



Training Handbook:

Higher Specialist Training, Obstetrics & Gynaecology

July 2023





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**INSTITUTE OF
OBSTETRICIANS &
GYNAECOLOGISTS**

ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

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.

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 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 the Basic Specialty Training and Higher Specialty Training Programmes in Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

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

The National Specialty Directors (NSDs) for the Institute of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists oversee the delivery and development of the BST and HST training programmes. The Hub Coordinators support the National Specialty Directors for BST.

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

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 both BST and HST level no Trainer can have more than one BST and HST Clinical Trainee. This rule can be reviewed by the training body under exceptional circumstances.

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
- 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

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 accreditation process. The purpose of a training site accreditation 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 accreditation panel advises on 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 accredit all training locations approved for training to ensure that they meet these requirements.



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 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 Prize
- The Dorothy Stopford Price Medal

Trainees are encouraged to get involved with the Trainees' Committee. For information on the Trainees' Committee please email trainees@rcpi.ie. For a list of current Trainees' Committee members and details on the role please [see 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. 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 take action and continue to drive improvements in training.



Regulations Relating to Higher Specialty Training (HST)

Point of Entry (Recognition of Prior Learning)

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

Recognition of prior learning is not possible. Trainees must complete all years and requirements of the programme in order to be awarded a Certificate of Successful Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST)

HST must be undertaken in posts that have been approved for training by RCPI. Trainees must complete the full five years on the HST programme. There is no credit for time completed previously or in another jurisdiction.

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 from the five, after year three, may be gained from a period of full-time research, a tutor post or in a clinical fellowship (approved Out of Programme Experience; OPCE).

The first three years on the HST in Obstetrics and Gynaecology will be in regional hub rotations.

There are currently 15 rotations in five hubs.

See below for the rotations in July 2023:



Rotation	1	2	3	4	5	6
R1	Tralee	CUMH	CUMH	STGH	Limerick	Limerick
R2	CUMH	Tralee	Waterford	Waterford	CUMH	CUMH
R3	Waterford	Waterford	STGH	CUMH	CUMH	CUMH
R4	Galway	Galway	Sligo	Sligo	Limerick	Limerick
R5	Limerick	Limerick	Mayo	Mayo	Galway	Galway
R6	Coombe	Coombe	Ballinasloe	Ballinasloe	Galway	Galway
R7	Rotunda	Rotunda	Cavan	Drogheda	Mater	Mater
R8	Rotunda	Rotunda	Drogheda	Cavan	Rotunda	Connolly
R9	Drogheda	Drogheda	Rotunda	Rotunda	Connolly	Rotunda
R10	NMH	NMH	Mullingar	Mullingar	Wexford	Wexford
R11	Wexford	Wexford	SVUH	SVUH	NMH	NMH
R12	NMH	NMH	Wexford	Wexford	NMH	NMH
R13	MRHP	MRHP	Coombe	Coombe	SJH	SJH
R14	Mayo	Mayo	Coombe	Coombe	Tallaght	Tallaght
R15	Coombe	Coombe	Tallaght	Tallaght	Drogheda	Drogheda

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.

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.

Trainees can swap rotations with each other after the initial allocation to HST. However, this will need to be the full three-year HST rotation. The NSDs must discuss and approve this change.

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 all large tertiary hospitals/units in the country.

See below for a list of training sites and their recognition of training.

Clinical Site	Recognition of Training	First recognised from
Rotunda Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
National Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
Coombe Women's and Infants University Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
Cork University Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
Galway University Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
Limerick University Maternity Hospital	24 months	Historically Approved
Mater University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
St Vincent's University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda	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 for 6 months (Approved July 2022 for 12 months)
Waterford University Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Mid-West Regional Hospital Mullingar	12 months	Historically Approved
Mayo General Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Wexford General Hospital	12 months	Historically Approved
Portiuncula Ballinasloe	12 months	Historically Approved
Connolly Hospital	6 months	Approved December 2022; first trainee on scheme July 2024
Sligo General Hospital	6 months	Approved March 2021; first trainee on scheme July 2022
South Tipperary General Hospital	6 months	Approved October 2022; first trainee on scheme July 24
Cavan General Hospital	6 months	Approved December 2022; first trainee on scheme July 24
Kerry University Hospital	6 months	Approved September 2022; first trainee on scheme July 2023

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.

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 Perinatal and Maternal Audit is essential for all Trainees.

If a Trainee intends to develop further a 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

After your first three years on the programme, in September/October each year trainees 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.

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 those three years are complete.

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



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 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. Remember, you cannot undertake research in 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, along with the STC of the respective training programmes, assign posts to Trainees based on set criteria in December/January. Trainees are informed of their allocation a minimum of 16 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.

NOTES:

- Trainees are assigned posts for the first three 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).
- Training sites are informed of their allocations on an annual basis after posts have been assigned. At a minimum, hospitals will be informed within 16 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 his/her 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



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 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.

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. The Trainee must inform the NSDs of his/her intention to apply for flexible training.

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 up to 80 per cent of the hours. Other arrangements (50-80%) are possible in agreement with the training site and the NSDs.

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

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. Applications received or discussed retrospectively will not be approved. This rule does not specifically apply to maternity leave. For example, when applying for six months maternity leave, the CSCST date will be altered by six months

Trainees must discuss the extended /exceptional leave with their NSDs in the first instance and then inform their specialty coordinator at least 4 weeks in advance of the intended leave of absence.. In the absence of exceptional circumstances i.e. sick leave, Trainees must complete posts they are allocated to for the duration of the post.

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.

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. Of note parental leave is treated like flexible training and it is not considered leave of absence.



Out of Clinical Programme Experience (OCPE)

OCPE cannot be taken until the end of year three.

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
- A 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 12 months will be recognised towards completion of training. All these posts have to be agreed by the NSDs and they will decide on the amount of time applicable to this out of programme experience.

Some Trainees may wish to spend two or three years in research leading to an MSc, MD, or PhD, by stepping aside from the programme for a time. During this period the Trainee will not accrue training credit if 12 months OPCE credit was awarded previously.

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 September/October, approval will be in December/January. 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.

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

- A minimum clinical workload should be continued each year during OCPE to obtain the maximum credit that can be awarded (12 months)
- Trainees should therefore
 - 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 mandatory courses where possible
 - attend an annual HST assessment / evaluation throughout their OPCE 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.

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, 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.

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 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 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 e-Portfolio.

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

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 in May and September and if needed in December of each year. The evaluation panel includes the National Specialty Directors for the specialty and a Chair.

During the evaluation, the panel will review the ePortfolio and an evaluation pack. For those attending PYAs, there will be an extern present. The extern will have access to the trainees ePortfolio prior to the evaluation. After 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.

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 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.



Supports for Postgraduate Medical Trainees

ePortfolio

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

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

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

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

RCPI provide 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

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.

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 and examinations qualifying for this refund scheme contained in the HSE [guidance document](#). Commencing 8th July 2019, 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) from July 2019 onwards.

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. <https://www.rcpi.ie/news/releases/looking-after-your-health-a-guide-for-doctors/>

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 heldesk@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 heldeskr@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 heldeskr@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](#).

Post CSCST Fellowships

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

These Fellowships allow Trainees to gain training or experience which is not currently available on the RCPI Higher Specialist Training programmes, or which a Trainee may need for a particular consultant post with a special interest.

These Fellowships offer training opportunities for doctors who are within two years of obtaining a CSCST.

The additional training is designed to expose Trainees to subspecialties and advanced clinical skills.

The posts will offer:

- A structured educational experience designed to deliver the requirements of a particular subspecialty which are not readily available within HST
- A supervisor with authority and accountability for the fellowship post



- Opportunities for audit and research
- An enhanced salary

Where appropriate, the post will fulfil training body requirements and HSE employment requirements for consultant posts. All posts are evaluated and approved by the appropriate training body. In order to be eligible for these posts Trainees must have successfully completed a RCPI Higher Specialist Training programme within the last two years. Further information can be found [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
- A logbook provision for logging all activities during the fellowship
- A formal evaluation process during the fellowship

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



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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 Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists

Approved By:	Date
National Specialty Directors	July 2023
Review	
Review by National Specialty Directors	July 2024