

**OBJECTIVE STRUCTURED FINAL ASSESSMENT  
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY**

**Please note that the form to submit mitigating circumstances is available separately as an editable document. Please use these contact details where required: (mobile) 07341 562 519 [NSHCS.assessment@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:NSHCS.assessment@hee.nhs.uk)**

**Introduction and Scope**

1. This policy is applicable to all trainees on the Scientist Training Programme (STP) or Accredited Scientist Training (ASP) programmes who are scheduled to sit or resit their live Objective Structured Final Assessment (OSFA).
2. The policy should be read and applied in conjunction with the OSFA Regulations and related policies and guidance available on the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) website. Only some of the relevant policies are indicated by underlining below.
3. Trainees should understand that the OSFA is provided as part of their HEE commissioned or employer funded programme. A high level of expertise and complex planning is invested in ensuring a fair and robust assessment for trainees involving a lot of time and input of practising specialists within their future workforce.
4. Eligible trainees are expected to sit their OSFA at the scheduled time. Trainees wishing to withdraw from their OSFA due to circumstances other than those covered by this policy must notify the NSHCS immediately providing the reason behind their decision – a separate dialogue will be conducted with the trainee in this case.
5. Trainees who attend and register at the time of their scheduled OSFA are indicating that they are well prepared and fit to sit their OSFA.
6. This policy acknowledges that circumstances can arise which may have an impact on the trainee's ability to demonstrate their best efforts but not such that it necessitates a deferment or requires the trainee to request withdrawal. This policy covers such circumstances arising:
  - 6.1 Near the time of their scheduled OSFA which they believe may have a detrimental effect on their ability to demonstrate their best efforts at their assessment; or
  - 6.2 At the time of the scheduled OSFA and which they believe affected their performance at their assessment or may require the trainee to withdraw on the day of their scheduled OSFA (Generic and/or Specialist).

7. The NSHCS trusts that trainees, in submitting mitigating circumstances, are doing so to ensure fair assessment and are not doing so to gain advantage. This trust will underpin the response to requests for eligible mitigating circumstances to be considered and a decision made on the request based on equity and fairness.
8. Mitigating circumstances could include but are not restricted to: serious illness occurring near the time of, on the day prior to arriving for their OSFA or at the OSFA itself; wellbeing circumstances relating to a registered disability or learning difficulty or other condition e.g. pregnancy; serious accident; circumstances relating to close family members; inability to arrive at the assessment centre due to circumstances beyond their control. Please note, trainees are expected to make all reasonable provision to enable them to arrive for their OSFA at their scheduled time including allowing sufficient time and, where necessary, overnight accommodation close to the venue.
9. Requests for consideration of mitigating circumstances must be supported by recent, formal documentary evidence such as a medical certificate, doctor's letter or other relevant evidence which must include a statement of the issue and impact on the trainee's ability to complete the OSFA on the scheduled date together with the date and duration, or likely duration, of the circumstances. In the case of any illness, self-certification may be considered depending on the circumstances stated; additional witness statements maybe requested. **Where applicable, delay in receipt of the required evidence may result in a delay in the release of the trainee's outcome from their OSFA.**
10. Trainees should be aware that OSFA results will not be released until their specialist Examination Board has met and its recommended outcomes have been ratified by the Head of the NSHCS. No information of the consequences for an individual of withdrawal from the OSFA on the grounds of illness, or any other mitigating circumstance, will be available prior to the OSFA or during the OSFA, other than that provided in general terms below. Trainees are referred to the [NSHCS Examination Boards Terms of Reference](#).
11. Trainees should read this policy in conjunction with the following policies to determine which is appropriate to their individual circumstances;
  - 11.1 Where a trainee has a registered disability, learning difficulty or condition requiring accommodation of reasonable adjustments, they are referred to the NSHCS policy on [OSFA reasonable adjustments](#).
  - 11.2 Where a trainee is subject to other circumstance known in advance which may require accommodation at the OSFA or deferral of the OSFA, they are referred to the NSHCS policy on [OSFA exceptional arrangements](#).
12. The timings provided below ensure that the request for mitigating circumstances can be considered within the timeframe of the OSFA process.

## Requesting consideration of mitigating circumstances

### Mitigating Circumstances occurring prior to the scheduled OSFA:

13. Where eligible mitigating circumstance arise close to the time of their scheduled OSFA such that the trainee feels that the circumstances may impact on their performance at their OSFA, then the trainee can either:
  - 13.1 Request withdrawal by submitting a completed mitigating circumstances form as soon as possible, detailing circumstances causing their withdrawal together with supporting evidence; or
  - 13.2 Attend their OSFA and in the event that they feel that the circumstances did actually impact on their performance, submit mitigating circumstances together with supporting evidence within 2 working days for note by the relevant examination board.
14. Chairs of the relevant Examination Board (Generic and/or Specialist) will be informed to note the trainee's absence from the OSFA or to consider the mitigating circumstances submitted by the trainee under the terms described in the NSHCS End Point Assessment Terms of Reference for Examination Boards.
15. In the case of withdrawal, the trainee should, as soon as is possible, refer to the OSFA Exceptional Arrangements policy and if within scope, complete and submit a request for rearranged provision. This must be received by the NSHCS within 10 days of the previously scheduled event.

### Mitigating Circumstances occurring on the day of the scheduled OSFA prior to arriving at the assessment centre:

16. Where eligible mitigating circumstances arise on the day of their scheduled OSFA (Generic or Specialist) prior to arriving at the assessment centre resulting in their absence, the trainee should make all efforts to directly inform the NSHCS of their circumstances either by phone or email to the assessment team. The circumstances may necessitate an authorised person such as the trainee's parent, partner or training officer, to notify the NSHCS on their behalf; in this case the authorised person will be required to provide appropriate identification.
17. In all events, the trainee must submit a completed mitigating circumstances form as a formal record as soon as possible and within 2 working days of their scheduled OSFA together with supporting evidence. If supporting evidence is not available within the time for submitting the form, the form must still be submitted within the given time with reason for the delay and reassurance that evidence will be forwarded within 10 days from the event.
18. Chair/s of the relevant Examination Board (Generic and/or Specialist) will be informed to note the trainee's absence from the OSFA.
19. As soon as is possible and within 10 working days, the trainee should refer OSFA Exceptional Arrangements policy, and if terms apply, complete and submit a request for rescheduling of their OSFA.

### Mitigating Circumstances on the day of the scheduled OSFA:

20. On the day of their OSFA, following registration and under exam terms and conditions if a trainee feels unwell, the trainee should immediately inform a member of the OSFA administration team who will take the necessary steps to support the trainee.
21. In the case that the trainee has not yet started their OSFA, they will be recorded as absent from their OSFA. The OSFA administrator will complete an incident report form to be passed to the Chair/s of the Examination Board to note the trainee's absence. In this case, the trainee is referred to the OSFA Exceptional Arrangements policy.
22. In the case that the trainee has started their OSFA, they will have two options. They may either:
  - 22.1 Take a rest. In this case the trainee will be escorted to the rest station where they may rest and have a drink. The trainee may rest until either they feel able to complete the rest of the stations, or, if they feel they are unlikely to feel capable of completing the rest of the OSFA, they may seek permission to leave the OSFA without completing all of their stations. A trainee who decides to take a rest will not have extra time added to their OSFA. A detailed report of the incident will be completed by the attendant OSFA administrator and passed to the Lead OSFA administrator/senior manager on duty on the day; or
  - 22.2 Seek permission to leave the OSFA immediately without completing all of the stations. In this case the trainee will be escorted off the OSFA circuit and taken to a quiet room where they will be given the assistance they require. The member of staff who receives the trainee's request will write an incident report of all the information given to them, and of the trainee's decision.
23. Chair of the relevant Examination Board (Generic and/or Specialist) will be notified of the incident and trainee's decision to carry on or withdraw. If the trainee decides to carry on, the report may be considered as detailed in the NSHCS End Point Assessment Terms of Reference for Examination Boards.
24. In the case of withdrawal from the OSFA, the trainee is referred to the OSFA Exceptional Arrangements policy.

### **Retrospective mitigating circumstances**

25. Where the trainee did not disclose mitigating circumstances prior to sitting their OSFA but in the event feels that they did impact on their ability to demonstrate their skills, they may submit a completed mitigating circumstances form with the appropriate evidence within 2 working days of sitting their OSFA. If supporting evidence is not available within the time for submitting the form, the form must still be submitted within the given time with reason for the delay and reassurance that evidence will be forwarded within 10 days from the OSFA event. Please note that the trainee's outcome from their OSFA will be held back until the supporting evidence is received by the NSHCS and can be considered by the Examination Board.

26. The trainee's submission will be forwarded to the Chairs of the relevant Examination Board (Generic and/or Specialist) for consideration by the panel under the terms described in the NSHCS End Point Assessment Terms of Reference for Examination Boards.
27. It will be usual practice that retrospective mitigating circumstances following the release of the trainee's outcome from their OSFA will not be accepted.

END

This policy has been in the interests of equity and fairness for all trainees. The relevant cohort of trainees will be alerted if, in the light of experience, amendments/revisions are required to be made.