



# Training Handbook

*Higher Specialist Training  
Obstetrics & Gynaecology  
2026/2027*

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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 Obstetrics and Gynaecology Training Programme. The purpose of the document is to also outline the Rules and Regulations pertaining to specialist training for Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

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](http://www.rcpi.ie).

While other institutions are referenced to (e.g. Medical Council, Health Service Executive, National Doctors Training Planning) we have given our interpretation of their regulations but the institutes/organisations 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
- Institute of Medicine

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

In Obstetrics & Gynaecology, the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG) oversees Higher Specialty Training Programmes in Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G). Higher Specialist Training (HST) in O&G is five years in duration.

The National Speciality Directors (NSDs) for the Institute of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists oversee the delivery and development of the HST training programme.

In Higher Specialist Training the day to day running of the programmes is conducted by the National Specialty Director(s) (NSDs). 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(s) run the Specialty Training Committee (STC) for the Obstetrics & Gynaecology training programme.. The STC report to the Education and Training Committee of the IOG and meet at a minimum quarterly.



## RCPI Trainers

Trainers play a crucial role in the delivery of the 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 largely 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 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, no Trainer can have more than one HST Clinical Trainee. This rule can be reviewed by the training body under exceptional circumstances. More information on becoming a Trainer can be found on the [RCPI Trainer Webpage](#)

The core responsibilities of the Trainer are

- Meet the Trainee and understand the individual requirements of training.
- Meeting with the Trainee in their first week in a post and agreeing the Trainee's Personal Goal Plan
- Facilitate attendance at educational activities
- Act as a supervisor to the Trainee
- Provide feedback and motivation to Trainee
- Attend Trainee annual evaluations
- Monitor progress and performance
- Completing the End of Post assessment and signing relevant activities in the ePortfolio
- Appraising the Trainee's progress at regular intervals during the post

Where possible, one clinical year maximum can be spent with the same Trainer.

The following criteria are required to be a registered Trainer

- Registered on the relevant Specialist Division of the Medical Council Register
- Completion of the [Physicians as Trainers Course](#)
- 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). Please note, this is desirable but not mandatory

Locum consultants can be granted temporary trainer status under the following conditions:

- Specifically requested by NSD to the Faculty Education & Training Committee (or equivalent) for Approval.
- Long-term locum (appointment should be for >1 year or contract of indefinite duration).
- Applicant must be a in good standing with the college.
- If awarded, temporary status would be linked to the post and cease when the post ends.
- Applicant would need to complete the Physicians as Trainers Essential Skills course and any other trainer development initiatives as applicable.
- The training site must have at least one other registered RCPI trainer at a given training site.

## 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, with involvement from both college representatives and the NSDs. Further information is available on the [Quality Enhancement Office Website](#)

## 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 accredit all training locations approved for training at regular intervals and in response to training concerns to ensure that they meet these requirements as per process mentioned above.

## Trainees' Committee

The RCPI Trainees' Committee is the 'voice' of Trainees in RCPI. They represent Trainees on College Council, the Training Committee, the six Faculties and Institutes, each STC and the Examinations Committee.

The RCPI Trainees' Committee has always had an active interest in postgraduate specialist training and



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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 several Trainee Awards relevant to the O&G cohort including:

- The David Mitchell Award
- The William Stokes Award
- The Dorothy Stopford Price Medal
- The Arthur Eakins Award

Trainees are encouraged to get involved with the Trainees' Committee. For information on the Trainees' Committee please email [trainees@rcpi.ie](mailto:trainees@rcpi.ie). For a list of current Trainees' Committee members and details on the role please see the [Trainee's Committee RCPI Webpage](#). There are also O&G trainee representatives (2 BST and 2 HST) who attend and take part in the STC meetings to represent the trainee cohort.

## Training Post Evaluation

Each year you will be asked to complete a short online Training Post Evaluation (TPE). 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. Data will be aggregated and only used after three years. 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 Specialty Training (HST)

### 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 is not possible in most circumstances. 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. Applicants will be considered but there is no guarantee of approval.

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 Obstetrics & Gynaecology is five years. The first three years of HST must be spent in training posts in Ireland. One year, in year four or five, may be gained from a period of full-time research, a tutor post or in a clinical fellowship (approved Out of Programme Experience; OCPE). Trainees are expected to complete their Higher Specialist Training programme within a maximum of seven years, inclusive of any Out of Programme (OCPE) experience. A full list of RCPI approved training sites can be found on the [RCPI Website](#).

The first three years on the HST in Obstetrics and Gynaecology will be in (largely) regional hub rotations across hospitals of differing size and activity

The year one intake ranges from 15 to 18 in number (as currently approved by the NDTP for O&G HST) and is agreed by the NSDs with the STC and Director of Training each year – according to training site's needs, numbers on OCPE and overall trainee numbers on the HST scheme



There are currently 18 three-year rotations. See below for the rotations in July 2025 as an example:

	Jul-25	Jan-26	Jul-26	Jan-27	Jul-27	Jan-28
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<b>Rotation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>R1</b>	Tralee	Tralee	CUMH	CUMH	Galway	Galway
<b>R2</b>	CUMH	CUMH	Waterford	Waterford	Limerick	Limerick
<b>R3</b>	Waterford	Waterford	CUMH	CUMH	CUMH	CUMH
<b>R4</b>	CUMH	CUMH	Limerick	Limerick	Rotunda	Rotunda
<b>R5</b>	Galway	Galway	Sligo	Sligo	CUMH	CUMH
<b>R6</b>	Limerick	Limerick	Mayo	Mayo	Galway	Galway
<b>R7</b>	Limerick	Limerick	Ballinasloe	Ballinasloe	Coombe	Coombe
<b>R8</b>	Rotunda	Rotunda	OLOL	Cavan	Mater	Mater
<b>R9</b>	Rotunda	Rotunda	Cavan	OLOL	OLOL	Connolly
<b>R10</b>	OLOL	OLOL	Rotunda	Rotunda	Connolly	Rotunda
<b>R11</b>	NMH	NMH	SVUH	SVUH	Wexford	Wexford
<b>R12</b>	Wexford	Wexford	NMH	NMH	NMH	NMH
<b>R13</b>	NMH	NMH	Wexford	Wexford	Waterford	Waterford
<b>R14</b>	MRHP	Coombe	Coombe	Coombe	Tallaght	Tallaght
<b>R15</b>	Mayo	Mayo	Coombe	Coombe	Tallaght	Tallaght
<b>R16</b>	Coombe	MRHP	OLOL	OLOL	Coombe	Coombe
<b>R17</b>	Coombe	Coombe	Mullingar	Mullingar	SIH	SIH
<b>R18</b>	Galway	Galway	Letterkenny	Letterkenny	NMH	NMH



- \*NMH – National Maternity Hospital Holles Street Dublin
- \*OLOL – Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda
- \*MRPH – Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise
- \*SVUH – St Vincents University Hospital Dublin
- \*SJH – St James’ Hospital Dublin
- \*CUMH – Cork University Maternity Hospital

The rotations (the sites included and the sequence of rotations) can change from year to year and will do so at the discretion of the National Speciality Directors.

**Over the course of HST, Trainees are expected to:**

- Complete 60 months experience (fulltime or equivalent) in Obstetrics & Gynaecology
- Acquire experience in Obstetrics & Gynaecology in Model 3 and Model 4 hospitals.
- Fill out a Personal Goals form with their trainer at the start of each post and upload it to their ePortfolio; the form should be agreed and signed by both HST Trainee & Trainer.
- Meet regularly with their lead trainer during each post and complete an evaluation form prior to attending for evaluation/assessment.
- Maintain a contemporaneous and up to date ePortfolio.
- Attend for annual assessment/evaluation in year 1 and in year 2 and a progress evaluation in year 3.
- Attend for an annual assessment/evaluation when out of programme.
- Demonstrate ongoing increasing ability to manage Obstetrics and Gynaecological cases, including performing more complex cases on the labour ward and in the theatre complex.
- Attend the penultimate year assessment, where an external assessor will review training.
- Attend for final year assessment with the NSDs.
- Attend for all additional assessment/evaluation as deemed necessary by the NSDs/External assessor.
- Out of programme experience if approved must take place after Year 3.
- HST Trainees are expected to attend all the courses and study days as detailed in their Curriculum



Following a successful interview, trainees will be allocated to a hub for the first three years; according to their preferences and ranking at interview. Trainees are obliged to complete the three years in the hub that they are pre-allocated. If time is taken out (leave of absence) during these three years, trainees will have to return to the sites within the rotation that they missed, although the sequence of the rotation may then vary. These adjusted allocations will be determined by the NSDs.

Equivalent post swaps between trainees after their initial allocation may, on occasion, be approved by the National Specialty Director(s), however, this will need to be the full three-year HST rotation and is 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. Similarly, during the three-year rotation and after year 1, trainees may be facilitated to swap equivalent posts with each other; this is subject to the same parameters and must be discussed with and approved by the NSDs.

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.

The final two years on the training programme will be in clinical sites suitable for years four and five and trainees will be asked to rank their choices each year from a list of available posts. Trainees will be allocated to one of the larger tertiary hospitals/units in the country for year 5 of HST. There will be two years allocated to some hospitals/units across all the years of the scheme; this refers to the larger teaching units only.

See below for list of current training sites and their recognition of training

<b>Clinical Site</b>	<b>Recognition of Training</b>	<b>First Recognised From</b>
Rotunda Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
National Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
The Coombe Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved



Cork University Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
University Maternity Hospital Galway	24 months	Historically Approved
University Maternity Hospital Limerick	24 months	Historically Approved
Mater University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
St. Vincent's University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Our Lady of Lourdes' Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved (12 months) Approved July 2022 for 24 months
Tallaght University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
St. James' Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Mid-West Regional Hospital Portlaoise	12 months	Historically Approved (6 months) Approved July 2022 for 12 months
University Hospital Waterford	12 months	Historically Approved
Mid-West Regional Hospital Mullingar	12 months	Historically Approved
Mayo University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
University Hospital Wexford	12 months	Historically Approved
Portiuncula University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown	6 months	Approved December 2022
Sligo University Hospital	12 months	Approved March 2021
Cavan General Hospital	6 months	Approved December 2022
University Hospital Kerry	12 months	Approved 6 months (Sept 22) Approved 12 months (Jul 24)
Letterkenny University Hospital	12 months	Approve October 2023



In exceptional circumstances, e.g. according to an individual's training needs or at NSDs discretion after assessment, NSDs may need to re-allocate an individual trainee outside their regional training hub and/or to another hospital/unit for a given training year.

Trainees must spend the first three years of training in clinical posts in Ireland before undertaking any period of research or out of programme clinical experience (OCPE). The earlier years will usually be directed towards acquiring a broad general experience of Obstetrics and Gynaecology under appropriate supervision. An increase in the content of hands-on experience follows naturally, and, as confidence is gained and abilities are acquired, the Trainee will be encouraged to assume a greater degree of responsibility and independence.

All Trainees should have exposure to Obstetrics and Gynaecology practice in a few different settings. Exposure to Gynaecology in a general hospital setting is desirable for all Trainees. Participation in Clinical Audit in Maternity and Gynaecology is essential for all Trainees.

If a Trainee intends to develop a further special interest within Obstetrics and Gynaecology, such as Colposcopy, Gynaecological or Obstetric Ultrasound, this will be accommodated as far as possible within the training period, re-adjusting timetables and postings, if possible, provided the Trainee's core competencies are not compromised. Wherever possible, such special interests or special skills should be validated by following a recognised special skills module or diploma course and by obtaining the relevant diploma. The Trainee planning sub-specialisation should achieve a thorough grounding in the core competencies in Obstetrics and Gynaecology before leaving the programme to pursue a sub-specialist programme or on returning to the programme following out-of-programme experience in the sub-speciality.

## Annual Allocation of Training Posts

While the first three years allocations are completed during intake, trainees will be asked to submit a Training Intentions Form each year to determine their allocations for year four and five. On this form you will 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. This form will be sent in September/October in year three and year four.

As you have already been placed in approved training posts for the first three years of HST, you will



not be asked to complete a Training Intentions Form until you are in year three.

If you intend entering a full-time clinical SpR post in your fourth and fifth year, 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, the NSDs will take your preference into account, while also considering your training needs.

It is important to always return your Training Intentions Form, especially if you plan to undertake Out of Clinical Programme experience (OCPE). If you have applied for OCPE or a flexible training post but do not 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. OCPE approvals are made at the same time as determining the clinical allocations for the following July. OCPE is not approved after the hospitals/units are notified of the clinical site allocations for the following July. Remember, a trainee cannot undertake out-of-clinical-programme experience during your first three years of HST.

If you do not submit your Training Intentions Form you risk not having a clinical SpR post for the following year, and not having your preferences for allocation noted.

NSDs currently assign posts to Trainees based on set criteria in December. Trainees are informed of their allocation a minimum of 12 weeks prior to taking up the post.

The allocation policy is as follows:

- 1. *Training Needs*** - When completing the allocations, the NSDs 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/October, prior to allocation, to indicate their preferred posts



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. 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 an allocation 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.

When trainees are advised of their post they are encouraged to engage with their site as early as possible in relation to onboarding paperwork. Trainees are encouraged to keep their information up to date via their National Employment Record ([NER app](#))

**NOTES:**

- Trainees are assigned posts for the first three years of training however flexibility will be provided during this allocation 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).
- Training sites are informed of their allocations on an annual basis after posts have been assigned. At a minimum, hospitals will be informed within 12 weeks of the commencement of the post
- If, following the issuing of allocations, a previously allocated post becomes available due to the withdrawal of a Trainee, the NSDs may consider allocating that placement to a Trainee who was not allocated to their preferred placement.
- For operational reasons the NSDs may have to make changes to placements at short notice.
- Generally, posts are of a duration of 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:**

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



- Two clinical years, maximum, can be spent in the same training site (noting that some sites are not recognised for up to two years, and clarification should be sought from the NSDs during the training programme)
- One clinical year, maximum, can be spent with the same HST Trainer

## Outcome-Based Curriculum (OBE)

The implementation of this Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum is an iterative process that relies on feedback from multiple stakeholders. This process is subject to revisions and updates to enhance its effectiveness.

RCPI and the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are committed to continuously improving this new curriculum and its assessment methods, aligning them with international best practice and standards.

As part of this commitment, specific aspects of assessment and learning are currently under review to ensure they align with the new curriculum design. The following quality improvement initiatives are underway:

- Revising and updating the Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills (OSATS)
- Developing a structured programme of online learning which will become part of the mandatory courses
- Revising and updating the ePortfolio design and edits to specific forms (e.g., OSATS)

In parallel, there is an ongoing review of the RCPI Assessment Strategy, including the potential introduction of additional summative assessments.

Any significant changes to the existing training requirements, such as the introduction of new summative assessments or major changes that may impact progression decisions, will be communicated with a minimum of 12 months' notice to trainees.



## 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 at 50% WTE.

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.

Applications generally open in September each year and RCPI will share the details with trainees on behalf of NDTP.



## Job Sharing

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

These posts involve matching two trainees in a site to share a 0.5 WTE post.

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 Share](#) policy document for more information on how to apply and further information on the regulations of job sharing.

## Reasonable Adjustments

In some instances, it may be necessary for Trainees to apply to have a reasonable adjustment to their training programme in line with the RCPI Reasonable Adjustment Policy. This policy applies to all areas of disability including physical and psychological such as learning disability or a mental health condition. If a Trainee wishes to inform the RCPI of a disability requiring reasonable adjustment, they are required to submit all relevant and recent supporting documentation written by the appropriate health professional (e.g., treating physician, Occupational Medicine physician, psychiatrist, education psychologist). The supporting documentation should include the nature of the adjustment requested and must be submitted to the RCPI via email to [wellbeing@rcpi.ie](mailto:wellbeing@rcpi.ie)

## Leave of Absence

Exceptional Leave of absence must only be taken in exceptional circumstances, e.g., sick leave. This leave must be applied for prospectively, must be approved by the NSDs and acknowledged by the RCPI. It cannot be applied for retrospectively. Any alterations to CSCST dates will be made at the time of approval only. Trainees must also ensure they inform their hospital site from an employment



perspective of their intention to take a leave of absence.

Trainees must complete the [Leave of Absence Form](#) and send to their HST Coordinator in the first instance, as well as discuss the extended /exceptional leave with their NSDs. In the absence of exceptional circumstances i.e. sick leave, Trainees must complete posts they are allocated to for the duration of the post. The Taught Programme may be completed during time of leave if desired but if not will be required to be completed upon return to the programme.

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

The final six months of the HST must always be in a clinical post approved for training in Ireland and any leave of absence or OPCE time cannot form part of this final six months.

Extended sick leave, and its impact on date of CSCST will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and will be discussed with and approved by the NSDs.

## 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. 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 the end of the third-year allocation to the training 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 as approved by the training body OR
- Dedicated research post approved by the training body OR
- A suitable academic post approved by the training body and the NSDs

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 the first 12 months will be recognised towards completion of training. All these posts must be agreed with and approved by the NSDs in advance.

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. During this period the Trainee will not accrue training credit if 12 months OCPE credit was awarded previously.

Trainees must complete the [OCPE form](#) before taking up an OCPE research, clinical or lecturer post.

All applications must be made prospectively and as part of the training intentions process in August/September. 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 via the relevant Training Coordinator in the RCPI Operations Department.

OCPE approvals are made at the same time as determining the clinical allocations for the following July. In order to be considered for OCPE, trainees should have completed all recommended training outcomes and goals, have a well-populated ePortfolio and achieved all key expected milestones by that point in training.

Approval will be announced in December/January. OCPE is not approved after the hospitals/units are notified of the clinical site allocations for the following July.

Once a formal application is made and OCPE is approved, trainees must follow the below criteria during their time on the OCPE:

- Outcomes and KPIs to be pre-determined and trainees will need to report back on these at the



annual evaluation. These will be on a case-by-case basis and determined by whether the trainee is doing clinical, research or a tutor role while on OCPE.

- ePortfolio should continue to be populated while on OCPE i.e. clinics, CBDs, attendance at meetings/conferences, delivering teaching etc. Trainees are also expected to complete an end of year evaluation form with their OCPE supervisor as normal
- A minimum clinical workload should be continued each year to obtain the maximum credit that can be awarded in first year of OCPE (12 months), as per the following parameters:
  - undertake on call duties – suggested 2 shifts per month as a minimum
  - attend one clinical session per week – suggested to be of their choice and with due regard to their training, logbook completion and interests (and per NSD assessments)
  - engage in CPD, attend study days and the Taught Programme
  - attend an annual HST assessment / evaluation throughout their OCPE time
- During the evaluation at the end of the year of OCPE, it will be determined by the NSDs how much credit will be awarded (to a maximum of 12 months)
- If a trainee takes longer than 12 months on OCPE they will only receive 12 months credit.
- Whilst NSDs prospectively review and approve OCPE, final awarding of credit is dependent on demonstration of newly acquired knowledge/clinical skill and output through documentation in eportfolio and supporting evidence from the supervising consultant

OCPE is not guaranteed. The decision to allow a Trainee to go on OCPE is based on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, relevance of clinical experience, relevance of research, training rotation numbers, requirements of the programme, service requirements etc. 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.

No Trainee can finish the last 6 months of the training programme on OCPE, maternity leave or other leave.



## HST Taught Programme

The HST Taught Programme is an essential element of the HST curriculum (please note if you commenced HST before July 2024 you will be completing the old pathway of mandatory courses and not the Taught Programme).

The Taught programme 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](#)

In relation to attendance at study days, mandatory 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).

## 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:

- Bed-side undergraduate and postgraduate teaching
- Developing and delivering lectures
- Principles of adult learning, teaching and learning methods available.
- 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

Due to the nature of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Higher Specialist Training Programme and the above rules regarding full completion of the five-year programme, acting up as a consultant in your final year is prohibited.

All HST Trainees must complete their final six months of the programme in a recognised HST training post in Ireland as allocated by the National Speciality Directors and the Training Body.

## 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 in the Trainee's e-Portfolio.

Trainees are required to undergo an annual evaluation process. This evaluation will take place within the RCPI administration offices in Dublin or can be virtual. Trainees must attend the evaluation, including those on OPCE.

At the Evaluation, 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 on the End of Year Evaluation Form.

Evaluations take place in May and September, and if needed in December of each year. The evaluation panel includes the National Specialty Directors for the specialty and the RCPI HST specialty coordinator.

During the evaluation, the panel will review the ePortfolio and an evaluation pack. For those attending



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PYAs, there will be an extern present. A PYA should occur when the trainee has one clinical year left to complete on their training programme, to ensure recommendations on completion of the curriculum can be fulfilled within the final clinical year. The extern will have access to the trainees' ePortfolio prior to the evaluation. At the evaluation the extern will provide specific recommendations for the trainee. At the end of your evaluation, the panel will agree on a list of recommendations for the following year which will be recorded on the End of Year Evaluation form.

Further information on the Annual Evaluation process can be found in the [HST Progression Through Training HST policy](#).

Please note if you have not been in contact with the college in 12 months, or have failed to respond to communication, you are de-facto removed from the training scheme.

### **Withdrawal from Training Programme**

If a Trainee wishes to withdraw from a Training Programme before their expected CSCST date, they must first notify their NSDs, 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 should 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 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 Taught Programme and/or mandatory courses listed in the general Obstetrics & Gynaecology 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 certificate.



## 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. There are useful ePortfolio supports available both in the [ePortfolio knowledge base](#) and on the [Learning Support](#) section of Brightspace.

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/quarterly feedback.

The ePortfolio is the Trainee's record of their training and the information in the ePortfolio is owned by the Trainee. The Trainee is expected to keep their ePortfolio up to date and log activity each week. RCPI provide the ePortfolio system for the Trainees to record their training programme requirements. 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.

As you rotate through posts, your Trainers are required to verify recorded information and sign off on assessments. To do this, they will need to log into their own ePortfolio account.

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, site and Trainer are correct, as well as adding Assessors for other assessments e.g. OSATs
- 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 two weeks to agree on their 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/Quarterly Assessment 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 End of Year Evaluation form with the Trainer in advance of the Evaluation date

### **At the end of your training programme**

- Make sure that the ePortfolio is completed in terms of requirements and signed off by the Trainer in preparation for the Final Year Evaluation with the NSD(s).

## **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.
- Free four-month subscription to a BMJ OnExamination Package – request an access code by emailing [Training@rcpi.ie](mailto:Training@rcpi.ie). To redeem your voucher and activate your four-month subscription, You can log into [BMJOnExamination](#)



## RCPI Trainee Representative

RCPI Trainee Representatives have been appointed to training sites across Ireland.

The Trainee Rep is there to help Trainees stay connected to RCPI while in training. They act as a conduit between Trainees on site and RCPI, sharing important information about training and giving feedback to RCPI (and vice versa).

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.

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](mailto:Trainees@rcpi.ie).



## HSE Financial Support Schemes

Please note up to date information on Financial supports can always be found on the [Medical Careers Ireland Website](#)

### **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 mandatory 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](mailto: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.

More guidance on this can be found on the [TSS Policy Document](#)

### **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.

### **Arthur Eakins Award**

The Arthur Eakins Award was introduced in 2024 by the Health and Wellbeing sub-committee of the RCPI Training Committee, in conjunction with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine. It aims to recognise the importance of Trainee health and wellbeing and encourage Trainees to actively get involved in improving and promoting health and wellbeing. It is awarded to a Trainee for a research project or quality improvement initiative which improves and promotes Trainee Health and Wellbeing. The medal and education grant worth €1,000 is funded by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine



## Fellowships/Scholarships

Several 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 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. The programme is aimed at supporting clinical training as distinct from research, particularly targeted at Specialist Registrars /Senior Registrars, who are in the latter stages of their Higher Specialist Training (HST) programme, in order to maximise the benefit of specialised training abroad. Applications for this generally open in August/September each year and the training body will issue an announcement related to same.

### 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 have obtained CSCST within the last two years.

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 RCPI in conjunction with a fellowship supervisor on site. 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

## Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT)

The all-Ireland 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



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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.

It is recommended to discuss with your NSDs well in advance if you are considering applying for this programme. Trainees will still be required to complete the requirements of their HST training scheme.

### Irish Clinician Educator Training Programme (ICET)

The Irish Clinician Educator Training programme is an innovative, advanced educational pathway in the field of Postgraduate Clinical Education. It is a two year programme and is open to SpRs as an Out of Clinical Programme Experience (OCPE). The aim of the programme is to support the training and professional development of future leaders in Postgraduate Clinical Education in Ireland.

ICET Trainees are involved in supervised teaching at postgraduate and undergraduate levels and are expected to conduct research to a level of Medical Doctorate. Selected candidates avail of funding over the course of the two years on the ICET programme. ICET applications open for trainees in November and again this should be discussed with the NSDs and OCPE Form submitted well in advance should the trainee be interested in applying. Interviews take place in January with outcomes communicated to all applicants in February. More information on ICET can be found on the [ICET Programme Information Document](#)

### 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 Schem



## Review

This Handbook shall be subject to review every year from the date of approval of this document by the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists

Reviewed By:	Date
National Specialty Directors	July 2026