

Guidance for Managing Exit from and Return to GP Training July 2022

The RCGP is responsible for producing specialty specific guidance within more generically agreed frameworks. This guidance provides a standard approach to managing requests from doctors who have resigned or been released from GP training and wish to return.

Resignation

Trainees may resign from training for a variety of reasons including when an inter-deanery transfer was applied for but not granted. Sometimes, a doctor will reapply for GP training and if successful, begin training again. In such cases, the previous GP training could count in line with the following principles:

- Resigned from training within the last 5 years.
- Must not have been out of UK medical practice (as defined by the GMC) for more than two consecutive calendar years.
- At least one calendar year of continuous time must have been spent in clinical GP training posts (not OOP) within the last five years.
- There was satisfactory progress in the previous training programme.
- The period of training that could be “counted” in these circumstances is that covered by an ARCP form. An ARCP form from the previous training programme is expected.
- If there is an ESR for a previous period of training but no ARCP form, an ARCP panel may be arranged at the discretion of the new deanery to review the previous period of training and decide whether any of it could contribute towards the new programme.
- Trainees should complete at least 12 months (wte) in the new deanery.
- The new programme will be constructed depending on capacity in the deanery. Previously completed posts should ideally not be repeated.

Release

When an Outcome 4 is issued the reasons for this and the options available to the trainee should be clearly documented.

- The final ARCP form must clearly note which capabilities have and have not been met and that an Outcome 4 usually means it is unlikely the trainee will be able to go on to have a career in general practice.
- Details of the reason for the Outcome 4 should be specific and should also be included in communications with the trainee following the issue of the Outcome 4
- The ARCP form must also include any information on mitigating circumstances
- Appropriate career advice should be offered to the trainee.
 - This often means having to have a difficult conversation, however this is in the best interest of the trainee who may need to be told that the Outcome 4 means there is no option to pursue a career in general practice.

- The Gold Guide (GG8: p71) states that the trainee 'may wish to seek further advice from the Postgraduate Dean (PGD) or their current employer about future career options'
- The suggestion of applying for a standard CEGPR should not be offered as it is not likely to be successful in these circumstances
- The appeal process should be discussed with the trainee.

Suspension

If a trainee is suspended by the GMC, it is likely that the NTN **will** be removed (GG8: 3.99 vi). The Gold Guide makes provision and sets out the requirements for the trainee to request that the Postgraduate Dean restores the training number if the Interim Orders Tribunal (IOT) decision is revoked, and GMC registration reinstated (GG8: 3.106 i).

If the NTN is withdrawn, the trainee can appeal to have it restored (GG8: 4.166 – 4.172). If the appeal is successful, the trainee can re-enter training at the point at which they left if the period out of training does not exceed two years (GG8: 1.15 ii). They do not need to re-apply to the training programme. The period the trainee was not in training should be treated like an Out of Programme post. If the trainee is out of training for two years or more, they must reapply to training, and cannot re-enter where they left. In this situation the same guidance for resignation applies and an ARCP panel must determine how much if any previous time can count.

If after a period of suspension, a doctor wishes to return to training, they must re-apply, which requires a letter of support from the deanery (GG7: 3.74). This should be considered on a case by case basis, with review of the individual circumstances by the relevant GP Dean and close consultation between the deanery and the GPSA team to ensure no issues will arise at a later date. There is currently no appeal of decisions not to support a reapplication by the deanery other than going to the relevant PGD, and good employment practice would be for the Dean to request a review of the decision through local processes.

If the doctor is supported back into training, the GPSA team should be notified, and a decision reached on whether it is appropriate for any previous GP training to contribute to the overall programme and confirmation of how many exam attempts remain.

Re-application

1. Eligibility

The criteria used to decide whether a trainee who was released from training, should be supported back into training are included in the [Guidance for Applicants](#) on the NRO website:

14.1 Support for Reapplication to Specialty

*If you have previously resigned or been removed from a GP training programme, you will need to provide full details of the resignation/release/removal. This must be provided on the [Support for Reapplication to a Specialty Training Programme](#) form and approved by both the Head of School/Training Programme Director **and** Postgraduate Dean in the region where training was previously undertaken. This evidence should be emailed to the confidential email address of your first preference region at the point of application. Any applications from excluded trainees without submitted evidence will not progress any further in the recruitment process.*

The [Person Spec](#) states that:

Applicants must not have previously relinquished or been released / removed from a GP training programme, except under exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances may be defined as a demonstrated change in circumstances, which can be shown on the ability to train at that time and may include severe personal illness or family caring responsibility incompatible with continuing to train. Applicants will only be considered if they provide a 'support for reapplication to a specialty training programme' form signed by both the Training Programme Director / Head of School and the Postgraduate Dean in the HEE Local Office / Deanery that the training took place. No other evidence will be accepted.

Whilst it is difficult to define 'exceptional circumstances', it should be accepted that this must have been something that directly and specifically affected the trainee's ability to train at the time. An exceptional circumstance is not something that could have been dealt with and managed at the time.

2. Exam Attempts

The MRCGP regulations allow for a maximum of 4 attempts at each of the AKT and CSA/RCA. A fifth attempt is permitted in exceptional circumstances. The number of examination attempts applies only once for any trainee, so if all attempts have been exhausted, no further attempts will be permitted even in the case where a trainee enters a new training programme.

The GMC has approved RCGP examination regulations as outlined above.

3. Principles and process

Considering the information above, the following principles and process are suggested.

Principles

- A trainee who was not successful in their first training programme especially after numerous attempts at each exam and periods of remediation, should not be supported back into training.
- Exceptional circumstances should only be considered if justifiably exceptional as outlined above.
- Exam attempts do not reset in a new training programme.
- If all attempts have been used up for any previously passed exam (which may expire in the new period of training) or previously failed exam, there will be no way for the trainee to successfully complete the new programme.
- If limited exam attempts remain, pressure on the trainee and likelihood of success must be considered when discussing the advisability of returning to GP training.

Process

When a trainee approaches the deanery for support to re-enter a training programme, the deanery should:

- Consider the principles above
- Inform GPSA *before* the doctor makes an application, to ensure:
 - accurate advice is provided
 - the number of remaining exam attempts is confirmed
- Prepare a case with recommendations to present to the postgraduate Dean to make a decision on whether a letter of support should be issued or not
- Provide feedback on the decision of the Dean to the trainee
- Share the letter of support with the GPSA team

If a trainee re-enters a training programme, the deanery should:

- Plan an appropriate and bespoke training programme based on the specific needs of the trainee
- Provide ongoing and relevant support
- Contact the GPSA team for advice if a trainee is trying to fulfil CEGPR recommendations

Additional [guidance on returning to practice](#) is provided by the AoMRC.