentions Form you risk not having a clinical SpR post for the following year.

NSDs, along with the STC of the respective training programmes, assign posts to Trainees based on set criteria. Trainees are informed of their allocation a minimum of 13 weeks prior to taking up the post.

The allocation policy is as follows:

- 1. Training Needs** - When completing the allocations, the NSD will take into consideration the experience already gained by the Trainee and the future experience needed to meet the training programme requirements as outlined in the curriculum. Allocations will be made on that basis. Recommendations made by the annual evaluation panel and the requirement that Trainees should have experience in a range of services and demographic settings will also be taken into consideration.
- 2. Trainee Preferences** - Trainees will be asked in September, prior to allocation, to indicate on their preferred post.
- 3. Seniority** (or ranking at interview in case of candidates who interview for entry into the programme) - Trainees are assigned available posts according to their seniority i.e. available posts are assigned to Trainees entering year 5 according to their expressed preferences and



training needs before they are assigned to Trainees entering year 4. This cohort are in turn assigned posts before Trainees entering year 3.

For candidates applying to the training programme, posts are assigned according to how the candidate ranked at interview, i.e. the candidate who ranked highest is assigned available posts according to their expressed preferences first.

4. *Post availability/geographic distribution* - The availability of the post. The number of Trainees expressing a preference for a post may exceed the number of those posts available in that site. While service requirements do not take priority over training needs, a situation may arise where a Trainee needs to be allocated to a hospital to fulfil geographic distribution. Where none of the above considerations allow for a decision between two Trainees who wish for the same placement the National Specialty Director may refer to interview ranking scores at entry to the Scheme.

Notes:

- Trainees are assigned posts for a minimum of their first two years of training however flexibility will be provided if there is a change to the Trainee's training needs or to the availability of training posts (e.g. new post approved or a post withdrawn). Trainees must formally apply for a change in post through the RCPI post reassignment process
- Training sites are informed of their allocations on an annual basis after posts have been assigned.
- If, following the issuing of allocations, a previously allocated post becomes available due to the withdrawal of a Trainee. The NSD may consider allocating that placement to a Trainee who was not allocated to his/her preferred placement.
- For operational reasons the NSD may have to make changes to placements at short notice.
- Final allocations are reviewed and agreed by the relevant STC.

Generally, posts are of a duration of six months or 12 months depending on the training programme and Trainees are allocated to preapproved defined rotations.



The following rules apply for the allocation of training posts over the duration of the programme:

- A minimum of 1 clinical year of the training programme must be completed in a training site outside of the Dublin area.

**Exception to this for Histopathology & Chemical Pathology. Trainees in Histopathology must complete a minimum of 6 months of the training programme in a training site outside of their assigned training Hub. Chemical Pathology Trainees complete all their training in the Dublin training sites.*

- 2 clinical years maximum can be spent in the same training site.

** Exception to this for Histopathology, Immunology and Chemical Pathology. Trainees can spend more than 2 clinical years in the same training site.*

- 1 clinical year maximum can be spent with the same Trainer where possible (including post call ward round where relevant)
- Trainees will be allocated where possible to their first preference. While we cannot guarantee that Trainees will be placed in one of their preferred posts they will be accommodated as much as possible. Individual training requirements are also a consideration when posts are being allocated. If a Trainee rejects a training allocation they will be effectively withdrawing themselves from the training programme

There are some instances where it may be acceptable for there to be more than one Trainee per Trainer. Typically, this occurs where there is limited access for the Trainees in a specialty to acquire some specific experience.

Where an essential element of the curriculum is missing from a programme, access to it should be arranged, by day release for example, or if necessary, by secondment.

The number of clinical posts in a specialty must remain constant. If an individual moves out of a programme, he/she does so knowing that there is no established date to allow him/her to return back into the programme at any particular time, but only when a slot in the training programme again becomes available. Trainees in out of programme experience will be considered for re-entry to posts before the appointment of new trainees to the programme.



Flexible Training

It is the policy of the RCPI training bodies to facilitate 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, for them, not be practical for well-founded reasons.

The training body recognises and supports part-time, interrupted, and other forms of flexible training and all Trainees are eligible to apply for flexible forms of training for a period.

Trainees can apply for flexible training through three routes:

- HSE National Flexible Training Scheme
- Job Sharing
- Less than full time working

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 1st 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.

Applications for flexible training can be made to the HSE NDTP up to 12 months in advance of the proposed date of commencement of flexible training. We recommend applying as soon as possible, as applications are considered in the order in which they are received, and places are limited.

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.



Applications for flexible training should be made to NDTP, however Trainees are required to let their relevant training body know that they are going to apply in plenty of time, so rotations can be planned and structured.

Further information on the application process can be found [here](#) on the HSE website.

Job Sharing

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

Job sharing works on the basis that two Trainees will share one full-time post with each Trainee working 50% of the hours.

A training post can be shared by two Trainees who:

- are training in the same specialty and;
- are within two years on the training pathway

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. The policy on post reassignment can be found [here](#).

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

HST Trainees may take up to three months consecutive leave of absence from the programme within the duration of the training programme with no impact on CSCST date. After three months, leave will be deducted and the date of CSCST will be changed accordingly.

Trainees must discuss the extended leave with their NSD(s) in the first instance and then inform their specialty coordinator at least 4 weeks in advance of the intended leave of absence.

The leave of absence must only be taken in exceptional circumstances only e.g. maternity leave or sick leave. This leave must be applied for and acknowledged by the relevant faculty and not retrospectively, and alterations to CSCST dates will be made at this time only.

In the absence of exceptional circumstances e.g. maternity leave or sick leave trainees must complete posts they are allocated to for the duration of the post. For example, if a trainee is due to exit the programme in March of a given year, the trainee is advised to remain in the post for the duration of 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.

Trainees returning from exceptional leave 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.

Extended sick leave, and its impact on date of CSCST will be dealt with on a case by case basis. All applications for leave of absence should be made prospectively in writing to the NSDs, via the training coordinator using the RCPI Leave of Absence [form](#).



Parental Leave

If a trainee takes parental leave, he/she will have to make up this time on the programme, similarly to that of a flexible trainee. Any time that is taken as parental leave must be made up before a trainee will be awarded their CSCST. This includes parental leave taken in blocks or as part of a shortened week. Trainees taking parental leave must complete the Leave of Absence form and return to their training coordinator. Any parental leave arrangements must not notified to the training coordinator in advance of commencing.

Out of Clinical Programme Experience (OCPE)

OCPE cannot be taken until year three 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

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

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.

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 and Faculties Department, via the relevant 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 a number of things, including but not exclusive to, relevance of clinical experience, relevance of research, training rotation numbers, service requirements etc.

Courses and Study Days

All HST Trainees are required to attend courses and study days throughout their training programme. These days are mandatory. Some courses/study days Trainees are required to attend once a year, and some are required once during the programme.

Trainees are automatically given access to their mandatory courses 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 can be organised in the local hospital. Please see Training Programme curriculum for further details.

Attendance at study days, courses, exams & 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.

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 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:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate 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
- The value of regular appraisal and assessment in informing the training process
- 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

Acting up as a consultant

Acting up as a consultant is not possible on the Pathology Training Programmes.



Annual Evaluations

The Annual Evaluation of Progress (AEP) is the formal method by which a Trainee's progression through her/his 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 ePortfolio.

Trainees are required to undergo an annual evaluation process. This evaluation will take place within 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.

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 [here](#) in the HST Progression Through Training HST policy.

Withdrawal from Training Programme

If a Trainee wishes to withdraw from a Training Programme before their expected CSCST date they must first notify their NSD(s) then the Specialty Coordinator and Trainer of their wish to withdraw from the Training Programme.

Trainees should give at least four weeks written notice before they wish to leave their current training post. All Trainees who withdraw from the training programme are invited to attend an exit interview.



Exit 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 as allocated by the Training Body that are approved for HST and have been awarded training credit through the annual evaluation process
- 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
- Failure to complete any of the above may result in a Trainee have 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 Irish Medical Council. Trainees will be invited to a conferring ceremony with their relevant training body where they will be awarded a CSCST.



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. Following completion of the training programme a Trainee will have access to the ePortfolio for three years. RCPI provide a number of 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.



When to update 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 Helpdesk@rcpi.ie. To redeem your voucher and activate your four-month subscription, simply login to www.rcpi.ie and click on the link for BMJ OnExamination

RCPI Trainee Representative

Trainee Representatives are an important point of contact for Trainees seeking clarification or direction relating to training and education matters and are expected to encourage and support improvements to educational facilities that will improve training delivery, for example MRCPI tutorials, journal access, journal clubs, internet access 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 College's hospital inspections at their hospital sites(s).

Trainee Reps are 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 RCPI and put your management skills into action.

Trainees can apply to become a Trainee Rep for their hospital if they meet the following criteria:

- A SpR in a full-time clinical post in Higher Specialist Training or in the second or later year of Basic Specialist Training
- Clear assessment/training record of at least 12 months prior to your application
- Interest in education and training



Trainees are encouraged to get apply to be a Trainee Representative. For information on the Trainee Committee please email trainees@rcpi.ie. For a list of current Trainee Reps and details on the role please see [here](#).

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 & examinations qualifying for this refund scheme contained in the HSE [guidance document](#). A maximum contribution of €450 is payable to NCHDs for each course or exam on this list.

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 [guidance 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 Helpdesk@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. For further details please see the [RCPI website](#) or the HSE NDTP [website](#)



Training Support Scheme (TSS)

Additional Training Support Funding has been made available to NCHDs from July 2019 onwards.

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 HSE NDTP website](#).

Please see the NCHD Training Supports Scheme (TSS) Guidance Document for Employers & NCHDs [on the HSE NDTP 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.

Trainee Awards and Fellowships

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.

The competition is open to all Trainees, or a team of Trainees currently registered with RCPI.

Further information can be found at www.rcpi.ie or contact Helpdesk@rcpi.ie.

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.

Further information can be found at www.rcpi.ie or contact Helpdesk@rcpi.ie.

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.



Further information can be found at www.rcpi.ie or contact Helpdesk@rcpi.ie.

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. For further details please click [here](#).

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.

Further information can be found [here](#)



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.

For further details on ICAT please see <https://icatprogramme.org/>.



Policies and Procedures

There are a number of other Policies and Procedures that Trainees may refer to throughout the duration of their training programmes. Below is a summary of these policies and procedures. For further detail please see the individual policy or procedure which is available on <https://www.rcpi.ie/>.

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

Please click [here](#) for further information on the above HSE policies.



Review

This Handbook shall be subject to review every three years from the date of approval of this document by the Faculty of Pathology.

Approved By:	Date
Faculty of Pathology	July 2023
Review	
Review by Faculty of Pathology	July 2024