

Guidance on Supporting Professional Activities (SPA) time for Anaesthetic/ICM trainees

HEE WM

Following discussions at School Board, post-fellowship trainees would like to access SPA time in order to undertake additional educational activities without impacting on work/life balance. It is recognised that trainees undertake a wide range of non-clinical activities, often in their own time. It is intended that some of their study leave could be used to encourage their involvement in non-clinical activities as outlined below. The SPA time should meet normal Study Leave requirements, as dictated by HEE, and local Study Leave policy.

SPA time should be applied for in the same manner as study leave, but clearly marked as a request for SPA time on the study leave form. The usual 6 week notice must be given and the request will be subject to approval from the rota coordinator, and at the discretion of the College tutor. The request may be refused if it is deemed unreasonable, or it is felt to be at the expense of achieving core learning module outcomes. Rarely, SPA opportunities may occur at shorter notice than the Study Leave policy dictates. These can be accommodated if discussed with, and approved by the College Tutor, but agreement should not be assumed in advance. If discrepancies occur then the Study Leave policy will be followed.

A total of 6 days of study leave can be used for SPA time per annum. The allocation for LTFT trainees will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. SPA time is optional, and trainees who do not wish or need to use SPA time will not be disadvantaged in any way. There is no financial budget associated with SPA time.

Organising and managing one's time is an essential part of being a senior trainee. The plan for SPA sessions needs to be discussed with the educational supervisor at the initial meeting. The time should be used effectively, and trainees will need to provide supporting evidence for each session on LLP. The SPA time will be based within the Trust that the trainee is working in.

Guidance on SPA time on Zero Days

The BMA and HEE both state that study leave is counted as working time. SPA time should be taken during training time if possible, but SPA opportunities e.g. management meeting, sub-speciality list may occur on zero days, weekends, bank holidays or time when a trainee would not otherwise be working. These can be claimed back as time in lieu. However, the application process will remain the same with the SPA time being applied for in the usual way. In these circumstances it is at the discretion of the college tutor if time in lieu will be offered. A trainee who has undertaken an SPA event during weekends, bank holidays etc without application for study leave will not be eligible for a lieu day. The time taken back in lieu should be taken whilst at the same Trust / rotation in which the study leave or SPA time was taken.

Working on days when a trainee would not otherwise be working, including SPA time is exceeding your hours and cannot be mandated and is therefore the choice of the individual trainee. Trainees have a professional responsibility to protect their own health and that of their patients by ensure they gain adequate rest. Employers cannot be held responsible for trainees exceeding hours out of their own choice.

If a LTFT trainee applies for study leave on a non-working day, the above guidance will similarly apply. Non-working days for LTFT trainees should be considered in the same way as zero days.

SPA and training / ARCP

The achievement of the Core Competencies for Anaesthetic training towards a CCT is the benchmark by which training is measured. Trainers understand that trainees want to pursue additional educational opportunities, and want to support trainees in doing this. However, the achievement of the CCT must take priority in situations of conflict. Therefore, the trainee must ensure that any SPA activity planned for, and undertaken, does not compromise training time such that core competencies are not achieved.

Essential exams (e.g. FRCA, FICM) must also take priority over SPA opportunities.

It is impossible for College Tutors to keep track on all trainees' clinical and non-clinical activity, therefore the responsibility for keeping track of the SPA, and ensuring that this balance is achieved must lie with the trainee. If a trainee fails to meet Core Competencies and the ARCP panel feels that SPA time was contributory to this then SPA time may be restricted in the future, and the policy reviewed.

Examples of what SPA time may be used for:

- QI project, audit
- Guideline development
- Research, including GCP training
- Publications
- Preparation for regional/national presentations
- Management activity e.g. shadowing senior management, training meeting
- Organising and teaching for medical students/junior trainees
- Organising and teaching simulation sessions
- Attending clinics
- Working towards other degrees
- Attending previously missed clinical training opportunities

This is not an exhaustive list, and approval will remain at the discretion of the College tutor.